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Great thanks to the editorial board and all the contributors. We are looking forward to our 2018 conference in Struga in October and hoping for your further contributions.

We hope we make that little difference...

Editor-in-chief

Using literature texts in teaching English as a foreign language

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Abstract

Teaching English as a foreign language is a process whose aim is changeable from culture to culture and individual to individual. These problems made teachers to find and develop new methods and techniques in order to improve the teaching and learning process. There are various reasons for using literature in ELT. The first and essential one is that language in literature texts is taken as valuable source of authentic language to expand the language awareness. The second reason is that lessons which involve literature in teaching and learning provoke interaction, discussion, critical thinking and educate the persons' personality and it is motivating. Finally, there are disadvantages in using literature in ELT. Despite the enthusiasm of those who are in for using literature, there is still a point which claims that the use of literature is not always pleasurable for all the learners.

Key words: *ELT, literature, reading, authentic language, critical thinking*

Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language is a process whose aim is changeable from culture to culture and individual to individual. These problems made teachers to find and develop new methods and techniques in order to improve the teaching and learning process. The role of literature in ELT varies depending on what theories and approaches have prevailed in language learning because since the 1880s this area attracted more interest among EFL teachers (Clandfield and Foord, 2006).

The Communicative language teaching method gives credit of the **authentic language** taken as language written by specialists for specialists (Jordan, 1997). Literature language is

deemed as authentic material. Most works of literature are not created for the primary purpose of teaching a language. Many authentic samples of language in real life contexts (i.e. travel timetables, city plans, forms, pamphlets, cartoons, advertisements, newspaper or magazine articles) are included within recently developed course materials. (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). The old-fashioned structure drills which have been widely used in ELT, make the process of learning so monotonous and even impossible in today's life conditions and the advancement of technology. Because teachers lacked other materials, they had to look for new tools and methods in order to make the lessons more entertaining. Now texts are produced by authors who live in the political and social world of their time, and we gain a better understanding of their works by taking these contexts into account. (Beard, 2001).

Realizing this fact, the new publishers try to remove the boring extracts from the books. However, the usage of literature texts cannot be very useful if only taken as tools to improve students' knowledge in the language. Other components are needed but literature should be an essential tool in teaching English as a foreign language. The goal of the language teacher is to help students understand and produce spoken and written texts (in the traditional sense of language products) and to cope with, mediate between or even enter into 'cultural texts' (if seen as social practices). (Corbett, 2003: 168).

1. Theoretical approaches of using literature in English language teaching

There are various reasons for using literature in ELT. The first and essential one is that language in literature texts is taken as a valuable source of authentic language and expands the language awareness. The second reason is that lessons which involve literature in teaching and learning provoke interaction, discussion, critical thinking and educate the persons' personality and this is motivating (Clandfield et.al., 2006). If language for ages has served three major aims: language for communication, language for artistic and cultural appreciation, and language for linguistic analysis (Kelly 1969: 396) and these aims varied in different periods in history in the XXc, the communicative ability of learners was taken as the most important one. In 1991 Ellis stated that the major objectives in ELT are linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural, thus by using literary texts in teaching all the objectives are covered.

The main theory on which the paper is based is *the theory of Stephen D. Krashen* who developed a second language acquisition theory. He distinguishes two concepts in language learning i.e. acquisition and learning, where acquisition is seen as the basic process involved in developing language proficiency. For him the unconscious development of the target language

system results because of the usage of the language for real communication. From here, learning would be related to the conscious representation of grammatical knowledge and non spontaneous processes. Thus, students who read literature books can acquire better communicative and linguistic competence. The research question of this paper will be whether the usage of literature texts in the English language teaching will improve students' knowledge in terms of vocabulary. The language in the literature books is considered as authentic. Many scholars such as McKay confirm that reading books improves students' vocabulary but only if the students are given clear instructions and guidance: reading literature, increases learners' awareness of language use since literary texts present language in discourse set in different social contexts (McKay 1986: 191). If you give them a task to read the book in order to retell it, they can easily find the plot online and will not achieve any results in terms of improving their vocabulary. That is the reason why clear guidance is really important. When reading literature texts, the reader is engaged with this passionate aspect of the text. Engagement is generally thought of as a key component of learning environment, especially learning English language. This engagement is created especially through conflict prevailing literary works. (Keshavarzi, 2012).

Furthermore, our aim would be to prove whether reading literature increases students' awareness of language use based on the *extensive reading* approach which is connected to reading a lot of books for entertainment and acquiring general understanding. Setting a theoretical/critical text or extract for students to study independently prior to a lecture or seminar devoted to it is valuable in that it gives the students the opportunity to see what they can do for themselves. Our suggestion would be that reading books should be obligatory component of any language teaching syllabus because it allows students not only to consolidate their previous knowledge of linguistic rules but also to get a clue of how the language is used in real-life situations and taken as such would be considered as authentic language. (Ellie, Chambers and Gregory, 2006).

2. Learning and improving vocabulary

Competent speakers of English language know the lexis or the vocabulary of a language even though the knowledge would vary in terms of learners' education and occupation. Giving instruction in teaching vocabulary is not an easy task. Sometimes, teachers are facing difficulties, because students are not willing to learn new words because they do not think it is necessary because of various reasons. According to Krashen, you have to "live in the country"

in order to achieve any real proficiency in a second language, and that the informal real world environment is always superior to the classroom, or formal environment, but it is also confirmed that classroom does help after all. (Krashen, 58: 1982). The case when one talks to a native speaker or a person with a proficiency level in English language, students deem that they are inferior to the situation and they cannot find the appropriate vocabulary. If the informal language is the language used for every day routines among close people, it is essential to provide the vocabulary for communication in social situations. If students are in a position of a real-life situation such as speaking to a native speaker they often feel insecure because they lack the native speaker vocabulary. However, this can be a very good reason for students to improve their vocabulary by reading different books where they will encounter formal and informal language the native speakers use on daily basis. If students get familiar with phrases and expressions that are more likely to be used by native speakers and the same ones are to be found in authentic books, they will feel more secure to speak the language for sure.

Literature texts are taken as authentic material, since they are written for native speakers; thus they offer cultural background, various ways of expressing emotions, vocabulary used in the time when the book was written and plenty of real life situations. Literary language can also meet the curiosity students might have in terms of meeting someone from a different culture, and answer different every day questions or how native speakers behave in their surrounding. Literature should be used in the classroom in order to raise students' cultural awareness and to increase their wish to meet and talk to native speakers.

1.1 What is literature?

Various definitions for literature can be found in books, dictionaries and papers. The Oxford dictionary gives the following definition “Written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit”. This definition is essential because it describes literature as a way of art and merit. Literature is seen as the art-form of a language where words are its tools. As the painter uses paint, a musician uses instruments, a sculptor uses stone-and-chisel, a writer uses words. Even though there are many explanations of literature all of them lead to one conclusion that “literature is only literature if it is considered as art (Clandfield, et.al.).

Nowadays, many people believe that literature is not of huge importance and find a way to underestimate its worthiness. The today's society triggers the fact that students are probably more inclined towards computer science and those who are more passionate towards literature and other art forms will be destined to a life of low-paying jobs and unsatisfying careers. At

one point, at least in our surrounding, people started to think that literature is insignificant. However, for people who deal with languages, literature serves as a gateway to learning and understanding the world. However, there is still a hope that people will change their minds because it has become fashionable to read and talk about the recent best-sellers, which is promising.

1.1.1 Using literature in ELT and criteria for selecting materials

Using literary texts in the ELT is not just putting in practice a set of activities, memorizing situations, characters or understanding the main ideas of the author. If it is used as such it won't probably meet the needed results. The main reason to use literature in the ELT is to make the lessons interactive where students can improve their communicative skills and enhance their critical thinking abilities. Literature opens a new world to the students. It improves the critical abilities and encompasses every human dilemma, conflict and makes the students eager to uncover the plot more than a gap filling exercise. According to Duff and Maley, there are three main reasons for using literature: linguistic, methodological and motivational (1900:6) and these would be the criteria models for selecting literary materials in the English language classroom.

- Linguistic, because in reading literature the learners gain knowledge of different linguistic units such as irony, exposition, argument, narration, etc.
- Methodological, because when reading students can develop reading and comprehension and also become creative and imaginative. However, it is important for the teacher to choose the appropriate material for the learners
- Motivational, because most often students sometimes consider literary texts more interesting than the texts in their course-books and the reason for that lies in the outdated texts which do not catch the students' attention

2. The disadvantages of using literature in ELT

Although, there are many advantages discussed above, there are certain exclusions to the assertions made before. According to Sullivan, there are two problems connected to literature and its usage in language teaching (Sullivan, 1991):

a) Linguistic difficulty of the text is one of the major arguments against using literature in the language classes.

b) Learners may need a lot of background knowledge about English language and culture to interpret some texts.

Despite the enthusiasm of those who are in for using literature, there is still a point which claims that the use of literature is not always pleasurable for all the learners. Another criticism - it is also suggested that foreign language literature often fails to make any sense of progress, and rather than advances in skills or abilities it specifies items of knowledge (Brumfit, 1981).

There are other concerns connected to English language teaching and the usage of literature considered as authentic material:

- Problems with the grading of the grammar and vocabulary component
- Facing difficulties can make students think that the effort will be never worth
- The idiomatic language can be outdated
- Sometimes the literary texts are too high level
- Problems with cultural references in terms of comprehension

Conclusion

The main aim of this paper is to show that advantages are more than the disadvantages. Using literature in the classroom is a different approach in ELT and involves not only motivation but also pleasure for students and the teachers. Because literature is considered to hold high status in many cultures and countries, students can feel a real sense of achievement at understanding a piece of highly respected literature (Clandfield & Foord, 2006).

However, it has been argued whether literature texts and extensive reading should be obligatory part of the ELT curricula. There is no doubt that literary texts enable the students to acquire the language naturally by learning the input through authentic language. As stated above, it is important for a person who wants to become fluent language user to read longer, “live in the country” where the language is spoken, but also attend English language lessons, because it is confirmed that the classroom does help after all.

Finally, extensive reading is a needed component in the foreign language curricula although it is seen as long-term aim or vision of both the teacher's and school's policy in the country where you learn or teach. Even though it takes much time to find the needed resources and make students read extensively, it is a positive challenge for both students and teachers

because it has been proved that literature texts give a lot of possibilities for critical thinking, creativity and of course knowledge and better results in the target language.

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Developing durable language competences in the EFL classroom: Drawing on from the experiences in an Intercultural Communication course

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Abstract

Following a three-year research on the development of language competences in English in two types of university courses, a general EFL course and an intercultural communication course in English, this paper analyses the findings and suggests ways to make EFL courses in higher education more effective in developing durable and sustainable language competences. The intercultural communication course offered various types of real, authentic and purposeful communicative (interactive) language activities that could complement EFL courses, contributing to the overall language proficiency of the students and the building of robust and resilient language competences and communication skills.

Keywords: *EFL, Higher Education, durable language competences, intercultural communication, culture, communicative language activities*

Introduction

This article presents the findings from a three-year research on the development of language competences in English in an intercultural communication course at University American College Skopje as opposed to the development of language competences in a standard EFL course offered at the same University¹. The Intercultural Communication course, even though designed to develop intercultural communication skills and promote intercultural understanding, was taught in English to students to whom English was not their mother tongue, and thus offered an excellent opportunity to test the development of language competences in

¹ University American College Skopje (UACS) is a private university in Republic of Macedonia founded in 2005 which has approximately 4000 students in both undergraduate and graduate programs.

a non-linguistic environment². Although it was a non-linguistic course, it integrated several language learning strategies and approaches. In its essence, the Intercultural Communication course can be said to have been based on the Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL. However, the (intercultural) content in the course in terms of lecturing and theoretical background was limited to less than 30%, so the remaining part was destined to the practical development of intercultural communication skills in English through real, live interaction with native and non-native peer speakers of English. The course blended together the communicative approach, the collaborative learning (Gayer et al. 2008), and the digital media facilitating both interaction in English and social processes (Mondahl et al. 2009). As far as the EFL classes are concerned, it was a course-book based course in English, implementing an eclectic approach including occasionally problem-based learning and combining various types of language activities. The interaction in the class was solely among the class members who all spoke at least one other mutually intelligible language which they used in their everyday communication outside the classroom. The aim of our research was to investigate which course would provide better environment, tools and activities, for developing language competences more successfully. Having in mind the recent tendencies of making language learning more resilient and durable, we also wanted to research the sustainability of the language skills developed in both courses. In order to do so, we have combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. At the beginning we used a self-evaluation questionnaire to outline the students' profile, detect their expectations and attitudes towards language learning and make them evaluate their language competences. Then, we used an entry and an exit test that measured the learning outcomes of both courses based on the language competences we aimed at developing through the courses. A second exit test was conducted with the first group of students who took the first entry and exit test at the beginning of their first year at University. At the time when they took the second exit test, three years had passed since the first one and the students were about to finish their undergraduate studies, which made the aspect of durability and resiliency of language competences quite relevant. In order to fully understand and clarify the findings of the entry and exit tests, we have created four focus groups to explore students' experiences from and opinions about the courses they attended, providing us with a deeper insight in the process of developing language competences and making them more sustainable.

² The course Intercultural Communication was offered at UACS as part of the international program Global Partners in Education <<<http://thegpe.org/>>>.

Review of the research

The research included 120 first-year students at B1 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in non-language related fields of study. Each year, after having completed the university placement test, 40 students whose results corresponded to the B1 level and had close scores were divided in two groups randomly. Half of them registered for the Intercultural Communication³ course and the other half – for the EFL course. Both courses lasted for 15 weeks (13 weeks class work; 2 weeks for the midterm and the final exam), were taught by the same lecturer and involved a 3-hour class meeting per week. The course delivery of the Intercultural Communication course, as described in the course outline, was based on four weeks of intercultural communication theory review in English, and over the remaining 9 weeks of the semester the students were linking (live) with three different universities from three different countries for approximately 3 weeks each. Each of these three-week blocks started with a general information session about the partner university/country. Over the next number of days, the primary class activity was student interaction. On days devoted to student interaction, the class was divided into two groups. Using videoconferencing technology, the class group A had a group discussion about a predetermined topic with the partner country's group A. While group A was having group discussion, group B was in individual chat rooms with their particular partner. The following class groups switched. Other activities in the Intercultural Communication course, besides those described, involved: journal keeping from the video conference sessions; reading newspaper articles, writing newspaper article summaries once per week followed by oral presentations; descriptive and compare and contrast essay writing, various authentic readings on the linking country (geography, politics, history, cultural characteristics, etc.) and class discussions on these matters, one quiz on each country, and a collaborative project on a predetermined topic with every partner. The delivery of the standard, course-book based, EFL course was conducted through a variety of reading-comprehension activities, listening activities, writing activities (descriptive and compare and contrast essays, summaries, letters), speaking activities, grammar and vocabulary activities through a balanced combination of lectures, role-plays, pair and group work, class discussions, and an occasional case study generally stemming from the upper-intermediate course book. At the first and last class of both courses, both groups of students were given an entry and an exit test based on the learning outcomes of the specific course which, even though differ in some aspects, both contained development of communication competences in English as one of the

most important learning outcomes. The conclusions from this research are based on the results from these tests and the students' responses and comments during the focus groups meetings, providing evidence for our hypothesis that the content and the activities of the Intercultural Communication course providing the opportunity to communicate real meaning, involving the students in real communication, urge students to use their natural strategies for language acquisition, be more independent learners, and develop more durable language competences and communication skills.

At the beginning of the semesters, each student who attended either the Intercultural Communication course, or the EFL course, filled out a questionnaire regarding their age, gender, mother tongue, years of studying English, long-term or short term-stays in an English speaking country, other experiences related to English language learning and a short self-evaluation form of their language competences in English based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Several other aspects were also included in the questionnaire since we wanted to detect students' attitude towards language learning and the language skills they wanted to improve as well. The students' age ranged from 18 to 20. Sixty-two percent were male and 38% were female. Macedonian was the mother tongue of 76% of the students, Albanian to 17%, Turkish to 4% and other languages to the remaining percentage. Eighty-four percent had studied English for eight years, 8% for seven years, 5% for six years, and 3% for twelve years. They all studied English in the course of their primary and secondary education, and only 7% had attended informal language classes in English at a language school/center. None of the students had stayed in an English speaking country but they all had the chance to speak English in a natural environment; 47% had contact with a native speaker; 27% sometimes read newspaper articles in English; 14% sometimes wrote emails in English. Seventy-two percent of the students were most confident at and thought they were best in reading, 12% thought they were best in grammar, 9% in speaking, 5% in listening, and 2% in writing. Sixty-one percent thought their weakest side was writing in English, 22% thought it was the grammar, 14% thought it was speaking, and 3% thought it was their listening skill. However, 67% wanted to improve their speaking skills, 21% wanted to improve their writing skills, 8% wished to work on their grammar, 4% on their listening skills and 2% on their reading skills. Using the Language Self-Assessment Grid of CEFR, students evaluated their English language ability. Regarding their reading skills, 87% evaluated their ability at B1 level, 7% at B2 level, 4% at A2 level, and 2% at C1. Regarding their Listening skills, 81% evaluated their ability at B1 level, 9% at A2, 8% at B2, and 2% at C1 level. As far as their speaking skills are

concerned (speaking interaction and production), 71% answered B1, 18% A2, 10% B2, and 1% C1. When it comes to their writing skills, 65% evaluated them as being at B1 level, 28% at A2, and 7% at B2. All in all, 76% of the students included in the research evaluated their English language skills at B1 level, 15% at A2, 8% at B2, and 1% at C1.

The learning outcomes of both courses, in terms of English language competences, were students to develop language competences that correspond to the B2 level according to CEFR. We outlined 6 learning outcomes connected to the development of English language competences and skills. The first learning outcome referred to the listening skill according to which the student were supposed to understand extended speech, lectures, argumentations or presentations on a reasonably familiar topic. He/She should also be able to understand most films, TV news and programs dealing with current affairs. The second learning outcome was related to the reading skill. Students were supposed to be able to read and understand articles, reports, papers, books chapters concerned with different current issues. The third learning outcome was connected to the speaking skill i.e. the speaking interaction so that the student would be able to interact with a reasonable level of fluidity with native or non-native speakers, get involved in discussions and debates on various current issues, expressing his/her standing point. The fourth learning outcome concerned the speaking production so that the student would be able to deliver clear and detailed presentations on various subject matters, provide clear and detailed descriptions, explain his/her views on wide range of subject, talk with a reasonable degree of fluidity about their advantages and disadvantages. The fifth learning outcome accrued from the writing skill according to which students were supposed to be able to write clear, detailed, well-developed and structured essays, reports and summaries conveying a main idea, a piece of information, or a viewpoint providing relevant arguments in support. The sixth learning outcome concerned grammar and the students' ability to form grammatically correct sentences using appropriate tense form, active/passive voice, reported speech, form direct and indirect questions, use specific vocabulary, phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions from the curriculum. Even though the grammar proficiency is relevant to all skills and the lack of knowledge in grammar rules, syntax, and vocabulary affects and is in a way part of all previous learning outcomes and language skills, we still decided to have one specific outcome dealing with the knowledge of grammar. The main reason is that in the standard EFL class a significant time was spent on doing grammar activities and exercises and the grammar bank was an integral part of the curricula, but also because students mentioned it separately from the other skills in the questionnaire and aimed at its development as a distinct skill. It is important to mention that

in the Intercultural Communication class students did not do any grammar activities or exercises, and grammar issues were not part of the curricula. Still, we thought it would be revealing to see how well the students from the Intercultural Communication would do the grammar activities without any specific grammar preparation with similar types of exercises and activities during the course.

The entry and the exit test administered at the beginning and at the end of the course accordingly comprised 8 assignments. In order to measure the first learning outcome, students were given a listening comprehension activity (an authentic recording of a radio show) with ten multiple choice questions. For the second learning outcome, students were given a reading comprehension activity (an authentic newspaper article) with ten multiple choice questions. In order to measure the third and the fourth learning outcome, 15-minute interviews were conducted. For the third learning outcome, students did an oral decision-making task in pairs, and for the fourth task, each student was asked to give a description of several photos/pictures. The fifth learning outcome was measured by asking the students to write a 500-700 word compare and contrast essay and a 150-200 word article summary. The sixth learning outcome was measured by assigning two activities: open cloze exercise and sentence transformations. For the marking of the writing activities we used analytical scoring i.e. points were assigned for the content, organization, vocabulary, syntax and the mechanics. The marking of the speaking activities was generally communication oriented i.e. points were assigned for overall comprehensibility and fluidity, ability to convey a message, to describe, to express an opinion, engage actively in a conversation, but we also included some linguistic features or criteria such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

Presentation and interpretation of the findings

The entry and the exit test results of both groups of students did not show a wide discrepancy in students' performance and language proficiency. However, the students from the EFL course had higher score on the tests and consequently developed their language competences slightly more successfully than the students from the Intercultural Communication course. The average score of the entry test of the Intercultural Communication class was 67 out of a maximum of 120 points and 88 on the exit test. The average score of the EFL class entry test was 66 and an average of 91 points from the exit test. Consequently, in the EFL course, the improvement was approximately 38% as opposed to the improvement of 31% in the Intercultural Communication course. However, both groups successfully developed the necessary language skills expected at B2 level, which was the aim of both courses. It is interesting to note that even though standard

listening or reading comprehension activities (listening or reading followed by multiple choice or true/false questions) weren't done during the Intercultural Communication course, there was still improvement of these learning outcomes. Namely, the improvement of the listening skills in the Intercultural Communication course was 23% and 15.4% improvement in the reading skills. During the Intercultural Communication course, students listened to their partner-students from other countries talk about the different characteristics of their culture, and the students took notes of what they heard, asked questions, and responded to questions for at least 8-9 weeks. They also listened to a few lectures, several project presentations of their fellow students, newspaper article summary presentations and asked questions or made comments on what they had heard. Furthermore, they listened to the national anthems of the partner countries, analysed the lyrics, and watched a few short video clips on the countries in questions preceding class discussions. The reading done in class mainly comprised short texts about the history, geography or the political situation in the countries they linked with, followed by a quiz on countries' facts. As homework assignments, they read newspaper articles of their choice. The comprehension part of the reading activity consisted of writing a summary of the newspaper article they read followed by a short oral presentations and a class discussion or short comments on what they had heard. Furthermore, students had a short reader on Intercultural theory to read and prepare for the midterm and the final exam consisting of multiple choice questions, true or false section, filling in, and short essay questions. The results from the entry and the exit test show that listening and reading skills can also be successfully developed through listening and reading assignments that accrue from nonlinguistic needs and closely resemble the real life listening and reading activities. However, the improvement of these two skills in the standard EFL classroom, in which there were numerous listening and reading comprehension activities, followed by multiple choice or true/false assignments, matching those from the entry and the exit test, is quite higher. The improvement of students' listening skill in the EFL course is 28.3% and 28.5% of the reading skills. This can mean that students in the EFL classroom developed better listening and reading skills, but it also indicates that for better results at tests, the class activities should correspond to those in the test. It also shows that if students are being prepared for a language test, standard activities provide better results. As far as the speaking skills are concerned, the speaking interaction improved 31.6% in the Intercultural Communication course as opposed to the improvement of 26% in the EFL course. The principal speaking interaction activity was a regular once-per-week interaction with native and nonnative speakers via live video conference links on various predetermined topics which gave excellent results regarding the speaking interaction learning outcome. The topics discussed ranged from college life,

cultural traditions and characteristics, holidays, national cuisine, family life, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, etc. There was a set of prompt questions that students could use for each topic to stir interaction or keep it going but students asked and answered various different questions. Furthermore, students discussed with their fellow classmates the topics/issues presented in the newspaper summary reports section, without previous preparation of questions. Besides this, students also interacted with their teacher on various matters regarding the history, geography or the political situation of the cultures in questions. On the other hand, during the standard EFL course students were also engaged in class discussions with or without previous preparations or prompt questions on a wide range of current topics mainly but not solely from the textbook like environmental protection, free time activities, career plans and employment, quality of life etc. They also interacted with each other during pair or group work on regular basis. The reasons why these differences in performance and development of skills occurred will be addressed further in the article following the results from the focus groups. The improvement of the speaking production is nearly 27% in both Intercultural Communication and EFL course. The activities done in class that helped the students develop this skill in the Intercultural Communication course were mainly project presentations i.e. two to three project presentations prepared with three different partners from a different country on current topics, and weekly oral presentations of newspaper articles - each student presented at least 5 times during the course. In the EFL course, students in pairs prepared and orally presented two projects, before the midterm and the final exam. They also prepared short presentations of decisions or solutions to problems accruing from various in-class activities nearly every class. Input on how to prepare and deliver an oral presentation, its structure and basic components was provided in both courses. Furthermore, the improvement of the writing skill was remarkable in both courses and it was among the skills that had been advanced the most. In the Intercultural Communication course the improvement was 73.8% and was the most advanced skill. During the course, students wrote 3 compare and contrast essays comparing one or several cultural characteristics of their culture and the partner culture. They also wrote a newspaper summary once per week, and answered short essay questions based on the Intercultural theory expressing their personal opinion as well. In the EFL course, the improvement was 51% which was the second highest improvement, even though, compared to the improvement of the same skill in the Intercultural Communication course, it was considerably lower. In the course of the EFL classes, students wrote one essay per week on current topics (city life as opposed to country life; environmental issues; describing memories and past events, etc.) covered in the course book (explanatory, argumentative or compare and contrast), a few types of letters and different

paragraphs accruing from the syllabus and based on the course book. Instructions on essay writing, organization, and structure, content were provided in both courses. The improvement of the last skill, grammar, in the course of the Intercultural Communication classes was also substantial i.e. 29.8% which was very close to the improvement of the other skills. Having in mind that grammar activities and assignments were not done during the course, this result was an excellent improvement. Grammar issues were discussed individually or very briefly in class when discussing/grading the written assignments. Even though the average grade of the grammar activities from the exit test is 11.3 which is, nonetheless, quite low, the improvement percentage shows that advancement of the grammar skill can in fact be achieved in a more spontaneous way. We should also have in mind that the test is measuring improvement of grammar skills through an open/cloze and a sentence transformation activity, types of exercises that hadn't been done during the course. In the EFL course, the most advanced skill is the grammar skill with an improvement of 76%. Grammar was an integral part of the course syllabus. Specific grammar issues were addressed and students did various follow-up grammar activities like filling in, multiple choice, open/cloze grammar exercises, sentence transformations and other grammar activities from the course book. Grammar issues were addressed when doing the writing assignments and the oral presentations as well.

The EFL classroom and sustainability of language competences

The results from the entry and exit tests showed that both courses, even though different in approach, content, and activities, helped students improve their language proficiency, further develop their English language competences and successfully advance their reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar skills. The Intercultural Communication course helped students develop speaking interaction skills the most, but it also helped them develop good reading, listening, speaking production and even grammar skills. The standard course book based EFL course helped students develop excellent grammar, writing, speaking production skills and speaking interaction skills to a lesser degree. However, the results showed that both courses are not equally suitable or the best choice for development of some specific language skills like the grammar skill or the speaking interaction skill, which are closely related to the development of the other language skills and to the development of the language competences in general, and were also very important to the students as we saw in the questionnaires they filled out. The findings indicate a certain weakness in the EFL course in developing communicative language competences more efficiently and a high degree of dissatisfaction with the communicative

language activities employed. Then, how can we improve the EFL courses in higher education to develop the communicative language competences more efficiently? What makes the Intercultural Communication course so successful in developing this essential part of the general language competences? What can we add to the general EFL course so that it addresses more directly the advancement of the communicative language competence? Another crucial question recently has been not only how to enhance students' language competences, but also how to make these competences durable. Having in mind that in higher education, the language courses are quite often placed in the first year of study and students rarely have other language courses during their undergraduate studies, sustainability of language competences is very important issue. Thus, today's language teachers' challenge is not only to advance students' language skills, but to make the process of language learning and the developed language competences sustainable as well. They should not only try to put in use the most suitable methods, approaches and tools to enhance students' language skills and abilities, but they should also try to find the most suitable ones for developing robust and durable skills. Sustainability and durability of skills should become a core aspect when developing course syllabi for the language courses and adopting an approach. Although the standard EFL course resulted in better overall results in the exit test and language proficiency, another crucial question emerged, and that was: which course equipped the students with more durable language competences that students can use outside the university after finishing their studies? In this sense, we have provided a second exit test for the first group of students from both the Intercultural Communication course and the EFL course at the end of their final (third) year of study i.e. three years after the completion of the course. The results from the second exit test from both courses show a general decrease in the performance. The total average score of the exit test in the Intercultural Communication course was 88 as opposed to the average of 79 points or 66.5% on the second exit test taken 3 years after the completion of the course. Decrease can be noticed in every tested skill. However, it is the most observable in the learning outcome 3, 4 and 5 or speaking interaction, speaking production and writing i.e. on the first exit test the average point for the speaking interaction was 15.8 points, 16.2 for speaking production and 15.2 for writing as opposed to 13.4 average points, 14.3 and 13.3 respectively. Still, these results are higher than the results from the entry test taken at the very beginning. The improvement of the language skills 3 years after the completion of the Intercultural Communication course was nearly 19% compared to the 31% improvement at the first exit test right after the completion of the course. The results from the second exit test in the EFL course showed even higher decrease in the scores. The total improvement was 16% and a decrease in

the scores in every skill was also easily noticeable. The total average score was 90.7 on the first exit test as opposed to 77.3 on the second.

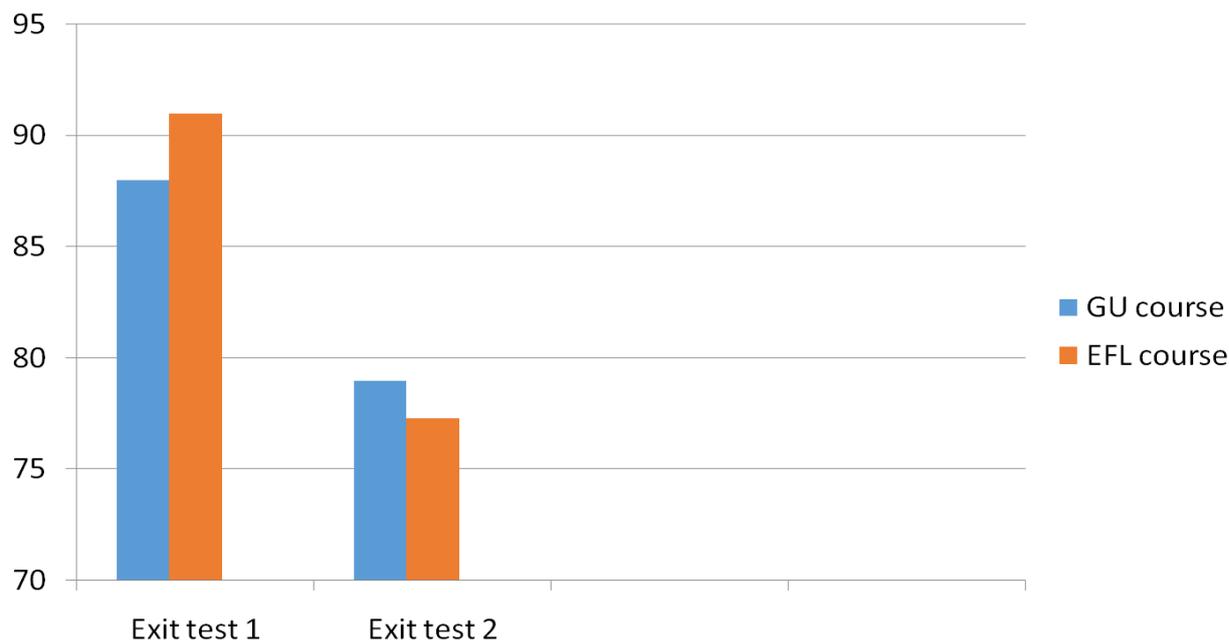


Figure 1 Graphic presentation of the results from the two exit tests

The qualitative aspect of the research

In order to fully understand this difference in the results from the second exit test and to interpret the decrease in the performance of the students attending the EFL course as opposed to the students from the Intercultural Communication course 3 years later, we decided to add a qualitative aspect to the research to complement the quantitative one. Aiming at finding out the attitudes of the students towards the learning and teaching process, the content of the courses, the activities and the assignments and how they influenced the development of their language skills we created two focus groups per course. The four focus groups in total were formed out of the first two groups of students who took the second exit test 3 years after taking the courses Intercultural Communication and EFL respectively and consisted of ten students per group. We conducted a semi-structured group interview that followed several research questions but also allowed spontaneous discussion. When asked whether they thought the content of the course and the activities allowed them to further develop their language skills and in what way, the students from both courses answered that the content and the activities helped them advance their language skills. The students from the Intercultural Communication course said that their language skills improved by having the opportunity to “really talk to people, communicate for

real, make friends with whom they chat even after the end of the course". The students from the EFL course believed that their language skills improved by "doing various grammar, reading, listening and writing activities, their teacher's effort to motivate and encourage them, and their personal involvement and dedication". The second question dealt with specific language skills i.e. which language skills they thought they developed the most and why, and whether they can name specific activities they believed helped them do that? The students from the Intercultural Communication class thought their speaking skills (both speaking interaction and speaking production) got considerably better. The activities they listed were the class discussions via video conference links, the collaborative projects and their presentations with a partner from a foreign country and the oral presentations of newspaper articles; even the chat sessions with their partners were put on this list as having improved their speaking skill. The listening skill was also mentioned and the ability to understand different accents developed through the video conference links. The writing skill was also mentioned stating that "it was very interesting and motivating to write about the differences and similarities of their and their partners' cultures and their overall intercultural experience during the course". They also said that it was "challenging and fun to read real articles from online newspapers and discuss actual events happening in the countries they link with", "This prepared us for what we would actually do outside of the classroom". The students from the EFL course more or less named all language skills from the learning outcomes. The majority of them believed they developed the reading skill the most; many of them stated the grammar skill and the writing skill as well. The activities that helped them develop those skills were the reading comprehension activities with multiple choice or true or false, various texts after whose reading debates or discussions followed; the grammar exercises with multiple choice, gapped texts, open/cloze, sentence transformation; and the writing exercises and the teachers' instructions and tips from the book for successful writing. The third questions asked the student to name the activities that were the least helpful for developing their language skills. The answers of the students from the Intercultural Communication course ranged from "all activities were helpful" to some naming the journal keeping from the class discussions via video conference links as the most tedious activity. The students from the ESL course generally named the speaking interaction activities as the least useful since they "didn't use English in the course of the activity", so they believed these activities failed their purpose i.e. developing the speaking interaction skill since they weren't interacting in English, but primarily used their mother tongue instead due to the feeling of "awkwardness" and "embarrassment" to speak in English to a fellow student. The majority of them named the discussions in pairs and the prompted dialogues as the least useful activities

since they rarely spoke in English while doing the activity. Even if they did speak in English, they used simple sentences or prompted sentences from the book because they found it “strange”, “unnatural” and they didn’t feel “at ease” speaking to a fellow students in English and “pretending” or “acting out a situation”. Some even pointed out the group activities or the joint project where students in groups tried to solve a problem together and were supposed to come up with of a joint solution. Even though these activities were useful for developing other skills (“general communication skills”, “teamwork”, “cooperation”, “problem solving”, “analytical skills”), students rarely used English in the preparation process or even if they did, it didn’t come “natural” to them to speak in English, some were even “ashamed” to speak in English because of their “accent, pronunciation, lack of vocabulary” and they found it “easier or more natural” to use their mother tongue and used “just occasionally certain words or phrases in English”. The last question was naming one or several activities or certain content from the course that they found the most memorable and/or believed it would be or already had been useful or applicable outside of the classroom. The majority of the students from the Intercultural Communication course as most memorable and applicable outside of the classroom indicated the fact that the course gave them an opportunity to use English “for real”. They “really needed to use the language to communicate with the other students, to exchange opinions, ideas, to share experiences and to learn about each other’s cultures, to do the activities, the assignments and the collaborative projects”; “It wasn’t fake”, “This is how communication in English outside of the classroom would be like” said one of the students. In addition, as particularly useful outside of the classroom, the students added the intercultural communication skill they developed i.e. “the ability to successfully communicate with people from different cultures”, other skills like “teamwork”, “collaboration”, “problem-solving”, “negotiation skills”, but also “tolerance”, “understanding”, “making friends from different countries” with whom they were still in touch, “learning about different cultures and their major characteristics and way of life”, the concepts of “stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination” which they became more familiar with and understood better. The students from the EFL class as most memorable and useful outside of the classroom indicated the case studies and the projects. The reason why they chose these two activities was because they were “more interesting since they involved not only reading but also listening or watching a video, photos, group activities, competitions etc.”, “came from real life”, “true stories”, “we learnt about how other people coped with certain situations in real life and this could help us in future if we faced a similar situation”. They also stated that the development of other skills like “collaboration and teamwork”, “problem-solving”, “analytical skills” apart from the language skills was one of the reasons why these were the most

memorable and useful activities and content. Besides all this, the collaborative projects were said to have been very useful for their speaking production skill because they involved an oral presentation at the end, giving them the opportunity to develop their “presentation skills, to speak clearly and intelligibly, to interact with the audience, to work on the body language and to learn how to use different software and presentation tools besides the standard one”.

Conclusion and recommendations

All these findings point to the conclusion that language competences are more resilient and sustainable if they are developed through language activities that involve content relevant to the students’ interests, whose domains are diverse but embrace students expectations and needs. The language activities should involve the necessary processes of reception, production and interaction but they work best if the students are able to relate to them and find a purpose besides the linguistic one. In addition, as many approaches in language teaching have shown (the Language Immersion (Anderson & Rhodes, 1983); Content-Based Instruction or CBI (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989); Content and Language Integrated Learning or CLIL (Marsh & Maljers in 1994); English for Specific Purposes or ESP), the language activities and course content should be meaningful; they should provide relevant, up-to-date information or content besides language principles and concepts; and they should develop other essential skills along with the linguistic ones like analytical, problem-solving, or critical thinking skills which students would recognize. Furthermore, the activities should include tasks and content that would activate effective communication and learning strategies. A sustainable EFL course should offer a balanced variety of language and non-language related tasks and activities that would require implementation of already acquired and newly developed strategies in learning and communication. Moreover, the cultural framework of the language where students should create and interpret meaning should be an indispensable part of an EFL course that fosters sustainable language competences. The relationship between language learning and culture and its importance has already been identified and widely explored. Culture has become an integral part of EFL course outlines and course books for quite some time and EFL teachers already use various didactic materials on specific cultural characteristics or historical figures, excerpts from literary texts, authentic materials, and many other tools and activities to introduce culture in the EFL classroom and to make students understand the link between culture and language learning. However, our findings have shown that simulations, role-plays and other similar types of activities that involve interaction solely among the class members are not always motivating and challenging, and thus useful enough for developing resilient language competences with

university students. The interactive communicative language activities through which students in higher education could develop durable language competences should combine the different understanding of language i.e. language as a code, but, even more importantly, language as social practice (Shohamy 2007) and its cultural context (Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino & Kohler 2003). The interactive communicative language activities should encompass the language as a social practice and give opportunity to students to really participate in it. The rich complexities of communication, the fact that language is used for purposeful communication and language occurs in everyday life to interact with people, to establish and keep existing relationships, to create, express and interpret meaning should also be reflected in the communicative language activities. These activities should also provide the students with the ways cultural context affects the communication, the creation and the interpretation of meaning and how the students' culture and the cultural context of the second language interrelate. Last but not the least, the communicative language activities should foster students' independence and provide context for the students to become users but also analysers of the language they use (Svalberg 2007). Our research has demonstrated that the activities used in the Intercultural Communication course enable all these aspects. The students from the EFL course lacked the authenticity of the communication, and thus were less motivated, productive and proficient in developing durable language competences and were more dependent on their teacher. EFL curricula cannot and should not be entirely transformed into an intercultural communication course but it should be complemented with these types of communicative language activities which would reflect students' interests and accrue from real needs in order to offer to university students more durable language competences.

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Gamification for inspiration

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Abstract

There are so many teaching methods and techniques that teachers use to teach young learners memorize, reproduce and write the basic vocabulary. These methods and techniques are useful when it comes to teaching students that are already motivated and eager to learn, especially those in private language schools. But what do we do when we work with students that lack of interest in learning a foreign language, students that are not able to understand the main point of going to school and learning to read and write their mother tongue, student that see their English teachers as clowns who enter the classroom to amuse them and they don't even bother to write a word in their notebooks or say a word in English.

Key words: *inclusive education, educational theater, gamification*

Introduction

This paper is about a research that made a little progress in the learning process of second and third grade Roma students who at the beginning of the school year were not able to follow the curriculum or cope with the tasks given at class and not capable of memorizing a word for the next English lesson. With the help of simple gamification and drama in the classroom they managed to do better. Recently, the modern education system requires a change in traditional education environment, change towards dialogue, meaningful communication, co-operation and general problem solving in the educational process. The same system faces the introduction of a relatively new type of education, namely inclusive education. Subject of research in this article, is precisely inclusive education, by the use of teaching methods that provide children with experience and training at different levels, training in which all pupils are equal regardless of their social or ethnic background.

Subject research and methodology

The motivation during the lesson should be achieved in the first 10 minutes. It should always be accomplished in order to stimulate at least the primary interest among students. There is no methodological formula for the formation of students' motivational attitudes. The methodology taken in concern when making efforts to motivate students is the way in which they will be instructed to follow the lesson. Then they are ready for learning reactions, appropriate to the group norm for active expression of thought.

Conceptual conflicts with my students were mainly due to the fact that I began to teach English through facilitation of learning based on cognitive models and generalizations. I tried to bring them closer to the language by focusing on the details. Until then, I had no difficulty with this approach. I realized that most of my present students prefer to "see the trees before they see the forest." They feel more comfortable when they understand the components, the facts and specifics of a construction. I hardly kept their attention, because they were impatient and wanted "to get straight to the point", complaining that I talk too much and write too much. I learned that most of my students study through linear logic and I had to adjust my teaching style accordingly. So I did, I found a way to capture the essence of a particular structure that works, through examples from everyday life, through games, tasks where I animate and engage the students to work and gradually started to get results.

It is true that students are inclined to learn when engaged in fun activities, but it is not expected to have fun every day and every minute at a time. They should not refuse to complete a given task merely because they consider it to be insufficiently entertaining. I was very confused and frustrated with the complaints of my students that I was setting too many tasks and any task that was a bit more difficult and with higher expectations, according to them, was not worth to work on.

According to the above, I have been motivated to use the educational theater (role play) as a tool for inclusion of Roma children in education. Educational theater is an interactive method in which teachers and students communicate and form an educational environment in which they work together. This method practices the active participation of students in the educational process because it engages them emotionally and provides aesthetic pleasure.

We can treat the "educational theater" method as an addition and expansion of the characteristics of the theater for recreational purposes and to emphasize its influential potential on the change of knowledge, attitudes and, moreover, the behavior of the audience. Educational theater can be considered a modern educational construct that does not rely on reproductive learning, but on the interactive - and that is the participation of students.

As a result of involvement in the interaction, participants recognize it in an authentic way, or, in other words, the formation of concepts is based on an acquired individual experience, rather than through distanced knowledge, formulated by someone else.

Providing a good atmosphere in the educational game ensures success in the educational process, in the formation of a pedagogical environment that is characterized by a change in communication with the students and the role of the teacher.

When implementing the approach for inclusion of Roma children and overcoming the obstacles in their education, we are guided by the idea that theater is a kind of game, where the child is free and fun, which is a good precondition for the integration of Roma children in education.

The method of role-play activities engages all the students; they either perform certain roles or participate as active spectators who evaluate the interpretation of their peers.

Such participation allows interaction during classes and to a great extent provides flexibility in the study of the teaching content, respecting the individual abilities and interests of each child.

For example, in the second grade - when studying new vocabulary, the purpose of the lesson is to assimilate the names of the numbers 1 to 5 in English.

The establishment of an educational theater environment envisions the involvement of all students, even those who work more slowly and encounter difficulties in fulfilling the task set by the teacher. All this stimulates the students and their desire for learning through participation in an educational theater. We call it "The Numbers' Walk".

For participation in the theater, cards are used, prepared in advance by the teacher, with the numbers written in words, as well as the digits.

Five students are initially in the theater. Each of them is a character and has a name (in words: One, Two, Three, Four, Five), which is written on a card. Each child attaches the name of the character played by One, Two, Three, Four, Five on the blouse. As a result, students can see the written word and the meaning of the corresponding figure, and also listen to it in sound and pronounced. The teacher also receives a role; he/she is the driver of the numbers (Mr/Ms Number). The role of the driver in the play is to help the numbers cross the street from one side to the other. At first the driver, Mr/Ms Number, presents him/herself, then he/she presents the players - children actors with the names One, Two, Three, Four, Five, encouraging all students to pronounce the names written on the card to each of the actors. Then each of the characters, participants in the theatrical performance, presents themselves, entering into dialogue with others: *Hello! I'm number one. Hello! I'm number two.*

All the participants repeat unanimously the names of the characters, i.e. numbers, and at the same time they salute them (Hello One, Hello Two ...). The characters also greet the class: *"Hello everyone!"*, while Mr/Ms. Number helps the numbers cross the street, again asking the students to pronounce the names of the numbers (the names of the characters) that crossed the street. In this activity students find out that several of the characters are hidden (For example, One, Three, and Five). Upon arrival at the place, the driver checks the numbers asking *Who are you?* and gets a response from the child actor *I'm number Two*. Thus, Mr/Ms. Number makes a conclusion that two figures are missing, addressing for help to the others, asks: *Who is missing ?*, expecting an answer from the children: *Number One, number Three, number Five! or just One, Three, and Five*. The game continues with the teacher's initiative for children to call the missing numbers. Once those numbers are shown, the driver counts them again. During the next play of the game and change of students, the driver Mr./Ms Number can be played by a student, who has the role of a guide, so the class will play independently, of course, with the support and intervention of the teacher.

Conclusion and results

The term quality education refers to quality teaching in the schools by teachers and quality learning, and at the same time a great student motivation for learning. The educational theater creates a positive learning atmosphere where all students, regardless of differences, gain confidence in their own possibilities and work together. They create conditions in which effective learning and upbringing is accomplished, students freely, in a pleasant atmosphere, master the English language; learn with desire and enthusiasm in conditions of diversity.

Observing the work of this type of classes, the following results were established:

CRITERIA	INDICATORS	RESULTS
<i>THE ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS TO LEARNING</i>	POSITIVE	80%
	DOESN'T SHOW ANY INTEREST	20%
<i>INDEPENDENCE AND INVOLVEMENT</i>	VOLUNTARILY	55%
	AFTER ADITIONAL STIMULATION	25%
	DOESN'T SHOW ANY INTEREST	10%

Note: The experimental observation was carried out with 12 students aged 8/9. During the lessons a special Observation Form was used to record the results.

Teaching grammar the fun way

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Abstract

Grammar seems to be the most difficult part of learning a language so creators of teaching materials must design grammar exercises which will make studying it more enjoyable and fun. This paper presents various techniques which can be employed by material designers to present grammar to students in the most acceptable manner so that they can adopt it easily. More precisely, it offers practical examples from the textbook aimed at teaching English for law enforcement students designed for students at the Faculty of Security in Macedonia. However, the paper offers advice on how these types of exercises can be adapted for teaching English to all levels and for all purposes.

Key words: *grammar, textbook for law enforcement, material design*

Introduction

Grammar seems to be the most challenging aspect of the process of learning and also teaching a foreign language. The general impression is that students do not really like studying grammar and they perceive it as some set of rules they need to adopt. So, teachers need to employ various techniques when presenting grammar to their students in order to make it more fun and acceptable for them. This paper offers some practical examples on presenting grammar parts to students. More specifically, it presents examples from the textbook aimed at teaching English for law enforcement students at a tertiary level and it also offers advice on how these types of exercises can be adapted for teaching English to all levels and for all purposes.

Creation process

Before creating any materials for their students, teachers should always rely on the teaching experience and analyse what actually works best for their students in class. They should take into consideration the level, the age of the students and their needs. Before my colleague and I started creating materials for the students at the Faculty of Security we took into consideration all these factors. The first thing we did was carry out needs analysis (step 1). We created a

questionnaire for the students in which they were supposed to give us information on what exactly they need to know for their future profession. We also distributed a similar questionnaire among people already working at the Ministry of Interior sectors and asked them to state in what circumstances they use the language and what kind of things they need to know. Then, after this first phase, we determined the students' level of English with a diagnostic test (step 2). Two levels were determined, intermediate (most of the first year students) and upper-intermediate (most of the second year students). After that we moved on to the 3rd step i.e. selecting grammar parts to be covered for each level. In addition, we started creating materials for each specific level and we included grammar part in each unit (step 4). One of the greatest issues we had to face was whether the grammar section should be integrated in the content presented or isolated from it. And we decided that it should be integrated in the content presented (see the section below). Finally, after we created the materials we piloted them in class (step 5). After working with those materials for a whole year we distributed one more questionnaire among students to examine their opinion about the materials. The results were highly satisfactory (see Trajkova, 2010). All the students (100%) stated that the materials suit their needs. 85.2% stated that the grammar and vocabulary are presented well and they have no problem with their acquisition. The rest had divided opinions. Some stated that the grammar and vocabulary are too difficult for them, and the other part of students stated the opposite. This is not surprising because not all students from one year are on the same level. The diagnostic test showed that most of the first year students were on an intermediate level and most of the second year students were on an upper-intermediate level. However, there were students who had much higher or lower knowledge than the majority. In addition, 96.3% responded that the materials contain authentic cultural sources and 100% stated that the materials are very motivating and inspire them to learn the target language.

Designing grammar exercises

Before starting to create materials one needs to decide on what type of design principle they are going to use. We decided to use a communicative concept as a design principle. According to McDonough & Shaw (2003: 28), the communicative concept is attractive because it provides a richer teaching and learning environment and it:

- “ - includes wider considerations of what is appropriate as well as accurate;
- handles a wider range of language, covering texts and conversations as well as sentences;
- provides realistic and motivating language practice;

- uses what learners know about the functions of language from their experience with their own mother tongue”

McDonough & Shaw (2003: 29) point out some other questions which also need to be addressed before one begins to create grammar exercises, such as: how will the grammar be presented?; what would be the role of grammar in each unit?; what language skills are going to be practiced? To what extent is the unit going to deal with: a) communicative functions as properties of language and b) communicative behaviour and activities?; Will the learners have any freedom to ‘create’ meanings and language for themselves?

Following Ur (1996) and Doff’s (1991) advice on how grammar should be presented, we decided to use the integrated skills approach, i.e. use the listening, speaking, reading and writing to practice new material – vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, text/discourse (see Lubelska & Matthews, 1997: 16). According to Penny Ur (1996: 78), it is surprisingly difficult to present and explain a foreign-language grammatical structure to a class of learners: “Grammatical accuracy on its own is a dead end, unless used to receive and produce interesting and purposeful meanings within the context of real-life language use”. Doff (1991: 35) also believes that it is important for learners to have plenty of contextualised examples of the structure and to understand them. Meaning should be shown through a situation (from outside the class in which the structure could naturally be used) and several different examples should be given so that students can build up a clear idea of what the structure means and how it is used.

Ur (1996: 84) also suggests a list of types of grammar practice which can be employed to lead students from accuracy to fluency:

1. *Awareness*
2. *Controlled drills*
3. *Meaningful drills*
4. *Guided meaningful drills*
5. *(Structure-based) free sentence composition*
6. *(Structure-based) discourse composition*
7. *Free discourse*

Following this list, grammar in our materials was presented by combining all these methods which ranged from making students aware of the part of grammar presented, to controlled and meaningful drills which just focused on the usage of the appropriate grammatical form presented to creating free sentences and discourse compositions which students had to create based on the knowledge they gained previously. In addition to this, it is also important to note down that we mostly used the inductive method when presenting the

specific grammatical forms i.e. we would make students use the form and thus become aware of its form and usage in context.

Some practical examples

In this section, some practical examples of how grammar was implemented in the English for law enforcement textbooks⁴ are presented. All these examples can be used to create grammar exercises for any type of students who study English as a foreign language at any level. They should just be adapted to topics familiar to the students.

The first example is one in which the third type of conditional sentences (unreal past) is presented. We decided to connect the grammatical term “conditional sentence” with the lexical one (in legal terminology it means: an imprisonment sentence, except that the offender serves the sentence outside of jail, under strict, jail-like conditions), so we called the unit “Conditional Sentence”. After a short discussion to introduce the topic, students are given a text to read, called: “In prison on a wedding day” which is about a person, named Paul, who has a car accident while driving under the influence of alcohol. However, after he explains to the judge that that very day is his sister’s wedding and he was just on his way to the airport to pick up some guests when the accident happened, he is given only a conditional sentence. After students read the text, and discuss it, they do a listening exercise in which a journalist who deals with unusual life stories and events conducts an interview with Paul. Students are supposed to listen and choose one option from the multiple choice exercise. By selecting the appropriate option they create conditional sentences. For instance: *Paul would have sent somebody to go to the airport if his uncle (hadn’t asked him/ had asked him/ didn’t ask him) to keep it a secret*. In this way students are introduced to the third conditional type inductively and are made aware of its form and usage (Ur, 1996: 84). After that, the teacher explains the form and usage of the third conditional, which is presented in the part called: *Focus on Your Language*. After the explicit instruction, students do controlled meaningful drills in which they have to make sentences in the third conditional by putting verbs in the suitable form. After that they are asked to read a text about great escapes from Alcatraz and after each paragraph they have to finish a sentence (conditional one) with a given prompt and based on the text. This presents a guided meaningful drill they have to do (see Ur, 1996: 84). Finally, they are given certain situations and they need

⁴ Two textbooks were created and then published by the Faculty of Security, Skopje: Trajkovska, V. & Trajkova, Z. (2012). *Protect 1, English for Law Enforcement* (for first year students on an intermediate level) and Trajkova, Z. & Trajkovska, V. (2012) *Protect 2, English for Law Enforcement* (for second year students – on an upper-intermediate level)

to read them and say (or write) what they would do if that specific situation had happened to them. This is a structure-based discourse composition. In conclusion, as it can be seen from the example, the grammar in this unit was integrated in the content and all the four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) were used to present and practise it.

Another example that could be presented here is the presentation of past modals in the textbook. We incorporated them in the unit about juvenile delinquency. After a short discussion about what a juvenile delinquency is and what types of crimes it includes, students are asked to listen to a psychologist who talks about the reasons for juveniles' violent behaviour and three different cases. They are supposed to fill in the blanks with the missing information. After that they have an exercise in which they are given statements with past modals and they are asked to state which of the three, previously presented cases, each statement refers to. In this way they are implicitly introduced to past modals and their usage and meaning. After that, the teacher explicitly explains which past modals are used in which specific situations. Following this, so called awareness stage, students do controlled drills in which they are explained a situation and they are supposed to fill in the blanks with a correct past modal form. In addition, they are presented with a meaningful dialogue and are supposed to fill it in with a correct past modal form (guided meaningful drill).

Besides grammatical forms, functions were also incorporated in the teaching materials and were mostly inductively presented. For instance, in order to introduce students with "giving advice" as a function, they were presented with a text called "Keep your eyes open" in which parents are given advice on the things they need to do in order to keep their children safe. After inductively introducing students to the different ways one can give advice, they are explicitly made aware of the form. In addition, they are asked to write a text (structure-based discourse composition) and give various pieces of advice to people for safety precautions (e.g. *advice people on what they could do to protect their home or advice how young people could protect themselves when going out in the night etc.*).

To sum up, grammar in all the three examples was integrated in the content and presented via the four skills. The practice part varied from simple controlled drills, then meaningful guided drills, structure-based sentence and discourse composition to free discourse.

Conclusion

This paper aimed at presenting various techniques which can be employed by material designers to present grammar to students in the most acceptable manner so that they can adopt it easily.

More precisely, it offered practical examples from the textbook aimed at teaching English for law enforcement students and aspired to inspire teachers on how they could develop their own teaching materials and present grammar in a fun and interesting manner. The results from the creation process and then from the piloting of the materials among students showed that grammar presented in a meaningful context is more easily acquired by the students. More precisely, grammar should be integrated, either inductively or deductively, in the presentation of the four skills, such as any piece of listening material, reading text or text students need to write or speak about. Thus, students acquire it without being focused on it. They even use the specific grammatical forms or functions without being aware of it. In addition, teachers should also make sure that grammar is presented through a variety of exercises, starting from controlled drills to more meaningful and creative ones. In addition, teachers should also make sure that the topics presented are of students' interest. It is much easier when it comes to teaching English for specific purposes because topics are all connected to the specific area. However, when it comes to general English, a needs analysis at the beginning of the course will always help to select the topics which best suit the specific category of students. Finally, teachers themselves should enjoy teaching grammar and present it as nothing more than a tool to express oneself as accurately as possible. This would relieve the students from the burden and pressure they feel whenever they are told that they have a grammar class.

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Who is in charge of your class?

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Abstract

Are teachers nowadays in charge of their own class? Who should be in charge of the classroom? All teachers face this crucial problem in the classroom. Successful teaching outcome is achieved when teachers, learners and parents collaborate well. Success in learning a foreign language depends not only on teaching methodology and linguistic analysis, but also on what goes on inside the classroom. In this complex world, it takes more than a good school to educate children. Apart from motivational sessions, learners need structure. They need to trust their teachers and their peers in order to feel comfortable in class and perform well. A mutual relationship based on trust and respect from teachers to learners and vice versa must be established from the very first day each learner joins a class.

What are the major discipline problems which lead to “passive aggressiveness”, “unacceptable” behaviour at school? How can teachers improve their learners’ behaviour, encourage cooperative learning and foster respect inside and outside the confines of a class? The issues of classroom management, classroom discipline and communication among teachers-learners and teachers-parents will be discussed in this article.

“Learners are the world’s most valuable assets”.

Key words: *classroom management, discipline, communication, learning atmosphere, respect, confidence.*

Becoming a teacher is a difficult and demanding profession. Becoming a good teacher is undertaking a lot of responsibility. Teaching students has everlasting effects on them regardless their language level and their age provided that the lessons are interesting, challenging and motivating (Chapman, 2011).

Do you think it is that easy to teach? Well, teaching is a difficult procedure which needs: development and maintenance of teaching activities and continuous watching and dealing with

the events inside and outside the borders of the classroom because there are learners who drive teachers crazy, students who behave in an arrogant manner towards their peers or their teachers, students who are disruptive, unmotivated, indifferent, and disinterested and cause problems in class. During my career as an English language teacher and a school advisor, I have come across plenty of colleagues who dread teaching students. Because some learners are naughty. Because they cannot concentrate. Because what all they want to do is run around and make a lot of noise. Because the teachers sometimes believe they cannot “control their students”. The word “control” sounds hard and strange! To be able to control (let’s say) the whole teaching procedure, teachers have to be aware of what happens in the whole school environment. Students need guidance (Chapman, *ibid*). in order to participate successfully in class. A mutual relationship (Nelsen, Lott, and Glenn, 2013) among all members of each class must be settled from the very first day learners join a class. Teachers should remember that there is always something to appreciate in each pupil and should aim at building strong relationships with their students and create a sense of self-esteem and confidence among all the students by supporting, praising, encouraging and motivating them (Dörnyei, 2001).

It is advisable for the teachers to be fully aware of each learner’s profile and family background even before the lessons start. This is going to help them form a clear picture about each learner.

But are teachers nowadays in charge of their own class? Who should be in charge of the classroom? The immediate response given by most people is that the teachers should be in charge. All teachers no matter our knowledge of the teaching profession, no matter our teaching experience, we all face this essential issue in the classroom.

Classroom discipline and *classroom management* are issues of major importance that concern all educators. If teachers are equipped with the theoretical background about these two topics, they might be able to handle future incidents in a better way and become more effective inside and outside the borders of the classroom.

We, teachers often use the terms classroom management and classroom discipline interchangeably. However, these two important topics are different in how they are implemented in a classroom setting. *Classroom management* is the duty and responsibility of the teacher (at the beginning of the school year) to provide clear expectations, appropriate teaching procedures for effective language to take place, and rules and routines that encourage positive behaviour in class (Gootman, Marilyn, 2008 and Brooks, 1985). Also Emmer, (1984), Emmer, Sanford, Evertson, Clements, & Martin, 1981; Evertson & Emmer, (1982) point out

the importance of establishing rules and procedures for general classroom behaviour, group work, seat work, transitions and interruptions, use of materials and equipment, and beginning and ending the period or the day. Ideally, the class should establish these rules and procedures through discussion and mutual consent by teacher and students (Glasser, 1969, 1990).

On the other hand, *Classroom discipline* is the student's responsibility and duty to follow these rules and routines that promote appropriate attitude in class, to behave well and to face the consequences of breaking them (Marshall, 2001). According to Ur (2012) "Classroom discipline exists when teacher and students accept and consistently observe a set of rules relating to classroom behavior in order to facilitate smooth and efficient teaching and learning". Charles and Spender (2005) claim that students should learn and be trained on how to behave with dignity, self-control and concern for the others. That also means that they must be approachable and supportive in return. I personally believe that classroom discipline exists when students behave responsibly and with self-esteem during a lesson, focused and without making any unnecessary/irrelevant interruptions, that is, in a way that promotes the flow of the lesson as it was previously planned by the teacher.

Research shows that teachers who have poor or weak classroom management skills will commonly use strict discipline to gain control of their students. Instead of students knowing what is expected of them and responding to procedures and routines, they are worried they might get in trouble. A classroom run by strict discipline might not result in a positive learning environment. If students do not know what is expected of them, the chances of their misbehaviour will increase, resulting in the need to discipline. However, very often and despite our best efforts we, teachers, feel "hopeless" in certain classes or with certain students due to discipline problems.

When teachers find it difficult to handle situations concerning classroom management, discipline problems arise both inside and outside the classroom borders. Brophy & Good (1986) declare that the time a teacher has to take to correct misbehaviour caused by poor classroom management skills results in a lower rate of academic engagement in the classroom. Since the classes have become multicultural and multilingual (mixed classes with learners from various countries and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds), it is difficult to maintain classroom management. I personally believe that teachers should be in charge of their own classroom by creating an optimum teaching and learning environment and by helping their learners receive the best education, develop their character and personality so as to behave in an ideal manner and become attentive learners and responsible citizens of the world. This way both classroom

management and classroom discipline can be easily achieved. It takes however a few things to keep in mind in order to make your classes work like magic. When school starts, teachers should meet the parents of all their learners and discuss about their teaching procedure and the class aims, objectives and targets. Teachers should explain to parents what their expectations from their learners are. Proper communication, collaboration and cooperation with the parents can lead to better management results. During the first month of the school term and for the rest of the school year, it is better for the teachers to continue to review and reinforce management issues. Failing to invest time required to teaching classroom rules and procedures will lead to a lack of accountability and proper learning. All students thrive on structure and a proper framework for learning.

According to Marzano (2003,b) the quality of teacher-student relationships is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management. Building mutual relationship with the students encourages classroom management and discipline.

Teachers should also inform their learners of punishments/penalties or rewards and what they will be used for (Marshall, *ibid*). Failing to develop a systematic set of penalties/punishments results in chaos. When discussing about rules and routines in each classroom, in order to start implementing them, it is advisable for the teachers to find out if there is something they can adopt, change or develop more in order to become more effective classroom managers. Along with well-designed and clearly communicated rules, routines and procedures, the teacher must acknowledge students' behaviour, reinforcing acceptable behaviour and providing negative consequences for unacceptable behaviour (Stage and Quiroz's research, 1997).

Why aren't students attentive in class? I believe that the major discipline problems that teachers face in class today are due to:

- The inability of the school to satisfy the needs of all learners.
- The lack of the learners' socialization.

These factors lead to the "unacceptable learners" who behave badly in class because of:

- Their dislike towards school environment. (Who is to blame for this?).
- The social domination and social limits concerning attitudes and beliefs.
- Their social isolation (some learners come from poor family and cultural backgrounds).

- Negative behaviour of some teachers towards learners with difficulties (literary and social behaviour), and of some learners towards their peers.
- Ignorance of class rules and routines. Teachers need to use assertive skills and demonstrate the same standards of courtesy and self-discipline that they wish their students to observe. Teachers may act spontaneously, but not impulsively; they should not use verbal violence to discipline students even when they are angry. Regulating their own feelings fairly can teach students constructive ways to resolve their own feelings (Ginnot, 1972 cited in Porter, 2006).
- Anxiety in class caused by lots of tests and impartiality of some teachers towards some “weak, timid or difficult learners”.
- The changing of schools: many learners feel uncomfortable when they need to move to other cities or schools, and this can be a negative factor for their progress and their proper behaviour in class.
- The teaching approach. Teachers need to be flexible. Not every approach works for every learner. (Barbetta, Norona, Leong; Bicard, 2005).

Some learners misbehave in class (Kyriakou cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 1996) because:

- ✓ They are bored at school
- ✓ This is the way they were brought up at home.
- ✓ Other peers encourage them to do so.
- ✓ Of lack of social abilities to coexist with the others in class and share experiences and knowledge.
- ✓ They show low self-esteem and low self confidence.
- ✓ They have emotional problems.
- ✓ Thus, learners demonstrate an antisocial behaviour.
- ✓ What is an antisocial behaviour?
- ✓ It is the illegal behaviour of learners who violate legal and social rules (Evans, 1989). Behaving in this way learners seek attention, they desire power and authority or seek revenge showing “passive aggressiveness”.

Learners who demonstrate “passive aggressiveness have the following characteristics:

- They care only about things that interest them
- They deliberately forget their obligations as learners.
- They “accidentally” destroy things in class or at school
- They demonstrate a behaviour irrelevant to the school environment

They never complete their homework (they say they never have enough time, they say they are tired or their homework is too difficult for them).

They react like that because they want to:

- To attract the attention of everyone
- To show their “anger”(Johnson,; Cohen; Brown, Smailes, Bernstein, 1999), "
- Learners’ antisocial behaviour could be prevented if:
 - Curriculum of the individual programme is tailored toward the learners’ needs where particular importance will be given to talented students (music, sports, etc) and attention to weak or shy learners. I know that this is hard to happen especially in large classes with mixed-ability learners. But there is always some hope to manage it when teachers know their students and their abilities well.
 - Teachers’ are trained in topics concerning the cognitive, (Thagard, 2008), emotional and social development of the learners: through various courses, seminars, discussions with colleagues, exchange of views on teaching methodology etc.

Thus, teachers can improve their learners’ behaviour by:

- Establishing rules and routines in class at the beginning of the school year.
- Creating a positive learning environment inside and outside the classroom borders.
- Involving all learners in the learning procedure.
- Dealing with the prime problems before they become real problems in class.
- Everything will work smoothly if the relationship between teacher-learners and learners-learners will be improved.
- This can be realized with:
 - The creation of inner school and classroom regulations

- The inspection of learners during the breaks.
- The seating arrangement in the classroom which will promote pair/group collaboration and cooperation.
- The proper psychological preparation before each lesson. Teachers should educate learners on how to listen to them carefully and be attentive during the lessons. They should also get ready to deal with “particularly” difficult and indifferent or unmotivated learners.

There are various techniques for a better classroom management.

Teachers attract the learners’ interest when:

- They set rules and routines in class with the contribution of all the learners.
- They move around during the lessons.
- They inform the learners about the targets and the teaching procedure of each lesson.
- They become motivators for their learners not only as a source of knowledge but also as a model for the best attitude (When they speak slowly and clearly using only the target language).
- They avoid the school’s principal involvement when a learner misbehaves in class.

In order to maintain classroom management, teachers should wonder:

- How well prepared they are when they enter the classroom
- How fair and impartial they are to all learners (no matter their origin, religion, cultural background, attitude etc.)
- How prepared they are in order to set limits to the learners.
- How much self-control they have got.

To achieve all the above mentioned, teachers should:

- Have basic theoretical knowledge concerning, Educational Psychology, Psychology, Pedagogy, Sociology, (Lambert, and Lambert, 1964) and Philosophy (Snowman, 1997; Kim, 1995).

- Promote task-centred techniques in class
- Be firm and show professionalism in class. This way the atmosphere in class becomes positive and pleasant (Chapman, *ibid*).

Be experienced in order to:

- Form their personal theory of teaching and maintaining a class of learners
- Improve their teaching practice
- Know how a group /a pair works in class

Teachers create a positive atmosphere in class and make the class as fun and challenging as possible when:

- They recognize and encourage the learners' desired behaviour
- They use positive language in order to highlight the desired behaviour
- They know how to praise and reward learners
- They listen to the learners carefully
- They help students develop their intrapersonal, strategic and judgmental skills (Chapman, *ibid*).
- They learn to be caring teachers who work with, rather than against their students.
- They replace barriers to build mutual relationships with their students (Nelsen, Lott, and Glenn, *ibid*).
- Produce carefully planned interesting, challenging and motivating lessons.
- Take a personal interest in each student in the class. As McCombs and Whisler (1997) note, all students appreciate personal attention from the teacher. Although busy teachers do not have the time for extensive interaction with all students, some teacher actions can communicate personal interest and concern without taking up much time.

I personally believe that in this complex world, it takes more than a good school to educate students. And it takes more than a good home. It takes these two major educational institutions working together inside and outside the borders of the classroom. Do you agree that an effective teachers-learners, learners-teachers, learners-learners, teachers-parents and learners-parents communication contributes to a successful and fruitful teaching procedure?

It is essential to realize that teachers feel in close contact with their learners, but they stand above them. An effective communication ensures an effective teaching and consequently an effective learning outcome of the learning process! What do you think?

Thus, for effective communication with students:

- ✓ Before lessons start, teachers should be informed about the learner population, their files (the particularities of each group of learners, the special characteristics of each class: Which learners face learning difficulties, which learners are difficult to teach or which learners are disinterested or unmotivated etc).
- ✓ Teachers should try to gain confidence of their learners and their parents (Schussler, 2003 cited in Graham-Clay S, 2005).
- ✓ Teachers should have clear objectives, aims and teaching methodology trying to assist all learners towards English language learning by using the target language and by communicating in a way that relates to the age and interests of the learners. School communication practices should involve families in the education process.
- ✓ It is advisable for teachers to implement a Needs Analysis Questionnaire in class which will help them find out about the interests of their learners so they can prepare their own teaching material accordingly.
- ✓ It is essential to instill Love in learning and to establish a trustful relation between the learners and their school. It is important to report that understanding how children of different ages communicate and what they like to talk about is crucial for rewarding interaction with them.
- ✓ Caspe (2003) suggests that teacher preparation and professional development programmes should actively promote the development of communication skills for teachers.

Avenues of Communication

Communication begins with a welcome sign when the parents first enter the school building (Chambers, 1998). Always welcome signs and a smile from the part of the teachers reflect the range of language spoken in the school community and create an even friendlier and inviting atmosphere (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004). Always a “friendly” school environment” reflects how highly communication with parents is valued by school staff (Chambers, *ibid*).

Teachers should actively incorporate strategies to maximize sharing information with parents and students as well. They should also:

- ✓ Give clear information about the aims/objectives of their teaching and their expectations from the learners.
- ✓ Make frequent telephone calls to parents (it is better to report positive comments first about their children’s progress and then move on with negative remarks).

- ✓ Establish a friendly-communication with parents (when parents visit the school).
- ✓ Arrange parent-teacher conferences and meeting dates collaborating with other colleagues of the school and the headmaster.
- ✓ Report various school-based community activities and focus on the ones their children participate in.
- ✓ Provide written communication (*one way communication*) (Williams & Cartledge, 1997 cited in Graham-Clay *ibid*). This type of communication can be achieved with the use of:

(a) Newsletters in order to share written information with a parent community.

(b) School-to-home notebooks. Many teachers use daily communication books to share information with parents, particularly for learners who have special learning needs. (Davern, 2004; Williams & Cartledge, 1997 cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*).

(c) Frequent progress report cards and email-messages to parents which should be clear and easy to understand. These records or messages should provide an analysis of academic development across content areas, information about student strengths and learning style, an assessment of the learner's social development, specific goals for the student to work on, and associated suggestions for the parent (Aronson, 1995 cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*).

Communication can also be: A Two-Way Communication:

A Two-way communication occurs when teachers and parents dialogue together developing trust, a mutuality of concern, and an appreciation of contrasting perspectives" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004 cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*).

Also traditional occasions for dialogues are thoughtful and well-planned conferences. Effective parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity to create a successful partnership, but they may be anxiety provoking for both teachers and parents alike (Minke & Anderson, 2003 cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*). Price and Marsh (1985, cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*) encourage teachers to select an appropriate meeting time and location, advise participants in advance, review the learner file in advance, develop a clear purpose for the meeting, and identify information to be discussed including positive aspects of the learner's performance.

Lastly, teachers are encouraged to follow-up the meeting by preparing a written conference summary in line with school board policies. Effective parent-teacher conferences also require important interpersonal skills on the part of the teacher. Appropriate open- and closed-ended questions also help gather information and seek parental input. Also use of everyday language and a non-threatening tone encourages conversation (Evans, 2004; Perl, 1995; Studer, 1994, cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*). Parents are not looking for a cold, professional approach from school staff. Rather, teachers who develop a “personal touch” in their communication style achieve enhanced school relationships. Similarly, teachers need to convey a value for the “authority and wisdom” of parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2004 cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*).

Barriers to Communication

According to Graham-Clay (*ibid*), barriers that hinder good communication between educators and parents exist at several levels:

- At a societal level, Brandt (1998, cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*) notes that the public in general is becoming increasingly estranged from state schools which are frequently the target of negative reports. Taffel, (2001 cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*) notes that many parents today feel unsupported, misunderstood, and overwhelmed by the demands placed on them. To address these barriers, educators should appreciate that every positive interchange will serve to increase trust and build stronger relationships, not only with individual parents, but ultimately with the broader community as well.
- Cultural differences can also create significant communication challenges if teachers use “their own cultural lenses” to interact with culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Colombo, 2004, cited in Graham-Clay: *ibid*). To address this potential disconnect, teachers need to seek out information to understand the cultural and linguistic diversity reflected in the families of their students (Lai & Ishiyama, *ibid*). Similarly, teachers can incorporate the faces of diversity into children’s literature in the classroom (Molland, 2004, cited in Graham-Clay, *ibid*).
- Economic and time constraints may also be primary obstacles to effective communication (Finders & Lewis, 1994).
- Lack of technology also limits communication opportunities for many families. Teachers should never assume that students have access to technology at home (Ramirez, 2001). Many teachers and parents are still uncomfortable with the use of technology. Thus, Ramirez (*ibid*)

noted that “paper-based” communication should still have a fundamental place in the overall communication strategy of the school, despite extensive technology use.

- Finally, a significant barrier may be the still traditional 5-10 minute parent conference that offers little time for meaningful communication regarding a learner’s academic and social progress. The parent-teacher meeting can become a more effective interchange when parents feel invited and encouraged to attend well planned conferences, and when teachers have identified the main points to be discussed with samples of the learner’s work at hand (Stevens & Tollafeld, 2003).

Conclusion

Successful teaching outcome is achieved when teachers and learners cooperate well. This is mainly due to an effective classroom management. Managing a classroom refers to the actions teachers need to take in order to maintain order in the classroom which enables learning to take place. It is essential for teachers to decide in advance how they wish their learners to behave and then make these expectations crystal clear to them and to their parents. Not having well-defined rules or procedures leads to chaos in the classroom. Teachers have the authority and they are in the charge of the classroom. The best method concerning classroom management is the establishment of rules and routines when the school year starts. Also the procedures should be taught as deliberately and thoroughly as academic content.

Effective communication is essential to creating strong school-home partnerships and to increasing parental involvement. Just as teachers are skilled in the art of teaching, they also require knowledge and skills to effectively communicate with their parent community (Graham-Clay, *ibid*). Teachers should strive to use a variety of effective strategies to make communication with parents as informative and interactive as possible, incorporating new communication methods and yet retaining the human touch. Every communication exchange, regardless of format, should reflect a thoughtful, planned approach and should be viewed as an opportunity for teachers to promote parent partnerships and, ultimately, to support student learning. (Graham-Clay, *ibid*).

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University Students with Disabilities and ELT

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Abstract

Contemporary society is under constant pressure to provide people with disabilities with equal opportunities. Logically, the first step in that direction implies providing them with access to all levels of education. At first glance, this task seems quite simple, nevertheless a closer look at the core of this issue reveals the immensity and complexity of the matter. First and foremost, there is a wide range of physical and mental disabilities. In addition, their manifestations could vary from mild to extremely severe ones. This immediately raises a series of contentious issues. Are mainstream EFL teachers adequately prepared to deal with such a great challenge? Is it really possible to teach students with disabilities alongside with regular students? Is it possible to turn the regular classroom into equally conducive environment for all types of students? This paper examines the current state of affairs regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the EFL academic courses in the Republic of Macedonia. The findings brought to the forefront rest on interviews with university teachers of English and students of English who agreed to share their experiences and viewpoints regarding this issue.

Keywords: students, disabilities, tertiary education

Introduction

In this paper we tackle a very sensitive but currently extremely relevant topic – the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education. Although instigated and upheld by adequate legislation globally, still it seems that even the most developed and advanced societies have a long way to go to fully materialize this, unquestionably, very noble goal set for the benefit of all.

As the bottom line of this study is to discuss the-state-of-art of inclusive education at tertiary level in the Republic of Macedonia, its scope will be gradually narrowed down from discussing the legally binding character of the inclusion, to what the inclusion actually involves, and what

obstacles higher education providers need to overcome to successfully meet the requirements stipulated by law. Finally, we turn our attention to a specific segment of higher education – the inclusion of disabled students in the context of students majoring in the English language and literature. The findings presented here have been obtained by means of conducting questionnaires aimed at eliciting both EFL teachers and regular university students' opinions regarding inclusive education.

Theoretical background

Legislation on inclusive education

Since the turn of the new century, more and more modern societies seem to have recognized the need of raising the general awareness of people that individuals with disabilities, or as some prefer to call them – people with special needs, are entitled to the same rights as the people without disabilities. This implies that communities are increasingly committed to finding ways to present people with disabilities with equal opportunities and conditions so that they could realize their full potential, and, thus, become useful members of society.

Quality education is definitely one of the main precursors of quality life. Tertiary education is clearly critical for young disabled people in the construction of their identity and in obtaining qualifications which can have a major impact on their future labor market prospects.

The integration of students with disabilities into the higher education has been undertaken by numerous countries all over the world. They have all primarily opted for introducing changes in their legislation so as to ensure that making explicit mention of this category of students in the legal documents will set the stage for adequately catering for their needs.

Thus, in the USA, for instance, the crucial breakthroughs for educational opportunity for students with disabilities came with the enactment of two pieces of federal legislation. The first is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities in any program receiving federal funds, including education. The second is the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which mandates a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. These two laws were powerfully reinforced by the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination in employment, public services, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications against anyone who has a disability (Wolanin and Steele, 2004).

In the same vein, in the UK, the Equality Act which was passed in 2010 protects people from discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, etc. The Equality Act prohibits a school or other education provider from treating disabled students unfavourably. In fact, an education provider has a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure disabled students are not discriminated against. These changes could include providing extra support and aids (like specialist teachers or equipment). As to Higher Education, the Equality Act states that all universities and higher education colleges should have a person in charge of disability issues that disabled students can talk to about the support they need to receive.

The Republic of Macedonia has followed in the same footsteps as well. The development of the National Strategy on Achieving Equal Rights for the Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Macedonia rests on European and national legislation and on the Standard Rules for Equalization of the Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Accordingly, the inclusion and the equal treatment of people with special needs in education are stipulated in the Laws on Primary, Secondary and Higher Education. According to the Laws on Primary and Secondary education, students with disabilities, depending on the form and degree of disability, can either study in special schools for disabled children, or they can study in special classes within regular schools and, in some cases, they can even study alongside with regular students. The Law on Higher Education, on the other hand, solely outlines the obligation of the University units to provide special conditions for the realization of the studies of this category of students and gives them free hands to independently regulate these matters.

If further expanded, this research will, undoubtedly, confirm the fact that the legislation upholding "the inclusion of the disabled" has indeed become a global phenomenon and a common practice.

What does 'the inclusion' encompass?

Considering the fact that the inclusion of people with disabilities in the education process is clearly and unambiguously laid out in laws and in legally binding documents, and that the outcome of the inclusion is expected to be favorable and beneficial not only for the people with special needs but for society at large, one might believe that its materialization can in effect occur quite easily and quickly. On the contrary, a closer look at this intricate issue almost immediately reveals both its immensity and complexity. Providing equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities, especially at tertiary level, does not pertain only to providing wheelchair-friendly routes around university buildings and campuses. In fact, that is

only one of the many possible starting points. The actual inclusion is extraordinarily multifarious and requires a very careful deliberation and planning of so many different aspects simultaneously.

What comes in particularly handy in that context is the fact that the inclusion of the disabled students has attracted the attention of many researchers who have approached the phenomenon from many different perspectives. In fact, a quick literature overview discloses that many researchers are essentially committed to identifying the stumbling blocks which prevent the complete materialization of the inclusion from taking place. Understandably, some of them are mainly concerned with finding pragmatic and viable solutions which can effectively alleviate the inclusion process itself.

Thus, in the UK, Fuller et. al (2007) in *Barriers to Learning: a systematic study of the experience of disabled students in one university* present the findings from a survey of self-reported disabled students in a single UK higher education institution. This article in fact reports both statistical data about the quality and variety of students' experience of learning as well as their qualitative comments about learning and assessment. The analysis of the survey points to the need for providing parity and flexibility as well as staff development in making the 'reasonable adjustments' required by disability legislation. Hollowey's (2010) study, *The Experience of Higher Education from the Perspective of Disabled Students*, also examines the perspective of disabled students at a university in the United Kingdom, and makes recommendations for policy and practice. Hollowey aims at identifying *factors which create a positive experience* for disabled students, but he also does not exclude those *which effect discriminatory practice and marginalization* as well. He discusses the implications of his findings significant for policy and practice, concluding that there are some requirements to be met: central policy which would support the philosophy of an accessible learning environment for all students; central co-ordination to implement the policy with practical guidelines to/for departments; ongoing monitoring and evaluation procedures which would involve disabled students and staff training.

Vikerman and Blundell (2010) also address this issue in their article titled *Hearing the voices of disabled students in higher education*. Their study reports the findings of disabled students' experiences and views of transition from induction through to employability within one HE institution. The study concludes that there is still much work to be done in leveling HE experiences for disabled students. More importantly, this study identifies five key issues to be addressed in order to enable access and entitlement to HE: pre-course induction support; commitment by HE institutions to facilitating barrier free curricula; consultations with disabled

students; institutional commitment to develop support services; and embedding of personal development planning.

Very positive signals are emitted by Sachs and Schreuer's study *Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: Performance and participation in student's experiences*, (2011), which looks into the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education in Israel. Surprisingly enough, their findings suggest that – in terms of academic performance, these students do not lag considerably behind peer students without disabilities. They attribute that to the fact that these students invest much more time to meet the demands of their studies at the expense of extra-curricular and social activities and networking. Nevertheless, they conclude that higher education institutes still have a long way to go to reduce the gap in social inclusion of students with disabilities and to adjust academic standards for their needs.

With regard to USA HE, Marshak et al. (2010) in *Exploring Barriers to College Student Use of Disability Services and Accommodations* draw attention to the fact that – despite the federal legislation requirements that colleges and universities should provide equal access and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, many students still do not fully avail themselves of college disability services and accommodations. In this qualitative study five major barriers to why some students might not seek-out or more fully utilize disability services and accommodations in post-secondary education were identified: (a) identity issues; (b) desires to avoid negative social reactions; (c) insufficient knowledge; (d) perceived quality and usefulness of services; and (e) negative experiences with faculty.

Numerous other studies, undoubtedly, have made invaluable contributions to disclosing all relevant aspects related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in education and higher education in particular. Nevertheless, all these research attempts unquestionably lead to one major general conclusion – despite the progress made, university schooling of the disabled on a global level still faces numerous serious challenges ahead. The areas in need of special attention and consideration in this context, as Tinklin et al. (2004) suggest, are teaching and learning of disabled students, monitoring and evaluation of disabled students as well as their socializing as an equally valuable segment of academic life and experience. The need for urgent teaching staff development is another aspect which should under no circumstances be overlooked if we aim at quality tertiary education in which teachers are adequately prepared to act professionally in a variety of situations related to students' disabilities.

Evidently, all these are the major pillars supporting the structure of tertiary education which, now that there is such a pressing need to include disabled students as equal stakeholders in higher education, need to be seriously reconsidered and readjusted. The undertaking of such a

huge and significant feat puts higher education in front of a major test. In order to become much more appreciative of new flexible policies and strategies, modifications need to be introduced to the entire 'academic mindset', or – as Dhawan (2005) underlines, *flexible approaches in education are needed to respond to the diverse abilities and needs of all learners, but if the curricula and teaching methods are rigid and there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials, teachers will feel constrained in fulfilling their responsibility.*

The versatility of students' disabilities

Having established the fact that HE institutions should get accustomed to embracing changes and to subjecting their structure and organization to a complete overhaul, several other issues of paramount importance need to be brought to the forefront.

One of these is the broad array of students' physical and mental disabilities which poses a particularly serious challenge to the process of inclusion. Students might suffer from learning disabilities, visual impairments, auditory impairments, physical disabilities, behavioral disabilities, social/emotional disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders or even cognitive developmental delay. Additionally, the manifestation of the different disabilities normally can vary considerably from person to person. In some students the symptoms of the disabilities can be mild but in others they can be quite severe. Furthermore, as practice has shown so far, what sometimes works for one student with a particular type of disability will not necessarily work for another student with the same type of disability in the same context. This realization particularly accentuates the exigency of setting as flexible standards as possible to successfully accommodate a truly broad spectrum of students.

The process of inclusion can be especially challenging and trying when disabled students suffer from multiple disabilities simultaneously as the education providers would have to figure out ways to genuinely cater for these students' needs as well. What they should also bear in mind in creating their policies is that sometimes a student's disability is not easily discernible, thus some students keep silent about their disabilities for fear of not being accepted, which – without doubt, considerably undermines their chances of success.

Finally, the type of disability should be very carefully gauged against the nature of the university study the student is embarking on. Establishing a correlation of this type imposes itself as one huge determining factor which makes the difference between successful completion of the studies and failing to do so. In other words, not every university study is completely compatible with every type of disability, in the sense that the disability could really present an insurmountable obstacle to studying and, later – after graduation, to working in a

particular field. Thus, for instance, it would be inconceivable for university studies which prepare future teaching professionals to accommodate students with speech impediments, serious physical impairments (deafness, muteness and blindness) or some severe mental disability. This implies that in building their inclusion policy, education providers should mandatorily specify what disabilities would not be a complete hurdle for completing a particular type of university education.

Disabled students and ELT

Although a lot of research has been conducted on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general, to the best of our knowledge, not much has been written about the inclusion of these students in the context of English language learning.

Padurean's (2014) quite recent study is obviously one of the few studies which tackle this topic. Padurean conducted her research in Romania and shed some very favorable light on teaching English Language to children with special educational needs by examining the stance of almost all stakeholders involved – students with disabilities, students without disabilities, their parents and their teachers. Some of the insights brought to the surface in that respect are completely unexpected and worth considering. Namely, unlike the teachers and parents who are almost unanimous that students with disabilities should not study alongside students without disabilities as their inclusion mainly hampers the progress of the regular students, the students agree that their interaction and cooperation in the classroom is mutually beneficial and enlightening. Hence, Padurean concludes that “English can be taught to children with special educational needs without placing them in special schools. Learning a new language opens their minds, helps them create cognitive relations, organizes their mind and brings satisfaction. English teachers should adapt their lessons to children with special educational needs by using interactive methods and engaging them in classroom activities as much as possible. These methods are beneficial for regular students too, because they are challenging and they favor communication and interaction.”

Bishaw (2012) also deals with the inclusion of disabled students in the context of English language teaching and purports that the inclusion will be effective if teachers are able to respond to a wider range of needs and this could be achieved through greater differentiation of tasks and materials, which in turn, requires training teachers to implement inclusive teaching effectively. In other words, what Bishaw suggests is that EL teachers have to vary their method of teaching to meet different learning styles such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic type of learners. In training EL teachers, special attention should also be given to enabling teachers to adapt the

teaching materials and design appropriate activities which would make students with disabilities actively involved in the lesson. Teachers, according to Bishaw, should also be provided with training on how to communicate with different types of disabled learners. He points out that other supporting materials and technological devices should also be available to facilitate the process of teaching and learning.

Malanek (2014)⁵, on the other hand, approaches this issue in a very pragmatic way and offers some practical ideas and tips, which – if incorporated into the ESL classroom, would neither disrupt the other students nor draw attention to the disabled ones only. In addition, according to Malanek teachers should focus on the learners' strengths and praise them. They should also prepare a wide range of activities in each class which incorporate different learner styles e.g. visual, interpersonal, intrapersonal, kinesthetic. Then, they should give instructions in different formats e.g. orally and written, and they should break them down and simplify them. Students should be given enough time to process the instructions and task information, etc.

Evidently, all these findings and insights into studying EFL at tertiary level in the context of inclusive education are rather general and offer a broad perspective of the matter. Future studies should step out with more precise delineation of all the aspects of the issue and, consequently, with concrete and reasonable solutions to all dilemmas and challenges.

Disabled Students in ELT setting in Macedonian Tertiary Education

Research methodology

In this section of the study the focus is on students with disabilities in the context of studying English Language and Literature at state Universities in the Republic of Macedonia. We set out to confirm our initial hypothesis that university EFL teachers in Macedonia have not been sufficiently exposed to this issue and that they lack in training corresponding to deal with the inclusion process adequately. Furthermore, we were interested in the students' point of view as well since the inclusion process in their case embeds studying alongside with students with disabilities.

Both EL teachers and university students without disability who major in English were interviewed by means of short questionnaires.

5 <http://elt-connect.com/learning-disabilities-esl-classroom/>

The teacher's questionnaire included the following questions:

1. Do higher education EFL teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities and to integrate these students into the EFL teaching process successfully?
2. Is it possible to teach students with disabilities alongside with regular university students without impeding the progress of regular students?
3. Is it possible to successfully turn the regular classroom into an equally conducive environment for all types of students including the ones with disabilities?
4. Is it possible for EFL teachers to apply equally fair and objective assessment standards for both students with and without disabilities?
5. In your teaching experience so far, have you ever worked with students with disabilities?

Similarly, the students' questionnaire was composed of the following questions:

1. Is it possible to study alongside with students with disabilities?
2. Can the regular classroom be successfully turned into equally conducive environment for all types of students including the ones with disabilities?
3. Is it possible for EFL teachers to apply equally fair and objective assessment standards both for students with and without disabilities?
4. Have you ever studied alongside with students with disabilities?
If yes, was your experience positive or negative? Why?
5. Would you be willing to help a fellow student with disability learn a particular subject matter?

Results and discussion

University EFL teachers from all over the country were invited to take part in the survey – in most cases via email. Unfortunately, not all of them responded. The lack of response from some of the teachers was most probably due to the fact that the questionnaires were sent out at the beginning of the fall semester – a period of the academic year when they are busy conducting the exam session alongside preparing themselves for the new semester. Another explanation for the lack of response may be that the research topic did not strike them as interesting, relevant or familiar enough. Thus, only 15 (fifteen) teachers emailed back their filled-in version of the questionnaire. Despite this initial setback, the immensely positive outcome when conducting this research was that there were responses from representative of each of the state universities.

The majority of the interviewed EFL teachers, as expected, stated that they had had no experience teaching disabled students, which is completely in line with the students' answers discussed further down. Only a couple of teachers did confirm to have worked with children with special needs but they all added that their experience was mainly positive as their students were not with severe forms of disabilities. They singled out stuttering, for instance, and further explained that this disability was easily overcome and did not affect the actual outcome owing to students' huge enthusiasm and hard work.

The notion that the majority of the teachers have not been in a position to deal with inclusive education merely points to the fact that the inclusion of disabled students in tertiary education is still pretty much work in progress in the higher education setting.

The teachers were unanimous that they had neither had formal training within their formal university education nor knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities. One of them actually mentioned that this topic was only scantily touched on within the general courses of pedagogy and psychology, which is, in any case, far from enough. What makes things even worse, perhaps, as some of them pointed out, is that “... *EFL teachers have never had any opportunities to attend any training, seminars and workshops related to inclusive education...*” in the course of their teaching career either.

The interviewed EFL teachers were not in agreement when it came to their point of view regarding questions two, three and four. Namely, some expressed their belief that teaching students with disabilities together with regular students was impossible. Some were more tentative and claimed that it all depended on the type of disability, adding additional explanation which said: *If a student has a hearing impairment that the teacher can assist the student by “speaking more loudly than usual, using visual prompts and aids, presentations and handouts more often, but if a student suffers from a mental disability, that could only disrupt the normal flow of the teaching process and cause some “very awkward and uncomfortable situations” to emerge. Nevertheless, some of the teachers were confident that with “... adequate and proper training...” EFL teachers could acquire all the necessary knowledge and skills which would assist them in handling the process of inclusion efficiently.*

Similarly, their opinions were divided when it came to turning the regular classroom into an equally conducive learning environment for all students. The proponents of the negative stance purported that without suitable financial aid and support directed at modernizing considerably the traditional teaching and learning space with various assistive technical gadgets, it would literally be impossible and unreasonable to expect it to happen. The other lot tended to believe that all it took to completely transform the traditional classroom was teachers' good will and

determination which – in the long run, should surely be based on adequate training and acquisition of certain know-hows in the working context of teaching students with disabilities. Several of the teachers were evidently skeptical and brought the degree of the disability to the fore once again: ... *no matter what changes we introduce in the classroom and what teaching techniques we use, we would not find them much helpful in the case of advanced mental impairment, for example.*

With respect to the equally fair assessment standards, the teachers did not have a common ground. Half of them shared the opinion that applying the same standards and assessment criteria might be extremely difficult in some disability cases, as it would be certainly done to the disadvantage of the disabled students. One of the respondents very wittily depicted the impossibility of equally fair assessment by actually comparing it to the completely inconceivable and unacceptable competition between Paralympic games athletes and Olympic athletes. Only few of the teacher took a positive stance and claimed that assessment could be equally fair and objective if teachers developed and applied two completely different assessment systems, one for the disabled students and one for the non-disabled.

The student's questionnaire, on the other hand, was distributed among thirty students of English at the Faculty of Education in Bitola. Following the analysis of their answers what becomes immediately obvious is that, except for few respondents, students in general haven't had any experience in studying alongside disabled peers. One of those students who stated that they had had such an experience described the experience as unfavorable as the disabled student who was in their class disrupted the classes very frequently and “made everybody very upset while trying to help him”, whereas the other described the experience as “mainly positive and beneficial for all”.

The fact that the majority of the interviewed students had attended different local and regional high-schools in various parts of R. Macedonia, but had never been exposed to the inclusion process nor had any first-hand experience of the kind in their education, is rather indicative about the extent to which the inclusion of disabled students is materialized, or perhaps even more appropriately, not materialized in our society at large. Another immediately noticeable finding is that all of the interviewed students showed unanimous agreement and willingness to be of help to a disabled peer as “*all have equal rights*”, “*it is a natural and human thing to do*” and “*all deserve equal opportunities*”.

Students' opinions were divided when it came to the first, second, and third question. In other words, they were not all confident that studying alongside disabled students was always and in all cases possible and favorable for all. Some of them even stated that depending on the

disability, sometimes the inclusion could even have a detrimental effect on regular students as the entire tempo of class activities might be significantly “... *slowed down*...”. They expressed the same concerns when it came to using the regular classroom to accommodate students with disabilities along with those without disabilities. The disabled students again – depending on the type of disability, might have “*some special needs*” and consequently “*needs for special conditions to be provided for them*”, according to the words of the interviewed students. While some of the interviewed students were confident that their teachers could and would find ways to objectively assess both disabled students' knowledge and theirs, some voiced their concerns that objectivity and applying 'the same yardstick' in this situation would be practically impossible. EFL teachers, they explained, might need “... *to lower the standards for the disabled*...” and “... *maintain the high academic standards for the rest*...” despite the fact they will all end up getting diploma on the same qualifications at the end.

Conclusion

Inclusive education was in the focus of this paper. This aspect of education although legally covered and supported by various regulations and laws in many different countries, including the Republic of Macedonia, is still – as numerous studies show, extremely complex and in need of a very delicate and well thought-out approach in the implementation of all theoretical solutions into practice.

More precisely, the accent of our research was on inclusive education in the framework of tertiary education, i.e. in the context of majoring in the English language and literature in R. Macedonia.

A questionnaire conducted among university students and teachers of English reveals the state-of-the art of inclusive education in R. Macedonia. Despite the fact that these are only preliminary results, based on a study with a limited scope and we would like to avoid the pitfall of making any overhasty and unfounded generalizations, still we deem it rather safe to state the inclusion of students with disabilities at this stage in the Republic of Macedonia is perhaps only at its inception.

Namely, even though a much larger and more comprehensive study is needed to come to any firm and inescapable conclusions, yet it seems that both teachers and students lack in experience of working and studying, respectively, with disabled students. In addition to that, EFL teachers are particularly concerned about the fact that they have never received any form of formal education or training to work with students with disabilities.

As to the other relevant aspects tackled in this study – handling mixed classes i.e. classes consisting of both students with and without disabilities, assessment standards, and classroom conditions, it is also strikingly evident that, generally speaking, both teachers and students are undecided. Their awareness of the humane and moral aspect of the inclusion does not diminish their concerns about the practical implementation of the inclusion. In fact, on the basis of both teachers and students' answers, our general impression is that some disabilities, especially physical impairments, do not present a major impediment to studying English at tertiary level, but severe mental disabilities, for instance, cannot be permissible in such a context as they would require completely different conditions and treatment /teaching approach.

Finally, the main conclusion which can be drawn on the basis of the overview of the recent research on inclusive education within all levels of education especially at tertiary level, is that the inclusion is a global phenomenon which develops slowly but steadily, a phenomenon the occurrence of which has not been circumvented in the Republic of Macedonia as well, and the application of which can solely be based on the principle of flexibility. Training teachers to accept be as tolerant as possible; preparing flexibility-based curricula; accepting flexible assessment standards, etc. are at the core of a successful implementation of the inclusion of students with disabilities in higher education in general, including the context of studying and teaching English as a foreign language.

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ELT education – are we up for the European ELT market?

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Abstract

The poor international competitiveness and the internationally unverified language competences of the English language teaching staff educated in the Republic of Macedonia supposedly impose the need to revise the framework of higher education requirements for this profession and educational programs implemented by higher education institutions in the first place, as well as the professionalization of already existing staff. In this process, the main challenge resides in raising the operational level and standardization of the profession, followed by harmonization of national descriptors with the Common European Framework of Languages.

Key words: *ELT, Modern English Language, educational programs levelling*

„At any point in language teaching history there are always items of faith which nobody questions...“

Guy Cook

In the context of existing technology and the extent of today's communication, it is unnecessary to speak about the importance of English in the world. This tendency, except for the last thirty years with the emergence and the flickering development of the Internet, has been recognized since the state's mere beginnings in the R. Macedonia.

Having only the Department of English Language and Literature at the state university in the last century kept things quite simple – one higher education institution with limited number of options: staff, students, native speakers, and funds; limited options for students to stay in English speaking countries in order to practice and upgrade their proficiency in the language.

The preset proficiency levels reached up to C1 (CEFR), but realistically, the average operational level was about B2⁶⁷.

Today in R. Macedonia there are several higher education institutions offering educational programs for future English language teachers. With the existence of English as subject (course) in primary, secondary and tertiary education, the need for such staff is obvious, but the demand, which was particularly rising 10-15 years ago, failed to maintain the level due to the influence of various factors. One of these factors is the lack of competitiveness of Macedonian English language teachers on the international labor market. At first glance, the reasons for such “failure” are in the classical dogma that there is no better teacher for a particular language than a native speaker of that language. We will leave this debate for a further occasion because the purpose of our research is another. The main reason for the inability of Macedonian English language teachers to teach in other countries is the lack of international recognition of Macedonian English language teaching programs’ diplomas. The reasons of this reality are of a various nature, the most important ones (supposedly) including international accreditation of the ELT programs and vague and non-formal harmonization with the CEFR levels required for ELT program in the EU⁸.

For the purpose of this paper, we set out to do the following:

1. Obtain an approximate view on predefined proficiency levels of students – we have conducted interviews with MEL⁹ instructors from private universities’ ELT programs in Macedonia. Our goal in this paper is to examine higher education ELT MEL practitioners’ view on the realistic situation with adherence to CEFR levels and whether students do reach the expected predefined proficiency levels with the given class hours and (non)existence of prerequisite entry level.
2. Review the ELT requirements of accreditation organizations in the EU for accrediting an ELT program specifically

⁶ Personal unofficial view of foreign native speakers language instructors

⁷ “Since 2012 France requires primary and secondary teachers to obtain a certificate¹⁴⁷ which proves that the teacher masters a modern foreign language at level B2 of the CEFR” – as mentioned in the Study “The implementation of CEFR in European Education Systems”

⁸ MoE’s view, as presented by the higher education official at the workgroup meeting for harmonization of national ELT programs and standardization levelling of language proficiency requirements (2015/2016, British Council Skopje)

⁹ Modern English Language

1. Case study – interviews with MEL instructors

MEL instructor 1:

“During the creation of our MEL levels, we relied mostly on the CEFR levels and the given literature supporting them. Of course, most of the text books are actually specially designed for preparation of international EL exams, like the Cambridge Assessment ones – FCE and CAE. The expected level of high school EL courses in gymnasiums in the fourth year completes the cycle with FCE, but since we doubted that most of the children reach that level, we have dedicated the ELT program study year 1 to the FCE level (B2), and within the next two years students are supposed to master the C1 level. This is sometimes very difficult to achieve because of the limited number of MEL classes (as defined by requirements of domestic and foreign accreditations of the school and university) and the lack of entry test producing mixed ability groups. Up to now, there has been no correlation between a given high school, generation, ethnicity or other factors with students’ levels – they are very individual for individual students. Mostly productive has shown to be executing individual extra assignments with students to improve their weaknesses. The native speaker factor is locally present, but more emphasis should be put on the chances for students to travel and stay in an English speaking country for at least 6 months to improve their communication skills.”

MEL instructor 2:

“We devote special attention to developing language skills separately, although some of the skills are largely neglected/different from the English language tradition, e.g. writing. Macedonian writing follows the Slavic languages culture, where a lot is written, but little is conveyed due to the use of a lot of figures of speech, evasion of direct expression of crucial topics and general use of a number of unnecessary words. Even though we have tried to foster writing by the introduction of special English writing courses, not much has been achieved in the line of writing though with students.”

MEL instructor 3:

“From my international experience with teacher’s conferences, I can say that the EL proficiency of our ELT staff in schools and ELT students is more or less the same. Macedonian EL teachers can be quite competitive on the international labor market if our teachers in-training have the right opportunities and the ELT programs have the necessary accreditations on board.”

2. Case study 2 - Research of EU accredited ELT programs

We have investigated the offer of EU accreditations given out to EU ELT programs to find out their requirements. Since most of them cover multiple disciplines, the general criteria go in the same line for all higher education institutions. ENQA¹⁰ accredits associations for accrediting higher education programs, and they have translated their Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in quite a range of languages, including EU countries (such as Bulgarian and Croatian), non-EU countries (Albanian and Bosnian) as well as non-European countries (Japanese). AQAS¹¹ being one of ENQA's accredited associations, lists on its website that they have so far accredited two ELT programs in Europe – one in Moldova and one in Cyprus. By careful and in-depth examination of their accreditation reports officially available on the AQAS website, we have extracted the following paragraphs concerning proficiency levels/MEL and language in general:

The following points relevant for our discussion are taken directly from the accreditation report for the ELT program in Moldova¹²:

- The target level for English on the programme level must be defined clearly, e.g. by referring to the “Common European Framework for Languages” (p.1)
- The faculty should extend the amount of English practice courses and the English classes should be divided according to the level of proficiency. In addition, extra-curricular activities in English should be offered. (p.2)
- According to the mentioned regulations the admission is given based on a contest. The candidate selection happens according to their school marks and field abilities in the chosen professional field. (p.5)
- The faculty should extend the amount of English practice courses and the English classes should be divided according to the level of the students' English proficiency. In addition, extra-curricular activities in English should be offered (p. 7)
- The students complained that their ability to speak English is limited due to the fact that they learn Romanian, Russian and French in schools and that particularly the English classes in the

¹⁰ European Association for Quality Assurance, <http://www.enqa.eu>

¹¹ Agentur für Qualitätssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengängen, www.aqas.eu

¹² Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS on the study programme “Romanian Language and literature and English Language” (B.Ed.) offered by Alecu Russo Bălți State University/Moldova

first year of study do not support the improvement of skills properly. The panel of experts recommends including more oral activities in the English language classes. The development of pronunciation skills should be enhanced by using computer-based technology such as *Praat* (freely available scientific software package for the analysis of speech) or *Audacity* (free open source digital audio editor and recording software application) in the phonetics classes (p.7)

- From the experts' perspective, it is highly important for future teachers to develop a strong personality. That is why the experts recommend integrating more student-centred delivery methods in the programme in a way that the students are empowered in class to be more self-confident and to develop more learner autonomy (p.8)

- The target level for English must be clearly defined for each module, e.g. by referring to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (**Finding 8d**). The descriptions used hitherto are not comprehensible. (p.8)

- The structure the programme allows for international student mobility and contains well defined instruments to promote international mobility (ECTS, recognition of credits from abroad, diploma supplements, and learning agreements.) (p.8)

Relevant points from the ELT program in Cyprus¹³:

- the panel believes that further improvements could be reached if the programme could provide a larger variety of elective courses that are specifically geared towards the practicalities of (English) language teaching, thus providing an even better preparation for the 'reality in the classrooms' (p.4)

- On the level of the profile and general setup of the programme the panel of experts recognizes that the ELT department yet faces challenges to promote student exchange to US-American and British universities.... At the same time the panel believes that future English teachers should be provided with opportunities and incentives to study in an English-speaking country, immersing themselves in the English language as well as in Anglophone cultures. (p.4)

- It became obvious in the discussions with the staff of the programme that the importance of a student experience in an English speaking country is not disputed and that on an individual level students are supported once they show interest. These activities should be strengthened in

¹³ Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS, On the degree programme „English Language Teaching“ (B.A.) at the Eastern Mediterranean University (Turkish Republic North Cyprus)

the future and developed to short- to long-term strategies to foster student mobility to English-speaking countries. (p.4)

- Quite obviously, the transfer of knowledge is facilitated through a good atmosphere within the ELT department enabling a productive dialogue between students and teachers. This dialogue is apparently also used to discuss the workload with the students and adjust it if required. (p.6)

- With regards to the overall potential for further improvement of the curriculum, in particular, staff and students alike would welcome an elective course on learning and teaching technologies. (p.6)

- A possible short-term measure might be to promote the exchange of students and alumni of the ELT programme who currently work as teachers and use the options offered through electives. (p.6)

Discussion

By reviewing the extracted relevant points, we can conclude that the language proficiency levels are not mentioned at all apart from the first one, where it is stated that levels should be defined clearly according to the CEFR, but no specific level was mentioned. Both committees working on these separate reports agree that the most important things to pay attention to are:

- student exchange and stay in English speaking countries (repeated on several occasions in both reports)
- studying relevant (modern) teaching methodologies
- student-centered learning
- speaking activities and support by elective courses with English instruction
- implementing technologies
- fostering good atmosphere for teaching and learning

Conclusion

We can safely conclude from this small-scale research that as far as the accreditation framework is concerned, our ELT programs in general can obtain the relevant EU accreditations following

the Cyprus and Moldova programs' examples. Macedonian MoE's standing during the workshop on this topic was one sort of "testing" of MEL instructors' general attitude and possible acceptance of the idea of "levelling" with little relevant referential background for acceptance of Macedonian universities diplomas for ELT programs.

Yet, the idea as such is not to be dismissed. Levelling and harmonization of the requirements and CEFR levels of students' EL proficiency will probably lead to unified proficiency across this profession, at least with the newer generations of EL and pre-service teachers. At the same time, PD of in-service teaching staff in the direction of proficiency and communication improvement might lead to bigger inclusion of communication in the classroom, refreshing of language knowledge and coming closer to the "native teacher" notion.

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Songs in the English language classroom

Reneta Stoimenova

ERASMUS+ KA1 Dissemination Activity

NB: You can generally grade the task, not the text – you can use the same song with lots of different levels, just change the task.

How to use the songs in this presentation:

1. Chaka Khan's "Love Me Still"

There are 2 versions of the text with **alternating deleted lines**. Students work in 2 groups according to the text versions. After completing the deleted lines, the 2 groups come together for a check-up.

2. Jamie Cullum's "My Yard"

Give students the lyrics of the song with **mistakes**. Get students to listen and identify them.

3. Michael Frank's "Now That the Summer's Here"

Cut the lyrics into strips and get students to **order** as they listen. They can work in pairs, using strips in 2 different colours if you print out on white paper for one member and on coloured paper for the other.

4. John Lennon's "Whatever Gets You Through the Night"

The lyrics of the song feature **pictures** put in place of words. Students identify the words as they listen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmDqWGt7Pzw>

Chaka Khan's "LOVE ME STILL" Lyrics

Version 1

Here is _____

Here's the part of me they have not sold.

I've _____

I loved you when, do you love me still?

Only _____

Others may come and they may go,

I _____, _____?

So many eyes and smiles surround me,

Empty _____, _____

Sometimes life is a bitter pill,

I _____, _____?

You have been mine since time untold,

Our _____, _____?

Others may come and they may go,

I _____, _____

Only you have seen the hidden part of me.

Call _____

I love you now, do you love me still?

Here are the eyes that only see you,

Here's _____

Here is the song they cannot kill.

I _____, _____?

Chaka Khan's "LOVE ME STILL" Lyrics

Version 2

Here is my hand for you to hold,

Here's _____.

I've wandered far; I've had my fill,

I _____, _____?

Only you have seen the other side of me,

Others _____,

I love you now, do you love me still?

So _____,

Empty expectations, faceless fears.

Sometimes _____,

I love you now, do you love me still?

You _____,

Our love is immortal, don't you know?

Others _____

I loved you young, I love you old.

Only _____.

Call me foolhardy if you will,

I _____, _____?

Here are the eyes that only see you,

Here's _____;

Here is the song they cannot kill.

I _____, _____?

Chaka Khan's "LOVE ME STILL" Lyrics

Here is my hand for you to hold,
Here's the part of me they have not sold.
I've wandered far; I've had my fill,
I loved you when, do you love me still?
Only you have seen the other side of me,
Others may come and they may go,
I love you now, do you love me still?
So many eyes and smiles surround me,
Empty expectations, faceless fears.
Sometimes life is a bitter pill,
I love you now, do you love me still?
You have been mine since time untold,
Our love is immortal, don't you know?
Others may come and they may go,
I loved you young, I love you old.
Only you have seen the hidden part of me.
Call me foolhardy if you will,
I love you now, do you love me still?
Here are the eyes that only see you,
Here's the mouth that only calls your name;
Here is the song they cannot kill.
I love you now, do you love me still?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BqfpqtJUnc>

"My Yard" by JAMIE CULLUM

Version with mistakes

So call a taxi cab and come around here
And I will see you right outside.
I got some DVDs and a couple of beers,
If you want to,
We can talk all night.
It's nothing posh, just a little sofa and me
And conversation for your mind.
So let's explore all the possibilities
Of the things that we both discussed last time.

[chorus:]

Take a cab to my heart
Don't you know the grass is taller on the other side?
Take a cab to my heart
Don't you know the love that you've been thinking of is mine?

You'll be my host at the other end of town
And the advantages you soon will find.
So let's enjoy the time when we're on our own
And we will answer to nobody else this time.
Tonight might be nothing but the stars and me
Any time that we take the script and toss it baby
Take a cab to my heart.

[chorus:]

Take a cab to my heart
Don't you know the grass is taller on the other side?
Take a cab to my heart
Don't you know the love that you've been thinking of is mine?

"My Yard" by JAMIE CULLUM

Correct version

So hail a taxi cab and come around here
And I will meet you right outside.
I got some DVDs and a couple of beers,
If you want to,
We can stay up all night.
It's nothing fancy, just a little couch and me
And conversation for your mind.
So let's explore all the possibilities
Of the things that we both talked about last time.

[chorus:]

Take a trip to my yard
Don't you know the grass is greener on the other side?
Take a trip to my yard
Don't you know the love that you've been dreaming of is mine?

I'll be your neighbour at the other end of town
And the benefits you soon will find.
So let's enjoy the fact that we're on our own
And we will answer to nobody else this time.
Tonight might be nothing but the moon and me
Any time that we take the script and flip it baby
Take a trip to my yard.

[chorus:]

Take a trip to my yard
Don't you know the grass is greener on the other side?
Take a trip to my yard
Don't you know the love that you've been dreaming of is mine?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdjLQ6ZKRvQ>

Michael Franks

Now That The Summer's Here

In slow motion I'm reborn
I need a week to mow the lawn
I eat dinner with my flip-flops on
Now that the summer's here
With my chores I only flirt
Hung in my hammock, reading Kurt
Struggling to remain inert
Now that the summer's here
Now that the summer is here
I'll laze all day - my work can wait
I might behave like a firefly
And oscillate with my mate
Now that the summer is here
I'll laze all day - my work can wait
I might behave like a firefly
And oscillate with my mate
I can spare some wherewithal
Listening to Ahmad Jamal
"Poinciana" says it all
Now that the summer's here
One thing is crystal clear
I won't be going anywhere
Except my Adirondack chair
Now that the summer's here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNNxeovdN5U>

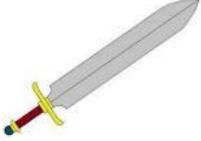
John Lennon

Whatever Gets You Through The Night

Whatever gets you through the
It's all right, it's all right



It's your  or your life
It's all right, it's all right

Don't need a  to cut through
Oh no, oh no

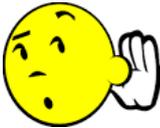


Whatever gets you through your life
It's all right, it's all right

Do it  , or do it 
It's all right, it's all right

Don't need a  to waste your time
Oh no, oh no



me, darlin', come on,  to me
I won't do you no harm



me, darlin', come on,  to me

Come on,  to me; come on,  , listen

Whatever gets you to the
It's all right, it's all right



Out of the blue, or out of
It's all right, it's all right



Don't need a  to blow your mind
Oh no, oh no



me, darlin', come on,  to me
I won't do you no harm



me, darlin', come on,  to me,

Come on  to me, come on , listen

John Lennon

"Whatever Gets You Through The Night" Lyrics

Whatever gets you through the night
It's all right, it's all right
It's your money or your life
It's all right, it's all right
Don't need a sword to cut through flowers
Oh no, oh no

Whatever gets you through your life
It's all right, it's all right
Do it wrong, or do it right
It's all right, it's all right

Don't need a watch to waste your time
Oh no, oh no

Hold me, darlin', come on, listen to me
I won't do you no harm

Trust me, darlin', come on, listen to me
Come on, listen to me; come on, listen, listen

Whatever gets you to the light
It's all right, it's all right
Out of the blue, or out of sight
It's all right, it's all right
Don't need a gun to blow you mind
Oh no, oh no

Hold me, darlin', come on, listen to me
I won't do you no harm
Trust me, darlin', come on, listen to me,

Come on listen to me, come on listen, listen

You can view the whole lesson online here:

<https://www.joomag.com/magazine/using-songs-in-the-english-classroom/0734237001448452433?short>