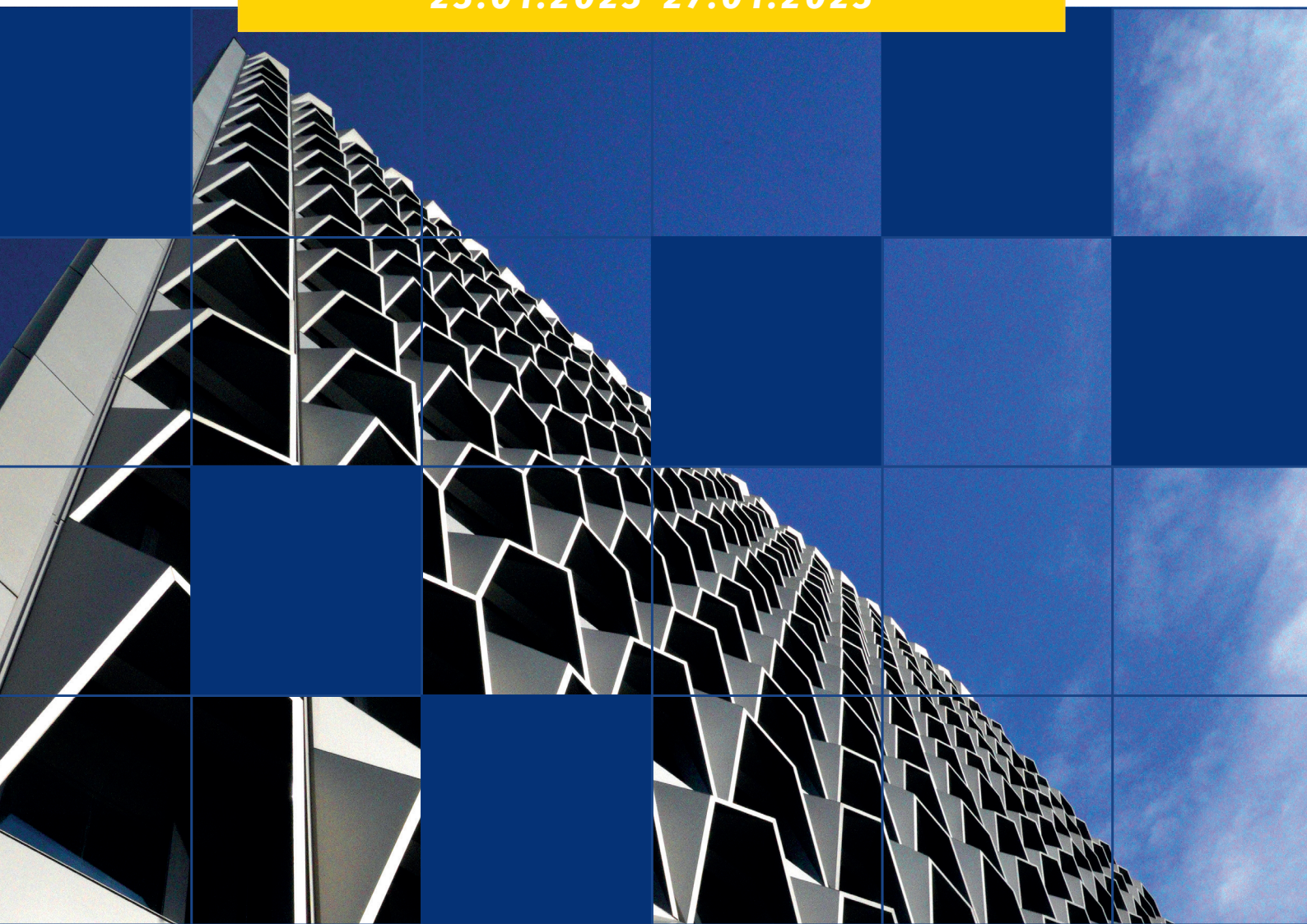


1ST EUT+
CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGES

***Inter/Multiculturalism in a
Post Colonial Era:
Languages and European Values***

23.01.2023-27.01.2023



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1st EUt+ International Conference on Languages



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1ST EUt+
CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGES

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h_da / **-euT+**

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PART ONE:

FOREWORD

Liebe Leserinnen und Leser,

seit 2020 ist die Hochschule Darmstadt Teil der European University of Technology (EUT+) und arbeitet gemeinsam mit ihren acht Partnern an der Vision eine Hochschule neuen Typs zu werden – eine Europäischen Universität mit Campussen von West- bis Osteuropa. Diese Vision steht unter den zentralen Leitgedanken „EUROPEAN VALUES EMPOWERING TECHNOLOGY“ und „THINK HUMAN FIRST“, d.h. ein gemeinsames europäisches Technikverständnis vertreten, das sich an den Bedürfnissen der Menschen orientiert und nicht allein an dem technisch Machbaren.

Schon Voltaire beschrieb die große Bedeutung der Mehrsprachigkeit als „Kennst Du viele Sprachen – hast du viele Schlüssel für ein Schloss.“ Die Fähigkeit, mehrere Sprachen zu sprechen, kann als Türöffner in der Kommunikation dienen und uns verschiedene Zugänge zur Welt, zu anderen Menschen, zu neuen Denkweisen und zur Problemlösung ermöglichen.

Mehrsprachigkeit und Interkulturalität sind – als Ausdruck der Vielfalt Europas – wesentliche Bestandteile der European University of Technology. Wenn es um die Verbreitung europäischer Werte geht, dann ergeben sich diese zu einem großen Teil aus den unterschiedlichen Sichtweisen, die wir in Europa haben, den unterschiedlichen kulturellen Hintergründen, aus denen wir dieselben Herausforderungen betrachten, und den unterschiedlichen Sprachen, in denen wir ein Problem beschreiben und eine Lösung ausdrücken. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist es besonders wichtig, dass sich Lehrende und Forschende zu aktuellen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen in diesen Themengebieten austauschen und untereinander vernetzen.

Umso mehr freue ich mich, dass die EUt+ Sprachenkonferenz im Januar 2023 erstmalig an der Hochschule Darmstadt als Gastgeberin durchgeführt wurde und bedanke mich bei allen, die zum Erfolg dieser Konferenz beigetragen haben, insbesondere bei Stefanie Morgret und Tamara Onnis.

Vom 26. bis 28. Juni 2024 wird die Konferenz von unserem EUt+ Partner, der Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena in Spanien, weitergeführt. Für dieses Vorhaben wünsche ich allen Beteiligten gutes Gelingen und spannende Erkenntnisse.

Dear readers,

Since 2020, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences has been part of the European University of Technology (EUT+) and works together with its eight partners on the vision of becoming a new type of university - a European university with campuses spanning from Western to Eastern Europe. This vision is guided by the central principles of "EUROPEAN VALUES EMPOWERING TECHNOLOGY" and "THINK HUMAN FIRST", i.e. representing a common European understanding of technology that is not only orientated towards what is technically feasible, but moreover towards the needs of individuals.

Voltaire already described the great importance of multilingualism as “Knowing many languages means having many keys to one lock”. The ability to speak multiple languages serves as a gateway in communication, offering us various ways to access the world, connect with other people, explore new ways of thinking and problem solving.

Multilingualism and interculturality - as expression of Europe’s diversity - are essential components of the European University of Technology. When it comes to the dissemination of European values, these largely derive from the various perspectives we have in Europe, the diverse cultural backgrounds from which we view the same challenges, and the numerous languages in which we describe a problem and express a solution. In this context, it is particularly important for educators and researchers to network and exchange current scientific findings in these areas.

Therefore, I am pleased that the EUT+ Language Conference was held for the first time at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences in January 2023 and would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this conference, especially to Stefanie Morgret and Tamara Onnis.

From 26 to 28 June 2024, the conference will be hosted by our EUT+ partner, the Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena in Spain. I wish everyone involved great success and exciting insights in this endeavor.

Arnd Steinmetz

President, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Die erste Sprachenkonferenz im Rahmen von EUT+ mit dem Thema “Erste EUT+ Sprachenkonferenz - Inter/Multikulturalismus in einer postkolonialen Ära: Sprachen und europäische Werte” fand unter Beteiligung zahlreicher Mitwirkenden in Darmstadt im Januar 2023 an der Hochschule Darmstadt vor einem internationalen Publikum statt.

Es erfüllt uns mit großer Freude, dass das Sprachzentrum unserer Hochschule die erste Gastgeberin der Konferenz sein konnte und mit dieser Publikation nun ein Sammelband der Beiträge vorliegt: diese liefern einen spannenden Querschnitt zur Bedeutung von Forschung, Plenum und Diskussion über Mehrsprachigkeit und Kultur nicht nur in der (Sprach-) Wissenschaft, sondern auch im täglichen Leben. „Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt“ – dieser Satz von Ludwig Wittgenstein wird hier gewissermaßen um eine inter- und transkulturelle Perspektive erweitert. Darüber hinaus kann die Relevanz der Reflexion von demokratisch-europäischen Werten im Bereich der Sprache und die Wichtigkeit, hierüber einen kontinuierlichen und konstruktiven Dialog zu führen, gerade heutzutage nicht hoch genug veranschlagt werden.

Mein Dank gilt allen, die an der Konferenz teilgenommen und diese unterstützt haben, insbesondere den Kolleginnen unseres Sprachenzentrums Frau Dr. Stefanie Morgret

und Frau Dr. Tamara Onnis, die das Format konzipiert und die Konferenz zusammen mit dem EUT+ Team der h_da organisiert haben. Zum Abschluss dieses Vorwortes möchte ich der Hoffnung Ausdruck verleihen, dass auch in Zukunft viele weitere internationale EUT+ Sprachkonferenzen realisiert werden können und somit eine Tradition dieses wertvollen und bereichernden Austauschs begründet wird.

The first language conference within the EUT+ framework, themed “First EUT+ Language Conference - Inter/Multiculturalism in a Postcolonial Era: Languages and European Values” took place in Darmstadt in January 2023. Numerous contributors participated in front of an international audience at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences.

We are pleased that the university’s Language Center was able to be the first host of the conference and that an anthology of the contributions is now available in this publication. The papers provide an exciting cross-section of the importance of research, plenary and discussion on multilingualism and culture not only in language studies, but also in everyday life. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s decree “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” is expanded here to some degree to include an intercultural and transcultural perspective. Furthermore, the relevance of reflecting on democratic European values the field of language, and the importance of conducting a continuous and constructive dialog in this area cannot be overemphasized, especially nowadays.

I would like to acknowledge everyone who took part in and supported the conference, especially my colleagues from our Language Centre, Dr. Stefanie Morgret and Dr. Tamara Onnis, who planned the format and organized the conference together with the EUT+ team. To conclude this foreword, I am keen to express the hope that many more international EUT+ language conferences may be realized in the future, consequently establishing a tradition of this valuable and enriching exchange.

Nicola Erny

Director of Language Centre, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Sprache hat die Kraft, uns zu verbinden oder zu trennen. Sprache ermöglicht es uns, zu kooperieren oder aber uns gegenseitig auszuschließen. Durch Sprache sind wir in der Lage, die Menschen zu sein, die wir heute sind, unsere Wertesysteme hochzuhalten und all das zu erreichen, was wir über Jahrtausende hinweg geschafft haben.

Dieser Band vermittelt einen Eindruck von der ersten internationalen EUT+-Sprachenkonferenz zum Thema „Inter/Multiculturalism in a Post Colonial Era: Languages and European“, die von der Hochschule Darmstadt ausgerichtet wurde. Dreizehn Beiträge laden ein zu Erfahrungen, Ideen und Forschungsergebnissen, die sich auf Sprache und ihre Wechselwirkung mit interkultureller Kommunikation, europäischen Werten und Postkolonialismus beziehen.

Es war eine große Ehre für uns, diese erste EUT+-Sprachenkonferenz zu leiten und zu organisieren.

Wir möchten uns bei allen bedanken, die zum Erfolg der Konferenz beigetragen haben. Insbesondere geht der Dank an:

- alle Redakteure von den EUt+-Partnern
- den Hauptrednerinnen und Hauptrednern der Konferenz
- das Sprachenzentrum der h_da
- die EUt+ Koordination und Veranstaltungsplanung der h_da
- den IT-Service der h_da
- das International Office der h_da
- die Studentischen Hilfskräfte des Sprachenzentrums

Wir möchten diese Gelegenheit auch nutzen, um unseren Kollegen an der Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena, die derzeit die zweite EUt+-Konferenz zum Thema Sprachen mit dem Titel „Merging New Trends and Consolidating Good Practices in Languages for Specific Purposes“ organisieren, alles Gute für dieses sehr belebende Unterfangen zu wünschen.

Herzlichen Dank!

Language has the power to bind us or divide us. Language enables us to cooperate with each other or impede each other. Through language, we are able to be the human beings we are today, hold our value systems dear and accomplish all that we have done over millennia. This volume provides an impression of the first international EUt+ language conference on ‘Inter/Multiculturalism in a Post Colonial Era: Languages and European Values’ hosted by University of Applied Sciences Darmstadt. Thirteen contributions invite you to experiences, ideas and research findings related to language and its interaction with intercultural communication, European values and post-colonialism.

It was a great honour for us to chair and organize this first EUt+ language conference. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the conference, especially to the:

- Editorial board editors from all EUt+ partners
- Conference keynote speakers
- h_da Language centre
- h_da EUt+ coordination and event planning
- h_da Technical support and IT Service
- h_da International Office
- Language Centre student assistants

We also want to take this opportunity to wish our colleagues at the Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena who are currently organizing the second EUt+ Conference on language titled “Merging New Trends and Consolidating Good Practices in Languages for Specific Purposes” all the best for this very invigorating endeavour.

Tamara Onnis & Stefanie Morgret

Chair-editors and organisers, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

È un onore e un piacere immenso per me far parte dell'alleanza EUt+ e quindi aver preso parte a questa conferenza e presiederne il comitato editoriale. Credo sia stata davvero un'occasione unica e preziosa per conoscere colleghe e colleghi provenienti da tutta Europa che operano nello stesso settore e condividono le stesse idee. Un'esperienza inestimabile che mi ha permesso inoltre di creare contatti e stringere amicizie, ora parte integrante della mia vita lavorativa. Ringrazio tutte le colleghe e tutti i colleghi del mio Ateneo così come degli altri Atenei per il loro impegno e la loro professionalità, e mi piace concludere con l'augurio che questa Conferenza sulle Lingue e Culture divenga una consolidata tradizione dell'Alleanza EUt+.

It is an absolute honour and pleasure to be a part of the EUt+ alliance, this conference and chair its editorial board. This is indeed a once in a lifetime opportunity to get to know like-minded colleagues from all over Europe. I have gained invaluable experience and have formed strong bonds and friendships that are now a solid part of my work life. Thank you very much to my colleagues at the hda and all EUt+ campuses for your hard work and dedication. I do hope that this conference on languages and culture will become a longstanding tradition etched in the EUt+ alliance.

Tamara Onnis

Language Centre, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Herzlich willkommen zu dieser wunderbaren Zusammenarbeit von EUt+ im Bereich Mehrsprachigkeit und Interkulturalität! Als Gastgeber dieser ersten internationalen EUt+ Sprachenkonferenz war es eine ganz besondere Zeit – gefüllt mit einer Vielfalt von Ideen, interessanten Begegnungen und dem intensiven Austausch miteinander. Es hat mich sehr beeindruckt, wie erfolgreich wir trotz unserer sprachlichen, interkulturellen und institutionellen Unterschiede in dieser ersten Phase von EUt+ zusammengearbeitet haben, ein professionelles Editorial Board aufbauen konnten und diese erste internationale EUt+ Sprachenkonferenz in Darmstadt realisiert haben. Ein großer Dank an alle Beteiligten! Es war eine sehr inspirierende Zeit und hat uns viele neue Türen für weitere Projekte in der Zukunft geöffnet.

Welcome to this wonderful EUt+ collaboration in the field of multilingualism and interculturalism! As host of this first international EUt+ language conference, it has been a very special time - filled with a variety of ideas, interesting encounters and intensive exchanges with each other. I was very impressed by how successfully we worked together in this first phase of EUt+ despite our linguistic, intercultural and institutional differences, how we were able to set up a professional editorial board and how we realized this first international EUt+ language conference in Darmstadt. A big thank you to everyone involved! It was a very inspiring

time and opened many new doors for further projects in the future.

Stefanie Morgret

Language Centre, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

C'est avec un immense plaisir et une grande fierté de participer à la première conférence linguistique et multiculturelle de l'EUT+. Notre travail d'équipe dans les domaines interculturels et linguistiques est un brillant exemple de la collaboration et de la détermination de notre alliance à traverser les cultures et les langues pour créer les bases de l'avenir de notre projet européen. Cette collaboration ayant été très enrichissante et fructueuse, nous sommes sûrs que le lecteur saura apprécier et trouver des données utiles pour ses propres recherches.

It is with immense pleasure and great pride having participated in the first linguistic and multicultural conference of the EUT+. Our teamwork in cross-cultural and linguistic areas is a shining example of our alliance's coordination and determination to cross cultural barriers and languages to create the foundations for a sound and mutually beneficial project. This collaboration has been very enriching and fruitful, we are sure that the reader will appreciate and find useful data for their research.

Stephen Le Coche

Head of Languages, Université de Technologie de Troyes

Plurilingvismul și multiculturalismul sunt valori pe care Universitatea Europeană de Tehnologie (EUT+) s-a angajat să le promoveze activ. Prima conferință EUT+ dedicată acestor valori și-a propus să exploreze din perspective multiple teme precum politicile lingvistice, tehnologiile educaționale, comunicarea interculturală, studiile culturale sau abordările inovative în cercetarea lingvistică, care au fost doar câteva din punctele de interes de pe agenda conferinței. Colaborarea intensă și fructuoasă între membrii proiectului a făcut posibil acest eveniment exemplar pentru importanța și nevoia de cunoaștere a unei adevărate comori europene, diversitatea lingvistică și culturală.

Plurilingualism and multiculturalism are values that the European University of Technology (EUT+) has made a mission to actively promote. The first EUT+ conference dedicated to these values aimed to explore, from multiple perspectives, topics such as language policy, educa-

tional technologies, intercultural communication, cultural studies and innovative language research, which were but a few of the focus points on the agenda. Enhanced and fruitful collaboration among project members led to this successful event, which foregrounds a true European treasure, linguistic and cultural diversity.

Sonia Munteanu

Modern Languages and Communication Department, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca

El primer Congreso de Lenguas en el seno de la Universidad Europea de Tecnología (EUt+) sin duda alguna ha puesto en valor las lenguas y los valores europeos, especialmente dedicado a la Inter/Multiculturalidad en una era Postcolonial. El multilingüismo es crucial en un mundo globalizado. Permite una comunicación efectiva entre personas de diferentes culturas, fomentando la comprensión y la cooperación internacional. Además, aprender varios idiomas mejora las habilidades cognitivas, como la memoria y la capacidad de resolución de problemas. En el ámbito profesional, el conocimiento de múltiples lenguas abre oportunidades laborales y facilita el acceso a mercados globales. También enriquece la vida personal, permitiendo disfrutar de diversas literaturas, músicas y tradiciones.

The first Language Conference within the European University of Technology (EUt+) has undoubtedly highlighted European languages and values, especially focusing on Inter/Multiculturalism in a Postcolonial Era. Multilingualism is crucial in a globalized world. It enables effective communication between people from different cultures, fostering understanding and international cooperation. Additionally, learning multiple languages enhances cognitive skills such as memory and problem-solving abilities. Professionally, knowledge of various languages opens up job opportunities and facilitates access to global markets. It also enriches personal life by allowing one to enjoy diverse literature, music, and traditions.

Camino Rea Rizzo

Area of Modern Languages, Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena

Laipni lūdzam iepazīties ar pirmo Eiropas Tehnoloģiju universitātes (EUt+) izdevumu, kas veltīts valodu un kultūru izpētei. Aptverot vairākas valstis un kultūras, EUt+ sniedz unikālu skatījumu uz valodu daudzveidību un mijiedarbību. Mēs dzīvojam reģionā, kur valodu daudzveidība ir gan bagāts mantojums, gan praktiska nepieciešamība. Šis darbs ne tikai izceļ daudzvalodīgas vides radītos izaicinājumus, bet arī uzsver inovatīvās un iekļaujošās iespējas, ko tā sniedz. Apkopojot valodniecības, izglītības un politikas pētījumu perspektīvas, šis izdevums cenšas padziļināt izpratni par to, kā valoda veido un tiek veidota dažādās ainavās. Ceram, ka secinājumi un diskusijas šajās lapaspusēs rosinās turpmākus

pētījumus un dialogu par valodu lomu identitātes izkopšanā.

Welcome to the first edition of the European University of Technology (EUT+), dedicated to the study of languages and culture. Encompassing multiple countries and cultures, EUT+ provides a unique vantage point on language diversity and interaction. We live in a region where linguistic plurality is both a rich heritage and a practical necessity. This work not only highlights the challenges faced by linguistic environments but also celebrates the opportunities for innovation and inclusivity that they present. By bringing together insights from linguistics, education, and policy studies, this publication aims to foster a deeper understanding of how language shapes and is shaped by the landscape. It is our hope that the findings and discussions within these pages will inspire further research and dialogue on the role of languages in fostering a cohesive yet diverse identity.

Anna Sedova

International Partnership Unit, Riga Technical University/ Rīgas Tehniskā universitāte

Με μεγάλη χαρά συμμετείχα στη Συντακτική Επιτροπή του 1ου Συνεδρίου Γλωσσών του Ευρωπαϊκού Τεχνολογικού Πανεπιστημίου (EUT+). Το συνέδριο ανέδειξε ιδιαίτερα τη συνεργατική προσπάθεια της συμμαχίας του EUT+, υπογραμμίζοντας τη σημασία της εκμάθησης γλωσσών, της πολυγλωσσίας και της πολυπολιτισμικότητας. Το συνέδριο παρείχε επίσης ευκαιρίες για διάλογο, κοινή έρευνα, παραγωγή γνώσης και ανταλλαγή απόψεων. Η εκμάθηση γλωσσών ενώνει τους ανθρώπους, προωθεί τις συνεργασίες, δίνει προτεραιότητα στις ανθρώπινες ανάγκες και δημιουργεί έναν χώρο ειρηνικής συνύπαρξης. Ευελπιστούμε πως οι διαφωτιστικές συζητήσεις που είχαμε κατά τη διάρκεια του συνεδρίου θα εμπνεύσουν νέες συνεργασίες για περαιτέρω διάλογο και έρευνα.

It is with great pleasure that I participated in the Editorial Board of the 1st Language Conference of the European University of Technology (EUT+). This conference vividly highlighted the collaborative efforts within our university alliance, highlighting the significance of language learning, multilingualism and multiculturalism. The conference facilitated opportunities for dialogue, joint research, knowledge generation, and perspective sharing. Language learning unites people, fosters connections, prioritizes human needs, and creates a space for peaceful coexistence. We hope that the insightful discussions we had during the conference will inspire new collaborations for further dialogue and research.

Anna Nicolaou

Language Centre, Cyprus University of Technology

Η πολυγλωσσία και η ποικιλομορφία των γλωσσών και των πολιτισμών αποτελούν πυλώνες στους οποίους βασίζεται η συμμαχία του Ευρωπαϊκού Τεχνολογικού Πανεπιστημίου (EUT+),

στην προσπάθεια της να κτίσει ένα συμπεριληπτικό και αειφόρο μέλλον. Το πρώτο αυτό συνέδριο του EUt+ για τις γλώσσες αποτελεί γιορτή της γλωσσικής πολυμορφίας και πολυγλωσσίας, που τελικό στόχο έχουν την καλλιέργεια ενσυναίσθητων και πολιτισμικά συνειδητοποιημένων πολιτών. Με τον τόμο αυτό, οι αναγνώστες έχουν την ευκαιρία να ενημερωθούν για τα ερευνητικά αποτελέσματα, καινοτόμες ιδέες και καλές πρακτικές διδασκαλίας και εκμάθησης γλωσσών που παρουσιάστηκαν στις διάφορες ομιλίες, εργαστήρια και συζητήσεις που διεξήχθησαν κατά τη διάρκεια του συνεδρίου. Εύχομαι να ακολουθήσουν πολλές παρόμοιες προσπάθειες για προώθηση της πολυγλωσσίας και πολιτισμικής διάδρασης στο μέλλον.

Multilingualism and the diversity of languages and cultures are pillars on which the European University of Technology (EUt+) alliance is based in its effort to build an inclusive and sustainable future. This first EUt+ language conference is a celebration of linguistic diversity and multilingualism, with the ultimate goal of cultivating empathetic and culturally aware citizens. With this volume, readers have the opportunity to learn about the research results, innovative ideas and good practices in language teaching and learning presented in the various talks, workshops and discussions held during the conference. I wish that many similar efforts to promote multilingualism and cultural interaction will follow in the future.

Elis Kakoulli Constantinou

Language Centre, Cyprus University of Technology

Скъпи читателю,

Държиш в ръцете си първото издание на Европейския технологичен университет (EUt+), посветено на езиковото и културното разнообразие в алианса. С този сборник имаш възможност да се запознаеш с работата на учени и преподаватели от 8 Европейски университета, партньори в EUt+, както под формата на резултати от научни изследвания, и прилагане на иновативни идеи, така и на споделяне на добри практики, представени по време на първата езикова конференция на EUt+. Тя се осъществи благодарение на интензивната съвместна работа на един изключителен екип от професионалисти, на които искам искрено да благодаря.

Надявам се да се насладиш на този празник на съществуващото в алианса многообразие от езици и култури, което е една от основните ценности в Европа на бъдещето.

Dear Reader,

You are holding in your hands the first edition of the European University of Technology

(EUt+) devoted to the linguistic and cultural diversity within the Alliance. With this collection, you have the opportunity to get to know the work of researchers and academics from eight European universities, partners in EUt+, both in the form of research results and application of innovative ideas, as well as sharing of best practices, presented during the first EUt+ Language Conference. This was possible thanks to the intensive collaborative work of an outstanding team of professionals, to whom I am grateful.

I hope you will enjoy this celebration of the diversity of languages and cultures that exists in the Alliance, which is one of the core values of the Europe of the future.

Vessela Frengova

Vice-director of the Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics

Technical University of Sofia / Технически университет София

Fáilte chuig imeachtaí na 1ú Chomhdhála Teangacha de chuid Ollscoil Eorpach na Teicneolaíochta (OEt+). Cúis lúcháire is ea é obair agus taighde daoine aonair agus foirne atá ag obair fud an Chomhaontais a léiriú de réir mar a chothaíonn muid líonraí agus pobail taighdeoirí agus cleachtóirí atá aontaithe ina n-iarrachtaí chun an t-ilteangachas agus an ilchultúrthacht a chothú agus a chur chun cinn. Is deis ar leith é Comhaontas OEt+ ceiliúradh agus iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar a bhfuil i gceist leis an iolracht theangeolaíoch mar oidhreacht chomhroinnte agus shaibhir, agus mar chuid den ghnáthshaol. Trí iniúchadh ar luachanna, oideachas, beartas agus cleachtas, déanann ábhar an imleabhair seo machnamh ar ghealltanais forleathana an OEt+ i ndáil leis an oideachas ionchuimsitheach, nuálach agus comhoibríoch.

Welcome to the proceedings of the 1st Languages Conference of the European University of Technology (EUt+). It is a pleasure to showcase the work and research of individuals and teams working across the Alliance as we continue to build networks and communities of researchers and practitioners united in their efforts to sustain and promote multilingualism and multiculturalism. The EUt+ Alliance represents a very distinct opportunity to celebrate and explore what it means to experience linguistic plurality as a shared and rich heritage, and as a lived reality. Through exploration of values, education, policy and practice, contributors to this volume also reflect on wider EUt+ commitments to inclusive, innovative and collaborative education.

Catherine Spencer

Language Studies / Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Technological University Dublin

PART TWO:

INTRODUCTION

EUROPEAN ALLIANCE:

EUt+ European University of Technology (EUt+)

In 2017, the European Commission launched the European Universities Initiative to promote excellence, innovation and inclusion in higher education across Europe. It is a strong vision for Europe: the 'European Universities' consist in networks of higher education institutions across the EU which enable students to study in several EU countries and different languages. Our alliance named "European University of Technology (EUt+)" was founded in 2018. Together with its eight partners, Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences is working towards a European university:

Technical University Sofia (Bulgaria)

Technological University Dublin (Ireland)

Cyprus Technical University (Cyprus)

Technical University Riga (Latvia)

Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena (Spain)

Université de Technologie Troyes (France)

Technical University Cluj Napoca (Romania)

University of Cassino und Lazio Meridionale (Italy) (new member since November 2023)

Each of these members bring unique strengths to form an alliance focused on increasing the effectiveness, professionalism and performance of our institutions.

The aim of the alliance is to be one of the first technology-oriented European universities, making contribution to the further integration of Europe. With this in mind, our motto is "EUROPEAN VALUES EMPOWERING TECHNOLOGY". In the areas of teaching, research and third-party funding, cooperation between the partners will be strengthened and intensified at all levels.

The acronym EUt+ accompanied by the plus sign illustrates another guiding principle: "Think Human First". Technology is more than a set of techniques or applied sciences. It is our essential human ability to express, think and understand the world through artefacts. In this sense it is an engine of human progress where arts and science meet. Science and techniques make excellent engineers and technicians, but combined with arts, humanities, ethics, and social sciences, they make outstanding professionals and technologically responsible citizens

1ST EUT+ CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGES (JANUARY 23-27, 2023):

Inter/Multiculturalism in a Post Colonial Era: Languages and European Values

Hosted by Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences

Language has the ability to impact and transform while itself being impacted and transformed. It is a core part of the EUT+, and the conference sought to create dialogue, generate new knowledge and understanding, research, and awareness on language and various themes relating to languages. Especially regarding topics such as intercultural communication, multiculturalism, European values and post colonialism. European integration and globalization have had extensive impact on the education systems of the EU member states. Tertiary institutions have implemented new study programs, or have even restructured their degrees to align with European integration and values. Methods of teaching and modes of language learning have also developed and have increasingly become ethnically and culturally diverse and focused. At the same language education and approaches may still reflect European values and positions and may not take language and culture in postcolonial and indigenous countries, groups and areas into consideration. Discourse on languages, learning, teaching and administrative practices may afford valuable insights in the above points.

The conference took place in an interdisciplinary environment that afforded the unique opportunity of persons from all area of tertiary education to share and discuss their experiences, ideas and research relating to language and its interplay with intercultural communication, European values and post colonialism. Participants had the possibility to forge contacts, network, and facilitate partnerships across the EUT+ campuses.

Themes

The conference the themes were grouped into five areas:

1. Language teaching/Best practice
2. Bi-/Multilingualism
3. Intercultural/Multicultural
4. Post colonialism
5. Globalization and language

TOPICS INCLUDED:

- + Applied linguistics
- + Bi-/Multilingualism
- + Cultural Studies
- + Culture and Language
- + Disabilities and the language learner
- + Discourse Analysis
- + Educational policy
- + Educational Technologies
- + Forms of language
- + Human Rights in Languages
- + Intercultural Communication
- + Intercultural Education
- + Intersectionality
- + Language Assessment
- + Language and Cultural Identity
- + Language and Gender
- + Language and Power
- + Language and Technology
- + Language and the Media
- + Language education
- + Learning environments
- + Lifelong learning and Languages
- + Professional development in languages
- + Psychology of the language learner
- + Research approaches in languages
- + Translation and Interpretation

PART THREE:

SELECTED SESSION PAPERS

**IMPLEMENTATION AND
STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF
THE LANGUAGE TEACHING
RESOURCE OF THE VIDEO
LESSON IN THE POST-COVID
ERA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores one of the most popular resources enabled by asynchronous IT teaching methods, employed as a reaction to the COVID crisis within the all-encompassing terminological frame of blended learning. Concretely, it explains the implementation of the video lesson in the mandatory course of Technical English for Telecommunications Engineering at UPCT. After contextualizing the design of our course under the parameters of the Spanish Higher Educational system, and the technological support available, the main contribution of this paper to the topic is that it focuses on the students' perception of the new course structure. In order to assess the perception of students towards the teaching and learning process, a survey was conducted with a focus on parameters such as engagement, self-regulation techniques, and the need to readjust the roles of teaching and learning in the EUt+ Higher Education system. The survey results will help identify changing trends in student performance.

INTRODUCTION

The forced transition, starting from March 2020 and extending throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, of a large portion of face-to-face teaching in Spanish universities and the rest of the world into online teaching, has constituted an unprecedented technological and educational challenge (Misrhra & Shree, 2020). In this context, the possibility of incorporating asynchronous teaching models into university tuition arises. This concept refers to teaching outside the time allocated to class according to the curriculum and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits, not to replace face-to-face lessons, but as a reinforcement prior to the class itself in any of its modalities: face-to-face, hybrid (combining face-to-face and streaming) or entirely online (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015). Furthermore, asynchronous lecturing constitutes a complement to teaching in real time that seems to have come to stay, since it brings significant changes from the methodological point of view, including the requirement of greater responsibility from university students in their learning process, and wider monitoring from the instructors (Castrillo & Martín, 2016; Malkin, Rahfeldt & Shayter, 2016).

Within the possible models of asynchronous teaching at universities, the video lesson led by the professors responsible for a subject or a module constitutes an extended practice. It has been used as such before the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in modules with a high number of students and plenty of practical content, as is frequently the case with languages (Herbert et al., 2017; Zeynep & Cetintas, 2020). From this perspective, the present work addresses the implementation of video lessons as pre-instructional input, in the field of Technical English for Telecommunication Systems Engineering at the Technical University of Cartagena (UPCT) during the 2020-2021 academic year. This study explores our students' response to the new modality adopted for a course assisted by a previous instructional video lesson, versus the conventional face-to-face course where all teaching is delivered as an on-site class at the university location, to determine to what extent students are satisfied with the video-lesson experience carried out.

Keywords: *Video lesson, blended learning, asynchronous language teaching and learning*

LITERATURE REVIEW

The learning experience analysed in this article, where video lessons are used as asynchronous, complementary material in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course (Yagamata-Lynch, 2014), can be located within the double perspective of blended learning (Torrissi-Steele & Drew, 2013) and flipped classroom theory (Hamdan, et al., 2013; Engin, 2014). In turn, both blended learning and flipped classroom strategies fall within the wider category of online learning and teaching models (Bates, 2003; Bullen & Janes, 2007). The existing literature about these learning and teaching models, either as a complement or as an alternative to the face-to-face class, has experienced a significant intensification, due to the teaching solutions implemented worldwide during the Covid-19 pandemic (Bao, 2020; Coman et al., 2020). Since teaching and learning contexts may considerably differ from one another, none of the available solutions for a post-COVID ICT teaching-learning paradigm in Higher Education offer one single definition. Taking this into account, this section focuses on those that best serve our case, with a view to a theory-practice correlation as accurately as possible.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, a wide range of studies have advocated for the benefits of asynchronous learning (Hiltz & Goldman, 2005; Hiltz & Wellmann, 1997; Lowenthal & Moore, 2020). Asynchronous learning is mainly understood as the design of complementary learning activities outside class time. It enables the possibility of accessing course contents on demand, irrespective of time and place (Wilson & Weiser, 2001: 63). The main contribution of asynchronous learning to the multiple combinations between online and face-to-face learning concerns the blurring of the time-space limits that it favours, regardless of the medium available. As Wilson and Weiser argue, academia no longer considers the question 'Do we get involved with distance learning?', but now seeks to find 'What is the best approach to the multi-site, multi-media learning environment?' (2001: 364). This reasoning seems appropriate for the changing times that most universities are undergoing nowadays. They have not been specifically designed as distance education institutions. Nevertheless, the pandemic has forced their faculty to learn the skills for converting their face-to-face courses into distant formats overnight.

Asynchronous learning fits into the definition of blended learning as 'an integration of face-to-face and online learning that can fall anywhere between the cline of a fully face-to-face course in a classroom setting to a fully online course where all the teaching materials and interaction are transferred to an online platform' (Kathpalia et al., 2020: 183). Thus, the combination of technology and classroom instruction that blended learning enables may be widely defined as a flexible approach to teaching, since there are as many blended-learning models, according to educational experts, as there are organizational challenges (Bañados, 2006).

Although blended learning is, therefore, not necessarily equivalent to online teaching and learning, to a great extent, it takes its theoretical frame and strategic resources from it. Again, online learning can only be defined under considerably open parameters. Due to the need for clarification, a long paragraph with all the variables of a plausible definition is given:

Online learning refers to the learning that is mediated by the internet. It is wider than 'networked learning'; while networked learning focuses on human-human connections, online learning lacks such specificity. It is narrower than 'eLearning' and 'digital education' which include the full range of digital tools and resources (...) In addition, online learning does not have the in-built claim to improvement that makes 'technology-enhanced learning' (TEL) a problematic phrase. In our post-digital reality, one can argue that 'online' is ceasing to be a helpful descriptor for students' actual experiences, especially (...) where (...) the boundaries between learning and other strands of activity in everyday life have become so soft" (Rapanta et al., 2020: 924).

Faithful to this concept of online learning, course designers and instructors throughout the world have attempted to list the basic pedagogical items indispensable for an effective approach to online teaching and learning. Their varied perspectives do not simply assess major challenges, such as the risk of compromising teaching outcomes and learning performance. In addition, instructors clearly state their determination to improve the results obtained in face-to-face teaching and learning methodologies to this day (Mahmood, 2020).

Among the most frequently mentioned elements or themes for successful online teaching and learning strategies, Martin et al., (2020) highlight organization, course design, and learner characteristics. From the sub-themes related to these three main categories, some seem especially pertinent to the design of asynchronous video lessons. These include evaluation and assessment of the students' performance and outcomes, and the teaching activity (Debashis Bir, 2019; Ozarland & Ozan, 2016); motivation, that is, students' engagement and active learning, especially in large groups, and dropout avoidance (Nouri, 2016; Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015); the transference of the main cognitive load of the course to the videos (Brane, 2016), thereby replacing a content-centred with a user-centred approach to teaching (Haugsbakken, 2020); the implementation of a flexible model based on multi-dimensional learning tasks that refer both to content and the technological medium (Stiller, 2016); and the call for self-regulating strategies and skills (Barnard et al., 2009), which appeal to the student's capacity to take hold of their learning process in an active way (Çakıroğlu, 2020). All of these concepts have been considered in the design of the ESP course described in the present article.

Most of the themes mentioned show a straightforward connection with the flipped classroom model. Although this is sometimes simply included in the blended approach to teaching, flipped classroom refers more specifically to course design and organization than blended learning, a term that remains more open and undefined by comparison. The flipped or inverse class is mainly, though not exclusively based on the use of instructional videos outside the class for new content input (Castrillo & Martín, 2016). It is also known as inverse instruction methodology (IIM). According to González-Gómez et al., 'the IIM foundation must be found not only in the constructivist but also in the social learning theory' (2016: 450). Consequently, the flipped classroom model or IIM involves a sociological approach to learning that goes beyond traditional pedagogical views focused on content transmission. In its surpassing of the class limits, it explores the possibilities of what is known as virtual learning communities (Hiltz & Goldman, 2005), one of whose main examples can be found in MOOC courses (Martín-Monje & Bârcenas, 2014).

Flipped teaching and learning presents evident advantages, such as students learning at their own pace and enhancing learning opportunities by using in- and out-of-class time for learning. To these assets, González-Gómez and his colleagues add an indispensable condition: the number of in-class hours within a flipped-class course must be the same as in the traditional approach (2016). This idea is reinforced by other authors who maintain that 'sustaining face-to-face time is a critical feature for a successful implementation of a flipped classroom' (Van Alten et al., 2019: 13), if the students' successful outcomes are to be guaranteed. The premise seems adequate to our purposes of introducing asynchronous video lessons as a complement, never as a replacement for class time.

For the correct use of video lessons in asynchronous, flipped-classroom environments, several models of implementation, sequencing, and integration are available, since it is generally understood that: 'The video lesson for online courses involves more than presenting content through a short video demo. It is a video-based learning module designed to achieve the learning objectives through sequenced content instructions and learning activities (Ou et al., 2019: 83).'

Moreover, the use of asynchronous teaching and learning models presupposes different combinations of teaching strategies, online communication channels between instructor and student, as well as the introduction of teaching roles and styles among which agile shifting is required. All in all, a successful result does not depend solely on the technology required, although sufficient connectivity for all users is of course indispensable. In addition, successful teaching and learning of this kind does not rely on a direct transference of class contents previously delivered in the classroom to the videos (Shaw, 2001). Instead, it involves an all-encompassing approach to teaching. Thus, together with the blurring of limits (face-to-face/online, time/space, student/teacher roles, class time), asynchronous teaching and learning demands a whole reorganization of class sequence, course input, materials, evaluation tools, and even the use of non-verbal modes (García-Pinar, 2019). Such a multi-faceted approach aims at complying with the purposes of a teaching and learning model capable of facing global challenges already underway before the pandemic, although starkly accentuated by it.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH COURSE (RE)DESIGN

The course of Technical English for Telecommunications Engineering has been a core subject in the third year, Fall/Winter Term (September to February) of the Degree in Systems Engineering at the UPCT since its creation in 2000. It shows a clear focus on English for Specific Purposes or ESP since all the units deal with the main topics of the knowledge area of Telecommunications Engineering. Among others, are fibre optics, wireless, networks, satellites, and antennas. The cognitive load that these engineering-related topics entail is the medium through which the instructors design the communicative goals students need to achieve: the acquisition and fluent use of technical vocabulary, plus the command of language functions and skills of English for Academic Purposes or EAP, such as oral presentation techniques and academic writing strategies. Tuition is distributed in two weekly sessions: a 2-hour lesson with the whole group, and a 1-hour meeting in small-

er groups of 10-15 students, devoted to oral practice.

During the strict lockdown that took place between March and May 2020, the UPCT computer experts offered digital solutions, tools, and training to the faculty—all of it in record time. Simultaneously, the University board of management encouraged the elaboration of asynchronous teaching programs (course unit descriptors) appropriate for the uncertainty in the mid-term future. The rethinking of our offer in the Area of English Studies led us to search for a flexible solution that, regardless of the final class frame, virtual or face-to-face, could permanently incorporate digital support into any class dynamics. With a view to improve the 2020-2021 academic year, the English teaching staff then decided to record a video lesson for each weekly class session (15 altogether) that students should not only watch but also work with in different ways, before the class. The initial purpose was to encourage a more intensive student engagement, especially in case of unforeseen issues, such as partial lockdowns or adverse personal circumstances derived from the pandemic. Likewise, with this decision, the English teaching staff was trying to enhance their presence as instructors, facilitators, and supporters.

Concerning technology, in this course redesign three specific channels are put into use, each with a concrete aim. The first one is the platform for video recording, used in combination with the second one, which is the Moodle student interface. Through a system called UPCTmedia, where every instructor can host his/her materials, the University's Centro de Producción de Contenidos Digitales (CPCD) enables the uploading of the videos to the course's Moodle interface (Aula Virtual). This way, only the students enrolled in a specific course are allowed access to the videos.

The third ICT channel used by instructors is the traditional email, through which they are almost permanently available throughout the term. The asynchronous dimension of the experience is thus carried a step forward. The constant availability of the instructors for feedback, solving of queries, and support, has turned out to be an excellent tool for the spontaneous measuring of student engagement. Without any previous training, course participants have had to face a new course routine. While they enjoy the freedom of working at their own pace, they must also feel confident enough to pose their questions to instructors at any time during the week. This degree of availability on the part of the instructors has proved to be sometimes an indispensable step to allow students to continue advancing on their own.

As for the pedagogical aspects of this course redesign and implementation, they mainly refer to the characteristics of the video lessons. Such aspects include, among other items, those related to length, contents, complementary materials, structure, modes, and assessment. Following the typical structure of videos in blended/flipped teaching patterns, the main cognitive load of the course has been transferred to the video lessons, leaving class time for problem-solving, discussion, and interaction activities relying on the recent prior knowledge generated (Hailikari, et al., 2008). Each new video lesson is accessible in Aula Virtual immediately after the previous class has finished, that is, a week in advance. Careful quality design is based on some of Bates' premises, such as clear learning objectives,

controlled workloads, and assessment strongly tied to desired learning outcomes (2019). The double verbal-visual channel, that is, the instructor speaking at the same time that the visual information is displayed on the screen, is constantly activated. Concerning the structure, the learning objectives of the video lesson are always explicitly discussed at the very beginning of the session, while the subsequent learning activities are gradually unfolded.

Compliant with the video lesson design theory, the style used by the instructor sounds conversational and enthusiastic. Despite the paradox posed by the absence of students, it has also become deeply personalized (Brane, 2016). Video lessons bridge the gap created by the anonymity of a large group of students summoned in asynchronous mode when such a style is adopted, with the introduction of jokes or remarks close to the students' worldview (Debashis Bir, 2019). The instructor's appearance on the screen may even allow for a more focused use of non-verbal modes such as gestures, eye contact, or intonation, than in the face-to-face class; all of it, for the sake of a higher student engagement (Bam-baerero & Shokrpour, 2017).

As a general pattern in this course design, each new turn of the video lesson is marked by a short task (no more than 2 or 3 per video) that the students must complete in a few minutes. The task results are discussed in the subsequent class. This way, active participation while dealing with the video is assured. The partial results of these semi-spontaneous exercises converge later, after the class, when the completion of a final, individual written assignment to be included in a student's written portfolio is required. The portfolio assignments are introduced, therefore, at the end of each class. Of a limited length, such short assignments mark the conclusion of the unit after the tandem video lesson/class is completed. In addition, they constitute a key element of the formative assessment of the course, an evaluation strategy that has become crucial in this teaching pattern. Finally, they belong to the Writing Corrective Feedback (WCF) mode of dealing with written submissions (Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Ellis et al., 2008; Saavedra & Campos, 2018).

Thus, portfolio assignments allow for an in-progress, recurrent evaluation process for which the student must take active responsibility. If necessary, this responsibility may be exerted by students reviewing the visual and written course materials after receiving the instructor's feedback. Having the possibility of going back to the video lessons contributes to providing final, corrected versions of the assignments, thus closing the teaching/learning cycle for each unit.

The weekly unfolding of the course routines explained (asynchronous individual work with the video lesson, class, final written assignments, and constant attention through email), enabled by the corresponding technological assistance, has allowed instructors to detect a general positive engagement of the students with the course in their weekly praxis. The next phase of the present paper, therefore, must perforce involve a quantitative confirmation (or questioning) of this perception, once the course has finished. For that reason, the following subsection focuses on the description and analysis of the results of the questionnaire through which the students' satisfaction has been surveyed.

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

A survey was conducted to gauge student perception of video lessons and the extent of satisfaction with the experience carried out and previously described. Then, a questionnaire consisting of 13 items formulated as statements was designed to be rated using a six-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree). The adoption of an even rating scale attempts to avoid the choice of a neutral midpoint so that we could obtain a resolute answer from respondents.

The questionnaire was structured in two parts. The former, covering items from 1 to 10, provided a series of possible reasons why students could find video lessons positive or negative regarding the issues of self-paced work, chance for revision, activation of prior knowledge, workload, understanding of tasks, awareness of the learning process, and teacher's support. The latter was intended to overtly ask for the usefulness of the system for their learning (item 11), the maintenance of the system after the pandemic restrictions have been lifted (item 12), and the negative counter-productive effect of video-lessons added to the telematic input in the student's academic routine (item 13). Finally, there was a section to introduce any additional opinion or open comment about the experience allowing for further qualitative information.

At the end of the semester, after the completion of the course, the questionnaire was administered through a link to a common online survey tool to the participants so that the responses would be anonymous. The sample of the study was 45 students enrolled for the course in the academic year, who were instructed according to the implemented model with asynchronous video lessons. Eventually, 35 students from the group completed the questionnaire, hence the final sample may be considered as representative of the group. According to the characteristics of the survey and the sample, descriptive statistics are used to detail the basic features of the data which are summarized as shown by the application of measures of central tendency and dispersion.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall rating of students' responses is displayed in Figure 1, expressed as a percentage, whereas a statistical summary of results is provided in Table 1. In general terms, it is apparent from Figure 1 that the statements referring to a negative element related to the use of video lessons tend to get lower ratings than those referring to a positive one. Students seem to disagree with the items deemed as a possible drawback of the system, which is represented on the left side of the bar graph, for example, items 6 and 7, while agreement with beneficial aspects gets a higher rating and, therefore, it is displayed on the right side as items 3 and 4. This behaviour is consistent with the mean values yielded since scores lower than 3 are associated with items 6, 7, 9, and 13 dealing with less favourable conditions in the questionnaire. Apart from the negative characteristics involved in the four items mentioned before, higher rates typically correspond to higher satisfaction with the system.

Moreover, the most frequent score in the questionnaire is 5, precisely for all the items assessing an advantage as shown by the mode values in our data set. These immediate results suggest a positive perception of the use of video lessons as well as considerable satisfaction. In addition, median values reinforce our observation since 5 is found as the score for favourable appraisal. Altogether, the results obtained point to a normally distributed data set where measures of central tendency yield similar values.

Regarding the measure of dispersion, low standard deviation indicates that the values tend to be close to the mean of the set, as in our data set, where most SD values are lower than 1. Slightly wider dispersion in the answers is found in items 6, 8, 9, and 13 reaching SD values from 1.23 to 1.39, which conveys a wider range of satisfaction levels.

Figure 1: Overall rating of students' responses

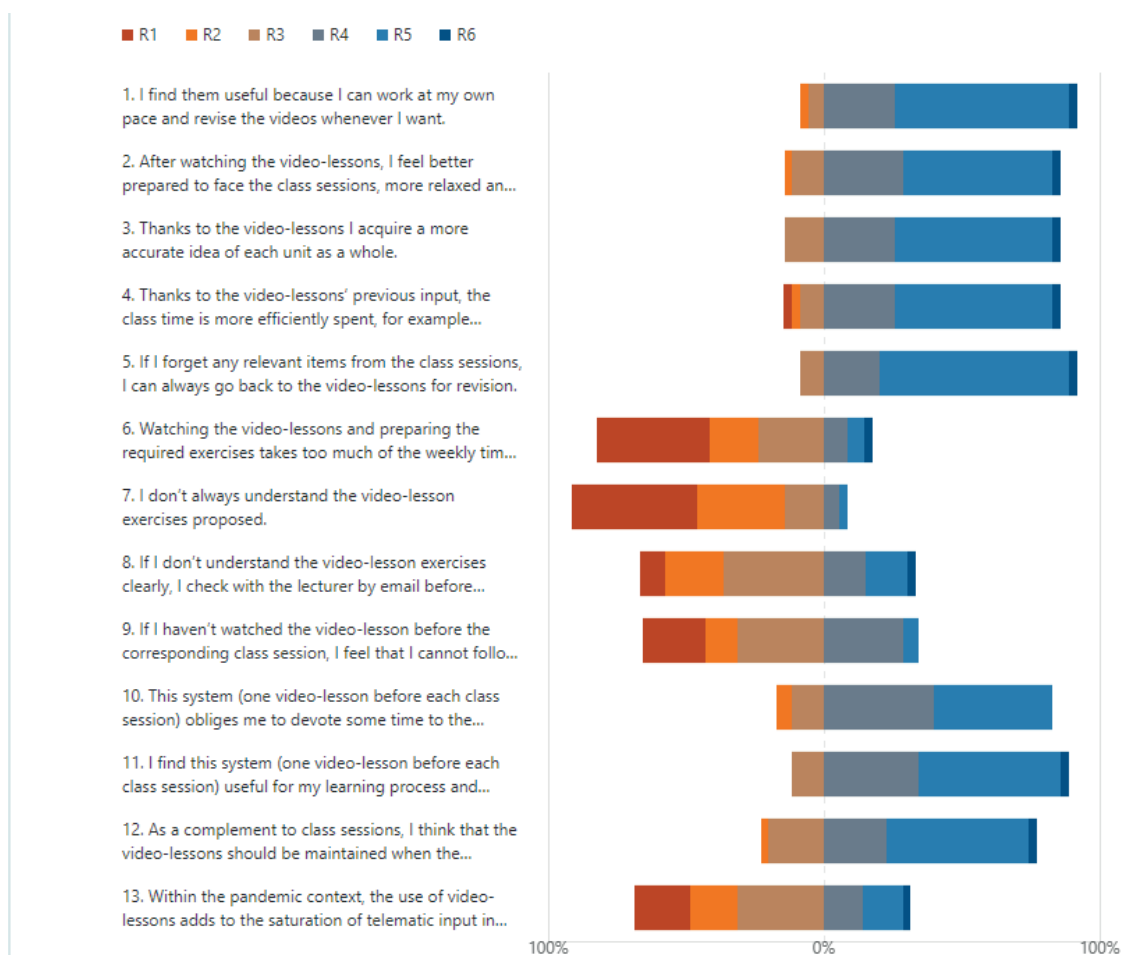


TABLE 1: STATISTICAL SUMMARY

<i>Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I find them useful because I can work at my own pace and revise the videos whenever I want.	4.57	5	5	0.77
2. After watching the video lessons, I feel better prepared to face the class sessions, more relaxed, and more willing to participate.	4.43	5	5	0.84
3. Thanks to the video lessons I acquired a more accurate idea of each unit.	4.49	5	5	0.77
4. Thanks to the video lessons' previous input, the class time is more efficiently spent, for example solving queries or doing more oral practice.	4.40	5	5	0.99
5. If I forget any relevant items from the class sessions, I can always go back to the video lessons for revision.	4.66	5	5	0.67
6. Watching the video lessons and preparing the required exercises takes too much of the weekly time I mean to spend on this course.	2.29	1	2	1.38
7. I don't always understand the video lesson exercises proposed.	1.89	1	2	1.04
8. If I don't understand the video lesson exercises clearly, I check with the lecturer by email before completing them.	3.15	3	3	1.26
9. If I haven't watched the video lesson before the corresponding class session, I feel that I cannot follow the class properly.	2.83	3	3	1.23
10. This system (one video lesson before each class session) obliges me to devote some time to the subject on a weekly basis.	4.20	5	4	0.86
11. I find this system (one video lesson before each class session) useful for my learning process and learning autonomy.	4.46	5	5	0.73
12. As a complement to class sessions, I think that the video lessons should be maintained when the pandemic context finishes, that is, when we go back to full face-to-face lessons.	4.31	5	5	0.92
13. Within the pandemic context, the use of video lessons adds to the saturation of telematic input in the student's academic routine. In this regard, I consider them counter-productive.	2.94	3	3	1.39

Further specific information about students' assessment is drawn from a closer inspection of the rating obtained per item. Respondents showed the greatest agreement with items 1 and 5, which both got 91.4% of conformity. Precisely these items attempted to measure students' satisfaction with respect to the personal pace at which they can work on the materials and the chance to go back to the video lesson to revise the contents. The results are in alignment with comparable previous studies (Kay, 2012; Turan & Cetintas, 2020) where having control over learning pace and compensation for missed content are found as sound reasons for students to use asynchronous video lessons.

Notwithstanding the assumption that students may not follow the class properly if they had skipped the corresponding introductory video lesson, results revealed a more dispersed opinion (SD 1.23) about such an idea, conveyed in item 9, with which 65.7% of respondents did not agree and 34.3% agreed. Although ignoring a video lesson may make students not follow the subsequent class properly, it would not be considered a hindrance to understanding the development and content of the session. The pre-instructional asynchronous video lesson brings up the related matter so that students can achieve a greater understanding and get the most out of the synchronous part. Consequently, missing the introductory video lesson would lead to omitting an important stage of the learning process that the teacher has to retrace and compensate for in the class.

In contrast, respondents perceived quite positively the activation of the prior knowledge and previous input facilitated by the video lesson, so they were prone to feel better prepared to face the class sessions (item 2) and participate more actively in class (item 4). In this vein, the introduction of asynchronous video lessons has turned out to be an asset to pave the way for content comprehension, boost self-confidence, and encourage participation in an active learning environment.

In general, the teaching experience has provided students with a more accurate idea of each unit, according to the rating in item 3. Results also indicate that students used to understand the exercises proposed (item 7). The combination of both items suggests that students seem to be aware of the significance of the course routines, that is, video lessons, class, final written assignments, and teacher's attention, and find them meaningful for their learning process.

Regarding the perception of the workload that this system entails for learners, item 6 introduces the topic as a burden higher than what it is expected to be assumed per week, whereas item 10 revolves around the obligation to watch and work on the video lesson every week to keep track of the subject and avoid cramming at the end of the course. SD score for item 6 (1.38) shows a greater variety of opinions, although the balance is inclined toward disagreement. Together with the scores in item 10, it may be drawn that the workload is not perceived as exceeding the ordinary amount considered for the development of the subject, although students are sensitive to the fact that a weekly dedication to the course is required for their own sake.

In this questionnaire, item 8 sought some feedback about the support offered by the lecture during the asynchronous step of the experience. The first part of the sentence (If I do not understand the video lesson) conditions the main clause (I check with the lecturer by

email before completing them), so the lecturer's attention is conditioned by a difficulty in understanding. Therefore, the item narrowed down the assessment to those cases where there was a particular doubt to clear. There exists a possibility that some students had questions but did not e-mail the teachers. However, this aspect was not considered in the survey.

The three last items closing the questionnaire are grouped since they inquired directly about the usefulness of the system (item 11), its maintenance after the pandemic (item 12), and its possible negative effect caused by adding extra telematic input (item 13). Items 11 and 12 got very similar scores revealing a positive outlook of the experience. On the one hand, in item 11 most students acknowledged the usefulness of the system for their learning process and learning autonomy, as observed in similar language teaching experiences carried out in Higher Education settings (Mahmood, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020).

Under these parameters, using asynchronous video lessons, apart from fulfilling their main goal of providing supplementary teaching in a bid to adapt to educational restrictions in COVID times, has successfully managed to enhance learner's autonomy. University students, today more than ever, are required to take control and responsibility for their learning, and the course approach has fostered students' commitment in that respect. On the other hand, in item 12, students manifested a strong support for the maintenance of asynchronous video lessons after the pandemic restrictions had been lifted.

Nevertheless, the fact that the material was electronically supplied in a situation where all teaching took place online may contribute to an overload in student's academic routines. In this respect, the results for item 13 disclosed a broader range of respondents' ratings (1.39 SD top value). The balance is inclined towards 69% disagreement versus 31% agreement, that is, students do not seem to be exposed to an excess of video-teaching exposure, but a score of 3 in the mode may be significant of a certain perception of feeling overwhelmed.

Finally, as regards the last section introduced after the questionnaire so that students could add any comment about the experience, we only obtained four comments that we quote next:

- 'I think that the video lessons are a good complement to the class session, whether face-to-face or online. They cannot replace the class, but they enrich its content and learning objectives. They help understand the course structure, the key contents, and the crucial parts required for evaluation.'
- 'Thank you for being such a dedicated teacher for your students, both in the classes and in the video lessons. I appreciate it fully. Thank you.'
- 'The videos are very useful; they should stay even without the pandemic.'
- 'The subject has been very well organized, both its contents and the time required for the subject. Having the chance to keep the videos and review the content at any time is very useful for our learning.'

Unfortunately, no more students decided to introduce a free comment about their level of satisfaction. Despite the limited contribution of this section, the students' positive response to the video lessons can be traced in two main aspects: a) it helps them deal with the subject in a more organized, autonomous way than before; and b) it increases the feeling of having supportive instructors, what influences their level of commitment. All in all, on account of the results obtained in the survey, the findings of the present study reveal a high rate of acceptance and satisfaction concerning video lessons.

CONCLUSION

The present study is logically limited by the urgent circumstances that propitiated it. In that sense, it echoes the worldwide response that instructors have been able to provide, with the help of IT experts, for an unprecedented global teaching emergency, no less than the favourable attitude of the students towards such global solutions quickly implemented under the risks of a lost year. For a more accurate assessment of the activity, however, it would be necessary to repeat the questionnaire throughout successive academic years and courses and, if possible, free from the pressure of the pandemic crisis. Furthermore, a comparison between this and other similar experiences in ESP courses, together with a more global focus on how this methodology is applied in university courses other than the language ones, would be desirable.

Video lessons within the larger pattern of online/blended/asynchronous learning have already been in use since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Kay, 2012), although their widespread implementation began during the COVID crisis. What this and similar surveys examine is, in essence, which of the elements of an ESP course designed under the requirements of introductory video lessons are mostly appreciated by students, and therefore susceptible to be further deployed in any changing teaching circumstances.

This exploratory study was performed as a purposeful tool to make teachers reflect on the student's response and consider it to inform future teaching. Surprisingly enough, the methodology newly implemented in the technical English course has enhanced crucial teaching/learning values in the form of students' engagement and autonomy, while maintaining constant teaching support through technical assistance. This way, other relevant factors such as the instructor's rapport (Claessens et al. 2016; Nguyen, 2007) not only did not experience a reduction but, on the contrary, were more easily acknowledged by students. For further benefits to be more specifically measured (i.e. those pertinent to academic achievement), a larger comprehensive study should trace the learning outcomes concerning the different skills introduced and assessed within the course. Nevertheless, an initial connection between engagement and positive results can already be derived from the present study.

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WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF WORDS. VALUES AND ATTITUDES TRANSMITTED THROUGH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Language is alive, and it has been changing through the centuries, because of societal development. The dynamic in social affairs reflects the language, as well as new words and expressions, that have been adopted. The interaction between human development and language enrichment is a two-way process. On one hand, people have enlarged their language capacity with new meanings and expressions; but on the other hand, language transforms, keeps, and transfers existing attitudes and values. It becomes a very useful tool for keeping traditions, because language is, as Bourdieu says, an 'invisible net' that offers to ease of understanding of life that determines human actions. The studying of language is very important to understand the dominant values of certain societies and how they have changed.

Language offers accessible schemes of thinking and visualization; so, if we change the way we express ourselves, we could change the way we see the world.

This paper presents the results of a survey on the language in the example of Bulgarian public speech in social media and articles published in the popular magazine Woman Today. The object of the survey is the language used to describe women. The attitudes and values are coded in the language and our analysis of it could help us to fight stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination based on gender.

INTRODUCTION

The study of messages posted in social media and magazines is important because they are meaning-laden and reflect socially shared attitudes and values of a certain society. Joan Scott believes that the study of discursive practices and language provides insight into the historical process of constructing subjective and collective meanings. The relationship between text and context, therefore, reflects the historical and social changes embodied in communication between individuals. Michel Foucault (1969) defines discourse as a way of talking about things within a particular institutional sphere: family, school, or hospital. In each situation, the use of language is subject to specific rules (discourse practices) that concern the right to generate and perceive utterances, to talk about certain topics, to use certain words, and to use linguistic expressions of a certain type. The types of discourses themselves are appreciated as social mechanisms that regulate the generation and dissemination of knowledge, beliefs, and ideological positions, impose certain ways of talking about things, and, through this, ways of thinking about them. The aim of this paper is to show what values, messages, and stereotypes are conveyed through language in social media posts and the magazine Woman Today.

The information we get from the analysis of different materials gives us information about the way opinions, attitudes, and specific social habitus are formed and construct a collective memory [memoria]. The attitude according to which the heterogeneous artefacts of visual communication are conceptualised not as mere analogues of reality, but in terms of their immanent strategies: to select [inventio], reorganise [disposito], modify [elocutio], and present [actio] information.

The used images and words represent the duality of a real and the desired state. The mirror through which they are viewed corresponds to the imposed and/or expected attitudes of the population. The way attitudes are formed is shaped along these lines. The language used to write articles and reports can be described as value-norming, reaffirming existing stereotypical notions. Images are not a reflection of reality: they create their own 'visual mythology'. In the complex relationship between power and journalism, apart from being a mediator, the latter plays the role of a myth-strengthening factor. One sees the drive to ennoble and change social reality, but in the end, it is not the actual but the visual, the ideal image, the substitute image that is imposed as the true one, constructed in such a way as to suggest social activism and optimism.

Keywords: *women, language, stereotype, discrimination, survey*

METHOD - DEFINITION OF LANGUAGE

Language is defined as a system of sounds and/or signs for encoding and decoding information. It is the primary means of communication between people. In addition to the transmission of specific information, language is also seen in a broader sense, encompassing the human cognitive faculty, in which the creation and use of systems of symbols, each of which associates a sign with a particular meaning established through social interactions, is also essential.

In the process of human communication, mechanisms for controlling social relations are generated, which in turn are modified through religious practices into values and attitudes that define what is and is not allowed. On the basis of a strict system of values that become embedded in language becomes embedded in people's minds and behavior.

Defining the concepts of value is a difficult process because of their broad and multilayered meanings. The needs of the present study require operationalising the two concepts in several ways without being an exhaustive and complete presentation.

In the various axiological theories, values are divided formally into positive and negative, relative and absolute, etc., and substantively into the material (the pleasant, the useful), the logical (the true), the ethical (the good), and the aesthetic (the beautiful); they also differ in the emotions associated with them, the nature and intensity of which vary with the type of evaluative attitude.

DEFINITION OF VALUES

A significant contribution to the development of the science of values was made by the Baden School of neo-Kantianism and, in particular, Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936). Rickert assumed that there is a fundamental difference between the world of culture, where the human soul and all intrinsically human manifestations are considered, and the world of nature. We can attribute the same thing both to the world of culture and to the world of nature, but in one case the scientist seeks some general law, rule, and in the other, the phenomenon is explained as unique, individual, not subject to one or another objective

scheme, based not on some general law but on a specific value. In this case, we are already dealing with a cultural phenomenon, with culture, which is not subject to natural-scientific explanatory schemes. The natural-scientific method is nomothetic (nomos), referring to the law, and the cultural-scientific method is individuating (individuum), referring to unique value. The first is objective, the second subjective.

José Ortega-Y-Gasset discusses the concept of value in his essay *Introduction to a Theory of Values*. He reflects on the meaning of values, whether something is valuable when it brings us pleasure and, respectively, has a negative value when it brings us inconvenience. Ortega thinks that value precedes the existence of pleasure and that is why it is recognised as valuable. Values have meaning and importance outside of and independent of their application to our goals, interests, and feelings. We come to recognise things as valuable without a desire to possess or use them.

Value presents itself as an objective characteristic, with positive and negative merit, which we recognise at the moment of evaluation. Valuation itself consists of the attribution of value contained in the object itself. Value manifests itself as a property of things. They are unreal objects contained in real objects and things through their properties. Appreciation of value is possible not on the basis of external features such as colour, shape, etc., but through reason. Subjectivity in evaluation is then already possible (José Ortega y Gasset, 1993).

On the basis of the various theoretical developments, the following clarifications can be made about the nature of the values appropriate for their empirical study.

Values are ideas (conceptions) that exist in the form of stable attitudes embodied in dominant tastes, styles, fashions, etc. Individual consciousness assimilates values by transforming their content according to its particular intellectual and emotional experience.

Values include in their content three organically interwoven components - the notion of the object of the assessment, the subject's own needs, and the importance of the object in satisfying the subject's needs.

Values change over time because they are related to the dynamics of worldview orientations, human needs, and the conditions for their satisfaction (natural, social, technological), which raises the problem of the authenticity of 'eternal' and 'immutable' values (Kondev and Pavlova, 2016).

METHOD

The study of values is important in order to be able to track the changes occurring in social relations. One way to capture these changes is through language and its use.

The method used for analysis in this study is critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis proposes that social representations can be understood as constructed linguistic practices that help construct meanings and reproduce social positions (Stajewska, 2007).

Norman Fairclough, in his Critical Discourse Analysis approach, considers 'language as a form of social practice rather than a purely individual activity or a reflection of situational variables.' He assumes that there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure, i.e., on the one hand, discourse is shaped and constrained by social structure, and on the other hand, it is socially constructed (Vassileva, 2009). The meanings and senses of social practice continue to be reproduced in and through language practices.

DISCUSSION: MESSAGES CONVEYED THROUGH THE MAGAZINE 'WOMAN TODAY' AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Analysis of articles published in the magazine Woman Today

Woman Today is the oldest Bulgarian magazine, published continuously since October 1945 until today. Its long life gives researchers the opportunity to trace the changes occurring in Bulgarian society during different historical periods.

Initially, the aim of the magazine was to meet 'the needs of women in cultural and educational terms'. In 1945, the magazine had a circulation of 20,000, which increased dramatically in the following years, 50,000 in 1950 and 260,000 in 1958, in 1967 the circulation was 300,000, and in 1970 326,420 with the Russian language edition (Българска жена) reaching 70,000 and in the 1980s reaching a circulation of 500,000 (Nazarska, 2007). Now the magazine reaches its readers in electronic and paper versions.

The analysis of the materials shows a clear trend for the specificity of the journal. Since the audience is mainly female, the materials are aimed at them. The columns are devoted to activities that are traditionally attributed to women and consequently, they prefer them. Most of the published articles are related to beauty tips, health advice, diets, home and child care, fashion tips, and cooking recipes. In recent years, the magazine has been enriched with columns such as Vagina's Monologues, The Little Prince, The Man Today, Money in the Feminine, and Sixth Sense.

The words we find in publications describing women are nuanced in two extremes: feminine and masculine. Feminine expressions describe women as angels, emotional, fragile, gentle, caring mother, devoted wife/partner, homemaker, good friend, thoughtful colleague, inspired artist, courageous entrepreneur, smiling neighbour, patient relative, amateur gardener, volunteer, giver,....and on and on.

The authors advise women to think about themselves and to do what they want, and what makes them happy.

Association of women with masculine means of expression is achieved through using the words of 'success, entrepreneurship, business, and strength'.

Each issue of the magazine provides readers with an opportunity to meet a successful woman. Interviews with Bulgarian women, who are developing in different fields of life, are published. The used expressions show the attitudes that are shared by society. A successful woman, to be so, needs to be successful as a mother and wife. Success appears to be

a consequence of strength derived from the basic female function – the family. I achieved everything thanks to ‘drawing support from my family’ is a common expression that women say. Their success is viewed as a collective one, not as personal.

Self-fulfilment passes through the prism of work-life balance. Special attention is paid to women’s professional fulfillment. The magazine pays special attention to women entrepreneurs. Advice is given on choosing an accountant for one’s business, it also provides information about competitions, or and any events from the business world with a focus on women.

It is interesting that the most commonly used word is happiness. The woman is the seeker of happiness, the giver of happiness, the happy woman, the agent of happiness, and the fulfiller of dreams.

The concept of happiness includes the search for a suitable partner. Provocative is the idea presented of finding the right partner as a goal, especially reasonably thought out.

Some materials emphasis the connection between our childhood traumas and the way they impact our lives. There is a section that offers a discussion with a psychologist. Everyone could ask a question or describe her/his problem and ask for help. Each issue puts different burning issues in society to psychological perusal.

In comparison, the published materials during the period of socialism emphasis the development of the ‘new man’. The format for presenting the topics discussed is interesting. They are mainly presented in the form of readers’ letters or personal stories, accounts, and memories. The use of personal stories aims at showing truthfulness and intimacy. Through personal example, it is easier to give advice and impart attitudes. These forms also prompt trust and other readers to share and seek advice from the editors, respectively the Party. In this way, people’s emotions and fears are captured and begin to be modelled.

The means of expression used are subordinated to the literary Bulgarian language, and periodically expressions such as ‘thanks to the party’, ‘for the sake of the future’, ‘for the new man’, ‘the next five years (petiletka)’ and other slogans that refer to the promised better future appear. The ideological imperative of modernisation is linked to the rejection of patriarchal normativity and the associated construction of a feminine-male identity, which necessitates a change in the behavioural patterns of both men and women.

The new value attitudes that we find relate primarily to children, the development of relationships with them, and educational measures. We notice a change in attitudes towards sexuality, divorce, and the search for happiness. On these topics, attitudes are bipolar. On the one hand, the idea of the individual as a value is enforced, but on the other hand, personal choice is treated as a prerequisite for a threat to the collective, and for this reason, certain actions continue to be condemned. Attitudes towards divorce and free sexuality are chastised as much on ideological grounds, as on traditional ones (Pavlova:2018).

The comparison between these two completely difficult periods shows how attitudes are transmitted through language and could influence people’s behaviour and their way of acceptance.

ANALYSIS OF ARTICLES AND POSTS PUBLISHED ON FACEBOOK

The social network of choice for analytics is Facebook because it has the most users and allows for the maintenance of pages with different content. The research done shows several main categories eliciting comments. The main themes are childbirth and parenthood, abortion, appearance, and professional realization.

The posts and comments under them on the topic of parenthood and motherhood are the most numerous. From the analysis of the language in the posts, it is clear that the imposition of childbirth and childrearing is the most important duty of women.

Interesting rhetoric is used when talking about motherhood. Motherhood as 'happiness, amazing experience, boundless love' is a summary of personal experience; there is also the external appreciation as 'great women have always given birth to children in this great land of Bulgaria!' Consciously or unconsciously, motherhood, this personal moment, is linked to the common – the nation.

There has been a linking of femininity with motherhood and a reaffirmation of its value as an essential factor of female existence. Lack of motherhood is partial and/or incomplete femininity. The voluntary renunciation of motherhood is very difficult to be accepted. Such a 'choice' is unacceptable and the reasons for it are summarised as personal characteristics – 'abnormal', 'selfish', or as a means of concealing the physical impossibility of becoming a mother.

As a result of the high prestige of motherhood, all topics related to reproductive, sexual, and biological rights pertaining to the female body are subject to serious debate and discussion.

The comments highlight the clear trend that women are to be blamed for the low birth rate in the country. Their desire to educate, work, and fulfil themselves outside the family, denying the values of 'our ancestors', is the reason for the negative growth of the country. Men are excused because they are 'stressed', and not provided with 'decent and well-paid jobs'.

Standards of beauty, with appearance assigned to it, is a common theme. Articles on diets, beauty tips, looking for recommendations for hairdressers, beauticians, etc., are among the main publications.

Negative attitudes towards overweight women continue to be perpetuated, including by women themselves. If globally (or at least in the Western world) prejudices regarding plump female forms are being fought, in our country it remains a cause for rude and insulting comments. Attitudes about women's skills and appearance (particularly the shapes and weights of the female body) are reproduced. 'It's one thing to feel comfortable in your body, it's quite another to claim you can be an overweight dancer...if her message is that any chubby girl can make a professional dancer, then all she's doing is providing work for psychotherapists' [1].

Such criticisms of women who don't maintain their bodies are reinforced by articles and

the comments under them about 'the jeans of our youth' and whether they still care for themselves. The tendency to link restrictions on the female body to the issue of health is interesting. We don't deny the link of some diseases to being overweight, but here we are talking more about overlays of 'concern' for the female body, while there is no similar thought towards male well-being.

The presence of an article about the relationship between tattoos and motherhood is also impressive. Women's comments, accompanied by pictures, prove that having tattoos may not prevent them from being mothers. Such stereotypes of the female body are commensurate with those of the Middle Ages, where illiteracy and strong religiosity of the people were the cause. But what explanation can there be nowadays, when the level, at least officially, of literacy is high and that of religiosity is low?

Despite the negative comments about women's appearance, they are nothing compared to the attitude toward women's sexuality and the topic of abortion. On the one hand, the absence of sexual culture and familiarity stands out; on the other hand, the treatment of women as sexual objects rather than partners is revealed. The male comments (with male pictures and names/avatars) are vulgar to women. The women's comments are mainly related to 'the lack of real men', to which other women respond 'I am my own princess – I love my role as a woman and I have a real man by my side' [2].

In recent commentaries, we find the traditional attitudes - about 'real' men and 'real' women. These 'real' characters point to those traditional roles recognised as valuable and their change and/or disappearance is exposed as a decline.

The topic of abortion and reproductive rights as a cause of the nation's decline is an often-exploited topic and abounds in a commentary that could be broadly divided into condemnatory and understanding. Understanding comments aim to support the woman in her decision. 'You'll get over it once you've made that decision – it was the right one for at the time, I suppose.' The question of guilt is raised 'Will you forgive yourself for it?' and many of the responses are that the pain remains forever 'there's hardly a day that goes by that I don't think about that'. Many of the comments are about sharing experiences and the pain endured. The judgmental comments are refracted through the prism of murder, morality, and religiosity. 'It's a sin', 'If you got pregnant voluntarily with a healthy child, you are just deciding to kill an innocent person who is paying with her life your mistake. I am amazed that you would publish such an article justifying cold-blooded murder.'[3]

Opponents of abortion, mainly women, use traditional arguments to defend their thesis. The criticism is directed only at women; men are not at fault. They are wrong, but their responsibility is again transferred to women. The use of religious rhetoric about "sin, soul" and abortion as murder is intended to reinforce the reproach against women.

Women's rights advocates are convinced that 'Abortion is a personal choice and should be. A partner or politics cannot monopolies a woman's body!'

CONCLUSION

The study of language allows us to trace the imposition and change of existing values in society. The analysis of publications in magazines and social networks allows for building a picture of the words used to describe women. In conclusion, we can highlight some trends, without claiming to be exhaustive and generalised, regarding the image of Bulgarian women. The words we find in publications describing women are nuanced at two extremes: feminine and masculine. Feminine expressions describe women as angels, emotional, fragile, gentle, "caring mother, devoted wife/partner, homemaker, good friend, thoughtful colleague, inspired artist, courageous entrepreneur, smiling neighbor, patient relative, amateur gardener, volunteer, giver.... and on and on.

The authors advise women to think about themselves and to do what they want and what makes them happy.

The association of women with masculine means of expression is achieved through using the words of success, entrepreneurship, business, and strength.

The comments under social media posts represent an interesting mix of positive and negative words, which in turn create conditions for the reinforcement of existing values.

Women's individuality is not questioned, and the sense of choice and equality is widespread, but in the comments under various threads, we find the hidden, deep-rooted mental patterns of thinking, perceiving, and interpreting the world around us. The traditional functions of motherhood continue to be reproduced as part of being a woman. The questions dealing with the relationship to the body again show a traditional understanding of issues such as abortion and the physical appearance of the body. The arguments used to defend traditional values are morality, religiosity, and homeland. In the topics discussed and the comments made on women's rights many of the women commenting asserted the right to individual choice without consideration of family/external environment. On the topic of motherhood, there seems to be a consensus on its value.

To summarise, we can say that women exist in a world of words that describe them in traditional roles such as mothers and wives, but also modern roles such as entrepreneurs and businesswomen.

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE – AN INTER- CULTURAL AND INTERDISCI- PLINARY PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

The new Erasmus+ project line, 'Blended Intensive Programme' (BIP) provides lecturers and students with an easily accessible and versatile option to integrate short-term mobility and international experience, even for students with limited mobility. As this is a newly introduced programme line, it is essential to conduct research to evaluate its potential, effectiveness, and scope.

The BIP 'Sustainability and Climate Change' was hosted by the Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen (THM University of Applied Sciences) in Gießen, Germany, in collaboration with the International Balkan University in Skopje, North Macedonia, Tallinna Tehnika Kõrgkool in Tallin, Estonia, and Vilnius Tech in Vilnius, Lithuania. This programme was open to students from all disciplines, aiming to explore the potential of sustainability in their respective fields, develop their intercultural competence, and experience their self-efficacy in using English as a lingua franca. Students were tasked with analysing sustainability and climate change in their respective disciplines. The participating lecturers provided guidance on group dynamics and collaboration, both in-person and virtually.

To assess the effectiveness of the BIP, reflections on the intended learning outcomes in the mentioned areas were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis employed deductive main categories and inductively developed subcategories.

The research findings suggest that, overall, students are able to achieve the stated learning goals. However, there is notable variation in the specific goals they attain and in the extent to which they meet these objectives. In this exploratory study, the focus is mainly centred on the learning goals and the degree to which they are attained, rather than assessing the individual student's level of achievement or the specific combination of goals they accomplish.

Another focus is the identification of further research needed to explore and enhance this new programme line.

Keywords: Short-term mobility, intercultural competence, sustainability, interdisciplinary learning

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH INTEREST

BLENDING INTENSIVE PROGRAMME

The project 'International Perspectives on Sustainability and Climate Change' is financed by a new Erasmus+ programme line called 'Blended intensive programme' (BIP) (DAAD, 2023). This programme supports short-term mobility ranging from five to thirty days and

a virtual phase that can either precede the mobility or, as in this case, takes place after meeting at the host university. As a minimum requirement, three partner universities have to cooperate, and students meet at the host university, all aiming to receive at least three ECTS points. Erasmus supports individual student travel and supports the programme at the host university by granting overhead costs that cover on-site expenses.

The main objectives of the BIP, as stated by the EU/Erasmus + programme, are to provide mobility opportunities to students who may not be able to participate in more extensive exchange programmes and to encourage lecturers to collaborate with their counterparts from other universities abroad in developing learning content. BIPs can be integrated into or complement existing curricula (European Commission, 2023).

The language centre and the unit responsible for transferrable skills, both parts of the Department of Management and Communication, initiated the BIP at the THM University of Applied Sciences. As both units offer courses to all students of the university, the BIP is intended to be open to students from all disciplines. Sustainability and climate change are cross-cutting and intersectional topics relevant to every field of study, making them suitable topics for such a broad range of students.

Due to this breadth, sustainability was initially addressed on a general level, with the task of providing more detailed and discipline-specific considerations of sustainability allocated to the students. Further foci of the programme included developing language learning skills, intercultural competence and (virtual) teamwork.

There were ten spots available for each participating university resulting in ten groups of four students, with one student representing each university. For the distribution of students from each university see Table 1.

University	THM	IBU	TTK	Vilnius Tech
No of students	5	8	10	10
No of lecturers	2	2	2	2
Academic background of lecturers ¹	Lecturer for English for special purposes and Spanish Lecturer for economics, business administration and statistics	Business administration	Lecturer of transferrable skills (communication, creativity, cooperation, public speaking), lecturer of economics	Creative industries, languages and learning techniques

Table 1: De facto distribution of participants

¹ Degree programmes of students are not indicated to guarantee the anonymity of the students.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EUROPEAN VALUES

The intended learning outcomes primarily focus on intercultural and interdisciplinary encounters, as well as on using English in an academic context, alongside reflecting on the relevance of sustainability in each respective discipline.

Regarding interdisciplinary encounters, the focus was on general knowledge about sustainability and climate change, and comparing students' academic backgrounds regarding these two aspects. Students were expected to develop their disciplinary understanding of sustainability and climate change, comparing it to its relevance in other disciplines. Various lecturers and field trips provided input and insight into general aspects of sustainability and how different disciplinary approaches to the topic. Students had to apply this knowledge to their study programmes and reflecting on the relevant aspects of sustainability and climate change within their academic field.

Working in heterogeneous teams with diverse cultural and academic backgrounds exposed students to different perspectives on sustainability and climate change. This exposure aimed to broaden their horizons and sharpen their view on of their field of study and future professions.

In terms of intercultural competence, students were expected to develop their teamwork skills, focusing on awareness of problems that could arise due to culturally different approaches to the tasks, perspectives on the main topic, and teamwork both locally and in the virtual environment.

The third intended learning outcome was to develop strategies for language learning and language use in the context of academic English. Given the varying language levels of students, it was not feasible to focus on specific aspects of language use. However, students learned how to develop strategies to prepare for language use at their levels in an academic context, experiencing self-efficacy in their language use.

These learning outcomes align with European aims and values as they promote mutual cultural and disciplinary understanding and thus democracy and equality. On a more specific level, the Erasmus Plus goals are rooted in European objectives and values. They emphasise the importance of 'strengthening European identity and active citizenship', both of which are fundamental to the BIP on sustainability and climate change.

Moreover, it is essential to explore how the project caters to the perspective of the conference 'Inter/Multiculturalism in a Post Colonial Era: Languages and European Values'. In particular, inter- and multiculturalism, as well as languages and European values, are of interest here.

FOCUS OF THIS PAPER AND RESEARCH INTEREST

The questions towards the project that should be answered by the aligning research aim towards the aspects mentioned above. How does the project promote the development of intercultural competence and hence mutual understanding on both personal professional

levels? Furthermore, the exploration of the reflections should provide information on the development of language awareness and/or the learner autonomy concerning language learning.

Another pivotal question refers to the development of professional identity among learners regarding the role of sustainability and climate change in their respective disciplines. The research should offer insight into challenges that should be addressed for the next implementation of the project. Regarding broader relevance beyond the project, this paper is poised to explore initial tendencies regarding whether such a setup would lead to competence growth and identify areas requiring further research.

The following sections describe the various components of the project, as well as the underlying theoretical background and the research methods.

SCHEDULE

According to the Erasmus Blended Intensive Programme guidelines, the BIP organised by THM consisted of a five-day mobility phase in Giessen followed by four-week a virtual phase. During the virtual phase, students were expected to organise themselves and work on their assignments (see below for details). Within this period, students were encouraged to contact lecturers for clarification on assignments or to address team-related issues. However, there was no structured support provided during the virtual phase.

The schedule for the week in Giessen (Table 2) shows the activities and tasks that were initiated to promote competence development in accordance with the intended learning outcomes (see above). The following table gives a detailed overview of the week.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	Kick-off: The topic of the week getting to know each other Group formation Getting to know team members	English language use in a scientific context Language learning strategies Collaboration in interdisciplinary environments	Impact of climate change on economy, society, and businesses, carbon tax efficiency	Sustainability at THM Sustainability in a newly built neighbourhood (FlexQuartier), a research project by THM and the city of Gießen (on-site)	Field trip to Grube Fortuna, Solms-Oberbiel Sustainability and structural change

Afternoon	Working on aspects of sustainability in the newly established teams	Online collaboration tools and work organisation	Case study on sustainability	Sustainability in the city of Gießen, carbon neutrality by 2035	
Responsible university	TTK, THM	Vilnius Tech, THM	IBU, TTK	THM	THM

Table 2: Schedule of the week at THM

The first two days of the week in Giessen were dedicated to fostering a conducive working environment. Students were supported in forming teams and considering intercultural aspects. This phase enabled students to familiarise themselves with each other's backgrounds and develop an understanding of diverse perspectives on sustainability. The tasks assigned aimed to educate students on teamwork dynamics and prompt their application of this knowledge. Furthermore, students were encouraged to reflect on the challenges of working together in an intercultural and interdisciplinary environment.

Regarding language learning, the heterogeneous English proficiency levels of the participants had to be considered. Consequently, it was not possible to focus on specific language phenomena. Instead, emphasis was placed on elucidating language learning strategies in the context of academic language use and the experience of self-efficacy. As a result, students of all language proficiency levels could improve their language skills and benefit from input on both higher and lower language levels.

On the following day, students received input on the economic aspects of sustainability and climate change, representing a disciplinary approach towards the topic.

On Thursday students got an insight into sustainability on different levels of society. Those three engagements provided practical insights into the topic. At the institutional level, THM showed their sustainability initiatives while discussions at the urban planning level underscored the role of science in urban development. Additionally, students were given an overview of the measures taken to become carbon-emission free by 2035 by the city.

The excursion on Friday to a mine shed light on the effects of structural change on the economic and social aspects in the region. Although the mine was not closed for sustainability or climate protection reasons, it served as a poignant illustration of the ramifications of jobs losses and the decline of a whole industry on a region and its people.

The lectures delivered on Wednesday were the only ones that adopted a disciplinary approach towards sustainability and climate change. Further, the visit to the FlexQuartier also had scientific input but served more as an example for the implementation of specific measures than as a scientific input.

It was the students' responsibility to integrate the new information into their previous knowledge and the context of their disciplines.

ASSIGNMENTS

To show that students achieved the intended learning outcomes, a series of assignments were outlined, catering to all students regardless of their proficiency levels in English.

Students were required to complete three tasks, two of which were group tasks and the third was a reflection on personal competence development. The products of the two group assignments required the production of a video and a poster on a topic related to sustainability and climate change. Further, the topic should integrate the students' different disciplines and perspectives on sustainability and climate change. Additionally, the groups were mandated to condense the video content onto a poster.

These tasks, focusing on a single topic, necessitated extensive discussion, reflection, and compromise within the groups, thereby facilitating rich intercultural and interdisciplinary encounters.

Considering the different English proficiency levels, a written summary was omitted, with the assumption that students with lower levels of English would contribute more to a video than to a written text. This approach aimed to mitigate the tendency for higher proficiency students to monopolise written tasks and potentially sideline those with lower language ability.

The two formats catered to the varying preferences and abilities of the students. Initially, the students engaged in whole-group discussions of the content. In the final stage, instead of limiting involvement to one or two students who were proficient in the language and video editing, the entire group could again divide the work to produce two representations of the content with different demands on technical and language skills.

Corresponding tasks in class facilitated the development of individual professional perspectives and the discussion on sustainability and climate change. This was accompanied by the lecturers who elicited answers and ideas in the different groups when necessary.

The grading rubric for the video sums up to a total of 40 points with the main aspects including content (9 points), visualisation (8 points), added value for the audience (7 points), language and structure (6 points each), sources and time management (2 points each). For the poster, the grading rubric contained 30 points, divided between structure and visual presentation 1 (9 points each), visual presentation 2 (8 points), documentation of sources and spelling and grammar (2 points each). Visual Presentation 1 and Visual Presentation 2 differed in terms of the overall arrangement of graphics and text on the one hand, and readability (font size, colours, etc.) on the other.

The reflection was an individual task and constituted 30% of the total mark. The assignment explicitly stated the aspects that students were expected to reflect on (see below). The reflection which was graded, was underpinned by a rubric which focused mainly on the depth and comprehensiveness of the reflection. The categories of the rubric centred on reflective thinking: whether the student explained their thought process and discerned implications for the future (10 points), analysis: conducting an in-depth analysis of the

learning experience and its value for oneself and the group, thereby increasing the student's appreciation of the discipline as well as intercultural cooperation (8 points). The third category referred to the connections that students were able to make between the learning experience of the course and past (learning/life) experiences and/or future goals (8 points). Spelling and grammar were worth 2 points of the assessment.

Students always had access to all the grading rubrics. Grading rubrics served as an addition to the task description to clarify our expectations.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge of the project lay in the heterogeneous nature of the group. Students brought diverse backgrounds across various areas: their cultural backgrounds, fields of study, and their mastery of the English language. In addition, their depth of knowledge about sustainability and climate change, both in general and in their specialities, varied significantly. We anticipated the diversity across the respective domains and the learning outcomes were crafted in response to these challenges. We sought to offer learning opportunities for each student on their individual level. Our concept for the learning objectives (see above) gives further insights into how we dealt with this.

As mentioned above, due to the heterogeneous backgrounds and prior knowledge within the group, the topic remains on a superficial level; students were tasked with delving into the necessary depth in their disciplines. Therefore, students bore the responsibility for exploring the relevance of sustainability and climate change within their fields of study. The course design included tasks and exercises that motivated and guided students to engage in this activity.

Another challenge stemmed from the expectations of the students. Although the call for the programme clearly stated the intended learning outcomes, students expected in-depth instruction in the field of sustainability and climate change. Initially, they were not expected to take over responsibility for their learning regarding sustainability. Therefore, ILOs had to be communicated repeatedly.

The transition from on-site to the virtual setting marked another obstacle that required careful navigation. Students had to agree on rules and procedures to change from personal to virtual interaction, a process that required careful planning during the on-site meetings.

One further challenge of the project was the involvement of eight lecturers from the four participating universities. The THM lecturers who initiated the project proposed the topic, along with a request for participation. The general idea was to initiate a comparable intercultural experience for the lecturers, like the one the students would have. Each university contributed a unique aspect to achieve the learning objectives. Given that the professional backgrounds of the lecturers were as diverse as the students', this objective was easily accomplished. However, the program did not directly address the intercultural challenge and learning outcomes for the lecturers.

Moreover, compliance among students from Gießen, the host university, presented a noteworthy concern. The no-show rate of Gießen-students was 50%, with implications on several levels. Originally, host university students were slated to take over in the afternoons by showing guest students life in Germany. Since only five students from Germany were present, the single groups lacked the international heterogeneity initially envisaged.

Further, scheduling posed an administrative challenge, necessitated coordination across four different academic calendars. Successfully navigating this challenge required a lot of willingness to find a compromise and flexibility by all parties involved.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The intended learning outcomes (cf. above) aim at intercultural communication, the reflection on the relevance of sustainability and climate change in their own field of studies and in other disciplines, and the development of English, especially self-directed language learning strategies.

In a study on the ‘identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization’ (Deardorff, 2006) the author seeks to determine a definition for intercultural competence by using a questionnaire and a Delphi technique. While the statements led to a general definition which covered a great variety of aspects, the definition respondents could agree to (3.5 out of 4.0) was the one by Byram (1997)² :

‘Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others’ values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one’s self. Linguistic competence plays a key role.’

Although this definition dates back to 1997, it is still prevalent and covers the concept broadly, being sufficiently specific at the same time.

In general terms, intercultural competence is defined as the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people from different cultures, in ways that are appropriate to the cultural context and that promote positive outcomes for all parties involved. We consider intercultural competence as a concept including all types of competencies (personal/self-competence, social, professional and methodological) with their interdependent relationship, (Bolten, 2007:25) and (Erpenbeck, 2012:148)

This idea follows the definition of competence by the Kultusministerkonferenz (2017:4) which clearly shows the four areas of competencies: knowledge and understanding, use and creation of knowledge, communication and cooperation, and scientific self-concept and professionalism. The special focus of the “Qualifikationsrahmen für deutsche Hoch-

2 In the second edition of the book Byram (2021) expands this definition and puts a special focus on the role of foreign language teaching. However, for the purpose of this discussion, we will be referring to the definition from his publication in 1997, without placing excessive emphasis on the role of foreign language teaching as outlined in the second edition of Byram’s book (2021).

schulabschlüsse”³ is the development of an academic self-concept or an academic professionalism (Kultusministerkonferenz, 2017:4). One important goal of the programme was to promote a development in the students towards an understanding of the scope of sustainability in their field of studies. This goal contributes to the development of an academic self-concept.

Subsequently, this leads to the definition of interdisciplinary.⁴ For this study the characteristics of interdisciplinary that are analogous to interculturality are prevalent. As in interculturality, a fundamental prerequisite for interculturality is substantial knowledge about oneself/one’s own discipline. Then, a certain knowledge about and understanding of the other disciplines and their knowledge gain is fundamental. Furthermore, the representatives of different disciplines must be able to mediate between each other. This is not possible without a certain respect for each other’s values. Although interdisciplinarity can comprise of more aspects, the aforementioned are sufficient for the present study.

In terms of language learning, the primary aim is to support learner autonomy. As learner autonomy is a complex construct, only parts of it can be addressed in our BIP. Tassinari (2010b) and (2010a:123) state that learner autonomy is comprised of knowledge-based and action-oriented competencies. It is a meta-competency and learners combine different skills and competencies. During the project, learning strategies and dealing with fears and attitudes during foreign language production were at the centre. Those two are part of the bigger concept of learning autonomy (Tassinari, 2010a:126).

The mentioned aspects and definitions provide the deductive categories for the content analysis.

Deardorff (2006) points out that the assessment method ‘self-report instruments’ is one of the possible methods to assess students’ intercultural competence. Deardorff (2006:250) states that participants in her study highlight that a mix of several (qualitative and quantitative or triangulation) is adequate. While this study relies on reflections of students that are a ‘self-report instrument’, the study does not incorporate various assessment tools. The purpose therefore is of exploratory character to indicate whether it can be assumed that the BIP is appropriate to promote the development of the indicated ILOs.

TEXT CORPUS AND ANALYSING METHOD

The text corpus used for the analysis is comprised of the students’ reflections in the third assignment. It made up 30 % of the grade and was mandatory. Of the 34 participating students, 18 handed in a reflection. For the remaining 16 students, the missing reflection resulted in a reduction of the grade. The prompts related to the intended learning outcomes. The reflection delved into the advancement of intercultural competencies and the area of teamwork. Furthermore, students were expected to reflect on the role of sustainability in their fields of study. In terms of the English language, students reflected on

3 Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Degrees

4 For a comprehensive discussion on interdisciplinarity in general and in teaching see Philipp (2021).

the difference between scientific language in their mother tongue and English as well as how they applied English for special purposes. Moreover, students were expected to reflect on the challenges they encountered, both individually and within teams. Finally, students are required to elucidate their strategies for overcoming the challenges. The reflections were limited to 500 words with the shortest text has being 173 words, and the longest 500. On average, texts were 425 words long.

Given the small number of texts and their limited length, this analysis can only be explorative in nature. It aims to provide insights into whether the students developed toward the intended learning outcomes and identify possible sources/solutions to problems encountered.

The reflections of the students were analysed through qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2018). The a priori codes were based on the instructions in the assignment that again related closely to the intended learning outcomes (Biggs, Tang, 2011) and the theoretic reflections on intercultural competence, interdisciplinarity and learner autonomy as stated above. After coding the 18 reflections using the main codes, sub-codes were generated inductively. The analysis was carried out with MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020.

RESULTS

The content of the class did not extensively explore sustainability as a topic itself, rather the depth was influenced by the students' commitment and interest. The topic served as the vehicle to reach our learning goals in terms of intercultural learning, developing an understanding of one's own scientific identity, and the competence development in English as a foreign language. The analysis of the text concentrates on the three main intended learning outcomes and it highlights remarkable insights.

DISCIPLINARY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The reflections of the students clearly showed that knowledge about sustainability was very heterogeneous. The reflections showed four degrees of understanding of the relevance of sustainability and climate change in their respective disciplines.

Four students stated that they were engaged in studies such as environmental engineering, where sustainability and climate change were central. To them, the relevance of the topic lay at the heart of their studies. A second group showed a deep understanding of sustainability although their field of studies is not directly related to this topic. For example, careers in fashion and architecture. Another group of students did not know about the relevance of said topics for their discipline but stated that they started to reflect on it.

This group showed the biggest development in terms of adding a new perspective to their

disciplinary understanding. The following statement represents this group:⁵

'The topic of sustainability, sadly, is rarely discussed in my field of studies or social circle, so that was a big hole in my education that I always wanted to fill in, but always had excuses to save it for later. The structure of this project led me to finally gain knowledge about climate change or other environmental problems and the ways you can solve those issues.' (Stud #10)

Another student, who also belongs to this group stated:

'My field of study is robotics. During the project I realized the possibilities of the use of robotics in sustainability a lot more than I had before. Automation, which is a part of robotics as well, has great potential in reducing waste and increasing the efficient use of resources in today's world. I learned a whole lot of new words from the project as well - most of them related to sustainability.' (Stud #11)

A student who had no idea about sustainability and climate change in his field of study before the programme, and who saw no value in his future work, forms the fourth category and makes up the final group; this student remains at a superficial level. His lack of development is obvious:

'I'm a event engineer, it means that I'm studying everything, from electronics to construction and in every field sustainability is understood in different ways. In terms of events I am responsible for technical solutions, sound light and stage building, using reusable cups is my priority. In example, I need to plan acoustic solutions in a way, to use as less equipment as possible, because I can only be sustainable by using less electricity. Some principle applies in lighting as well. This means I need to utilise my surroundings, and sometimes untraditional solutions. In order to be successful, I need to be creative and think outside the box. [...] To conclude, sustainability has a really low priority in my field, mainly because we always use equipment which lasts decades and we almost never use anything which cannot be used again. Stages are modular and made from aluminum, all the pieces are made to last and can be used in all sorts of stages due to the modularity. Same goes to all the lights and sound equipment, everything costs multiple thousands of euros and we are thought from the very beginning to preserve and be careful with everything that we use because of that. It doesn't matter what you do, all of us need to preserve our planet and it will only get better if all of us participate, let's not waste duct tape and use more cable defenders, which aren't one time use. (Stud #9)'

The first two groups, with a good understanding of sustainability and climate change, could take on roles as experts and provide greater support for the whole group. However, noone from these groups complained about the responsibility they had to take over for in-depth content. The fourth group, showing no understanding of the relevance of the topic, must be addressed explicitly in future iterations of the programme to prevent this outcome.

5 Statements made by the students are quoted verbatim and are not linguistically corrected

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

The reflections provided a heterogeneous picture of the learning outcomes, challenges, and approaches toward intercultural competence.

In terms of the intercultural learning outcomes, some reflections clearly showed an awareness for and development of competence. Students mentioned the importance of understanding the group members' cultural backgrounds in depth. They also emphasized the enriching aspects of intercultural perspectives on sustainability and climate change. For instance, one student stated:

'Trying to listen, talk and work together was a really rewarding experience. Every person, especially from different cultures, has certain things that guide them while working and this is an invaluable experience. Understanding and comprehending how the other person's mind works and at the same time being able to properly communicate it considering these aspects, helps to better manage the tasks of group work both in Lithuania and in an intercultural environment.' (Stud #5)

This citation represents a deep reflection on the cultural influence on working and dealing with the tasks and interaction between group members. Another example that expresses a deep reflection on the intercultural encounter and measurements for good international teamwork is the following:

'This was possible, firstly, because talking about our backgrounds, our upbringing, and our interests helped us to understand each other's mindsets and expectations. Secondly, each one of us stuck to the rules that we brought up at the beginning: to communicate properly and to give positive criticism. Based on those rules, we could motivate each other and were not afraid to ask questions when something was unclear (e.g., scientific terms used for our video presentation)' (Stud #17)

The next citation represents the influence of the lingua franca used in intercultural encounters. Furthermore, it shows the student's deliberate learning process to develop his intercultural learning skills:

'I felt that I really deepened my understanding on inter-cultural cooperation - for example I understood that misunderstandings come from complex language use, accent, culture, lack of clarity in the explainer etc. So as great as it feels to use complex words to explain ideas - it is not always a good practice. As the saying goes - "if you can't explain your idea to a 6 year old, you don't really understand the idea yourself very well". I made an effort to always use simple sentences and concepts to make myself clear, because I also appreciate when people do it for me. Also, whenever we had free time after school or during school, I talked with people from all different countries, which made me realize how big of an influence culture and traditions can have on socializing.' (stud #11)

A smaller group of students offered superficial reflections on the intercultural setting of the project. They showed some kind of intercultural competence development without giving specific examples.

A good representation of this kind of reflection is the following statement:

'The project gave me really great experience in intercultural communication. For me, the most interesting part was the week in Germany, because there we had so much interaction between different people from different countries. Also because we were in a new city and in new culture for us, we had to learn a lot in a short time frame.' (Stud #2)

Although the student named different aspects, it does not become clear, where the competence development occurred; the reflection remained on a very superficial level.

Among the 22 statements coded as intercultural learning from 14 reflections, six have to be considered superficial. Three of those six superficial statements were provided by students who showed an in-depth understanding of intercultural competence development in other parts of their reflections. Regarding the other three statements, while they do not indicate a lack of competence development, they indicate a potential lack of awareness of intercultural aspects.

The most prominent themes in intercultural learning outcomes are:

knowing about the background of team members to facilitate understanding.

the benefit of intercultural and interdisciplinary perspectives on sustainability and climate change to broaden one's horizon.

The first aspect directly relates to an activity that took place in the classroom. There were no tasks or exercises related to the second learning outcome; students discovered the benefits of culturally diverse perspectives throughout their work. Both aspects were intended learning outcomes that we were aiming to achieve.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE FIELD STRATEGIES CONCERNING LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

The students' **reflections** on their language learning, language learning strategies and English for academic purposes were predominantly superficial. The majority of students reflected on vocabulary learning. They rarely referred to strategies that aimed at the sentence level, single terms are at the centre of their considerations.

Some of the students found strategies to cope with their lack of knowledge:

'The glossary we created helped to learn and understand the terminology about sustainability. Of course, it is easier to express thoughts in Lithuanian, but it was not so difficult to express ideas through examples.' (Stud #5)

Even when they stated that they had developed a perspective on scientific language use they were not able to express their thoughts clearly:

'Scientific language compared to Estonian is totally different in my opinion, but once I learned some new English words then some other newer ones started to make sense too. It felt like mixing compound words with compound words or something like that. A bit harder part was talking to the camera.' (Stud #3)

One student recognised the connection between language and culture and emphasised the resulting challenge:

'Which force us to communicate using English as main language, we may say it's easy, but it also contains some culture behind the language and to be specific scientific language, nevertheless it is also becoming our strength which allows us to have more scientific paper from many countries.' (Stud #15)

On the other hand, students also emphasised that their common topic and scientific understanding supported mutual understanding:

'Although you do not speak the same language, this is not an issue when you want to talk about specific scientific topics or general topics. You don't have to be embarrassed if you don't know a word or say something "incorrect" and in case of doubt, Google sometimes helps.' (Stud #18)

Some students expressed concerns about speaking English to other people because of their language abilities. Other students were more specific and reflected on their deficits in scientific language specifically.

Every participant reflected on their language abilities and the challenge of using English in an international and scientific context. They mostly remained on a superficial level limited to vocabulary. Several students stated that despite their fears, they have experienced that language mistakes did not limit understanding in the group. One student with a very high proficiency English level also described communication as a mediation process:

'From now on, I know that I need to use more cohesive language, try to keep it as simple as possible (e.g., presentation slides), and be more creative. My group members gave me some advice on how to manage that.' (Stud #17)

'I felt that I really deepened my understanding on inter-cultural cooperation - for example I understood that misunderstandings come from complex language use, accent, culture, lack of clarity in the explainer etc. So as great as it feels to use complex words to explain ideas - it is not always a good practice.' (Stud #11)

As both students already have a very high level of English, learning how to mediate concepts in groups with differing language levels was very important (Council of Europe, 2018:104 ff).

All those examples show single processes in individual students. The only aspect that was mentioned broadly referred to the challenge of scientific vocabulary and the fear to of speaking English in front of strangers. Overall, the reflections on language were very superficial.

FURTHER INSIGHTS

While some students were preoccupied with the challenges imposed by language, intercultural aspects, and interdisciplinarity; others expressed their expectations regarding the complexity of the input and how they take over responsibility:

‘Rather than being frustrated that some of the exercises and presentations were below my expectations, I tried to use it as stimulus. So while the lecturers were holding a presentation, I would, e.g. do further research on my phone on the facts they mentioned.’ (Stud #14)

While this statement indicates that the student took responsibility for their learning, it also shows that this is perceived with a negative connotation. Therefore, it can be assumed that the responsibility for the individual development of the students was not communicated clearly enough.⁶

In the planning of the assignments, we assumed that the two formats (video and poster) would suit all students and enhance the engagement of students at all language levels. This seems to prove true as students stated the following:

‘[...] someone did the design, someone researched the literature, and so on. In the end, we talked each work package through, thus everyone got an insight view of what other group members did. With this strategy, each group member contributed to the group’s success in equal parts trying to do what one can do best. We submerged our fields of study and created a video project that is beyond what I have expected.’ (Stud #17)

‘Everyone was honest about what they know and what they’re good at so that we could use those different skills for a positive output.’ (Stud #14)

Students did not explicitly state that the type of assignment led to the even contribution of the workload, but it can be assumed that the formats of the assignments contributed here.

CONCLUSION

The project offered the opportunity to draw conclusions on several levels. Firstly, the research provided information to assess the project’s prerequisites and its contribution towards the development of European values. Secondly, it allows for an assessment of how the project aligns with the intended learning outcomes. Finally, we can draw conclusions from our experience to identify modifications for future implementations of the project.

⁶ The student (THM: 2) then states: ‘Luckily, this way I stayed open-minded and was able to enjoy the things that were new to me even more. During discussions with all students and in my group I enjoyed participating and incorporating my knowledge.’ This shows a general positive outlook and puts the first statement into perspective.

HOW DO PROJECTS LIKE THE BIP CONTRIBUTE TO EUROPEAN AIMS AND VALUES?

Projects like the BIP strongly contribute to European values as they provide the opportunity for European citizens of different countries to meet, collaborate and get to know each other. It is through personal interaction and positive experience that it is possible to establish aims and values like “equality (...), to contribute to peace, (...) to combat social exclusion and discrimination, and to enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries” (European Union 2023). A shared task, and thus dependency and a shared exploration of the issue, can spur development toward the internalisation of the aims and values.

In this specific example, students experienced the value of diverse disciplines and individual perspectives. The topic itself fosters awareness for and understanding of sustainability and climate change. These are also aspects of European citizenship. The diversity within Europe makes it a fundamental competence to be open and prepared to empathise with others’ perspectives and to value the competencies of others even though they might not be easy to discover and understand.

The research results indicate that students can develop intercultural and interdisciplinary competencies as an outcome of the project. However, a considerable number of students (approximately one third) are not able to display deep reflections on intercultural and interdisciplinary competencies. Therefore, it could be one possible consequence to dive deeper into those aspects and to provide more input and exercises.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE BIP ON SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN REACHING THE ILOS?

The BIP on sustainability and climate change effectively achieves the intended learning outcomes by raising awareness of their relevance within students’ respective disciplines. The analysis of the reflections clearly shows that it is essential to provide a setup in which students take responsibility for their own learning regarding the knowledge they are already familiar with. The students who did not know how sustainability is relevant in their discipline showed considerably less or no development in terms of their perspective.

Considering this, it could be beneficial to add an assignment where students research the relevance in their respective disciplines beforehand.

In terms of intercultural competence, the results demonstrated that students acquire the ability to adopt others’ perspectives and incorporate intercultural considerations into their teamwork. However, it was observed that some students demonstrated only a superficial level of reflection. It is possible that providing additional guidance on intercultural aspects and how to effectively navigate them could facilitate deeper reflection and further enhance competence development.

Regarding language competency development, students showed an awareness of their

language skills and in various cases they reflected on their language use. Some students with a high level of English reflected on how to adapt to others with a lower level while others experienced the effectiveness of their language knowledge in communication.

WHAT PREREQUISITES DO ORGANISERS HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT?

When organising a BIP, the host university and the partners should consider several aspects. Firstly, academic calendars vary significantly, making it challenging to find a joint time slot for mobility.

Regarding the content and intended learning outcomes, lecturers must strike a balance between the actual input on sustainability and climate change and the input and exercises supporting the reflection required. Before the project begins, students could benefit from additional input and perhaps even a preparatory assignment. This could involve providing them with fundamental information on sustainability in their field of study or assigning a research task to prepare for the program.

Moreover, in our case, establishing sufficient commitment from students at the host university was challenging because half of the registered students did not attend. Measures need to be taken to enhance commitment.

During the virtual phase, students worked independently. This phase of independent work seemed to be important because students' reflections on intercultural learning outcomes also stem from the autonomously organised tasks. With moderate intervention and support from the lecturers, progress on all levels of intended learning outcomes could potentially be improved.

FURTHER RESEARCH

In the future, it's important to delve deeper into how short-term mobility with a blended learning approach can effectively contribute to the development of intercultural competence and promote European values. We also need further research to understand the right balance between providing instruction and offering experiential learning opportunities for developing intercultural competence.

Another area worth investigating is the role of assignments in supporting and demonstrating competence development aligned with the intended learning outcomes. This research can provide insights into the various aspects of competence enhancement.

Regarding competence development, it could be interesting to explore how far competence development can go and how many competencies can be developed in this international and interdisciplinary setup. Here the individual learning experience and competence development could be at the centre of interest.

The new Erasmus+ program line called 'Blended Intensive Programme' offers great potential for internationalisation since it is easily accessible and flexible. Overall, more research is needed to identify the necessary framework to achieve the best results.

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***STUDENTS' VOICES IN
LANGUAGE COURSES
IN TERTIARY EDUCATION:
GIVING POWER TO STUDENTS***

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on teaching and learning practices in language courses in Tertiary Education, through which the students take the subject position (Fairclough, 1989). It takes into account the point that European Values must be substantially incorporated into Education. It also emphasises the fact that all students' cultures can be utilised in language courses. Moreover, it strongly agrees with the statement that language can transform society and can be transformed by it (Stamou, 2014). It specifically advances that students in environments that renounce traditional methods of teaching/learning (which are connected to the Colonial Era and the related power of the dominant groups), become researchers, designers, self-reflectors, decision-makers, re-designers, and creators of their multimodal texts, through processes which make their voices heard and consequently incorporate their identities in their texts. In these teaching and learning practices, students' interests, concerns, beliefs, and goals along with their imagination and creativity, are integral components to express their voices. These practices aim to convince students that as creators of texts, they are the ones who have the power to act as social actors (the students as principals, authors, and animators, Goffman 1981, cited in Fairclough, 2004). The main outcomes of these practices are related to the realisation that all cultures include socially constructed norms of behaviour, values, representations of the social and natural world, and language varieties. All the aforementioned are equally valuable and can be used in texts, based on the text creator's social goal. Moreover, the students realised that the language and the other semiotic modes are pools from which the users draw the elements needed, in order to create the message they want to convey. Finally, students' language-communication skills were improved through the analysis, re-design and re-creation of their texts. The practices included in this work were implemented in: 1. The Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I-Foundation, (addressed to African Students), 2. The English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (English for Specific Purposes), (addressed to audiences with a large percentage of Greek-Cypriot students). All the above-mentioned practices were evaluated both by the student-participants and the language instructors. The theories/approaches that this study was drawn upon are: Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), (Halliday, 1978), Genre Theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014), Critical Literacy (Baynham, 2002; Freire 1974), Multiliteracies (Cazden, et al., 1996), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 2004; 2001; 1989), Classroom Discourse (Duff, 2010; Ioannidou, 2014) and Classroom Ethnography (Cazden, 1988; Hammersley, 1990; Hymes 1989).

Keywords: *students' voices, students' power, language courses, Tertiary Education*

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to present teaching and learning practices that incorporate students' voices, making them the subject position (Fairclough, 1989) and principals, authors, and animators (Goffman, 1981, cited in Fairclough, 2004) of their texts, in language courses in Tertiary Education. More specifically, these student-centred practices originate from the Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I - Foundation (Greek as a Second Language), and the English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (English for

Specific Purposes), of the Cyprus University of Technology's Language Centre.

Research questions:

1. How can students' voices be effectively incorporated into the lessons?
2. What happens when students obtain power in the lessons?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Traditional teaching

Traditional teaching is a term that describes teacher-oriented practices through which students are taught while just listening to the teacher (Tularam & Machisella, 2018). This approach is analysed in two pillars: the emphasis on curricula and books and the teacher functioning as an authority and the dominant source of knowledge (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). The aforementioned suggests that teachers talk more than students (Rashty, 1999, cited in Khalaf & Zin, 2018). In reference to this, Flanders (1970) suggested 'the rule of two-thirds', according to which two-thirds of the classroom time is allocated to dialogue, with the teacher speaking for about two-thirds of the time and about two-thirds of the teacher's talk being direct. Moreover, and strictly connected to the 'rule of two-thirds' is the presence of the IRF/E model (Initiation, Response, Feedback/Evaluation) (Cazden, 1988; Walsh, 2011), where the teacher asks a question, the students answer, and the teacher evaluates their answer, regarding language learning, traditional approaches with emphasis on grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001). Further, traditional teaching is based on the disintegration of language into sentences, where the teacher focuses on grammar and syntax and students are given the task of reproducing the instructional content (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). Another characteristic of the traditional language learning approach is the exclusive incorporation of the target language's culture, ignoring the learners' culture (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001).

Criticism of traditional teaching

Traditional Pedagogy was strongly criticised by theorists and researchers. As a 'treatment' to the Traditional Pedagogy, Freire, through his Critical Theory (1974) suggested Problem Posing Education, stating that teaching must not be limited to exchanging ideas, between teacher and students. Students must not be considered as 'empty pots' which must be filled by the teacher, but both parties, as equals, must conduct a critical dialogue, to realise that there are not any 'neutral' words, since the 'reading of the world' precedes the 'reading of the word'. In Critical Theory, contextualisation plays a crucial role and according to Freire's approach, the aim of education should be Critical Consciousness. Recently, Tularam & Machisella (2018) emphasised the concern that traditional teaching may not facilitate the acquisition of valuable learning skills by students, while Khalaf & Zin (2018) pointed out that traditional learning 'creates' active and non-active learners, due to the inconsistency of learners' active engagement. In addition, Ioannidou (2014) decried the existence of three distinct but interconnected discourse processes in traditional classroom activity, which show the asymmetry between teacher and students' interpersonal relationship:

1. Regulative discourse process (linked to the hierarchical relations of the participants).
2. Instructional discourse process (involving the transmission of the content knowledge, which is usually transmitted by the teacher).
3. Evaluative/formative process (teacher assesses the construction and acquisition of knowledge/content).

These discourse processes constitute teaching practices wherein the teacher leads, asks questions, organises the teaching process and evaluates students' contributions. In contrast to the teacher's role, students are expected to read, write, and answer the teacher's questions, performing specific language acts such as describing, narrating, arguing, and explaining.

Traditional Pedagogy was also criticised for its role in promoting the naturalisation and universalisation of mainstream literacy practices (Street, 1984, as cited in Baynham, 2002). Similarly, Charalambopoulos & Hadjisavvides (1997) expressed reservations about Traditional Pedagogy, emphasising that language learning should not focus solely on the language system, but on the power of language in specific social contexts. Likewise, in light of the Genre Theory, Cope & Kalantzis (2014) argued that traditional grammar originates from a distinctively modern logico-scientific culture and epistemological framework rooted in logical-scientific thinking. It was founded on the notion that the world can be described through facts, rules, and regularities. Despite the criticism of Traditional Pedagogy, it is worth mentioning that the movement Back to Basics claims that the downturn of the education level can be faced through the reintroduction of traditional teaching methods, leading to high levels of literacy (Baynham, 2002).

Recent insights

A variation of post-structuralist theories and approaches drew -either directly or indirectly- from Freire (1974), thus shaping new perceptions of education. In contrast to Traditional Pedagogy, Progressivism suggests new terms and concepts such as writing as a process, students as active learners, students' interests incorporation in language learning, emphasis on the learning process rather than the curriculum, use of authentic texts, teacher as a facilitator, and students texts' ownership (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). Consequently, Progressivism transferred the attention from teachers and curriculum domination to students' discourses, cultures, and interests and the process of learning.

Moreover, Halliday through his Systemic Functional Grammar (1978, 1994) considered language as a semiotic system and a conventionalised coding system, which is organised in sets of choices. In this context, Halliday (1978) suggested 3 meta-functions of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual) and stressed the fact that meanings are made in a specific socio-cultural context. Based on Halliday's theory, students can realise the power of language and its social function when they analyse and produce texts. Particularly, students can realise the communication and social occasion of a text and its characteristics, and how the reality is being constructed (ideational meta-function). Moreover, students can understand and express the interpersonal relationships between the creator of meaning and the recipient, which represent their social roles (interpersonal meta-function). Finally, students can understand texts and organise their texts, focusing on the way the language is organised and used (textual meta-function).

Drawing from Halliday, the Genre Theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014) views Genre as a term that describes the relationship between the social goal of a text and its language structure. Thus, the Genre Theory posits that education should acknowledge and emphasise the dynamic social context of a text-in-use. This is especially the case since texts are constructed in reasonably predictable ways following patterns of social interaction in a particular culture. Furthermore, genres are perceived as textual interventions in society and essential components for its existence.

Based on Freire's and Halliday's theory, Fairclough (2004; 2001; 1989), introduces Socio-cultural critical discourse analysis, a tool that allows teachers and learners to explore, understand and utilise the ideological nature of language. In this context, through Critical Discourse Analysis, it is argued that language can transform society and can be transformed by it (Stamou, 2014).

Students' voices: exploration of the term

Although the aforementioned post-structuralist theories and approaches use different terminology, they have a common component: they all give voice to students. The term 'voices' emerged in Multiliteracies (Cazden, et al., 1996) and stresses that education must not use only genres with high social power, but also those genres that carry various cultural voices and have a multimodal nature. This approach emphasises learners' subjectivities, the experiences of both teachers and students, grammar- metalanguage and the conceptualisation of learning as a design.

Students' voices have been characterised as a revolution in education (Grion, 2017). This term is realised, in many ways but maintains its core focus on students' experiences and subjectivities. An interesting analysis of the term is the one by Cook-Sather's (2006), who states that having a voice means possessing presence, power, and agency, allowing one to express himself, be heard and counted by others, and potentially influence them. Furthermore, this term is connected with the attempt to increase students' active participation in decision-making (Bahou, 2011), thereby introducing the principles of democracy and social justice in education (Fielding, 2012, as cited in Grion, 2017). In relation to these points, Mitra (2003) underlines that increasing students' voices in schools involves encouraging students to share their views on problems and solutions.

Many theorists and researchers have recognised the significant importance of incorporating students' voices in education. However, it has been noted (Seale, 2009) that the relevant literature concerning higher education does not expand on the conceptualisation of student participation. Moreover, the related literature often fails to address the issue of power relationships between teachers and students. Apart from these concerns, students' voices are mainly seen in literature as part of four meta-cognitive activities: asking questions regarding students' experiences, understanding students' perspectives, reflecting on implications for practice, and hearing voices that were previously silent or ignored.

Utilising Students' voices in teaching and learning practices

Despite the limited research regarding the incorporation of students' voices in teaching and learning practices, some research on students' voices have been conducted. Giampapa (2010) explored how a teacher developed a multiliteracies pedagogy drawing her own and her students' identities, as well as their linguistic and cultural backgrounds leading to the development of learning opportunities for all students. She asked the students to reflect on their first language (L1) and express their feelings when using their L1 in the school environment. The results of this research highlighted the importance of incorporating the students' first languages into the school environment, in order to help construct their identities. The research findings also indicated that when students are given a voice, their dreams, desires, fears, and subject positions became more meaningful.

Another interesting study on student's voices in teaching practices was conducted by Ferguson, Hanreddy & Draxton (2011). The results revealed that students' feedback on their participation in classes and classroom climate, would be utilised by the teachers to make future changes regarding classroom climate, teaching practices, and lessons content. In addition, a relevant project (Seale, 2009) explored students' learning experiences through their voices, focusing on how educational programmes include or exclude students with different learning needs. Apart from this, the project involved students in the analysis and exploration of their voices, fostering a collaborative partnership in which students contributed to the development of material and methods that could be used to help staff create an inclusive environment for all the students.

Students' voices in multiliteracies and discourse analysis contexts

The literature review shows that discourse analysis and multiliteracies are increasingly recognised as important components in teaching and learning. Koutsogiannis et al. (2015) described a teaching practice in a language class at a primary school where students were involved in a problem-solving task concerning the content, language and functions of newspapers and weather forecasts. The students had to create a multimodal text, explain their choices, correct possible mistakes, and present their work, while the teacher supported them through questions. In another study conducted by Efthimiou (2019), Kenyan students in a Greek Language and Culture Foundation course functioned as designers, decision-makers, creators of texts, and analysts of their own texts written in Greek (which functioned as a Second Language). Specifically, considering Freire's critical theory (1974) the students created texts, incorporating social identities, ideologies, and discourses originating from the Kenyan Kikuyu tribe. Students also analysed their texts based on Fairclough's (2004: 191-193) critical discourse analysis, using the following criteria/questions: 'What social event, and what social chain of social events is the text a part of? What existential, propositional, or value assumptions are made? Is there a case of seeing any assumptions as ideological? What discourses are drawn upon in the text? To what values do authors commit themselves?'

In relation to the above, Riegenbach (1999) underlined that although discourse analysis activities are highly motivating, the complicated process language learners are involved in, might be experienced as too demanding for them.

As presented earlier, despite acknowledging the pivotal role of students' voices in educational practices, their effective integration in language learning remains markedly restricted. Furthermore, in the majority of instances where students' voices are heard, the emphasis tends to centre around their experiential narratives, personal viewpoints, and perceptions of instructional sessions. Consequently, scholarly inquiry and practical application of pedagogical approaches grounded in students' voices, particularly concerning the ideological

dimensions inherent in language, are notably lacking in comprehensive representation within higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in the current project was shaped by the necessity of placing students at the centre of education (Freire, 1974) and amplifying their voices. The main challenge faced by the authors was how to integrate their students' voices into teaching and learning practices while ensuring that students retained ownership of their texts. Thus, the concept of students' voices was realised not merely as a way to convey experiences, perceptions, opinions, and evaluations related to learning and class characteristics, but also as a means through which students' values and ideologies could be consciously incorporated into their texts, functioning as sources of learning.

These considerations led to the classification of the current research as action research (Paraskevopoulos, 1993), since it constituted a small-scale study aimed at addressing a real-world problem. Additionally, both instructors and students participated in the research as equal stakeholders. After thoroughly examining various research methods and models, and with a focus on safeguarding students' ownership of their texts, the authors concluded that the most suitable approach was to assign students a project that maintained their role as decision-makers (Sullivan, 2006). Furthermore, the project was designed to be engaging and challenging, fostering students' creativity.

Before the semester began, the instructors decided on the theoretical approaches that would be implemented and the structure of the project. Each instructor was responsible for guiding and giving feedback to her students. However, throughout the semester the two instructors held regular meetings to coordinate and evaluate the process of the project, so that there would be consistency between the two courses.

The participants

The teaching and learning practices included in this work were implemented in:

1. The Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I-Foundation, which was designed for two African students, from Kenya, aged 18-20, who belonged to the Kikuyu tribe. The course aimed to prepare the foreign students to learn the Greek language so they could study Nursing in Greek the following year.

2. The English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (ESP). This course targeted audiences with a large percentage of Greek-Cypriot students. The group consisted of 18 first-year undergraduate students aged 18-20, studying for a Bachelor's degree in Multimedia and Graphic Arts. The aim of the course was to assist students to improve their English and gain the required skills that will be needed in their field of study. The two groups were purposely chosen because the instructors wanted to research how the same theoretical approaches could be used in those two different courses having the same result: giving voice to students.

Linking theory to practise

Preparing the students

During the first two weeks of the semester, the instructors observed their students, in class, and kept detailed field notes (Hammersley, 1990; Hymes, 1989). They then designed the intervening project based on both their field notes and the results of the needs analysis of their students, which was conducted through a diagnostic test. The second step was to present the project's design to the students and inform them about its implementation, along with its core components (Halliday's SFG, Fairclough's CDA, Critical Literacy). The third step involved the exploration of students' perceptions about: language learning processes and their own 'weaknesses' in language use and other semiotic modes. This was conducted through a questionnaire consisting of five open-ended questions. These questions were asked and answered in the language each group of students comprehended better, as the content would have been too difficult to answer in a foreign or second language.

The Greek Foundation students' questionnaire was in English, and the English for Specific Purposes students' questionnaire was in Greek. The fourth step was a critical dialogue

(Freire, 1974) between the instructors and the students, regarding ideological representations of the social world, identities, socio-cultural structures, the active role of learners, and the power of language.

Implementing the project

During the fourth week of the semester, the instructors assigned project to the students. The task was to create a text in any genre and of any text type, using any semiotic mode/modes (written, audio-visual, etc.). The only requirement was that the text ideologically represent a concept/ value of high importance in their socio-cultural context and specify its goal.

After the students had developed the initial design of their text, and while the students, with the assistance of the instructors were exploring components of SFG (Halliday, 1978), CDA (Fairclough 2004; 2001; 1989), Multiliteracies (Cazden et al., 1996), Critical Literacy (Baynham, 2002), and Genre Theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014), they were simultaneously modifying and improving their text. During these processes, students worked in environ-

ments that renounced traditional methods of teaching and learning which are connected to the Colonial Era and the related power dynamics of the dominant groups. In these settings, they became researchers, designers, self-reflectors (e.g., how to state something as an implicature and not directly), decision makers (e.g. choosing the appropriate modality), re-designers, and creators of their multimodal texts, through processes which made their voices heard and consequently incorporated their identities in their texts. The students' interests, concerns, beliefs, and goals along with their imagination and creativity, were integral components of these teaching and learning practices.

Critical self-reflection was integral to these processes. After receiving feedback from their classmates and instructors, the students redesigned and represented their work, improving it based on the principles of the aforementioned theories and approaches. The role of the instructors was to ask questions regarding students' choices (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, modalities, language acts, etc.) and functioned as effective communicators and experts in the Greek and English languages (Cope & Kalantzis, 2014). After the completion of their project, the students evaluated the completed projects and the process followed, through an anonymous questionnaire. The instructors used this feedback to improve these practices in the following semester (Spring semester 2023).

RESULTS

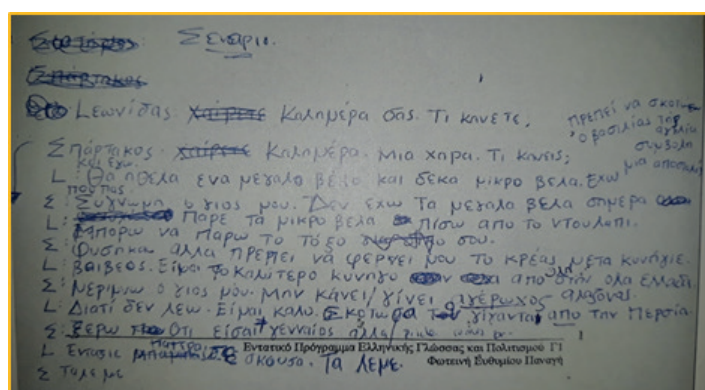
Practices through which students' voices 'entered' or 'dominated' in classes.

In total, two examples of students' work are presented and analysed, below. The first example originates from the Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course I – Foundation and the second example from the English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts.

1. Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course – Foundation

Addressed to African Students of the Kikuyu tribe, who were learning Greek as a Second Language, at B1 CEFR level.

Participant 1 wrote the following text, which is a dialogue between Leonidas, a Kikuyu young adult, and his father, Spartacus.



Translated version

Note: The instructor translated the student's work without any interventions (e.g., grammatical and syntactical mistakes).

Scenario

- 1 Leonidas: Good morning. How are you?
- 2 Spartacus: Good morning. I'm fine. How are you?
- 3 L: I am fine too. I would like a big arrow and ten small arrows.
I have a symbolic mission.
- 4 I must kill the king of England.
- 5 S: I am sorry, my son. Today I don't have any big arrows.
Take the small arrows behind
- 6 the cupboard.
- 7 L: Can I take your bow?
- 8 S: Of course, but you must bring me his dead body after hunting.
- 9 L: Sure. I am the best hunter all around Greece.
- 10 S: Be careful, my son. Don't become arrogant.
- 11 L: I don't say why. I am good. I killed a giant from Persia.
- 12 S: I know that you are brave but
- 13 L: Ok my father. I understood. See you.
- 14 S: See you.

Participant 1's text functioned as a learning resource on two levels. Firstly, it conveyed the values and the ideological representations on which the text was built. Secondly, it demonstrated the power of language encompassing the writer's choices regarding vocabulary, grammar, syntax, language acts, implicatures, etc.

Values and ideologies

Through his text, Participant 1 articulated specific values and ideologies of his tribe/community. Specifically, he created a character, a Kikuyu young adult, named Leonidas, who has specific duties and obligations towards his father and his tribe/community. He is tasked with killing the king of England (line 4 and 8) calling this mission 'symbolic' (line 3). However, he needs to borrow his father's arrows (line 3) and his bow (line 7). His father allows him to use his weapons, under one condition: to bring him the king's dead body (line 8). Thus, the power of the father emerges and subsequently the brave action depends on three parameters: Leonidas's bravery, his father's arrows and bow, and his father's permission and condition (he asks for proof: the king's dead body).

The writer certifies Leonidas's bravery using four arguments: Even though big arrows are not available, he will actualize the symbolic mission using small arrows (line 5). Moreover, he states that he is the best hunter in Greece (line 9) and above all, he had already killed a giant from Persia in the past (line 11). Additionally, his father recognises his bravery (line 12). Another interesting element in this text is the choice of names: The Kikuyu father is named Spartacus, while his son is named Leonidas (lines 1 and 2). Associating this with the specific historical persons, the writer's implicatures can be easily understood. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the young adult must kill the king of England. This duty is strictly connected with the Colonial Era in Africa and people's desire for freedom. In line 10, the

father advises his son to be careful and not to become arrogant. At this point the value of humility emerges and in lines 9 and 13 the value of a son's obedience and discipline to his father evident.

The lesson focused on the ideological representation of the ideal Kikuyu young adult, who is characterised by bravery, self-confidence, strength, courage, initiative, determination, obedience, discipline, and respect, acting in a way that protects his tribe/community and his family. Jim explained the importance of these values in the Kikuyu tribe, associating them with the contemporary daily life of a Kikuyu young adult. Then, students decided to conduct interviews with Cypriot young adults, exploring the question how young adults in Cyprus express respect to their parents. Through this process, the similarities and differences between the two socio-cultural contexts emerged. Moreover, it was understood that values and ideologies are positioned in specific socio-cultural contexts and can be interpreted only in those contexts.

It is worth mentioning that the target language (Greek as L2) was mainly used. However, at some points, students used English to communicate effectively. Later, with the instructor's assistance, English was translated into Greek.

The power of language

In the following lessons, Participant's 1 text functioned as a source for language learning, starting with correcting the grammatical mistakes of this text. The students worked together, while the instructor took on the role of an effective communicator. Following specific descriptors of the CEFR B1 level the lessons focused on language elements, drawing from Halliday's SFG. More specifically, the instructor and the students explored and analysed the interpersonal function of the text and how the social roles were built, by the student-writer. At this point, greetings and language acts between the two socio-cultural contexts (the Kikuyu tribe and Cyprus) were explored, focusing on the similarities and differences. The language elements (e.g. honorific plural, grammatical cases of nouns, active voice verbs' endings, personal pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions) used in the text were emphasised during the lesson, using three languages interchangeably: Swahili, Kikuyu and Greek.

Later, the students started creating their multimodal presentation, which compared the contemporary social position of men and women in the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya and Cyprus. They focused on socially constructed values, identities, and ideologies, and on the fact that these can only be interpreted in their socio-cultural contexts. Unexpectedly, this process revealed important differences in the norms of an academic presentations between the Kikuyu tribe and Cyprus: a Kikuyu student is not allowed to make eye contact with the instructor, should speak in a lower voice when addressing the instructor, and should not interrupt the instructor with questions.

During the creation of the slides, students self-reflected on their work, contemplating the social objectives of their presentation, which aimed to promote understanding, equality and respect among cultures and language variations, and stressing the role of the so-

cio-cultural context (interculturalism). Subsequently, the students improved their work by making changes to their slides, guided by enquiries such as: What is the social objective of this presentation? What are the characteristics/profile of the audience? What are the norms for effective body language during a presentation? How can the goal be achieved through choices on semiotic modes, vocabulary, syntax, etc.

2. English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts I Course (ESP)

The English for Specific Purposes for Multimedia and Graphic Arts 1 Course was designed for first year undergraduate Greek-Cypriot students, studying Multimedia and Graphic Arts. After students formed groups of three, they produced videos using the target language (English as a Foreign Language) to raise awareness on a sociocultural issue of their choice. The students were asked to create a video, rather than a written text, because, as Multimedia and Graphic Arts students, they found the idea of creating a video more interesting as it was related to their field of study. This task provided them with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge on video production; from storyboarding (which is a graphic representation of how a video will unfold, shot by shot, including notes about what is happening in the scene and what is being said in the script during that shot) to video editing (which is the manipulation and arrangement of video shots, incorporation of audio, music, words, sounds, subtitles, lighting, etc.).

The students presented various sociocultural topics, such as the causes of smoking, excessive use of technology (social media), lack of interpersonal communication and domestic violence related to addiction (alcohol and drugs). They were given the power to choose the topic that they wanted to raise awareness about, and during the discussion they proposed solutions and strategies to address each specific problem.

Values and Ideologies

A group of students created a video aimed at addressing the sociocultural issue of domestic violence stemming from alcohol addiction. Specifically, the video portrays the struggles of a young married couple, where the husband is grappling with alcohol addiction, leading to aggressive behaviour directed towards his wife and teenage son. The video, lasting approximately 3 minutes, explores various alcohol-related issues, primarily focusing on domestic violence, and illustrates how it impacts the wife and teenage son.

The video begins with the father sitting on a sofa, drinking alcohol, and listening to music, while the wife is busy cleaning the house. When the father requests food and is dissatisfied with what his wife serves, he throws the food on the floor and physically assaults her due to his dissatisfaction. Later, when the son emerges from his room and asks for money, his father's aggression escalates as he yells and strikes the son. Despite the mother's attempts to intervene and calm the situation, matters only worsened. The distraught son eventually leaves, prompting the wife to enter her son's bedroom to tidy up. The video concludes by revealing the heartbroken wife discovering drugs in her son's room.

In summary, this specific video provides a poignant depiction of how alcohol addiction can lead to domestic violence, ultimately pushing the teenage boy into seeking solace in the destructive embrace of drugs. Through the video, the students effectively portrayed the social and cultural aspects linked to alcohol addiction. They conveyed the importance of values such as respect and love within a family, emphasising the role of parents as positive role models for their children. Furthermore, they highlighted that alcoholism brings forth a range of issues that do not only affect the alcoholic individual but also all members of the family. Additionally, the video shed light on the fact that sometimes, vulnerable teenagers may turn to substances (e.g. drugs) in search of help and happiness.

After the video presentation, a class discussion ensued, focusing on the themes that emerged from the video. Various solutions were proposed to address this problem, including suggestions for stricter government rules and regulations to mitigate the issues associated with excessive alcohol consumption. Despite the presence of government legislation in the students' culture (Cyprus) that restricts underage drinking (those under the age of 18), it was noted that these laws are not stringent enough. This lax enforcement leads to young individuals consuming alcohol at an early age, potentially leading to addiction. This misconception that underage drinking goes unpunished, can encourage excessive alcohol consumption without fear of legal repercussions.

In conclusion, students recognized the importance of raising awareness about alcohol consumption and advocated for stricter fines for excessive drinking. Regarding domestic violence, the students agreed that there is an urgent need to raise awareness about this issue. One student informed the group about the recent opening of the Women's House in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. This crisis centre provides comprehensive support services to domestic violence victims 24/7. Lastly, the students discussed how drugs have become readily available often requiring only a small amount of money. Consequently, many teenagers who face challenges like abuse or social difficulties turn to drugs in search of happiness. One student shared information about a free helpline that can be called to report abuse against women and children.

The power of language

The spoken and written language (subtitles) used in the video functioned as sources for language learning. That is, spoken and written language was discussed in terms of vocabulary, syntax, and grammar usage. In addition, regarding spoken language, feedback was given on pronunciation and non-verbal communication (body language). Similarly, regarding written language, feedback was given on the use of punctuation, and capitalization. The comments and the feedback given to students were based on the CEFR B1 level descriptors. The instructor and the group of students explored and analysed the function of the text, spoken and written language, and how the social roles and the 'actors' were created. At this point, emphasis was placed on the language and images used, so that the result would not be offensive (e.g.: racist, inappropriate) in any way.

During this process, the instructor functioned as an effective communicator and helped in the correction of students' oral and written grammatical mistakes. Furthermore, a part

of the lesson focused on the interpersonal function of the texts. Thus, students had to choose verbal and nonverbal elements, along with music, acts and video techniques (such as zooming in/out, lighting up or darkening a scene, etc.) that were appropriate and helped in conveying the meaning they wished.

An extract from the written language used in the video is presented below.

‘Domestic Violence causes far more pain than visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and think loves you in return. Silence hides violence. Stop domestic violence today.’

Through their language choices (statements), the students conveyed their perspectives on domestic violence by choosing the appropriate language elements such as verbs, nouns, use of active and passive voice, etc. The students chose to start their text with the words ‘Domestic Violence’ which was the issue they wanted to raise awareness about and emphasise when they were given the power and voice to express their concerns about a sociocultural issue.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As it has been presented in the theoretical section of the current study, the majority of cases where students’ voices were utilised focused on students’ experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding learning processes (Mitra, 2003; Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011; Seale, 2009). Especially in language learning there is a limited presence of students’ voices as factors in shaping teaching and learning practices (Koutsogiannis et al., 2015). Even more limited is the utilisation of language values and ideological representations of students’ texts, as learning resources (Efthimiou, 2019).

Considering the above, through the aforementioned teaching and learning practices implemented by the authors of this study and their students (in the Intensive Greek Language and Culture Course - Foundation and the English for Specific Purposes Course for Multimedia and Graphic Arts), students’ voices (their interests, opinions, values, concerns, language skills, and ideological representations for the social world) were heard and dominated in the classes. This was achieved by giving the students the subject position (Fairclough, 1989). The initiative presented in this paper aims to link theory with practice (Seale, 2009), offering suggestions on how students’ voices in tertiary education can shape lessons and function as learning sources.

The teaching and learning practices described above brought students’ voices to the lesson in the following ways. Firstly, the project content was based on their communicative needs and perceptions. Secondly, students chose the values, perceptions, experiences, and ideologies they wanted to set as pillars of their texts. Thirdly, students chose the topic of their text, its text type, its genre/s, and its mode/s, creating a text which incorporated their interests, their worries, etc. Furthermore, they chose the elements they wanted to use such as vocabulary, syntax, language acts, etc. Moreover, their texts revealed students’ weaknesses and strengths and functioned as new sources for the following lessons, based

on which students conducted self-reflection and improvements of their texts. Finally, their texts functioned as means, through which they -as social actors- established a social goal.

Summarising what happened when students obtained power in the lesson

Students and instructors' roles became interchangeable since the lesson was neither based on the ERF/E model nor on 'test questions' set by the instructor (Cazden, 1988; Walsh, 2011). On the contrary, students transferred knowledge to their instructors and their classmates for instance, the social position of a young adult in Kikuyu tribe. In this context, the role of the instructors was to promote understanding, respect, and equality among people, cultures and languages, to encourage students to express their ideological representation of the social world and to offer a scaffold to the students for language improvement.

Thus, participants concluded that all societies include socially constructed norms of behaviour, values, representations of the social and natural world, and language varieties. Moreover, the creator of a text is the one who has power and as a social actor can cause changes or reproductions in society (Stamou, 2014). As Participant 1, a student from Kenya, said 'Talking about the way you 'read the world' sometimes you help people to see one more dimension of it'.

In conclusion, it can certainly be argued that the students' voices were effectively heard through the utilisation of the same teaching and learning approaches, despite differences in the subjects studied and the diverse sociocultural backgrounds of the participating students.

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**FOSTERING MULTILINGUALISM
AND MULTICULTURALISM IN IN-
TEREUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES:
FROM GLOBAL TO INTERNA-
TIONALISING ENGLISH**

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ABSTRACT

The EUt+ university alliance has vowed to adopt a ‘plurilingual approach’ (<https://www.univ-tech.eu/mission-statement>). Accordingly, plans have been made concerning the medium of instruction at all eight EUt+ partners. Drawing on a distinction between ‘most widely spoken languages’ (English, French, German, and Spanish) and ‘less widely spoken’, ‘low-spread’ or ‘low-dissemination’ languages (Bulgarian, Greek, Latvian, and Romanian), different goals have been established. EUt+ partners located in countries where a ‘most widely spoken’ language is the national language will use that as the principal medium of instruction, whereas partners in countries whose national language is a ‘less widely spoken’ language will use ‘other languages’ (most probably, English) as the main medium of instruction for the convenience of incoming students. The latter will be required to take instruction in the said ‘less widely spoken’ language, with the expectation that they will master said language at the A1 level by the end of their first academic term, then at A2 level by the end of their final term.

Our contribution investigates whether these linguistic plans, reflecting EUt+ roots in the European project’s long-standing commitment to ‘multilingualism’ (<https://www.univ-tech.eu/mission-statement>), may affect student mobility, regarded as ‘structural’ to obtaining a degree at EUt+ partner institutions, as well as essential for students to ‘build themselves and their vision of Europe’ (‘European Degrees in Engineering. EUt+ Reference Guide’ [EDE EUt+], 2022:4). This might particularly be the case as far as some EUt+ partners with a ‘most widely spoken’ language are concerned. We argue that prioritising national languages over English disregards the fact that the latter is actually ‘spoken as [a second language or L2] by 38 percent of the [European] population’ (Modiano, 2017:314) and studied as an L2 by 98 percent of students at primary and secondary schools across the continent, according to Eurostat. (Conversely, French is studied as an L2 by 33 percent of European students, German by 23 percent of them, and Spanish by 17 percent of them). This being so, the possibility exists that student mobility among EUt+ partners be restricted rather than fostered if students are asked to follow their courses in a language in which they may not be proficient enough.

We begin by describing EDE EUt+ mobility and language goals, which are heavily invested into a type of multilingualism that does not rely on using lingua franca. Then, we suggest that those goals may be counterproductive, as an excessive emphasis on multilingualism and a diminished role for English may deter students from engaging in prolonged mobility stays. A speculative overview of the background for EDE EUt+ is performed next, which is followed by a more practice-oriented approach to the issues at stake. Building on the idea that English-medium internationalisation policies may ‘paradoxically ... [result] in increased multilingualism on campuses, as ... students from different language backgrounds use [English as] the lingua franca to access and develop knowledge and competencies in a variety of languages’ (Palfreyman & Van der Walt, 2017), it is suggested that English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) be used strategically. Finally, the ‘SUCCESS’ project (2021-1-LV01-KA220-HED-000031178), developed under the umbrella of EUt+, is briefly approached for illustrating the possibility that English be used as a ‘practical’ lingua franca (Ives, 2007), eventually fostering multilingualism or—at the very least—furthering awareness of European linguistic diversity.

Keywords: EUt+, Multilingualism, Mobility, Lingua Franca, Global English.

INTRODUCTION

The vision that enlivens the EUt+ project is articulated in a wide-ranged declaration entitled 'European Technology: Mission Statement'. Together with matters of technology, diversity and inclusiveness, questions of language are addressed, as could not be otherwise in the context of a pan-European university alliance. EUt+ language goals are summarised as follows:

... the idealised competence in multiple languages implied by multilingualism is the ultimate aim [and] EUt+ will adopt a plurilingual approach, emphasising the development of effective communicators who draw on their varied repertoire of linguistic and cultural knowledge' (<https://www.univ-tech.eu/mission-statement>)

The goal seems as clear as it is ambitious: an effective multilingualism that is to be built on the foundations of Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity. This, of course, requires a large amount of planning and harmonizing of very different institutional frameworks, as well as the setting forth of detailed objectives that range from the structure and characteristics of student mobility to the specific language levels that should be required for being awarded a EUt+ degree.

The present study aims to contribute insight into the incipient EUt+ language policy, an approach in the making where multiple factors seem to come into play. Section 1 studies EUt+ language policy, specifically student mobility and the status of the different languages to be used in the alliance's campuses. Section 2 addresses the strategic but at the same time somehow controversial role performed by English within a scheme that cherishes multilingualism and promotes European languages (other than the former). At the same time, it implicitly concedes the practical purpose of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and a language of internationalisation. Section 3 deals with issues and concerns detected in the first mobilities, owing to the language of instruction and/or students' language proficiency. Section 4 suggests a variety of potential solutions, which necessarily end up with the tactical use of English to foster multilingualism and multiculturalism, as illustrated by the SUCCESS project. Section 5, finally, includes a number of concluding remarks

EUT+ MOBILITY AND LANGUAGE POLICIES

Although scattered references to language exist in Grant Agreement No. 101004088 – EUt+ (GA EUt+), subscribed between the European Commission and all EUt+ partner institutions, EDE EUt+ (circulated in 2022) is the document that most resembles an actual language policy in the EUt+ framework. Dealing with 'Bachelor and Master programmes in Engineering', EDE EUt+ opens with a short, introductory section on competences, learning outcomes, students' curricula, and curricula convergence. This is followed by a lengthy section describing the 'The 12 characteristics of the European degree for the EUt+ Bachelor/Master engineering curricula', of which sections 2.1 and 2.2 ('Embedded mobility / multi-campus

model' and 'Multilingualism' respectively) are of concern for this study.

That student mobility be given pride of place in the aforementioned list of characteristics should not come as a surprise, considering the language used for describing it. From the outset, mobility is referred to in almost existential terms as 'not an end in itself but a necessity to be exposed to others and their cultures, and to discover oneself' (EDE EUt+, 2022:6). It thus seems obvious that not any kind of mobility might do for attaining goals of such relevance.

Indeed, three very specific conditions are set for EUt+ mobility across partner institutions. First, it needs to be an in-person experiences, as 'virtual mobility' is a 'oxymoron by nature' that does not allow for 'a real encounter' with the self and the cultural other (EDE EUt+, 2022:6). Second, mobility must be at least a full semester in length. (Shorter periods are rejected because of having larger carbon footprints and, just like virtual ones, do not foster a 'real encounter'). Third, and crucially, a 'real immersion with the partner institution and the local culture and language' is required. Therefore, 'mobility only in a lingua franca' (EDE EUt+, 2022:6-7), generally understood as 'any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language' (Samarin, 1987:37), cannot fully serve the purposes of EUt+ mobility.

Given that English is a 'widespread means of international and intercultural communication', that is, the de facto 'global lingua franca in the contemporary world' (Seidlhofer, 2011: ix), it would seem safe to assume that the authors of EDE EUt+ had it in mind when promulgating the alliance's vision for student mobility. English, however, is never designated as a lingua franca in the 'Multilingualism' section, which opens with this definition:

Multilingualism is the ability to meet others in their own language and when international exchanges are not reduced to a single lingua franca, opening up the richness of the deep diversity of languages and cultures. ... [It] does not mean having one's mother tongue at home and a single lingua franca for study and work. It means being open to a diversity of languages, both in learning and in working' (EDE EUt+, 2022:10).

The language used for describing what a lingua franca may do to mobility is tellingly negative ('... are not reduced to a single lingua franca', '... does not mean having ... a single lingua franca for study and work'). No less telling is the fact that English is likewise described in negative terms when mentioned in the section. The following excerpt is revealing:

It is essential that students understand that monolingualism does not open up sufficiently to the culture of others, to their way of thinking. Nor does English alone allow students to find a job in a non-English-speaking country, where mastery of the national language is almost always necessary to find a job, and even more so to integrate' (EDE EUt+, 2022:11, italics ours).

That an implicit equation between 'lingua franca' and 'English' is being made, therefore, seems hard to deny. This does not mean, though, that English will not have a role to play in the EUt+ study track. Conditions for that role are defined by a so-called 'fundamental principle' for 'EUt+ languages', stating that 'linguistic diversity is a richness', as well as that

there is ‘no nobler language and that a native language should not provide an a priori disadvantage’ (EDE EUt+, 2022:11).

According to this general standard for fair use, a typology of languages is established that includes two groups: on the one hand, ‘most-widely spoken languages’, namely ‘English, French, German, and Spanish’; on the other, those that are variously referred to as ‘less widely spoken’, ‘low-spread’ or ‘low-dissemination’ ones, i.e. Bulgarian, Greek, Latvian and Romanian’, which are intended to be ‘promoted as much as possible among all partners’ (EDE EUt+, 2022:10).

Use of the languages included in these two distinct categories will likewise be different. As to ‘[e]ach of the partners with the most widely spoken languages’, it is stated that their respective ‘national language[s]’ will be the medium of instruction, while each partner prepares its students for learning in other languages on the other campuses and prepares itself to welcome on its campus students with a lower level of proficiency in its national language. In particular, language support courses are organised at the beginning or during the semester.

For those ‘partners with less widely spoken languages’, the provision is made that they will ‘offer courses in other languages for incoming mobility students’. In their turn, the latter will be ‘required to follow a course in the host partner’s national language at a level of A1 in one semester and A2 in two semesters’ (EDE EUt+, 2022:10).

Differences in the treatment of both groups of languages are thus quite noticeable, but there is also a similarity between the two. Curiously enough, so-called ‘other languages’ are never named in the relevant passages. However, an informed assumption can be made as to their identity. In a later reference to the language requirements that undergraduate students pursuing a EUt+ degree are expected to comply with, the following is stated:

In the EUt+ Bachelor programme, at least one foreign language at B2 level is required. It will be necessary for the mobility semester. This language will generally be English. (EDE EUt+, 2022:10, italics ours).

This is then exemplified by a ‘narrative’ passage also included in the section. Purporting to describe an imaginary student’s mobility experience, the following scenario is drawn:

He chooses to go to Universitatea Tehnica Cluj-Napoca, UTCN, first, based on the fact that he already knows English. Learning Romanian appears to be a more interesting challenge, in terms of intercultural opportunity. (EDE EUt+, 2022:11, italics ours).

MULTILINGUALISM AS AN OBSTACLE TO STUDENT MOBILITY?

There is quite a clear chance, then, that the ‘other languages’ formula may in fact refer to English, but the passage above contains yet another statement of EUt+ commitment to multilingualism: the student is said to have chosen a stay at a Romanian university precisely because of the ‘challenge’.

However, the latter is far from being a straightforward one. Both undergraduate level and graduate level instruction at EUt+ partner institutions where a 'less widely spoken' language is used will necessarily include courses in 'other languages' (which is most probably going to be English, as we have seen). However, this is not to be the case for the partner institutions where a 'most-widely spoken' language is the national one; there, instruction will be conducted in 'English, French, German and Spanish', with 'other languages' confined to 'language support courses' (EDE EUt+, 2022:10).

Now this should not be a concern just because of feelings of unfair treatment to the 'less widely spoken' languages, which is nevertheless a moot point. On the contrary, one can speculate that this arrangement may well have negative effects for student mobility to some of the EUt+ partner institutions included in the 'most widely spoken languages' group, namely UTT, H_DA, and UPCT.

A twist on the scenario included in the previous section might illustrate such effects. Let us imagine that the fictional student is not considering a mobility stay at UTCN or, for that matter, any of the universities in the 'less widely spoken language' group; rather, she or he has an interest on spending a term at, say, UPCT. The student 'already knows English' but has little to no knowledge of Spanish, and only a very limited number of courses at UPCT are taught in English, since a requirement for that does not exist. Given the circumstances, it should not come as a surprise that the student would consider the whole experience too much of a challenge and eventually abandon her or his initial idea to spend one term at UPCT.

What is more striking about this scenario is that it is not so much of a fiction as it might seem. The authors of this contribution both teach Technical English courses at UPCT's Technical School of Telecommunication Engineering and have experience managing student mobility. In that capacity, they have had the chance to encounter a number of real-life situations that resemble the above narrative.

For example, we have direct knowledge that several UPCT students that had been granted a mobility stay to a widely-spoken-language university partner eventually renounced it because they did not speak the language of instruction of the host university. When applying for the grant, the students had assumed that a range of courses were offered in English, but the offer was so limited that it did not allow them to cover the minimum number of credits for an entire semester mobility. Consequently, they spent the following academic year at their home institution and missed a chance for immersion in a different culture and a new language. In a similar instance, we know that at least two students from RTU had shown their interest in studying at UPCT, but the mismatch between the students' needs and the academic offer in English prevented them from choosing our institution.

This evidence is of course anecdotal and should be treated as such, in the absence of more solid data (which may be hard to obtain, given the difficulty of monitoring such a vast number of students and their motivations). However, it seems quite likely that similar experiences may have already occurred at other EUt+ partner institutions, and – more worryingly – that they might occur in the near future, once intercampus mobility has finally become the norm among EUt+ partner institutions.

FEAR OF ELF IN POST-BREXIT EUROPE

What is at stake, then, would seem to justify even a cursory look at the factors that might be underlying EUt+ nascent mobility and language policy. Of course, this requires more than a small amount of speculation, as none of the insights that will follow can be confirmed in any way whatsoever, but the exercise seems nevertheless worth performing.

Paramount among the aforementioned factors is one over which very little speculation can be made, and that is the EUt+ alliance's commitment to the vision of a multilingual Europe as set forth by the European Union. One has only to turn to the 'Council [of the European Union] Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages' (CR 22/5/19), where 'multilingual competence' is pronounced to be 'at the heart of the vision of a European Education Area' to make the connection. This competence is described as a part of 'a European Education Area' ... in which high-quality, inclusive education, training and research are not hampered by borders; spending time in another Member State to study, learn or work has become the standard; speaking two languages in addition to one's mother tongue is far more widespread; and people have a strong sense of their identity as Europeans, as well as an awareness of Europe's shared cultural and linguistic heritage and its diversity (CR 22/5/19:15).

Student mobility is highlighted ('... spending time in another Member State to study ...') and language objectives seem to be generally in line with EUt+ goals, if slightly more ambitious ('... speaking two languages in addition to one's mother tongue ...'). Even the references to European 'identity' and the need for recognizing the continent's diverse 'cultural and linguistic heritage' seem to find an echo in EUt+ emphasis on an authentic encounter with the other by means of languages that are not mere lingua francas.

Suspicion of the latter also seems to be rooted in another debate, the one on the nature and uses of language. As Ives (2006:125) puts it, there seems to be a divide in 'European political philosophy' between those who see 'language as primarily a vehicle for transferring ideas from one brain to another' and those for whom it is 'an integral part of culture, identity, power and conceptions of the world'. With a discourse that heavily relies on culture and identity, an overt mistrust of lingua francas on the part of EUt+ seems almost logical. No less so is that such a mistrust can be transferred to ELF, which three different scholars define as follows:

ELF is a "contact language" between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for who English is the chosen foreign language of communication (Firth, 1996:240); ELF interactions are defined as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue (House, 1999:74); ELF is any use of English among speakers of different cultures for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option. (Seidlhofer, 2011:7). Seen through the prism of linguistic and cultural authenticity, what the three definitions might seem to highlight is a sort of renunciation from speakers of ELF: while using the latter for communication, they would appear to be forfeiting their 'mother tongues', their 'linguacultures' and the original difference associated to them.

From this standpoint it is not difficult, then, to see ELF as an empty vessel deprived of any roots that are firmly planted on authentic cultural soil. Worse still, one can go as far as to proclaim that it serves an even more harming purpose, since nowadays ‘English is marketed as a lingua franca in processes that serve to sanitise linguistic imperialism’ (Philppson, 2017:135). To be fair, a kernel of truth can be found even in these arguably overblown concerns about the perils of submitting to ELF. As Seidlhofer (2011:68) states, ‘there is no doubt that in some parts of the world, there are very real fears for the survival of local and regional languages, as people (particularly, the young) increasingly turn away from their L1 in favour of English, which they perceive as useful and ‘cool’.

In Europe, such feelings have been given new prominence after the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the EU. The departure of the major English-speaking member state has been seen by some as a chance to question the use and status of English in the continent (Modiano, 2017:315-317). However, the spread of ELF is already too extensive across Europe, so much so, that such questioning seems ultimately pointless. Perhaps, then, other ways could be tried:

‘[In Europe] linguistic diversity is more likely to be protected by a new conceptualization of English as ELF rather than by ... exhortations to European citizens to learn languages other than English’ (Seidlhofer, 2011:68).

Seidlhofer’s new conceptualization would require that ELF be ‘appropriated and adapted to serve communal needs’ (2011:68), among which, of course, student mobility across higher-education institutions such as EUT+ partners. For that purpose, two things would seem crucial: first, having recourse to the very potential of ELF as a gateway into other languages and cultures; second, translating that potential into practice by designing and implementing language-teaching projects.

DETECTING PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTING SOLUTIONS

Before engaging with either of the two, nevertheless, it would seem wise to turn our gaze to the inner functioning of EUT+. The scheme devised to accomplish the alliance’s objectives establishes several work packages, subsequently divided into different specific tasks, where task 2.1 addresses the central issues of multilingualism and multiculturalism. The alliance’s language experts and international office managers are joined within task 2.1 in the so-called Language Pool, which is a kind of language observatory to look out for language provisions and set a functional framework for promoting multilingualism. Its target is to empower students to easily access the transcultural and plurilingual richness of the EUT+ on the common belief that mobility and languages are key to expanding horizons.

In this setting, two critical issues revolving around the conditions affecting mobility programmes come to fore, namely, the language of instruction at the host institution, and the level of language proficiency to follow academic instruction. Such issues are closely related to the above-mentioned distinction between ‘most-widely and less-widely spoken languages’, highlighting the concern that the high priority placed on the use and/or knowledge of EUT+ partners’ languages over that of English might be counterproductive

and deterring mobilities instead of fostering them.

The second issue at stake is the minimum level of language proficiency to follow academic instruction. EUt+ mobilities are intended to take place through the Erasmus+ programme, where most universities require a B1 as the minimum level of language proficiency to follow academic instruction; so does the EUt+. It is arguable if a B1 language proficiency level would be enough to understand the subject content in technical disciplines like engineering. Relying on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), in terms of overall oral comprehension, a B1 user of the language 'can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job-related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided people articulate clearly in a generally familiar variety'; and 'can understand the main points made in clear standard language or a familiar variety on familiar matters regularly encountered at work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives' (Council of Europe, 2001).

The next level, B2, is needed to 'understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex discourse on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in standard language or a familiar variety, including technical discussions in their field of specialisation'; 'follow extended discourse and complex lines of argument, provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the argument is signposted by explicit markers' (Council of Europe, 2001). In turn, the C1 speaker can 'use the language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes' (Council of Europe, 2001). Therefore, a B1 level is not enough to communicate in this setting; for example, a B1 level in German is not enough to learn engineering concepts in German. B1 or lower level language user would be overwhelmed by the language of instruction. The increased cognitive load would make students focus more on trying to decode the language input than retaining explanations and content. Such cognitive overload may lead to frustration instead of learning.

Indeed, multilingual competence is still an aim. Language and cultural barriers are two factors which restrain mobility, particularly in higher education, where students are invited to follow academic technical courses in a language in which they may not be competent enough to be successful. Conversely, having access to a set of modules in English would not deter students from studying abroad and learning another foreign language as well as the interaction with its culture. According to Eurostat, around 98% of pupils study English as a foreign language in primary and secondary education, followed by French (33% of pupils), German (23%), and Spanish (17%). The fact that English has globally expanded and penetrated in social strata and domains of use facilitates communication between speakers who do not share a common native language and cultural background. Therefore, English would have the potential to allow for cultural understanding and multilingualism.

The availability of an itinerary in English within the EUt+ European Degrees in Engineering, strategically designed in combination with other content subjects in the national language, shared with local students, and enriched with language and culture courses might fulfil a twofold objective: on the one hand, English would be reinforced and expanded through academic mobility (aiming at achieving a C1 or C2 level) and, on the other hand, students could have access to a second (or third) foreign language, whose learning would be possible thanks to the way paved by English.

Previous experiences and studies (Hornberger & Link, 2012; Palfreyman & Van der Walt, 2017) corroborate that institutional policies for internationalization through the medium of English (EMI) have ‘paradoxically, resulted in increased multilingualism on campuses, as increasing numbers of students from different language backgrounds use the lingua franca to access and develop knowledge and competencies in a variety of languages’ (Van der Walt, 2017:3). Once all EUt+ campuses are wide open to all students, the EUt+ international experience will not be banned for those who cannot take instruction in German, French or Spanish, provided that English could be used as a tool of communication, as a means to experience and get immersed in a different culture.

In a similar vein, Wilkinson & Gabriëls (2021) findings coincide with previous studies like Baker & Huttner (2017) and Mauranen & Mauko (2019), where the assumed English-only use of the language in EMI programmes is not so. In EMI multilingual settings students do switch languages, both within and outside the university context, but less so in the EMI classroom. Likewise, they confirm what Haberland & Preisler (2015) described as the ‘paradox of internationalisation’, that is, the greater language and culture diversion, the more likely English is adopted as the language of communication. In that respect, Kuteeva et al. (2020) add that such paradox extends to other university settings in agreement with Lasagabaster & Doiz (2020:380) who claim that ‘the terms “internationalisation” and “multilingualism” are used as euphemisms to refer to English’.

All in all, the current interaction between people from different backgrounds and speakers of different mother tongues is undoubtedly performed through English because of its predominant international status. Therefore, it would be wise to use English as a means to our end; that is to say, as a means to leverage interaction among European cultures and allow for multilingualism and multiculturalism.

A first-hand experience which clearly illustrates the arguments presented alongside this paper is observed in one of the Erasmus+ projects which is being developed during the period from November 2021 to May 2024: the SUCCESS project. SUCCESS stands for ‘Solutions for Unified communication Competences for Engineering Students and Specialists’. The project is aimed at creating a ‘student-centred’ curriculum intended to provide complete coverage of communication skills in English needed by the labour market technical communication. The resulting programme is made up of four training activities, each one taking place in the premises of each university member: Digital Communication in the 21st century (Technical University of Cartagena); English for Engineers, and Career panel (Technical University of Dresden and The Pyramid Group); Communication Lab (Technical University of Riga); and Communication Deployment Hackathon (Pôle Universitaire Léonard de Vinci).

The first training activity was held in Cartagena in April 2022. Five participants from each university partner joined together in a multilingual, multicultural and international setting. Students were arranged in groups mixing the four nationalities and interacted with each other, not only in English, but also in their second or third language that allowed communication, both inside and outside the classroom. At the end of the course, it is remarkable that the questionnaire administered to assess the program revealed as the best rated and valued item that of the interactions between students during the course. More

than any other, socio-emotional skills seem to have been fostered. An additional effect of such a good experience was the interest generated in some participants to get to know their partners' home universities. Consequently, some students decided to enrol in a summer course in Riga, where, as a part of the program, students could learn a bit of Latvian and enjoy cultural activities. Also, a student from Paris was interested in an internship in Cartagena and one student from the UPCT in carrying out his final project in Dresden.

FINAL REMARKS

What the SUCCESS project shows, therefore, is that interaction, mobility, multilingualism and multiculturalism seem all to be boosted by the common language of communication; indisputably, that language is ELF, in continental Europe and the world as a whole. Again, the evidence is anecdotal, but there is something not to be missed here, namely that a lingua franca (controversial as its background may be) can bridge the gap between the self and the other, rather than blocking it.

This points in the direction of what could be described as intelligent compromise. Considering that the EUT+ project is in its early stage of development, it might be noticed that the alignment of objectives, wishes and reality is precisely part and parcel of the project until its final attainment. It is intelligent to make concessions to the initial requirements, especially when they are directed at the improvement and viability of the final objective. In this sense, the periodic work meetings that take place are crucial to detecting problems, providing solutions and moving forward. Thus, an agreement has been established as a pilot for the facilitation of student mobility between EUT+ partners, clusters development and trajectory towards EUT+ European engineering degrees.

A concern with respect to languages is acknowledged by stating that 'priority should be given to solve problems of language that could prevent seamless student mobility'. In turn, the agreement invites to resort to English as the most common lingua franca as an easier choice to start with.

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#CYPRUS #COFFEE:

**TRENDS IN THE LINGUISTIC
COMMUNICATION OF YOUNG
GREEK-CYPRIOTS AS REFLECT-
ED IN COFFEE PROMOTION ON
INSTAGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

Cyprus is currently undergoing significant transformations that underscore its rich multi-cultural diversity and impact various aspects, including language and its development. As language communication adapts to balance cultural specificity with extroversion, global trends, and emerging forms of linguistic expression, Cyprus' linguistic landscape exhibits distinctiveness due to the prominence of two linguistic varieties: Cypriot-Greek (CG), the language variety of Greek-Cypriots, and Standard Modern Greek (SMG), the official state language. While SMG serves formal contexts, CG thrives in everyday oral communication, folk literature, and humour. Nevertheless, in recent years, CG has increasingly permeated previously considered inappropriate contexts, such as public speeches, broadcasted discussions, political debates, and advertising, in both spoken and written communication. Simultaneously, the growing influence of English as a means of communication among young Greek-Cypriots reflects contemporary global linguistic trends while echoing Cyprus' colonial history.

The coffee tradition holds immense cultural significance in Cypriot society, demanding considerable time for preparation and consumption. However, contemporary lifestyles, socio-economic conditions, and global influences necessitate innovative approaches to coffee products and their promotion. Targeting younger audiences, budget-friendly canned coffee has garnered substantial popularity among young Greek-Cypriots, particularly through social media platforms like Instagram. This study focuses on Mr. Brown's canned coffee as a case study for coffee advertising promotion on Instagram. It draws upon sociolinguistics and advertising theories, employing semiotic analysis as an interpretive tool. The study's objectives encompass documenting, analysing, and discussing the use of CG in brand promotion, identifying current linguistic trends and codes in multimodal advertising messages targeting Greek-Cypriot youth, highlighting the cultural significance of specific representational and language choices, and exploring the impact of globalization on local culture and language. The sociolinguistic context of Cyprus, influenced by both cultural and historical factors, presents a unique dynamic in which CG and SMG play distinct roles based on ideology, function, and prestige. This research uncovers how Mr. Brown's canned coffee strategically integrates CG into its Instagram promotion to target young Greek-Cypriots. The brand's Instagram content emphasizes local customs, traditions, and natural beauty, resonating primarily with young Greek-Cypriot men. Semiotic analysis reveals how Mr. Brown's visual identity, with its character design and typographic choices, reinforces gendered characteristics while enhancing the brand's prestige. The study also identifies gendered language in the promotion that perpetuates heteronormativity, reinforcing traditional roles and cultural norms. Many posts adopt a user-generated content model, allowing users to engage personally with the brand. The posts further integrate the brand's character/logo, blurring the line between influencer and product. The research in Mr. Brown's Instagram captions also reveals extensive use of CG, emojis, emphasis through semiotic features, pragmatic punctuation, and code-switching between CG and English. English hashtags enhance outreach, while Cyprenglish; a term which is thoroughly explained on page 10; reflects Cypriot identity, glocality and humour. In conclusion, Mr. Brown's canned coffee promotion in Cyprus strategically incorporates CG, cultural specificity, and historical roots to connect with young Greek-Cypriots. By embracing the cultural identity and aspirations of its target audience, the brand fosters pride, familiarity,

and cultural preservation. This study offers valuable insights into the intersection of language, culture, and advertising in contemporary Cyprus.

Keywords: *Cypriot-Greek, Instagram promotion, cultural identity, gendered language, glocality.*

GREEK-CYPRriot DIALECT: UNVEILING A LIVING LANGUAGE VARIATION

Language variation and its social implications have long been a subject of interest in sociolinguistics. Dialects, as regional and social manifestations of language, reflect not only the geographical location but also the social background and identity of speakers (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998). Cyprus, a Mediterranean island with a diverse linguistic history, presents a compelling case study, since the coexistence of Cypriot-Greek (CG) [?] which is the language variety of Greek-Cypriots [?] and Standard Modern Greek (SMG) in Cyprus creates a unique sociolinguistic context. The historical and sociopolitical factors that have shaped CG, the linguistic differences between CG and SMG, as well as the sociopolitical and cultural implications and significance associated with the usage of the two varieties, have been in the light of linguistic research thus contributing to the broader understanding of language variation in education and language planning, as well as identity, and language ideologies in a multilingual society.

The sociolinguistic dynamics between CG and SMG are multifaceted as the two varieties differ in form and function, and hold distinct communicative roles within Greek-Cypriot society. While SMG is the language of official communication, including education, courts, mass media, and written texts, CG remains the primary language variety for everyday oral communication among Greek-Cypriots. The functional differentiation is accompanied by a difference in social status, with SMG holding a higher prestige and serving formal situations, while CG is associated with informal and vernacular contexts. CG is a vibrant and expressive language system with distinct phonological features (Arvaniti, 2010), serving as a medium of casual verbal communication, folk literature, and humour production for contemporary Cypriots.

The sociolinguistic context of Cyprus, influenced by historical and sociopolitical factors such as the Turkish invasion in 1974, has led to the emergence of a contemporary and homogenised urban variety of Cypriot-Greek, lacking distinct regional characteristics, also known as pan-Cypriot Koine (Tsiplakou et al., 2006). This variety has replaced the previously diverse subdialects and is predominantly spoken by the younger generation.

Challenges arise when attempting to represent CG's distinct phonetic system in writing, as the Greek alphabet cannot adequately accommodate certain consonantal phonemes.

These unrepresented consonants, both allophones and independent phonemes, highlight the phonological differences between CG and SMG (Arvaniti, 1999, 2010). Consequently, the issue of orthography in CG extends beyond grammatical and spelling rules, emphasising the functional use of language and the social choices made within the community. Despite these challenges, CG persists in written form, primarily in literature, folk parody, and lately in social media communication (Papadima, forthcoming 2025). In our previous research, we documented the variety of typographical conventions encountered in the written rendering of the Greek-Cypriot dialect in different text genres and media. Simultaneously, our findings shed light on the typographical challenges that arise and the semiotic implications stemming from the absence of an official and widely accepted orthographic system for representing CG's unique phonological features (Papadima, Ayiomamitou and Kyriacou, 2013; Papadima et al., 2014; Papadima and Kyriacou, 2014). The use and representation of CG intertwine with sociocultural and political issues, reflecting the national identity and language ideologies of Greek-Cypriots. The choices made by speakers regarding their language variety and orthographic preferences are influenced by their social and political identity, contributing to a broader debate regarding the orthography of CG. Consequently, the written form of CG exhibits inconsistent and idiosyncratic typographic conventions and individual orthographic choices that offer insights into the content, tone, style, and intentions of the users, ultimately reflecting their social and cultural identity.

Although there is not much research on Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) using CG, Themistocleous' findings (2011) confirm that CG is widely used in CMC by young Greek-Cypriots, opting for Roman characters instead of the Greek script in online interactions. Teenagers and young adults, both male and female, prefer CG in online chat as it enables them to foster solidarity and assert their national identity.

The CG textese encompasses a wide range of linguistic features and diverse semiotic elements, giving rise to a visual language that emerges from creative and evolving repertoires. This visual language is characterised by a blend of typographical elements. While certain expressive tendencies are commonly observed, individualised modes of written expression display notable deviations from standard or widely accepted spelling and stylistic conventions, resulting in vernacular orthographic manifestations. These distinctive orthographic practices are influenced by both the English and Greek languages, encompassing orthographic, phonetic, or combined approaches (Papadima, forthcoming 2025).

This study examines the promotion of Mr. Brown's canned coffee through its official Instagram account (Mr Brown Cyprus, n.d., b), given the impact of coffee on the daily lives of young Greek-Cypriots and the linguistic choices and specificity observed in the brand's official Instagram account in Cyprus. The study aims to achieve several objectives, including the documentation, analysis, and discourse surrounding the utilization of CG in the promotion of brands. It also seeks to pinpoint prevailing linguistic trends and codes within the realm of multimodal advertising messages directed at Greek-Cypriot youth. Additionally, the study endeavours to underscore the cultural importance attached to distinct representational and language choices and to delve into the ramifications of globalization on the local culture and language.

CONSTRUCTING LOCALITY AND GENDER IN MR. BROWN'S BRAND AND PROMOTION IN CYPRUS

The coffee tradition deeply rooted in Cypriot society holds a significant cultural value, encompassing historical and ideological connotations that are intertwined with ethnicity and gender. In our previous research (Papadima, 2019, 2020), we emphasised the influence of coffee culture in Cyprus, focusing on the semiotic characteristics associated with Cypriot coffee and local coffee shops, as well as the gendered dimension present in the language and practices connected to coffee culture. The traditional Cypriot coffee shop functions as a predominantly male-dominated public setting, reflecting principles associated with patriarchy. This is evident in the structured social dynamics that reinforce a dominant male identity and perpetuate gender distinctions through the concept of 'doing gender'. The traditional Cypriot coffee shop remains an exclusive domain for men, affording them leisure time. Bourdieu's notion of a 'phallogocentric' viewpoint and an androcentric worldview, prevalent in Mediterranean societies and persisting today (Bourdieu, 2001; 6), finds a quintessential manifestation in the traditional Cypriot coffee shop. In this environment, female presence is confined to roles involving cleaning, coffee preparation, and serving the men who actively engage in 'doing gender'. This gendered aspect has been explicitly promoted in print and television advertising of coffee as well (Papadima, 2020).

In a transitional period of modernisation, the progressive shift in lifestyle, socio-economic conditions, and the influence of imported trends necessitate novel approaches to coffee products and their promotion. In recent times, low-budget canned coffees have garnered substantial popularity among young Greek-Cypriots, carving out a notable niche in the market. This success could be partly attributed to advertising strategies and trendy promotional techniques specifically tailored to appeal to younger demographic audiences.

Mr. Brown's canned coffee was launched in 1995 and, according to the brand's official page, has become highly appreciated by consumers, ranking among the top two choices in the canned coffee category (Mr. Brown Cyprus, n.d., a). The brand's official Instagram account (Mr Brown Cyprus, n.d., b) exhibits a deliberate focus on the local context, incorporating narratives and signs that specifically relate to Cypriot culture. Serving as a projecting example of popular culture text, this account employs a combination of representational and linguistic codes to engage viewers and contribute to the portrayal of a part of the local community. Furthermore, it effectively conveys gender and local identities that resonate with young Greek-Cypriots.

Semiotic analysis of Mr. Brown's logotype reveals how the character's deliberate design elements, such as his corpulent physique connoting affluence and benevolence, a well-groomed beard signifying masculinity, and a broad smile conveying enjoyment, sociability, and positive demeanour, highlight gender characteristics while enhancing the brand's prestige. The use of bold capital letters encircling the character underscores formality, emphasis, and seriousness (Dodd, 2006), validating the robustness and prestige of the brand while reinforcing the visibility of the logo. By positioning the character within a circular shape in a dark red colour that symbolises power (Clair, 2018), the visual impression of a wax seal is created, attesting authenticity and endorsing the product's credibility and the brand's prestige.

The Instagram posts of Mr. Brown's official account in Cyprus (Mr Brown Cyprus, n.d., b) exhibit a distinct emphasis on the local essence, encompassing various aspects of regional customs, traditions, and celebration of local calendar events and religious festivities. Moreover, the content is attuned to the natural progression of seasons. The narratives portrayed in these posts skilfully capture everyday moments of both work and leisure, employing a personal storytelling approach that seamlessly integrates local customs. Additionally, the account brings attention to the diverse facets of the Cypriot landscape, including its natural environment, flora, and fauna. The posts are primarily aimed at young men, as evidenced by the content and textual analysis of the posts, as well as the observations of informants who participated in a focus group conducted in October 2022 with the help of 10 informants, including male and female students from the Cyprus University of Technology. The informants agreed that Mr. Brown's canned coffee is affordable, easily accessible, and primarily targeted at youth, working-class individuals, and soldiers. The posts' gendered content is mainly evident in the visual elements, as noted by the informants, and is related to the product's target audience. A considerable number of posts depict young men engaged in male-dominated jobs related to manual labour, recreational or outdoor activities, and military service (See Appendix Note 1). In contrast, only eight (8) posts suggest the presence of young women engaged in activities such as cooking, decorating and drawing, reading, and office work, primarily in indoor settings (See Appendix Note 2). This communicative pattern is also evident in the language utilised, which incorporates military jargon, neologisms, and slang that primarily appeals to a male audience.

While the posts intentionally target a young male audience, it is important to acknowledge that advertising plays a significant role in perpetuating heteronormativity within society (Gill, 2009). Gender roles portrayed in advertisements not only shape individuals' attitudes towards brands but also have broader social implications (Eisend, 2019). Representational inequality against women in the brand's Instagram promotion symbolically confines them to the private sphere, while simultaneously diminishing their visibility and participation in the public sphere (Harp, Harlow and Loke, 2013), thereby highlighting the underlying cultural norms at play.

Many posts follow the 'user-generated content' model, which gives the power of authorship to the person posting rather than the brand itself (Kress, 2010: 21). The iconic and linguistic elements present in the posts, including amateurish photos, short videos, framing techniques that capture hands holding coffee or mobile phone, surrounding environments, and lighting choices, collectively contribute to the construction of private authorship. Consequently, these elements that indicate personal style serve as signals of subjectivity within the content (Zappavigna, 2016). The recurrent first-person reference, personal thoughts, and specific details of habits or circumstances create an atmosphere of intimacy with the account's followers. Followers interact and empathise with the posts, fostering a personal connection with the brand.

Within several posts, the male character representing Mr. Brown, who is also part of the brand's logotype, actively promotes the product by adhering to the practices commonly observed among internet celebrities. These practices include: a) disclosing personal life details, habits, and preferences, b) employing positive self-branding through textual and visual narratives, and c) occasionally offering product giveaways, a strategy frequently em-

ployed by influencers (Leaver, Highfield and Abidin, 2020). By integrating the brand’s character/logo into the product promotion, the brand’s image is further fortified. Furthermore, the adoption of a narrative approach featuring a character functioning as an influencer injects a comedic element into the captions. The use of specific linguistic choices enhances the comic effect, as the influencer engages the audience by employing their vernacular code, specifically CG. This deliberate linguistic strategy aims to establish a deeper and more resonant connection with the target demographic.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND CODING

The case under scrutiny focuses on the analysis of Instagram captions associated with a brand targeting young individuals. This examination delves into the use of language and codes for brand promotion and explores their semiotic implications. The study concentrates on posts made by the brand in Cyprus over the past two years, spanning from January 2021 to December 2022, with a research sample comprising 162 posts.

The analysis in this study was based on the registration of texts and codes extracted from captions in Mr. Brown’s Instagram posts. The texts of the captions predominantly featured the use of CG. Notable patterns observed in the captions included: (a) extensive use of CG, employing a simple typographic system to represent distinct sounds; (b) utilisation of emojis; (c) expression of emphasis through semiotic features, pragmatic punctuation, and lengthening of words and interjections (Ong, 2017); (d) tagging in English; (e) tagging in Cyprenglish, which involves transliterating CG into the Roman script; and (f) instances of code-switching between CG and English. The coding process of the original spellings in CG involved classifying them using Lyddy’s et al. (2014) typology as a preliminary reference while drawing insights from previous studies investigating linguistic features of Computer Mediated Communication (Barton and Lee, 2013; Turner et al., 2014; Ong, 2017). The Table below presents the coding categories, which were derived from a thorough examination and documentation of the posts, along with corresponding examples of each code. Phonetic transcription in IPA as well as translation/interpretation of the texts in English are indicated next to each code.

Category	Original spelling in Mr. Brown captions	Phonetic transcription in IPA	English gloss
Accent Stylisation: Phonetic-Based Spelling	σιελιδόνι	ʃɛliˈðɔni	swallow
	καλοτζιαίριν	kelɔˈtʃɛrin	summer
	ταιρκαστόν	tɛrkeˈstɔn	matching (masculine-singular-accusative)
	τταβλούι	tʰ:vluin	backgammon
	έσσειει	ˈɛʃi	there is

Spellings in GAE / Engreek: transliteration of English into the Greek script	Μάι μόνρινγκ ρουττίν [...]	mɛi_ˈmɔrning ruˈtʰin	my morning routine [...]
	[...] γράψε μας στα κόμμεντς!	ˈɣrɛpsɛ_mɛ sˈtɛ_ˈkʰ:ɔmɛnts	[...] write to us in the comments!
	Μπακ του ριάλιτι!	ˈmbɛk tʰ:u_riˈɛliti	Back to reality!
	Μέι δε φόρθ μπι γουίθ γιου	ˈmɛi dɛ_ˈfoɾθ ˈmbi ju	May the fourth be with you
	καφές φορ γουόρκ	keˈfɛs foɾ_ɣuˈoɾk	Coffee for work
Code-switching: switching between CG and English in the same sentence	Έσσιετε τζιαι εσεις έτσι t-shirt;; Που τ' αλήθκεια όμως!	ˈɛʃɛtɛ tʃɛ_ɛˈsis ˈɛʃsˈi tʰ:iʃɛɾtʃ? pu_t_ɛˈliθce ˈɔmɔs	Do you also have such a t-shirt? Seriously though!
	Κάμε tag τον παρέα σου που ντύνεται πάντα χαβανέζος	ˈkɛmɛ tʰ:ɛk tɔm_bɛˈrɛɛ_s:u pu_ɲɔin:ɛtɛ ˈpɛndɛ xeveˈnez:ɔs	Tag that buddy of yours who always dresses up like a Hawaiian!
	Αν είσαι gamer εν να το πιάεις!	ɛn_ˈisɛ ˈɲɛɛimɛɾ ɛn:ɛ_tɔ_ˈpiɛis	If you are a gamer, you will get it!
	One coffee to rule them all. Πόσα logo του άρχοντα θωρείς πάνω στο ποστ;	vuˈɛɲ ˈkʰ:ɔfi tʰ:u ˈrul ðɛm ˈɔl. ˈpɔsɛ ˈlɔkɔ tu_ɛɾx-ɔndɛ θɔˈris ˈpɛnɔ stɔ_ˈpʰ:ɔstʃ?	One coffee to rule them all. How many logos of the Lord (of the Rings) do you see in the post?
	[...] όσα copies τζιαν αν φκουν!	ˈɔsɛ ˈkʰ:ɔpis tʃ_ɛ_ˈf:kun	[...] no matter how many copies come out!
	Tagging in Cyprenglish: transliteration of CG into the Roman script	#ΡουΤαAlithkia	pu_t_ɛˈliθce
#sieftalies		ʃɛftɛˈʎ:ɛs	sheftalia-plural (Cypriot lamb and pork sausage)
#OtiKamisEnKalon		ˈɔti ˈkɛmis ɛɲ_gɛˈlɔn	whatever you do it's good
#Tsakrin		tʃsˈɛˈkrin	ice cold
#tsiknopempti		tʃsˈi:knɔˈpɛmptʰi	Charred Thursday
Stylised spelling: Expressive lengthening/ stylised punctuation	Ωωωωωχχχ... Τουτά ένει!...	ˈɔ:::x: (.) tʰɪtʰɛ ˈɛni	Aahhhhhhh... That's it!
	[...] τσακρίuuu	tʃsˈɛˈkri:::	[...] ice cold
	Έφτασεεε....	ˈɛftɛsɛ:::	right away! (for food or drinks ordered at a restaurant/café)
	Αααασύλληπτα	ɛ::ˈsil:iptʰɛ	inconceivably
	Καφές γιορτέεεε!!!	keˈfɛz ɲɔˈɾtɛ:::s	Have a coffee holiday!

Onomatopoeic/ exclamatory expressions: Non-lexical features	[...] παρά πα πα παμ!	pe're pe pe 'rem	pa rum pum pum pum
	ΜΠΑΜ!	'mbem	BAM!
	κλαψ, κλαψ!	'kleps 'kleps	weep, weep!
	Μπου!!!	mbu	Boo!
	Ωχο	'ox:ɔ	Oooh!
Neologisms: Newly coined words or ex- pressions	Τάγκαρε (cyprio- tised version of the word 'tag')	t̪h̪:ekereɣ	tag! (imperative-2nd singular)
	τσιλλάουα (cyprio- tised version of the word 'chill')	t̪h̪:i'l:eue	chilling out
	χαλαρούιτα (deriving from the word 'χαλαρά' meaning 'chilling')	xeleru'iɰe	kicking back
Military jargon: wording/ex- pressions used in the Greek and Cypriot army	σειράς/σειράες	si'res / si'reɣes	army buddy/buddies (of the same induction class)
	λούφα τζαι γυάλισμα	'lufe t̪ɰe 'jel:izme	shirking and (military boot) polishing
	Κάτι ν' αντέξεις το νούμερο!	'keɰi n_ɣ'ndɰksis t̪ɔ_ 'numeɣo	Something to help you go through your shift!
	Παλέουρας	pe'leures	old cadet (finishing his mili- tary service)
	απολελέ και τρελελέ	ɣpoɰe'le ɰe t̪ɣe:ɣ'le	discharged (upon comple- tion of military service) and going crazy

Language findings in the captions of 'Mr. Brown's' official Instagram account in Cyprus

FROM CODES TO INSIGHTS: CONTEXTUALISING KEY FINDINGS

In captions, the use of CG, transcribed into the Greek script, is almost exclusively favoured, with a few inserted keywords in English, such as 'tag' and 'comment,' or quotes in English. This reflects a code-switching practice often encountered in online texts. Semiotically, CG is closely linked to the concept of territoriality of language, being connected to local culture and preferred over a more ethnic linguistic code (Papadima and Photiadis, 2019). The choice of CG as the preferred linguistic variety for brand promotion has several implications. First, it connotes Cypriotness, emphasising the local character of the brand. Secondly, it suggests cultural uniformity and promotes the shaping of national identity (Zantides, 2018). Thirdly, it facilitates a more intimate communication with the target audience. Lastly, it creates a humorous effect (Pavlou, 2004).

For the written rendering of CG in captions, a phonetic writing system is adopted, using only existing characters of the Greek alphabet. The marking of distinctive sounds is achieved by adding the Greek vowel <ι> after the corresponding consonant, as in the words ‘σιελιδόνι’ and ‘καλοτζιαίριν’, indicating the sounds [ʃ] and [tʃ] respectively. This specific orthographic convention for rendering CG into written discourse is considered the simplest of the recorded existing conventions (Papadima and Kyriacou, 2014). It does not require additional diacritic marks, specially designed fonts, or smart keyboards for its use, and it is displayed and perceived in the same way on different devices and platforms for all users.

In a number of cases, English quotes or simple sentences are transliterated into the Greek script, i.e. in Engreek. The symbolic meaning of ‘vernacular transliterations of English’ varies depending on the context and intent, and, according to Spilioti (2013), is ‘locally emergent and indexically motivated’. In semiotic terms, it can signify Greekness authentication (Spilioti, 2020), discrimination, and mockery of misuse or mispronunciation of English, or a humorous tone in playful contexts, as in the case of Mr. Brown’s Instagram caption ‘Μέι δε φόρθ μπι γουίθ γιου [ˈmɛi ðɛ ˈfɔːθ ˈmbi ɣuˈiθ ɟu / May the fourth be with you]’.

Captions exhibit noteworthy elements of orality, supported by the use of CG which is predominately used in verbal communication, signifying a spontaneous, direct, and intimate form of communication typically found among peers or friends. Contributing to this orality is the use of friendly forms of address, exclamations, direct questions or suggestions to the readers, humorous style, puns, and the frequent use of ellipsis marks, which serve to highlight the pauses that are characteristic of oral discourse.

The hashtags used in the captions feature code-switching, mostly with English. The predominance of English, as a post-colonial effect and its hegemonic position as a lingua franca, seems to serve the economic, social, and political stakes of Cypriots (McEntee-Atalianis, 2004). The youth are increasingly exposed to English through mass culture texts and social networking platforms, shaping the way they communicate in both spoken and written discourse. While captions are mainly written in CG in Greek script, hashtags are written in English or Cyprenglish. The term Cyprenglish is a newly coined expression (Papadima and Kourdis, 2016) akin to the previously established term Greeklish formed by merging the words ‘Cypriot’ and ‘English.’ Its primary purpose is to describe the practice of transliterating CG text into the Roman script. Essentially, Cyprenglish pertains to informal and impromptu conventions that manifest within the realm of CMC. These conventions notably deviate from expected orthographic norms and established typographic standards, often resulting in unconventional renditions of the CG. The presence of English hashtags, even though they are widely recognised and serve as markers across languages, indicates a deliberate choice of using multiple languages simultaneously as an act of code-switching (Jurgens, Dimitrov and Ruths, 2014). Code-switching in English in the brand’s hashtags is used as a ‘discourse strategy’ (Poplack, 1980) which, in this case, serves to enable exposure and outreach to larger communities, enhancing extroversion and the diffusion of messages. At the same time, hashtags in Cyprenglish denote Cypriotness and reflect globality while providing a humorous tone, in line with the intention of the captions. Based on Jurgens, Dimitrov, and Ruths’ (2014) ‘taxonomy of hashtags according to their intended use,’ we can observe that in the current research sample, hashtags are used in the following order: (a) to link posts to external communities, (b) to refer to the brand or product on

a global level, (c) to promote the product and/or brand, and (d) to annotate the author's feelings or comments.

The use of emojis is known to enhance the personal style of captions in digital communication, adding creativity and playfulness to the message (Alshenqeeti, 2016; Danesi, 2016; Moschini, 2016). Emojis have become a significant tool for expressing emotions, incorporating attention-grabbing, colourful visual elements that can promote the salience of the message. Moreover, emojis can help to convey meaning concisely and clearly, which is especially valuable in captions that have limited space for written communication (Alshenqeeti, 2016). Visual metaphors of emojis can enhance the meaning of the verbal message in two ways: (a) by visualising the writer's emotion or intention, or (b) by illustrating the main points of the text content (Danesi, 2016). In the present study, the use of emojis was found to have a predominantly positive connotation. The majority of posts featured smileys laughing, partying, star-struck, and heart-eyed, among others, while pictorial or descriptive emojis were used to illustrate nature, sports, vehicles, summer, and other leisure-related themes. This trend supports the notion that emojis are primarily used to convey positive emotions and experiences in digital communication. Emojis possess semantic structure and carry implicit nuances within their manufactured symbols. Furthermore, they encompass both literal and associative meanings, infused with significance through symbolic representations, serving communicative intentions (Danesi, 2016). Acquiring the skill of strategically employing emojis involves developing pragmatic competence, which necessitates the ability to switch between varied writing systems (*ibid*), an ability that Greek-Cypriot youth seems to possess.

SUMMARY AND CLOSING REMARKS

In summary, our findings suggest that Mr. Brown's multimodal captions promote the 'completeness' of meaning, recognised and understood by the members of this group, that is the followers of the brand on Instagram, as proposed by Kress (2010: 147). The use of various modes such as tagging, code-switching, and visual metaphors, in conjunction with the contextual information, highlights the impact of globalisation and contemporary communication trends within the Instagram platform. The use of the Greek script to represent CG in written form carries ideological implications that emphasise the Greekness of Greek-Cypriots. Conversely, the use of Cyprenglish as a national indicator reflects territoriality and demonstrates the interaction between British and Mediterranean cultures in European Cyprus (Papadima and Photiadis, 2019).

Mr. Brown's brand promotion in Cyprus strategically grounds itself in the local context, effectively merging fixed traditional perspectives with contemporary lifestyle approaches, and actively endorsing the use of the CG as a medium for written discourse. By leveraging the cultural specificity and historical roots of the region, the brand creates a cohesive narrative that resonates with the target audience, aligning itself with the cultural identity and aspirations of young Greek-Cypriots. This approach not only fosters a sense of pride and familiarity among consumers but also contributes to the preservation and revitalisation of Cypriot culture and language.

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APPENDIX

Appendix Note 1

Links to relevant posts are provided here for reference:

1. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CWpkDk2NuEu/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>
2. https://www.instagram.com/p/CS5_QiuqcgR/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
3. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CRn3F4KVRR/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>
4. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLWERj1nAyr/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>
5. https://www.instagram.com/p/CL_M0K-n03H/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

Appendix Note 2

Links to relevant posts are provided here for reference:

https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch33A_gtf6d/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

https://www.instagram.com/p/CRS_kQLK0w1/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

<https://www.instagram.com/p/COHksEZNdA0/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==>

https://www.instagram.com/p/CNrs52ps_YY/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

NEW PATHWAYS TOWARDS PLURILINGUAL AND INTERCUL- TURAL EDUCATION:

DACADU - TEACHING PRACTICE IN THE EUT+ HIGHER EDUCA- TION ALLIANCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a framework, context, and rationale for a Collaborative Online International Learning project in the EUt+ Alliance. It outlines key insights from research on Internationalisation, mobility and intercultural competence. The paper addresses the design and findings from an EUt+ collaborative project titled DACADU Interkulturelles Lernen für Deutschlernende, which focuses on German language skills and intercultural competence in a virtual learning and blended mobility environment. The project brought together faculty and students (at different levels on the CEFR and from a variety of disciplines) from TU Dublin, UPCT Cartagena and Hochschule Darmstadt. The first phase consisted of intensive collaboration to produce digital, oral and written artefacts; mediated weekly through social networks and online fora, and published in the project's blog. The second phase involved a physical mobility experience for all participants hosted by Hochschule Darmstadt, with a comprehensive program of language, socialization, and cultural activities to extend intercultural learning. The paper presents the challenges and recommendations arising from such cross-institutional initiatives, focusing on aspects of this Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning (COIL) project within the European University of Technology (EUt+) Alliance.

Keywords: *Intercultural competence, Multilingualism, Blended Mobility/COIL, Higher Education, Language learning.*

INTRODUCTION

International and intercultural perspectives – Contexts and rationale

Internationalisation has long been a concern for European policymakers and practitioners. Institutions have recognized 'the need to reach outside the campus into the wider world, and across borders' to develop skills and attributes for 'tomorrow's practitioners and decision-makers'.¹ There is a long history of higher education cooperation between EU member states, which now increasingly extends to partners outside Europe. The achievement of several of the EU's policy objectives such as those in education, training, employment and multilingualism has a strong international dimension. Collaboration between universities both within and beyond the EU is recognized for its ability to 'attract talent to the EU, [...] promote peer learning and international comparison and [...] foster excellence in research and teaching.'²

The European University of Technology Alliance is one strand of European strategic action.³ As an Alliance, it articulates an overarching commitment to 'European Values empowering Technology' and to narratives of a 'pioneering spirit, reinvention, new frontiers, and a new education model to achieve openness, inclusion, and cross-boundary goals'⁴. In the EUt+

1 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/eea-in-the-world/european-higher-education-in-the-world>

2 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/eea-in-the-world/european-higher-education-in-the-world>

3 <https://www.univ-tech.eu/manifesto-and-identity>

4 <https://www.univ-tech.eu/more-european-students-will-soon-feel-at-home-on-eut-campuses;>
<https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/european-universities-factsheet-eut.pdf>

Proposal document EPP-EUR-UNIV-2020, work package indicators articulate objectives and aspirations regarding multilingualism and language proficiency up to, for example, B2 level (CEFR)⁵ for students on harmonised programmes in EUt+ universities.⁶

An EUt+ education provides the possibility for students and faculty to interact in several languages. It sets out a direction that differs in many ways from current educational offerings. Specifically, a gradual move towards a multi-campus university model. For learners, EUt+ presents an important acknowledgement of their European identity. Virtual mobility is also addressed.

The DACADU project addresses the aspirations above and, through its design and findings, provides new insights into multi-campus, pedagogically embedded, attractive, multilingual, interactive, and collaborative learning for European peers.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION – EXPLORING MOBILITY

Study, work, and training periods abroad enable skill development and enhance graduate employability. Graduates enjoy benefits beyond their early careers with longer-term positive impacts on academic and professional life (Engel, 2010; Iriondo, 2019). International collaborative experiences and cooperation encourage thinking beyond national borders and are acknowledged within international programs such as Erasmus mobility as an effective tool in bolstering EU public diplomacy efforts. This is particularly relevant for international development, migration, and intercultural dialogue where the value of developing enduring personal relationships amongst academics, graduates and stakeholders can enhance approaches to common social and global challenges. Moreover, cooperation in higher education is central to the innovation and development required to align with the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals – especially, Goal 4: Quality Education.⁷ Appreciation and preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity is one such goal.⁸

Erasmus+, the EU's flagship mobility programme, has provided life-changing experiences for more than 10 million students over its 35-year history. Furthermore, it has enabled over three million European students spend part of their studies at another HE institution or with an organisation in Europe.⁹ The value and quality of mobility, and the Erasmus expe-

5 CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe) is a framework of reference developed over 20 years of research and designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

6 EUt+ Consortium platform (restricted) <https://agora.univ-tech.eu/org/article/9871>

7 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

8 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>

9 Erasmus+ mobility 'has positive effects on educational, social, personal and professional development, in that it enhances knowledge, skills and attitudes, improves employability, helps confidence-building and independence, stimulates curiosity and innovation, fosters the understanding of other people, and builds a sense of European belonging' <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ff1edfdf-8bca-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

rience in particular, is well documented (Devlin, 2020; Knight, 2012; Leask, 2014). ‘Erasmus+ is unique in its scope compared to the organization of international mobility in many other regions’ (Devlin, 2020, 5).

In addition to the language learning and language awareness aspects within a plurilingual Europe (Devlin, 2020; Jung, 2020), new priorities for Erasmus+ include inclusion, digital transformation, and environmental sustainability.¹⁰ The value of mobility for intercultural competence and enhanced global citizenship attributes are also well highlighted (Schartner, 2016). Jung’s research (2020) highlights benefits in relation to communicative empathy, the experience of multi-lingual and plurilingual spaces for exploration of linguistic repertoires, enhanced competence in the native language (including English) and re-evaluation of the relationship with the national language. Crucially too, Jung (2020) argues that ‘Erasmus+ brings the geographical, geopolitical, generational, socio-economic, educational, and cultural limitations of English to the fore’ (Jung, 2020, 8). Language acquisition and intercultural competence development are key tenets of the collaborative project described below.

Nonetheless, challenges and issues persist around mobility which are important to provide a rationale for the DACADU Project. Research points to a need for more critical appraisals of study-abroad programmes (Van de Berg et al., 2012). Affordability issues highlight concerns about equity and student participation; competition from shorter, less expensive study visits; and internationalised curricula and whole-institution pedagogies that seek to promote cross-cultural understanding ‘at home’ (Leask, 2014). Others question the ‘Erasmus bubble’ and student motivation. (Earls, 2018).

Experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to online learning as well as growing concerns around sustainability, have highlighted other challenges for mobility as a vehicle for intercultural competence development and international collaboration. Pandemic experiences have also revealed potentially persuasive and viable options as alternative, parallel or pre-cursor experiences. DACADU might thus be seen as one such alternative. Mobility, of course, will and should continue to play a significant role, as it provides an opportunity for international collaboration and experience that cannot be replicated without physical and psychological ‘relocation’ to less familiar cultural, linguistic, social, or educational/professional settings.

Leask (2014) argues that to pursue internationalisation at home, students be actively involved in systematic and purposeful learning. There is significant value in efforts to ‘engage students with internationally informed research, and cultural and linguistic diversity, and to purposefully develop their international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens’ (Leask, 2014, 3). The DACADU project outlined below, in both its virtual component and in its planned physical mobility follow-up, was designed with such principles in mind.

¹⁰ Erasmus+ 2021-2027 in Ireland: Possibilities & Priorities <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBrK-UeNr4UjpiZ-7RdAqR7Q>

INTERCULTURAL & PLURILINGUAL PERSPECTIVES

UNESCO frames interculturality in terms of the equality of interaction among diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect, according to Article 4.8 of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.¹¹ In Guidelines for Intercultural Education, principles II & III articulate the need for learners to acquire the ‘cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society’ and to enable learners to ‘contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations’.¹²

Such understanding underpins increasing recognition of intercultural awareness in Higher Education, where it is frequently considered a transversal competence and often closely associated with foreign language teaching (Fantini, 2009; Deardoff, 2017; Hiller, 2010). While multiculturalism does acknowledge the coexistence of different cultures in the same space, the characteristics of cultural identities and positions may remain alien to others. Interculturalism aspires to ensure that the values and practices of different cultures are recognised – those, for example, that can be explored and harnessed in teaching and learning environments where students of different nationalities interact. Certainly, this international framework for intercultural experience aligns with some of the main aspirations and objectives of the EUt+ Alliance.

The Council of Europe, through its subscription to the CEFR to plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, also fosters a more nuanced view of linguistic and cultural diversity. Multilingualism/multiculturalism considers languages and cultures as separate, somewhat static entities that co-exist in societies or individuals. Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism accommodate, more holistically, individual language users/learners as social agents and creators of their linguistic and cultural repertoires. The dynamic use of multiple languages and varieties, and cultural knowledge, awareness and/or experience in social situations is thus prioritised. Also central is the recognition of the interconnectedness of different languages and cultures rather than differences. Crucial for the DACADU project is recognition of ‘the importance of evolving profiles that value even the most partial competences in and awareness of languages and cultures’.¹³

In line with broader subscription to internationalisation, intercultural and plurilingual experience, and with EUt+ aspirations and objectives, the partners in the three universities involved in the DACADU project sought specifically to develop German language skills and intercultural competence and awareness around plurilingualism.¹⁴ The project phases are outlined below.

11 See <https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/149502E.pdf>.

12 UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education, 2006, Document code: ED.2006/WS/59.

13 Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (coe.int)

14 See, among other documents, the EUt+ Manifesto and Mission Statement at <https://www.univ-tech.eu/>.

COLLABORATION – VIRTUAL AND INTERNATIONAL

A blended mobility approach was adopted which is understood as a new concept of virtual learning and virtual exchange (O’Dowd, 2018) and is rooted in Virtual Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) strategies. Here, virtual mobility refers to teaching experiences embedded in the formal curriculum’ that provide students with an opportunity to interact with peers and professionals at international universities, so they can develop intercultural competences and digital skills while working together on subject-specific learning tasks or activities (Taylor, 2017). Thus, blended mobility is best understood as a sub-type of COIL which combines structured virtual learning with short-term physical mobility, expanding traditional exchange and presenting more diverse possibilities. According to the 2021 European Commission, Blended Mobility Implementation Guide: ‘BM allows students to simultaneously reap the benefits of both physical and virtual mobility, financial savings, flexibility and access to new ways of studying and teaching’¹⁵

The benefits of blended mobility, delivered and evaluated through a variety of teaching and learning experiences provide for participation from more diverse cohorts (O’Dowd, 2022). Blended mobility can also pave the way for longer mobility experiences as it builds up students’ confidence, self-efficacy, and intercultural sensitivity. The virtual pre-phase can be an effective preparation for physical re-location. Blended mobility can support ‘internationalization at home’ and can overcome differences in the academic calendars of the institutions involved and can address financial barriers to longer periods of physical mobility. Blended mobility thus embraces new ways of learning, teaching, and training that can lead to new types of competences. And finally, it boosts digitalisation efforts and trains students and staff members in digital skills.¹⁶

THE DACADU PROJECT WITHIN EUT+

The findings and reflections provided here build on earlier dissemination activity by the project team (Carbajosa et al., 2022; 2023; Spencer et al., 2023) in which orientations towards inclusion regarding language and culture in a broad sense, and innovative pedagogical approaches to the learning of German are outlined. In the above, the use of teaching techniques and organization of tasks related to collaborative and digital communication are oriented to writing and literacy in particular, and based on relevant experience in developing context-specific strategies (Okoro et al., 2012; Bickford, 2020)¹⁷. The current paper presents a wider, more multifaceted view of the experience insofar as it frames the project from a language acquisition and intercultural competence perspective in a virtual environ-

15 European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Blended mobility implementation guide for Erasmus+ higher education mobility KA131, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/467485>, p. 26.

16 See, for example, https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/digital-europe-programme_en.

17 Digital communication-oriented strategies have also been put to use within the EU+ frame in encounters such as the SUCCESS programm, whose April 2022 session at the UPCT, with the participation of 5 partner universities, was precisely named Digital Communication in 21st Century (https://www.upct.es/destacados/cdestacados.php?c=33&ubicacion=general&id_buscar=14314).

ment, in which common EUt+ educational goals, alignment with European HE strategy, and development of academic communities are considered.

The acronym is derived from the initial letters of the three universities, Darmstadt, Cartagena und Dublin (DACADU). The DACADU project was implemented in the second semester of the academic year 2021/2022 and the first semester of the 2022/2023 year. The first phase consisted of virtual collaboration and engagement with students on the three EUt+ university campuses; the second phase involved a follow-up period of learning hosted by Hochschule Darmstadt in Germany.

DACADU PROJECT STRUCTURE

In structuring the DACADU project, the authors adhered to principles outlined for the EUt+ initiative¹⁸. The project seeks to develop German language skills & intercultural competence and to enhance and develop awareness around multilingualism and plurilingualism through collaboration and engagement with students on all three university campuses. This project and its goals are envisaged as enhancement, enrichment and (co)curricular activity that converges with the learning outcomes in the teaching of the lecturers participating. As a project, it also aligns with the objectives and aspirations around multilingualism and plurilingualism within EUt+.¹⁹

PARTICIPATION

Six students from UPCT, ten international students from Hochschule Darmstadt, and eight students from TU Dublin participated in the project. The languages, academic disciplines and programmes of the participants provided further diversity. In all cases, participation was voluntary, and commitment throughout the project remained high. Those from Cartagena were studying for a degree in Tourism and had an A1-A2 language level, and for them, German was their second or third foreign language, mostly after English and French. The students from Darmstadt were enrolled in Engineering programmes and/or in Masters' programmes in Communication and had already achieved a B1 level in German; all of them identified as speakers of more than two languages. TU Dublin students enrolled in an International Business & Languages programme, also identified as multilingual, and had A2/B1 level of German. In addition, students from a Masters' programme in digital communication at Hochschule Darmstadt participated as content curators of text and visuals for the blog that was created for the registration of all the activities throughout the process, and to which we will refer later in this study. Small multilingual and cross-campus groups were formed with representation from each university and were required to meet, discuss, collaborate, and post both individual and co-created artefacts as assigned. Modality and artefact variety added value to student tasks, in that they also be regarded as digital creations (Baer, 2014; Guikema & Williams, 2014).

18 A Guide to Piloting WP2 Initiatives in EUt+ is an internal document for EUt+ members partly inspired in google-pilot-framework-design.pdf

19 <https://blog.interculturalblog-hda.de/about-u/>

PHASE 1: ONLINE COLLABORATION

Inspiration in the preliminary stages came from a Logbuch (logbook), published by the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, a federal German agency with responsibility for integration. It provides resources and tools both for language acquisition and for mutual understanding across communities.²⁰ The Logbuch provided the DACADU project developers with ideas for activities and worksheets around centred on key themes of self, identity, and experience, adapted for the university students participating. These were and linked to specific tasks relating to interculturality, language learning and use, diversity, and experiences around surrounding their own, and as well as German, language, culture, and society. All these were summarized in four main themes or sections as listed below:

- Thema 1:** *Wer bin ich? Mein Alltag an der Hochschule.*
Thema 2: *Erster Tag in Deutschland: Realität/Erfahrungen & Erwartungen.
Was ist Deutschland für mich?*
Thema 3: *Vielfalt erleben: Individuell, in der Universität, in meiner Stadt.*
Thema 4: *Hier sind wir: Erlebte Vielfalt.*
- Topic 1:** *Who am I? My routine on campus.*
Topic 2: *My first day in Germany: Reality, experiences and expectations.
What is Germany for me?*
Topic 3: *Experience of diversity: Personally, on campus, in my town.*
Topic 4: *Here we are: Experiences of diversity.*

The promotion of autonomous learning, enhanced contact to deepen mutual understanding of the different cultural and language experiences of participants and support for creativity were supplementary goals.

The project was conducted virtually, utilising the opportunities provided by digital communication, both oral and written. This was complemented by face-to-face teaching locally (Lawrence, 2022). Telematic meetings were scheduled between teachers, teachers and students, and among students in work groups via various platforms. Students used a variety of digital communication networks such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and email. Artefacts were created, shared, and posted as outputs derived from assignments of writing and speaking activities for students and correction and editing of written assignments by lecturers. Videos were recorded in student work groups with feedback provided by peers and staff. Outputs and processes were evaluated through surveys prepared by lecturers.

Content, both written and oral, was consistently added to the blog, necessitating ongoing student engagement with posted artefacts for follow-on activities and continuous learning. All assignments and activities served to broaden the shared knowledge, interests and experiences of the participants.

²⁰ <https://www.bpb.de/shop/materialien/thema-im-unterricht/228373/logbuch-neuland/>

Student collaboration for Phase 1 was scheduled over approx. eight weeks of intensive work. Project design, meeting, pedagogic planning & resource creation, scheduling, and evaluation extended this timeframe to approx. fourteen weeks (including holidays and semester breaks).

PHASE 2: PHYSICAL MOBILITY – VISIT TO DARMSTADT

Phase 2 was a 4-day visit to Hochschule Darmstadt, Germany (5th to 9th October 2022) for all participants. The visit afforded an opportunity to review and evaluate previous online work for intensive German language tuition & intercultural awareness activities. Guided learning was also scheduled through the following activities: Wichteln (a present from my country), market day interviews and a language & culture-themed treasure hunt, peer interviews to revisit expectations & reality, guided walking tours of Darmstadt past and present and campus tour hosted by International Office. Medien-campus Dieburg, a start-of-semester student party, award ceremony with staff from the EUT+ Alliance, meals at campus Mensa, visits to a traditional German Brauhaus and Studentenlokal and a karaoke session were also included. Student and staff reflections were captured in visual and written journal entries – Tagebucheinträge – as a means to channel focus on the immersive experience and practice and extend the relevant domain and context-specific language. Some of these were also published in the blog.²¹

A high degree of motivation for the online phase was confirmed in evaluations and linked to the interest in and financial support for the physical mobility phase. Participant commitment - over and above curricular or programme requirements, and extending into holiday periods – points to an important consideration for other potential or larger EUT+ or similar initiatives, namely the need for suitably flexible institutional processes to recognize extracurricular or multi-campus learning.

PROJECT PHASES (NOT STRICTLY SEQUENTIAL) CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS:

- 1) *Online meetings of designers to establish project outline, objectives & calendar; materials design.*
- 2) *Team formation to reflect culture, language and university variety.*
- 3) *Project delivery; assignment, mediation & completion/posting of individual and co-created artefacts; weekly meetings & support sessions – Sprechstunden.*
- 4) *Preparation for and reflection on physical mobility to Darmstadt Wir reisen ab: transport & travel; personal accounts, impressions and visuals: presentations & documentation for Learning Journal.*
- 5) *Evaluation: virtual and physical phases were evaluated at the conclusion of each phase.*

²¹ For more information, see the film about the visit: <https://visit.interculturalblog-hda.de/2023/05/11/documentary-dacadu-visits-darmstadt-october-2022/>

EVALUATION

Project evaluations were undertaken in two online surveys consisting of closed and open questions, using Likert scaling (from strong agreement to strong disagreement) and ranking questions. The first survey (May/June 2022) explored language, satisfaction, perceived value, assessment of learning etc. by student participants; the second addressed experience and evaluation of the physical mobility phase. Language development & artefacts created through DACADU activities were incorporated and assessed to varying degrees in partial fulfilment of existing German course requirements in the assessment approved in each institution. Additional but voluntary DACADU student effort was aligned with teaching & learning objectives in the participating institutions. This points to a second key consideration, namely the challenges around recognition and/or award of credits across multiple programmes, universities and campuses. Key findings from the evaluation are presented below.

LANGUAGE

Survey data on language diversity and use were significant. Over 20 languages were identified by participants as those spoken or used in familial, social and study settings (Figure 1). Araújo e Sá et al. (2009 in Junior & Finardi, 2019, 21) highlight the benefits of multilingual educational projects as ways to prepare students for the globalized world 'by evolving comprehension of different languages and establishing relationships at several linguistic levels – lexical, morphosyntactic, and phonic'. Findings also demonstrate ways of challenging the hegemony of English in internationalisation efforts, demonstrating possibilities for multilingual educational experiences, and alignment with EU+ aspirations.²²

1. Please list all of the languages you speak. Include all that you have learnt, are learning or speak at home with family or in restricted settings.



Figure 1: Linguistic diversity of participants [More than 20 languages listed]

²² Ireland's long-awaited National Strategy on Foreign Languages in Education, Languages Connect, for example, sets out new and ambitious targets around foreign language learning. It cites ambition for Ireland to compete on the global stage, the need for educators and employers to work together to increase awareness of the importance of gaining proficiency in foreign languages, and sets out ambitious targets for primary, secondary and tertiary education. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd328-languages-connect-irelands-strategy-for-foreign-languages-in-education-2017-2026/>

2. At what level (on the CEFR) are you currently learning German? (0 point)

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● A1	3
● A2	4
● B1	10
● B2	2



Figure 2: Competence levels of participants [CEFR]

3. In which language did you communicate during discussion & conversation with team members in your small international group. Select as appropriate.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● German - 100% of time	0
● German - approx. 75% of time	4
● German - approx. 50% of time	3
● A mix of German, English and S...	12



Figure 3: Language of communication

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION – MOTIVATION, SATISFACTION, EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING – PHASE 1

A secondary focus in the evaluation was motivation, satisfaction, experience and learning in the DACADU Project.

The evaluations revealed that Intrinsic motivation for participants was high: over 85% indicated a strong individual desire to participate. There is evidence that peers and grades were not significant factors, as approximately 60% disagreed with statements that linked motivation with grade improvement. Almost 95% confirmed motivation in terms of a 'desire to improve intercultural competence by engaging and collaborating with others', indicating a strong understanding of and commitment to IC competence. Lecturer enthusiasm and encouragement were also a significant motivating factor for 79% (Figure 4). Keywords to capture students' experience indicated levels of enjoyment, anticipation and value attributed by participants to the project (Figure 5).

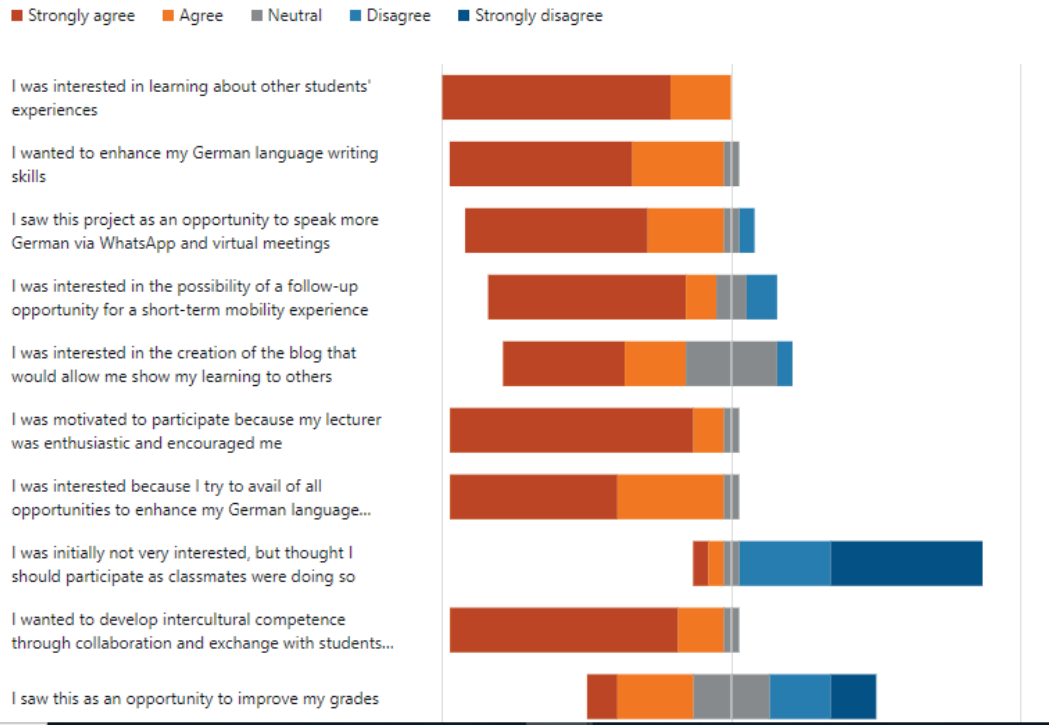


Figure 4: Motivation



Figure 5: Key words – Capturing motivation, experience and learning

The participants' evaluative comments showed high degrees of satisfaction, particularly as creators and curators of the blog, in which they had visible, tangible, and enduring evidence of their collaboration. Comments to explore satisfaction and learning also indicate convergence in terms of skills and development sought by the designers, and those identified by students (Figures 6 & 7).

The creation of the blog, as a separate and distinct resource co-created and curated by students – and perhaps because of this – was cited as a highlight for many participants (achieving a 4.79-star rating from respondents in the evaluation survey (Figure 6).

9. How satisfied are you with the *Da-Ca-Du* Blog that you have created? 5 stars indicate very high satisfaction level

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

4.79
Average Rating

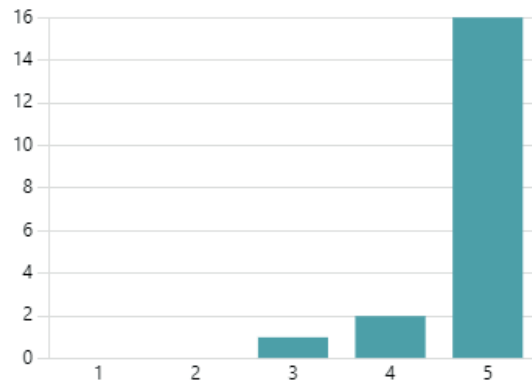


Figure 6: Satisfaction with blog/co-created artefact

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

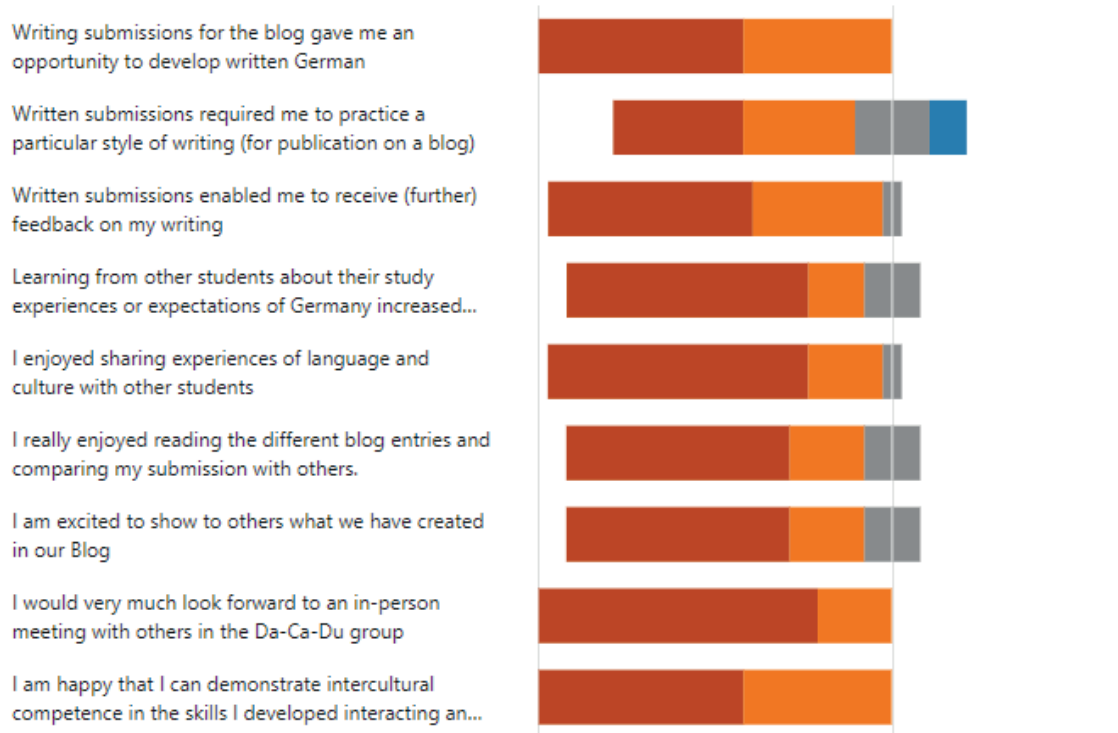


Figure 7: Satisfaction & Learning in the DACADU project

Student feedback and recommendations were generally positive but provide scope for further development and modification for future project iterations. Sample comments below:

'The DaCaDu Project was an excellent experience [...] The DaCaDu project was very well organised with clear assignments and pre-organised groups. I would definitely recommend this project to future students if the possibility arises.'

'I would like to have been able to do a few more posts because writing them and supplying pictures was really fun.'

'I was motivated to be a part of this project for two reasons - cultural learning through students across Europe and improving my German. I am very content with the quality of activities [] which enabled me to actively learn about each other.'

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION – PHASE 2

The second survey to evaluate physical mobility (November 2022) focused on opportunities for interaction, German language practice, and shared interactions and activities assigned during the mobility. All participants (10 of the original 19 participants were present) agreed that the physical mobility had been a source of 'high motivation and inspiration.' Students cited opportunity to reflect with peers on perceived 'improvements in intercultural and linguistic competence' practised in the online phase, and satisfaction with unexpected opportunity to learn 'not only about Germany [] but also about Spain and Ireland'. Opportunity to physically interact with students with whom written posts and video material had been created online was a widely cited benefit; students cited more German language interaction during the visit as a recommendation for future projects.

'Meeting the participants in person made us create cultural bonds that the programme could not achieve remotely. Moreover, it was interesting to get to know the students' background and share time together.'

'More joint activities and tasks that required the use of German.'

NEW SESSION WITH MORE PARTICIPANTS: 2023

The DACADU project (2022) was successfully evaluated, and it paved the way for the extension and continuation of the activity. The second online course DACADU+ was launched in spring 2023 and saw the addition of two new EU+ partners, namely, the University of Technology of Troyes in France and the Cyprus University of Technology (Limassol), together with Hochschule Darmstadt and the Technical University of Cartagena from the previous year. Student groups from Troyes and Limassol visited Darmstadt, which acted again as a host partner in October 2023. A video editing workshop in cooperation with the Media Department and additional intercultural learning activities in the city centre were incorporated into the programme.

The theme of the first visit in 2022 had been Expectations vs. Reality. Cultural and academic activities were recorded as written and oral submissions to the project blog. The target language was again German, as most of the students were at the B1 level. In October 2023, most of the students had beginner-level German, so the focus of the visit shifted to heritage languages and multilingual contexts. A new theme, Plurilingual and Multicultural Cities, was introduced for the second iteration, and will also be evaluated, as will consideration of new challenges that arise with larger groups of students.

CONCLUSION – CONSIDERATIONS, REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

From the designers' perspective and through reflection on findings, several considerations and recommendations are presented here by way of conclusion.

DACADU highlights new practices and potential for positive and enriching, albeit intensive and concentrated periods of learning and teaching for lecturers and students. Academic calendars, scheduling and institutional requirements regarding course and programme learning outcomes do present challenges, but potential benefits and multiplier effects are evident. The implementation of this DACADU project, as an innovative EUt+ initiative, has indeed created a European network of peers' who demonstrate intellectual & cultural curiosity and has supported inclusion and open-mindedness in achieving cross-boundary goals.²³ As a model, it offers scope for future learning and refinement in pursuit of other disciplinary and cross-institutional goals. Stimulating faculty interest and fostering student engagement in EUt+ is one substantive benefit (Gozcora, 2021, 1) as this discipline-focused, multilingual, and cross-campus project has shown.

Additional benefits, as evidenced in findings, include those identified for COIL projects more generally: student engagement and development of a growth mindset, namely 'thinking and behaviour practices, such as sharing information, collaborating, innovating, seeking feedback, or admitting errors' that are enhanced when students learn in plurilingual settings (Dweck, 2016). Other benefits are evident in peer-to-peer learning, co-creation and generation of knowledge (rather than that acquired from course materials or directly from lecturers) that supports the development of student academic integrity. Interdisciplinary collaboration and enhanced digital literacy through the use of online tools and the creation of an online blog both as a repository and as a learning resource are further benefits (Chun, 2015). From a German language learning perspective, participants benefited from the opportunity to hone skills in observation, listening, oral, written, critical thinking, reflection and interaction - but in more diverse, complex and novel scenarios than their

23 <https://www.univ-tech.eu/more-european-students-will-soon-feel-at-home-on-eut-campuses>; <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/european-universities-factsheet-eut.pdf>

usual classroom experiences might permit.

The flexibility of both lecturers and students ensured that challenges were overcome in the DACADU project. However, the gap between virtual collaboration and physical mobility hindered participation in the visit for some participants. These are areas for consideration, as are support (including financial) and administrative assistance from International Offices and/or discipline management more generally. The need for suitably flexible institutional processes and educational models to recognize extra-curricular and multi-campus learning will be important. Instructional design, effective communication and consultation with partners and participants. Quality enhancement, evaluation and feedback mechanisms will also be important considerations, and recommendations from this iteration of the DACADU project. Enthusiasm and commitment over and above curricular or programme requirements and extending into holiday periods, coupled with a good measure of *Durchsetzungsvermögen*, nonetheless, go a long way in ensuring success. The ability to directly experience new ways of learning and teaching and expansion of the classroom's borders, in ways perhaps unimaginable before COVID, is a significant achievement. The development of strong faculty connections across EU+ partners also points to how networks grow, and could extend to future and other areas of collaborative activity.

The DACADU project also highlights areas for future research. An attempt to compare or measure language skill or intercultural competence development in this project, for example, relative to what is achievable over longer periods of study or work abroad is beyond the scope of this paper. Nor is it likely to prove fruitful. COIL projects do not and cannot replace the complex dynamic and transformative learning associated with extended life, study, and work in an unfamiliar linguistic, cultural, and social setting. Intercultural competence is not structured, systematic nor rule-governed; it is challenging to teach, mediate and measure, primarily because it concerns 'values, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that are rooted in cultural patterns, social structures and individual experiences' of identity and belonging (Witte & Harden, 2021, 1).

Further exploration of the capacity of COIL projects to advance and enhance language learning, intercultural understanding and conceptions of European citizenship would indeed be useful, perhaps through novel research methodologies that transcend dualisms such as physical or virtual. Consoli's (2022) notion of 'life capital' or Coleman's (2013) concern with 'whole students & whole lives' might prove useful avenues to 'open our eyes' to a more holistic view of 'life stories'(Consoli, 2022:1401).

The DACADU project has illuminated possibilities for the exploration of linguistic and cultural diversity, motivation, and experience, in a very small sample of participants. How fruitful might longer-term and broader framing of international and multi-campus learning be, from a 'life capital' perspective? 'Life capital' as a new application of Bourdieu's well-known notion of capital in its social-educational aspect (1986) entails exploration of memories, desires, emotions, attitudes and opinions and may facilitate a more holistic picture of the complexity of new and emerging multi-campus, international and multilingual learning environments, and for virtual and collaborative initiatives such as DACADU.

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**LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION
AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE
MULTICULTURAL WORLD OF
THE 21ST CENTURY. METHODS
FOR VISUALISATION OF LIN-
GUISTIC INFORMATION IN THE
ERA OF THE NEW DIGITAL IM-
AGE CULTURE**

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the implementation of the visual component in foreign language teaching as an active approach, which is also applicable in other disciplines, beyond the specific scope of specifically foreign language teaching. The text presents different kinds of research conducted among students majoring in art, as well as in engineering specialities, focusing on their attitudes towards the role of the visual component incorporated into their special discipline's instruction, as well as in their foreign language for specific purposes classes. It also highlights the findings of foreign language teaching experiments with the employment of different percentage ratios of verbal and visual components, created or chosen and presented by learners themselves, followed by drawing the respective conclusions about the effectiveness of the process of the scientific information acquired.

To further illustrate his point, the author also cites examples from students' projects related to the presentation of educational content with a specific task assignment – to deliver the scientific knowledge in a way that is most attractive and accessible to the student audience. The main thesis supported is that the visual, the image, and the illustration can serve as an invaluable transnational codes promoting understanding between different national communities. , and, at the same time Simultaneously, they act as vehicles for the transmission of cultural content while retaining all specific national characteristics, thus facilitating the building of bridges between a wide range of cultures of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The tasks described involves creating for the use and creation of different types of illustrations to explain and teach, based on, and at the same time explanatory, teaching content and scientific information. , performed by students in class, They are part of the author's work in the field of pedagogical research related to increasing the effectiveness of the acquisition of scientific information for learning purposes, (specifically foreign language teaching), The approach draws on the learner's experience, interests and knowledge, through the use of classical methods (creating a drawing, a table, a diagram, etc.) and the use and enhancement of the motor abilities. The observations presented are from work with ten foreign undergraduate students at two Bulgarian universities majoring in fine arts and engineering at two Bulgarian universities. The use of such an approach has been effective over the last five years, and work on using different types of assignments is continuing towards designing a comprehensive approach and creating a methodology that would be applicable across different disciplines taught at different levels of higher education.

The adopted approaches align with the contemporary student-centred teaching methods, learner autonomy, maximizing the motivation and involvement through creativity and innovativeness, teaching through developing projects in co-authorship with the lecturer and co-designing of teaching content, thorough acquisition of scientific information through its presentation in front of an audience and mastering the pedagogical skills of students as prospective educators and mentors in their future professional career.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary flow of information ceaselessly rushing through the digital space, visual imagery holds a key place in the process of sending and decoding messages. The communication process between individuals, both from a personal and professional perspective, invariably involves a whole range of visual elements. This phenomenon applies equally to the academic sphere, especially when conveying scientific content – a fact which, in our opinion, calls for rethinking and reconsidering the current methods and methodologies adopted for the presentation of knowledge to learners, by introducing and implementing an illustrative visual imagery component. Transforming pedagogical approaches and restructuring specific elements constitute part of the educational process. These may prove to be of vital importance for ensuring greater effectiveness, attractiveness, and involvement for learners as well as for enhancing motivation for educators as pedagogues, researchers and innovators in the field of higher education. This, in turn, has a significant impact on all spheres of our social existence.

One of the debates of the contemporary 21st century is related to the future of education and, in particular higher education. Obviously, we are facing a transformed reality, in which local and global crises emerge and overlap. We are, painfully and clearly, interrelated and interdependent, not just as individuals, but as nations as well. National differences and state boundaries have long become obscure and have disappeared in the digital space. Education, amid various global crises, should be one of the conduits of change to adapt thinking and living to the new reality. In this respect, ‘Higher education in 2050 may be more adapted to its learners, which would be quite different from the current organization whereby learners must adapt to higher education’s structures. The new focal points of learning will be ‘learning to transform and learning to become’ (Rukspollmuang). ‘To support this, multidisciplinary can replace today’s disciplinary silos. This could enable not only learners but teachers and researchers to benefit from the advantages yielded by studying across disciplines, also noting that ‘new knowledge can emerge from hybridity’ (Majdoubeh). ‘To form competent humans with the ability to act ethically and be committed to society and the common good, humanities, the arts, and the sciences should be intertwined with different areas of engineering, technology, and innovation to create an ‘integral education’ (Ruiz Bravo López, as quoted in *Thinking Higher and Beyond. Perspectives on the Futures of Higher Education to 2050*. Published in 2021 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France and UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), UNESCO IESALC 2021. Copyright deposit: DC2021000616, ISBN 978-980-7175-57-9).

We believe that learning foreign languages and immersing oneself in a foreign culture through the ‘universal key’ called language, represents the opportunity to understand unfamiliar perspectives and connect with others. Communication, therefore, is one of the bridges that we can build together to create a better and more humane world. Changes, even those that seem revolutionary from afar, actually follow their ‘evolutionary’ path, accumulating actions that give rise to new phenomena.

Transdisciplinarity is a new concept, which has its roots in interdisciplinarity, – the intersection of traditional boundaries of academic disciplines and multidisciplinary, defined as the

co-ordinated interaction of different fields of knowledge, etc. Our thesis is that changes, on the one hand, cannot occur overnight, as reaching the new is an incremental, step-by-step process. On the other, each of these steps involves in its accomplishment dozens of additional elements of which we are not aware.

The key element in the establishment of today's multicultural world, with the advent of the Internet, is communication, which has become possible only and explicitly due to the lack of borders in the digital world, in which the vision shaping the new visual culture of contemporary generations takes a fundamental role. It is quite obvious that the differences between the representatives of the digital generation from different nationalities and nations are not significant. Their interests and tastes seem to be quite similar, at least based on observation in our pedagogical work with foreign students studying Bulgarian.

Young people today can adapt to an unfamiliar cultural environment much more easily, finding a faster way to communicate with their peers, which is greatly facilitated by their residence in a digital environment where they are constantly exposed to the cultural characteristics of hundreds of nationalities and ethnicities. The blurred and disappearing boundaries between different nations have become a reality, largely due to the "visual consumption" on the web. This is driven by the desire for new and novel images that serve as conveyors of information shared on social networks, in video games, through watching soap operas, or searching for information for educational purposes.

Keywords: foreign language, new pedagogy and teaching methodology, higher education, new imagery culture, digital era

IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ILLUSTRATIVE ELEMENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AND IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

In this paper, we will present several experiments in which we incorporate methods and techniques from different disciplines in teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language. The methods used are tailored to the profile of the students and their speciality, entirely focusing on the learners, their individuality, autonomy, and capacity for collaboration with the lecturer, on the one hand, and participating in teamwork activities with the group members, on the other. We have to be fully aware of the fact that we interact with a new type of generation that has a significantly different whose understanding and attitude towards the world compared to those of the generations of ten years ago: 'New forms of cultural and artistic expression have emerged in recent years. These are the result of acculturation impelled by the growth of connectivity and cultural exchange worldwide. The process is driven largely by young people. We see a new public aesthetic being expressed, rich in its inherent plurality, and we encounter a new willingness to innovate with form in each of the domains the youth inhabit, from fashion to food, music and personal relationships. The more than one billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24 in the world today are the most informed, active, connected and mobile generation the world has ever seen.' (as quoted in Rethinking Education. Towards a global common good?, p. 28, Published in 2015 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

One of the biggest changes we can observe in young learners is their new visual culture, and their new ways of perceiving, processing and producing information. We believe that the proposed approaches in the experiment will contribute to taking an important step towards achieving convergence between the educator and the learner. The development and implementation of such methods have the potential to create a new methodology that would underpin innovative pedagogy.

Illustration, exemplification, and visualisation of linguistic matter represents one of the methods that has constituted an essential part of the methodology of foreign language teaching, ever since we started talking about modern education. Illustration is a fundamental component at the primary stages of education, from the pre-school up to the high school stage, with its percentage, as compared to that of the verbal element, steadily decreasing. In the field of higher education, particularly in scientific science and engineering disciplines, as well as and, above all, teaching in the field of arts, teaching is unimaginable is unthinkable without the visualisation of scientific information. This information must which needs to be acquired, comprehended, reproduced, and subsequently put into practice by learners. Foreign language teaching, designed for different age groups and at different stages and levels of the education system, is invariably linked to the use of 'visuals'. This is especially true all the more so in today's technological world, where 100% of the information exchanged in the digital space is accompanied by a visual or illustrative element, which, in some cases, can prove to be far more informative than the verbal one.

The experiments we present here have been conducted with students studying Bulgarian for foreigners, who come from different art majors. i.e. These learners who have a background in the arts and are developing their skills in the field of painting and drawing, with some of them having already mastered these skills at a truly impressive level. The ten students who participated in the experiment are from different levels of study and have acquired varying degrees of language proficiency during the preparatory, first and second years of their Bachelor's degrees. Their nationalities are also diverse: – four are some of them come from China , one from South Korea - 1, while the others are representatives of the Slavic-speaking nations, respectively two are from North Macedonia -2, one from Serbia - 1 and two from Ukraine - 2.

EXPERIMENTS – VISUALISATION OF LINGUISTIC CONTENT BY LEARNERS

The core of the experiment comprises different types of tasks that students complete, alternating between creating an image based on a verbal element and vice versa – creating verbal content in their foreign language based on a visual image. First of all, the adoption of such approaches creates a stress-free, relaxed and positive creative atmosphere for learners, while developing both their linguistic and professional skills, and generating new cognitive links between linguistic and imaginative thinking which would be useful both from a personal and professional perspective. Making use of what is close to the learners' hearts, – drawing, – invariably enhances their personal motivation, interest, and concentration in class. Of course, the methodology can, and should, be used, for a certain limited

period of the session. For example, it would make an excellent lead-in activity to put the learners at ease, creating a working mood and making a smooth transition from a previous class they have had, most often related to a creative art activity.

Another option would be to include such a task at a time when the learners' concentration and motivation are decreasing, and therefore the subject material taught is not being properly received and comprehended by them. A third option, is to perform this type of task at the end of the session when the learners are already tired. and the use of The inclusion of gamification elements contained in these linguistic-artistic tasks will make it easier to summarize the taught linguistic content, ensuring its effective assimilation and memorization through the activation of other mental pathways related to imaginative thinking, thus activating learners' linguistic memory, as well.

Most people who have studied a foreign language, have had the experience of illustrating linguistic material with images – from the first words denoting everyday objects and realia, visualised with a picture or drawing in the textbook or projected on the screen of a multimedia projector. In other words, it can be assumed that learners hold in their minds a 'stored' experience of relating one word to an image from the very first steps of entering the world of the new, unfamiliar to them, language. Secondly, in the case of the participants in the experiment, they also have a better-formed and abundant image-visual culture, due to the nature of their involvement with art, which would be beneficial to be activated and utilised in aiding the language learning process.

Thirdly, it should be noted that contemporary learners belong to the representatives of the digital generation, whose perception of information, content creation and communication through digital technologies and the Internet are strongly related to the visually saturated digital space in which young people spend a substantial part of their personal time. Additionally, the use of imagery is unavoidable in foreign language teaching and learning especially when there is no mediating language between the educator and the learner. This situation frequently arises which is very often the case with learners from Asian countries, as we have experienced ourselves in teaching foreign students from China. (Over the last five years we have taught 32 Chinese students, only five of whom were proficient in English at B2 level). In these cases, the image appears to be the only possible first contact with the language, as well as a channel for rendering and reaching the meaning encoded with the unfamiliar graphic system through basic vocabulary and phraseology which they encounter during their first classes. Of course, gestures and facial expressions also play an important role at these initial stages as a bridge between the two languages and the cultures – that of the educator and that of the learner. However, if we look at them in depth, they also appear as a visualisation of a linguistic message that is rendered through signs which can be perceived as illustrators of verbal-abstract units.



Fig. 1. 'Learn Bulgarian (Level 1)'; Authors: Petrova, St., Pr. Tsankova-Kaneva, El. Kourteva, Kr. Tomova, Iv. Iliev. Sofia: 2004.

The first experiment we will focus on was conducted during the initial introductory Bulgarian language class with foreign students from Moldova and Ukraine. There were (four students in total with, two from each country, comprising three ladies and one gentleman). All of them were Russian speakers. For some, of whom Bulgarian (more precisely, its dialect form with several archaisms bygone for the modern literary norm lexemes and word combinations) was the language spoken in their families, while for others, Bulgarian was unknown. There were several stressful factors that 'restricted' the learners, (aged 18, who were in their first year of the Bachelor of Arts degree program., These factors led leading to constant anxiety in communication. They had only been in the country for a few weeks only, socialising mainly with their fellow countrymen. Their scope of interaction with Bulgarians were mostly limited to officials from various institutions and services, such as administrative services for students, student accommodation services, immigration services, ministries of the interior and foreign affairs, banks etc. Below is a detailed description of the experiment.

The class was the first one for the learners with a new lecturer who was a stranger to them. The students themselves also did not know each other, although, as already mentioned, in this case, two by two they came from the same country. In other words, there were factors that indicated difficult, or almost impossible communication with the lecturer during the class. The latter could resort to employing a variant that is well-known and quite safe for foreign language teachers – the lecturer talking and writing on the whiteboard, students taking notes silently, answering the questions with nods or in monosyllabic words. Of course, such an option for a foreign language class is invariably defined as unsuccessful. As a topic of the session, we chose 'Introduce yourself, tell the others about

yourself'. To set the tone for communication, the lecturer introduced himself briefly, using words (close in sound and meaning to Russian lexemes) that the Russian-speaking learners would understand. The pace of speech was slow, and lexemes and expressions were articulated and pronounced distinctly and clearly, with longer pauses to give students time to comprehend and try to translate to themselves what was being said. Then the students took turns introducing themselves. The lecturer asked for a 'volunteer' to be first and a student who spoke Bulgarian) volunteered. Two of the students who did not speak Bulgarian shared that they could understand, but could not '...utter a word'. The lecturer prompted them to introduce themselves in Russian, and he himself translated from Russian into Bulgarian, while encouraging them to repeat what he had said in the Bulgarian translation. The stress and anxiety that the learners experienced were still considerable.

The next task involved writing a short text on the topic 'What is drawing to me?', with a more creative version: 'My life as a drawing – drawing as life', specifying that the text could be written in Russian, so that the students would feel free to express their thoughts and reflections. In this version, the next task was for the whole group to translate the texts into Bulgarian together, with the help of a dictionary and with some assistance from the lecturer. In this way, through communication among the students in the group and between the students and the lecturer, we managed to overcome the barriers posed by languages, thus discovering the 'commonality between the different foreign', and, as a result, the foreign language being felt as less intimidating and 'less foreign'.

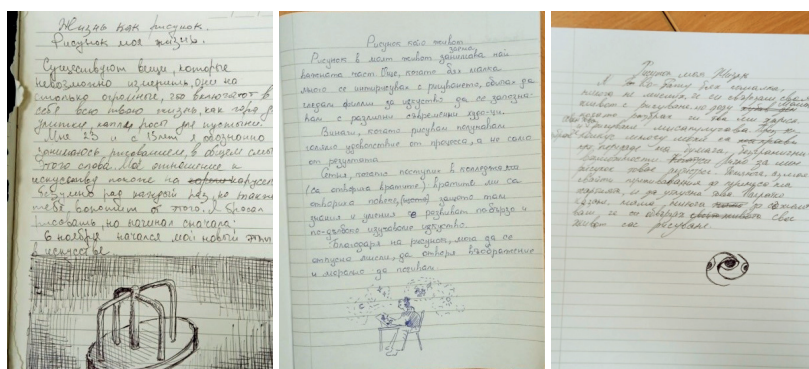


Fig. 2. Samples from the task for writing a text entitled 'Drawing as Life' and creating an accompanying illustration

We must clarify that teaching a foreign language, especially in the preparatory year, is very much an emotional process for both the learners and the teacher. We will not delve into all the reasons why this is so, but the primary reason is that the teacher becomes a kind of 'guide' into the new culture and way of life for his students. On the one hand, they are the ones who removes the barriers that inevitably hinder the individual student from adapting to and understanding the new foreign environment in which he has found himself. As every language teacher knows, among the topics covered in primary education are those related to the home, family, friends, etc., which inevitably evoke emotion and emotional attitudes in the learner and the tutor. That is, we could not make an analogy between a lecture in mathematics or chemistry with a seminar tutorial in a foreign language in terms of the emotional element. In this sense, this is also the reason for the presence of an emotional element in our article is part of the methodological pedagogical work, and its

absence in the teaching process would lead to its poor or absence of effectiveness.

The third task involved creating an illustration, using a pen or pencil, based on the written text. Of course, this task was most eagerly welcomed. The task was unexpected because the class was not directly related to the art disciplines of students' majors. The completed drawings were shown to everyone, and each student attempted to explain the relationship between the images and the text they had produced. The return to the text was accomplished by having each learner read the Bulgarian translation by each learner, with the help of the lecturer, where necessary. The mood in the classroom was now quite different from the beginning of the class. – the Learners were much more relaxed and communicatively open. They felt comfortable, the unknown was no longer so stressful and unpredictable. Instead, they were exploring the new territory new was being explored by stepping on known grounds – through their first language (mother tongue or the language of the country). and, More importantly, they were experiencing what they enjoyed doing, something they realised as a gift and had turned into a hobby, favourite pastime, education and future profession: drawing.

All learners shared that they often turned to drawing as a stress relief activity and, in this sense, we used a tool which was familiar to them to cope with a critical situation when introducing a new discipline. By creating a positive attitude towards the foreign language, stress-free and favourable classwork conditions, we also laid the foundation for team building between the learners and the lecturer, and among the learners themselves in the group. The lecturer demonstrated that he respected the personality, talent and choice of professional activity of the learner, i.e. the focus remained entirely on the learner, but not on the lecturer's own persona in the role of a mentor, or on the discipline and the subject matter taught. These are all elements constituting an essential part of the paradigms underlying the ideas of innovative pedagogy. 'Innovative pedagogies should build on the natural learning inclinations of students. A key lever for improving the preparation of 21st-century skills and the engagement of learners lies in the ability of pedagogies to match the natural inclinations of learners towards play, creativity, collaboration and inquiry' (Paniagua, Al., D. Istance 2018: 14).

By employing tasks in which the learner played an active role, demonstrating creativity, and, in our particular case, artistic skills, we were utilising practices which were responsive to contemporary policies underpinning the 21st-century education (Critical thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Information literacy, Media literacy, Technology literacy, Flexibility, Leadership, Initiative, Productivity, Social skills), as well as to the recommendations for the implementation of innovative practices in the process of teaching and learning. 'Learner-centred pedagogies, such as inquiry-based learning or collaborative learning, are particularly suitable in giving the learner an active role and promoting the application of key skills and attitudes. Assessment of such competencies demands the use of complex and authentic tasks rather than being excessively focused on discrete knowledge. Teacher modelling, demonstrations and the presentation of information remain highly relevant but framed with the ultimate objective of promoting students' performance and their active role in solving tasks'. (Paniagua, Al., D. Istance 2018: 20). It should be pointed out that, with a task assigned, the learner creates original visual content, which, in turn, facilitates the individual process of acquiring of new learning material

and lays the foundation for more sustained knowledge based on hands-on experience, 'learning by doing', rather than on mechanical memorisation of a particular theory.

Another experiment that we conducted during the initial stages of teaching Bulgarian to foreign students involved assigning a task to the students, in this particular case, students from China in their preparatory year, with very limited knowledge of English, using it sporadically when possible as a mediating language to compile their own vocabulary books of unfamiliar words. In addition to translating the words into their native language, they had to provide a visual representation of the concept denoted by the word. For this purpose, students either used dictionaries to look up the unfamiliar words themselves, or were assisted by the lecturer who provided the English translation. As for the creation of the image, students enjoyed complete freedom to choose the preferred technique and materials, the idea being that the illustration should not take too long. To cover the material for the session, 1/3 of the new lexemes were illustrated by each student during the lesson, and the remaining part of the illustrations for the vocabulary book were assigned as individual homework. The result, in psychological terms, was ensuring a continued exposure/opening to the unfamiliar language, exploring the new through tools and techniques that students were proficient in, and, most importantly, by an activity that they genuinely enjoyed doing.

In terms of achieving results related to students' language learning and their studies in an artistic speciality, we attained two goals: on the one hand, enriching and expanding learners' vocabulary, and, on the other, developing their drawing abilities, or at least maintaining them at an appropriate level. Very often, students of the preparatory language training acknowledge that they have no time for drawing, and they can hardly spare a moment for this activity. We dare to claim, therefore, that by creating a visual image accompanying a word new to the learner, its memorisation is facilitated more permanently, by linking the meaning and the iconic sign, as the created drawings can be defined.

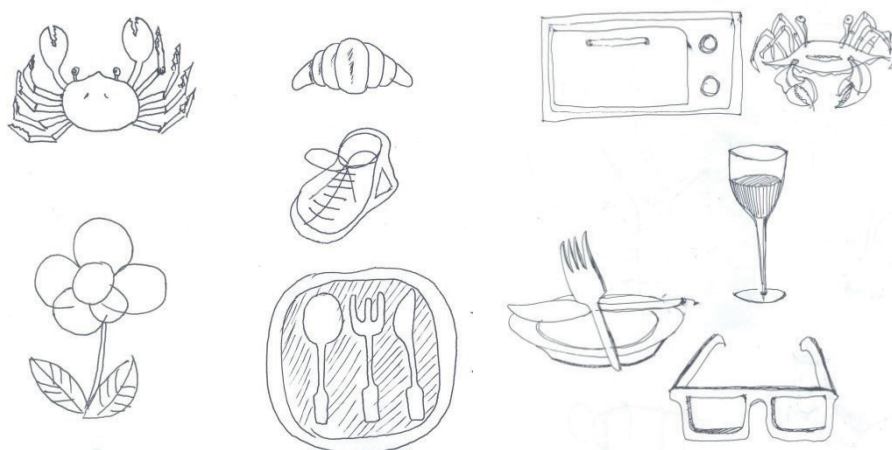


Fig. 4. An example of illustrating new lexemes during the class

In our work with students from China, we have noticed that when they have difficulty re-

calling the meaning of a word, they try to imagine its graphical representation, very often unconsciously starting to write it with a finger in the air or on the desk, thus attempting to reconstruct the meaning. This fact is easy to explain, as they use over 6,000 characters in writing in their native Chinese language, and the students themselves have a highly developed visual memory resulting from their artistic talents and pursuits. Chinese learners themselves corroborate this observation, saying that they reach the meaning of a word more easily after mentally reconstructing the graphical expression of a lexeme.

All of this prompted us to develop the idea of creating illustrated dictionaries, as visualising lexemes is a proven method for better learning them better. What made things different in this particular case is that the creative element has its impact on ensuring more sustained knowledge. In this case, we worked with students who had developed drawing skills, or at least possessed an artistic talent – and it is here that the question arises – How can this method be implemented with learners of other disciplines where no art skills are required?

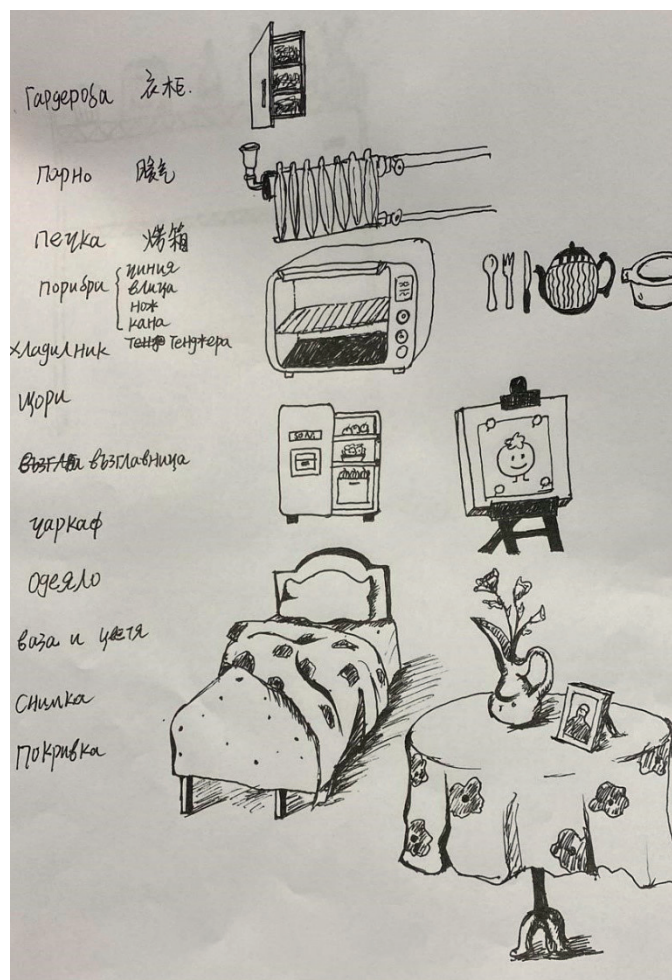


Fig. 5. A Sample page from an illustrated vocabulary book. A task completed as individual homework

Using digital technologies and the Internet provides a good option, too. The images can be found on the web and the vocabulary books which students compile will be in an electronic format, which also has its advantages as compared to the classical paper vocabulary books that language learners keep. For students majoring in computer technology and digital design, this task may prove particularly attractive, as they will also be developing their professional skills in the field they have chosen. Over the past few years, and especially in the two years of distance learning in a digital environment, we have had ample opportunity to observe the mastering of academic presentation skills with art students and engineering students. The results demonstrated by engineering students, in terms of meeting the requirements for creating a presentation, such as layout, balance between text and visual components, aesthetic properties, choice of colour scheme, combination of colours, relationship between form and content, and especially in the selection of illustrative material, contrary to expectations, at least ours, considerably exceeded our expectations and those of the art students. The outcome was surprising, given that for whom the listed requirements align with their professional pursuits. This topic has been discussed in greater detail elsewhere, accompanied by an extensive number of examples related to our work with students from both professional fields (Peev 2021: 99-107).

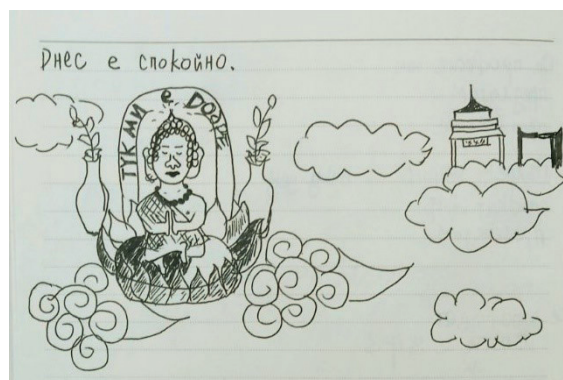


Fig. 6. An illustration on the topic "My Day Today", drawn in class

Another option for using illustration as a possible approach to foreign language teaching is assigning a task for creating a graphic image at a point in the lesson when the students show signs of fatigue and, consequently, lack of concentration. In preparatory Bulgarian language classes for foreign students, such moments are inevitable, as the scheduled language classes range between five and eight sessions, five days a week – winter semester 15 weeks - 27 hours of Bulgarian language and accordingly - summer semester 15 weeks - 14 hours).

In this particular experiment, the topic we proposed to the learners was to visually express visually their current, or more precisely, their momentary feelings and moods. Two of the students chose to draw the buildings visible from the windows of the studio, but for greater precision they redrew photographs of the same buildings found on the Internet, using their smartphones. It is interesting to note that of all parts of the buildings, it was the roofs that were drawn down to the smallest detail. One of the students drew an umbrella (the day was rainy and gloomy), seen from above, with precisely applied light shadows and raindrops falling on it.

The most interesting was the drawing was done by a Ph.D. student in Art Therapy, who drew a Buddhist deity sitting in a lotus pose on a pillow, floating in clouds. Above his head was an arch, bearing the inscription in Bulgarian 'I feel good here'. Above the drawing itself, the student put the title – 'Today is easy'. The atmosphere in the classroom was indeed positive and relaxed, enhanced by the warmth of the room, contrasting with the cold temperatures outside. The roofs and umbrella, and the arch over the deity, could be decoded as a need for, or quest for protection, as a 'shelter', an attempt to create a sense of security. The student who painted the umbrella (aged 20) was extremely shy and self-conscious as a temperament. She spoke very quietly, and whenever she made making a mistake, she kept apologizing and lowered her eyes guiltily to the floor. The two students who chose to paint buildings (aged 32 and 35, female and male) were also self-conscious, and reticent, respectful and rather reserved in their emotional expressions, which is, on the one hand, typical of Asian culture, but on the other – quite characteristic of them both as temperament. The PhD student (aged 30) was the most emotional, open and communicative. She was fluent in Bulgarian language at an advanced level, and had been residing in Bulgaria for three years., and, Significantly, she had defended a Master's thesis in Art Therapy and had had therapeutic experience with children in conducting experiments in the process of writing her thesis.

The implementation of this method, besides its purely 'therapeutic/relaxing' effect for the learners, served additional functions as well. Drawing during a language class will add a specific 'colour' and will further emotionally intensify the memories of the class, leaving an imprint on the overall perception of the academic discipline taught. Teaching Bulgarian language, in most cases, was rather stressful for Chinese learners, and the levels of difficulty for them were quite high, especially when they needed to speak and communicate in a foreign language. The key here was the attitude of the lecturer towards the learners and the atmosphere he/she created together with them, which was absolutely necessary, so they did not lose motivation and therefore attained their goals set. For the Chinese students, the main objective was to be able to communicate in an academic environment with their teachers and colleagues.

Speaking seemed to pose the main problem with the Chinese students, while in developing the other components of the respective language skills – reading, writing, listening and understanding, they progressed very quickly and achieved really good results. Due to the lack of contact points between their native language and the foreign language, however, face-to-face communication has turned into the main obstacle in teaching, and this was where the lecturer's efforts had to be focused. In this respect, the use of image-making tasks, with the addition of sub-tasks related to their verbal explanation and description, was a particularly good option that not only facilitated achieving better results in the acquisition of the target language, but also creates a mood that is good for both the learners and the lecturer, as our experience has shown.

The teacher, as a designer of the teaching process, has the task to create the appropriate learning environment, which underlies the practices of the new pedagogy, one of its key messages being: 'Innovative pedagogies should build on the natural learning inclinations of students. A key lever for improving the preparation of 21st-century skills and the engagement of learners lies in the ability of pedagogies to match the natural inclinations of

learners towards play, creativity, collaboration and inquiry' (Paniagua, AL., D. Istance 2018: 14). This is what we achieved by making use of the above-mentioned methods. Also, by involving the learners in a specific kind of game in which they created something, they become co-designers of the learning content, while the lecturer uses his/her experience to guide and unobtrusively moderate the interaction, in which at times the learner takes the leading role (Paniagua, AL., D. Istance 2018: 24).

It would be a good idea to stick to the following recommendation when implementing new approaches, namely, 'Innovation in teaching should be understood as a process in which teachers engage in creative and deep reflection, rather than as the simple application of techniques. Pedagogical approaches should be integrated progressively as teachers review their practices, to identify and better align their creative, intuitive and personal capacities with innovative pedagogies. Some teachers might incorporate the principles of embodied learning more naturally, for example. Others may feel more confident with arts, design, or gamification as a result of having positive personal experiences.' (Paniagua, AL., D. Istance 2018: 30-31). It is this incremental approach, the introduction of new ideas step by step, with the necessary analysis and evaluation of the results, seeking feedback from the learners that is important for us. The use of the techniques and methods described above regularly, in a long-term plan, within a semester and an academic year, will show whether there is potential for creating a methodology that yields the anticipated results in language teaching or not.

NEXT STAGE – CO-AUTHORSHIP WITH THE LEARNER IN THE PRESENTATION OF DIDACTIC AND SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

We have called the method which we are going to present here teacher-learner co-authorship of a teaching unit. We have arrived at this method gradually. Over the past few years, first and second-year students were assigned tasks to work on independently, mostly during the digital learning period. In the teaching process, the following model was adopted: after each class, the teaching unit was uploaded on Google classroom, accompanied by several assignments: 1. Make a detailed plan of the article; 2. Write a summary of the article in up to 500 words; 3. Assigning lesson-related self-study tasks (about 5 items).

At the end of the semester, all students are expected to submit these assignments by uploading them on the platform. One of the advantages of completing this type of assignment is that when students prepare for the exam, they have the essential information from the respective topics in a condensed form, that they can easily learn for their oral presentation at the semester exam.

The method of co-authorship between teacher and learner in the presentation of a teaching unit (scientific text), which we propose, is based on the tasks described above. These tasks include writing a detailed plan, creating a summary from which the key phrases for the presentation are selected, and incorporating additional information related to the topic is included in the presentation, at the proposal of the learner, with a recommendation given to him/her – the scientific information should be translated from sources in the native language of the foreign learner. The results, in our opinion, were

more than satisfactory, and the students themselves felt more confident about having the opportunity to share their point of view when presenting the topic. As soon as the assignment was set, they were encouraged to think about how to present the paper in a way that would intrigue their fellow group members when presenting it in class.

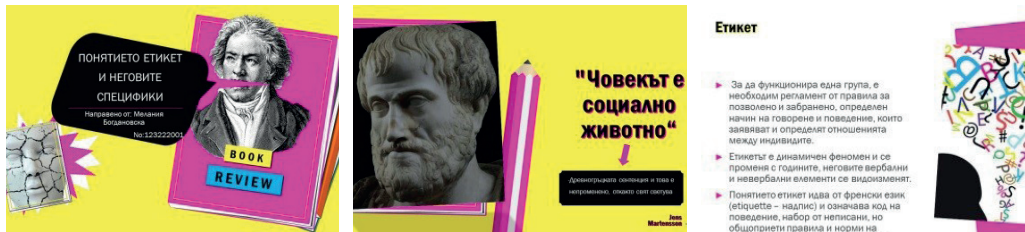


Fig. 7. Presentation made by a 1-st year student, majoring in Computer Systems and Technologies, FCST, TU - Sofia on the topic 'Label and its Specifics', part one - Introduction.

The example we will give is a presentation made by a first-year student – Slavic language speaker, majoring in Computer Systems and Technologies at TU – Sofia. The presentation was delivered to the Bulgarian language group of foreign students during a language class. Our evaluation of her performance was excellent, and the same assessment was also given by her colleagues in the room also gave the same assessment, erupting in applause after the end of the presentation.

Firstly, we should note the attractive visual aspect of the work of the student chose bright, eye-catching colours (pink and yellow), included of conceptual illustrations that suited the taste of young people, and organised a composition reminiscent of the visual and verbal components of a website. The selection of the content component, the textual part, was also highly impressive – the most important, the gist of the text, was selected from the article, and the content was reduced from 10 standard printed pages to key phrases and paragraphs that conveyed the main information on the topic.



Fig. 8. Presentation 'Label and its Specifics', part two - Exposition

There was a professional utilisation of a wide range of formatting template elements for images and text (ellipses, squares, table), without resorting to their chaotic use and distracting eclecticism, and most importantly – their choice was dictated by, and found connection with the content. In other words, a fusion between form and content was achieved, which is the greatest merit of the presentation quoted here. The font was well chosen

– legible, non-serif, and appropriate in size. The illustrations were also varied, – photographs, cartoons and comic drawings, which also complemented each other and created the sense of unity and completeness of the whole visual product. It should be noted that the students were given an academic topic ‘Creating an academic presentation’ and wrote a detailed plan and summary of the lesson, which gave us confidence that the basic principles of creating a presentation were based on previous theoretical knowledge. Prior to the presentation, the students had already given one presentation to the group following this format, on the topic of ‘My Hometown’. We also engaged in a discussion was held after each presentation, during which the strengths and the weaknesses of each student’s work were highlighted and discussed.

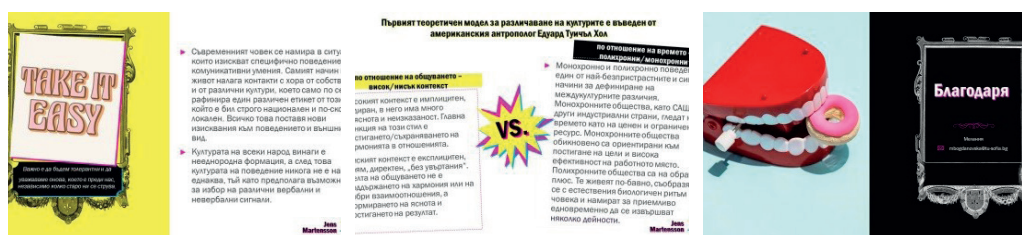


Fig. 9. Presentation ‘Label and its Specifics’, part two - Exposition

The presentation chosen as an example of the proposed method is one of the best, if not the best one, at least in our experience spanning we observed over the past two years of working with undergraduates to produce an academic presentation. It is important to point out that in this case we achieved several goals: firstly, we developed students’ technical skills (using PowerPoint) to prepare a presentation and, to some extent, forming pedagogical ones – for presenting scientific information to an audience, which are not practically worked on during their studies at university. Secondly, students improved their linguistic knowledge, as well as acquired skills in public speaking, developing awareness of the importance and significance of such characteristics as tempo of speech, clear and distinct articulation, voice strength and timbre, etc.. Other areas of focus included the use of literary Bulgarian language and the observance of its norms

Finally,, they acquired information that was part of their discipline curriculum by ‘doing’, in co-authorship with their trainer, refracting academic knowledge through their own worldview and understanding, putting in a lot of creativity, seeking an attractive approach, increasing their self-esteem and confidence as an active and equal member of the academic community.

In conclusion, Dr. Marie Aiken said, ‘We are living in a unique period of human history - an intense period of flux, change and disruption that may never be repeated. This moment in time is not unlike the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, when there were significant shifts in awareness, knowledge, and technology, accompanied by major societal changes. Some changes have been seductive and incremental and have caused psychological norms to creep into new places, while others have been sudden and alarming. We

need to start thinking and talking about the profound and pervasive impact of the technological environment of cyberspace on the individual and on society.' (Aiken 2019: 33).

We are truly living in a unique period of change and unprecedented dynamism. Education cannot be left aside from the changing environment and the new culture that young people – our learners – are bringing in and building. One of our tasks, as educators in the field of academic education, is to building on the best pedagogical practices that have proven to be effective and successful. By doing so, we aim to create new methodologies and pedagogical models which will underpin innovative pedagogy. This that will enable us to respond adequately respond to the needs of our times, and through which we will achieve better results that will satisfy both the learners and us, the educators.

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DIGITAL AFFECT CULTURES REVISITED

PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES IN AFFECTIVE GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In our virtually connected world, we observe global phenomena of solidarity and international movements as well as widespread cultures of fandom and international trends, accelerated by the enormously growing social media and entertainment industry (Döveling et al., in print; Menke & Birkner, 2023). Such developments can be framed as two sides of the same coin sharing one basis: powerful emotions. Emotions connect people all over the globe via mediated symbolic interactions: in chains of communicative acts, meaning is formed and changed by interpretation and negotiation (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). Illustrated by diverse examples, this article provides a framework for analysing such phenomena and demonstrates how digital affect cultures (Döveling et al., 2018) overcome national boundaries, creating the catalyst for worldwide solidarity and participation. It further develops the concept of digital affect culture (DAC) as originally conceptualised by Döveling et al. (2018) adding the symbolic interactionist perspective of impression management and feeling rules and the media and communication perspective of spirals of silence, illustrating spirals of emotions in DAC.

This paper begins by outlining the concepts of emotion and symbolic interaction and elucidates how Networked Media Technologies (NMTs) shape 21st-century societies. Building upon these foundational principles, we delve into the incorporation of DAC as elucidated by Döveling et al. (2018). This exploration encompasses a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between discourse, alignment, and belonging, delineating their mutual interconnectedness within the broader framework. All three processes are characterised in detail, relating to current social phenomena and scholarship on communication. To illustrate the practical implications of these concepts in the context of daily life, we spotlight aspects relevant to the global phenomena of fandom and social movements.

In conclusion, the article draws parallels between fandom and societal movements, and further develops the original DAC concept by adding impression management, virtue signalling, feeling rules and the spirals of silence as core elements in emotional interaction chains. It culminates by addressing the ramifications for both NMT platforms and ongoing research within this domain.

Keywords: *Emotion, Networked Media Technologies, Online discourse, Digital Affect Cultures, Symbolic Interactionism*

EMOTION AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTION IN A MEDIATISED WORLD

Mediatisation theory suggests that media play a growing role in shaping social institutions, impacting communication, culture, and power dynamics. It examines the evolving interdependence of media, culture, and society across time. As asserted by Bowman et al. (2021), in a mediatised society, interactivity is intrinsic to continual communication processes. Given that mediatisation progressively influences all facets of culture and society (Couldry & Hepp, 2013; Hepp et al., 2010), the integration of networked media technologies (NMTs) into emotionally constructed communicative structures is undeniably becoming more diverse and concurrently globalised (Döveling et al., 2018; Döveling & Sommer, 2023).

NMTs¹ connect individuals globally, enabling instant communication, information sharing, and collaborative interactions, transforming the way people access and exchange information and – above all – emotions. It is through these networked media platforms, that digital affect cultures (DACs) materialise. Everyday communication in a mediated context thus leads to the initiation of emotional exchanges, eliciting collective meta-appraisals of events within the media sphere (Döveling & Sommer, 2012). Such communication fosters affiliations, resulting in discursive, emotional, and ideological alignment (Harju, 2015, 2016). Symbols as well as emotional flows connect people around the globe, revealing the three core processes guiding symbolic online interactions: discourse, alignment, and belonging. Based on these complex and intertwined processes, DACs are shaped by the social sharing of culturally and discursively constructed emotions (Döveling et al., 2018).

The term ‘emotion’ has been difficult to define and emotion research in psychology was underdeveloped until the 1980s (Döveling & Konijn, 2021). It was only in the 1960’s, that Arnold (1960) and Lazarus (1966) noted that subjective interpretation and evaluation are core elements in the elicitation of emotions: Individuals evaluate events and people in their surroundings. This evaluation, ‘appraisal’, leads to emotion (Döveling & Sommer, 2012). Similarly, in contemporary research, a consensus prevails among scholars, affirming that emotions constitute ‘a positive or negative type of experience of the subjects’ and result in a ‘response following an evaluation of stimuli and situations’ (Gerhards, 1988: 16; Döveling, 2005: 337). In this manner, Scherer (1992: 150) defines emotion from a psychological perspective ‘as a sequence of interrelated, synchronized changes in the states of all organismic subsystems (information processing, support, execution, action, monitoring) in response to to the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to central concerns of the organism’.

Different appraisals lead to so-called ‘stimulus evaluation checks’ (Scherer, 2001) which are essential in the formation of emotion. These include:

1. Novelty check (Have external or internal stimuli changed?)
2. Intrinsic pleasantness check (Is it pleasant or unpleasant for oneself?)
3. Goal/Need significance check (Does it support or prevent one’s own goals?)
4. Coping potential check (To what extent does the person believe they have the event under control?)
5. Norm or self compatibility check (How does the event relate to one’s internal and external standards?)

Moreover, Manstead and Fischer (2001) underscored the inadequacy of solely concentrating on the individual, emphasising the necessity to scrutinise assessments within a social

1 Some examples include - Social Media Platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), Video Conferencing Tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams), Instant Messaging Apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram), Online Collaboration Platforms (e.g., Google Workspace, Microsoft 365), File Sharing Services (e.g., Dropbox, Google Drive), Streaming Services (e.g., Netflix, Spotify), Podcast Platforms (e.g., Apple Podcasts, Spotify), Online Gaming Networks (e.g., Xbox Live, PlayStation Network), Internet of Things (IoT) Devices (e.g., smart home devices, wearables), Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), Peer-to-peer File Sharing (e.g., BitTorrent), Content Delivery Networks (CDNs), Cloud Computing Services (e.g., Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure), Smart TVs with Internet Connectivity, Web Browsers (e.g., Chrome, Firefox), Video-Sharing Platforms (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo), Blogging Platforms (e.g., WordPress, Medium), Online Forums and Discussion Boards (e.g., Reddit, Quora), E-commerce Platforms (e.g., Amazon, eBay), Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) Technologies.

context and incorporate the evaluations of others in individual appraisals. They subsequently advanced this groundbreaking conceptualisation, emphasising:

What is crucial is that individuals anticipate others' definitions of the situation and how they are likely to respond to the situation and our behaviours. This anticipation is needed to coordinate social activity: if we act without any consideration of the implications for how we are evaluated by others, we risk losing their esteem and ultimately our social bonds with them (Manstead & Fischer, 2001: 224).

Symbolic Interactionism describes these instances of social coordination and perspective-taking, asserting that shared meaning and understanding are constructed through communication by relating our actions to others. (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic Interactionism, founded in the early 20th century at the Chicago School of Sociology, is based on three major premises (Blumer, 1969):

1. People are acting towards things according to the subjective meaning they ascribe to them.
2. These meanings usually result from social interactions with others.
3. Meanings are negotiated in interpersonal encounters and constantly changed in further interactions.

Thus, Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934) can be understood as a theory of peoples' encounters with their social environment, stressing the individual as well as social (inter-)subjectivity of meaning. Our social contacts and contexts influence our worldviews and the symbols we use and share. In a changing and highly complex environment, dominated by NMTs instead of a globalised media environment, people long for a much sought-after common ground that facilitates shared understanding. Thus, the meaning becomes socially relative, dependent on the situation, time, and culture, highlighting the need for cohesive emotional frameworks. Through communicative acts of interpreting and revealing our assessments and understanding the appraisals of others, we do not only know where we stand in terms of our appraisal, but we equally recognise how we can position ourselves in relation to the appraisals and emotions of others (Döveling & Sommer, 2012).

It is the interactionist perspective on emotions that is highly influential in understanding online communication when utilising NMTs. During the 1970s and early 1980s, at a time when the internet was not universally present, Hochschild (1979), Shott (1979) and Zurcher (1982) initiated the analysis of the sociology of emotions from an interactionist perspective. This perspective focuses on

- the context,
- the meaning a situation has for a person and
- the corresponding emotions that result from this meaning.

Connecting these aspects was groundbreaking and is still applicable and powerful for the understanding of emotions in digitalised environments. Hochschild, Shott, and Zurcher, amongst others (e.g., Thoits, 1990), emphasise that emotions are not regarded as physio-

logical invariants, but rather as outcomes stemming from the meaning a person attributes to a situation. It is only through the shared reference and interpretation within a social interaction that emotions and emotion management arise (Hochschild, 1979: 555; 1983; Shott, 1979: 1318; Zurcher, 1982: 1–2).

DIGITAL AFFECT CULTURES

Contemporary network society (Castells, 2001) is characterised by timeless time and the space of flows. Today, emotional messages and symbols flow through multifaceted networked media realms – often ubiquitously and synchronically. Loose ties (Granovetter, 1973) between people who may not even know each other shape the streams of information and form the basis of assessment of these realms, expanding classical notions of time and space through virality. Regardless of who and where people are, evaluative discourse, affective messages and nonverbal symbols like memes that are universally understandable (Gal et al., 2016), establish connections in digital contexts. Similarly, globally networked interaction chains transcending conventional constraints of time and space characterise contemporary emotion management. Likewise, Wahl-Jorgensen (2018) emphasises the ‘emotional architecture’ of social media. The specific algorithmic structure of digital media enhances the affectivity of communication, as emotional messages often attract significant attention and foster further communicative action (Menke & Birkner, 2023).

In their theoretical framework delineating the concept of ‘digital affect cultures’ (DAC), as articulated by Döveling et al. (2018), the scholars expound upon three intricately interlinked processes propelled by emotions: discourse, alignment, and belonging. Through a nuanced exploration of these processes, the authors underscore their interconnected nature and emphasise their significance in comprehending collective communication in NMTs.

Discourse: Negotiating emotion

In moments of heightened ambiguity, individuals resort to communicative action as a means to fulfil their inherent need for orientation. Rumours and myths are formed based on uncertainty and a lack of closure (Allport & Postman, 1946). From an evolutionary perspective, the communication of negative emotions helps to prepare the individual to adaptively deal with adverse circumstances, while the communication of positive emotions stimulates the expansion of human mental capability (Schwab & Schwender, 2011). Likewise, Dunbar highlights that language has evolved mainly for facilitating social bonding in large and complex social groups (Dunbar, 2004; Oesch, 2016: 5). Communicating affiliation is based on the sharing of emotions and attitudes regarding the world through gossip, narration, and linguistic interaction (Dunbar, 2004). Schwab and Schwender (2011) apply Dunbar’s theory to communication from an evolutionary stance to new media technologies. Within the digital realm, a specific discursive space is constructed (Markham, 2004) where participation and orientation are guided by emotional interaction chains (Collins, 1984, 1987). Emotions within divergent discourses, such as love, fear, and anger construct subjective positions mobilised in digital contexts. Specific discursive arrangements are

engendered gaining traction within online circulation and developing as dominant patterns of discourse (Kuntsman, 2012).

Emotional engagement with media has always been the subject of discourse and social interaction: In early cinema, spectators felt intimately connected with the actors on the screen and loudly commented on the movies (Bösch, 2019). Television has created communities of viewers with shared feelings of empathy, suspense or amusement, who discuss television messages with family members or peer groups (Holly et al., 2001; Sommer, 2010). In the digital age, these phenomena have extended to complex second- and multi-screen scenarios where media messages can contain notable memetic properties i.e. users can replicate and adapt content for retransmission (memes). These memes can be shared and commented on instantly and easily spread around the world within minutes (Harrington et al., 2013; Shah et al., 2015).

By liking and discussing humour, stories, and fashion trends as well as relevant social issues, distinct emotional messages are formed, copied and reproduced in far-reaching, diverse contexts and media systems. Lip-sync and dance videos, for instance, disseminated through TikTok, have spawned novel avenues of delight and fandom engagement, contributing to the swift and remarkable economic success of this emerging NMT (Granow & Scolari, 2022). Along with these trends, the logic of timeless time and the space of flows (Castells, 2001) influences the interpretation and understanding of significance: short, instant, pictorial messages, containing universal symbols and concepts that can be universally understood are capturing users' attention and going viral. These are the mechanisms employed by modern activism as Milan (2015: 1) claims in her analysis of cloud protesting as 'politics of visibility'.

However, emotions negotiated in discourse are never value-free. Discursive subjectification may lead to the production of a culturally unintelligible other (Butler, 2006), who is then often subjected to marginalisation (Harju & Huovinen, 2015). In an interview study with children regarding their digital activities, Wernholm (2018: 53) states that '... children risk being excluded from conversations with friends if they lack discursive knowledge about digital activities.' The discursively constructed subject positions are relational (Döveling et al., 2018).

In times of crises and catastrophes, affective discourse can be overwhelming. When encountering a barrage of impromptu emotional responses on social media, users develop expectations about the appropriate way to react by anticipating the appraisals of their significant others (Manstead & Fischer, 2001). Conversations and discourses can provide orientation and serve as coping strategies in these times, as studies during the COVID-19 pandemic reveal (McClain et al., 2021). Specifically, visual symbols rapidly fuelling stories, posts and reels generate processes of emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994: 5), at the same time evoking the need to take part in this communicative action to feel included. Similarly, like fandom with its specific codes and symbols, social movements emerge as virtual communities that connect globally via a digitally shared set of visuals, terms and narratives. Prominent hashtags like #metoo, #blacklivesmatter or #fridaysforfuture have established discourses that formed patterns of alignment resulting in global solidarity and companionship.

Alignment: Drawing evaluative boundaries

Humans tend to associate with like-minded others, thus gravitating towards those with whom they share similar experiences and evaluation, known as appraisals (Luminet et al., 2000; Nadal et al., 2013). Likewise, culture is correspondingly shaped by a set of rules, expressing emotions, the so-called display rules (for an overview, see Ekman & Davidson, 1994), that are passed on from one generation to the next. In their discourse-pragmatic analysis, Alba-Juez and Larina (2018) equally conceptualise the linguistics of emotion and the 'emotional turn in linguistics' (Alba-Juez & Larina, 2018: 11) from an interdisciplinary stance, which includes not only communicative, but amongst others, cognitive, cultural, and discursive aspects, as language facilitates emotional dialogue.

In digital realms, communication promotes alignments, which 'are regularly formed around emotional resonance' (Harju, 2017: 75), where like-minded individuals join in an imagined community (Anderson, 2006). Digital pathways tend to construct artificial meeting points that lead to diverse relational scenarios (Burkitt, 2014), with emotional resonance operating as a conduit to bring people together (Papacharissi, 2015). Emotion can thus be seen as a relational resource in the communicative process of alignment (Döveling et al., 2018).

Alignment, though, may not only be seen as positive: the constitutive limit of alignment is misalignment (Harju, 2015, 2016, 2017). The incomprehensible nature of the other, frequently prompts the establishment of emotional boundaries and encourages the delineation between 'us' and 'them', evident in misalignment processes that result in the formation of distinct, sometimes opposing groups, and the polarisation of emotions. In her network analysis of the German public discourse about the #metoo movement on Twitter, Martini (2020) reveals that more than half of the tweets using the hashtag #metoo had been posted by anti-feminist and racist accounts.

Given the fact that alignment encompasses misalignment, the flipside of belonging is exclusion or isolation – a widespread phenomenon and the shady side of network society. As time becomes timeless and spaces tend to flow, relationships and commitment are getting progressively non-binding (Vorderer, 2015). Moreover, the anonymity of digital networked communication may lead to deindividuation and disinhibition in human behaviour (Lea & Spears, 1991) as revealed by diverse investigations on verbal violence, flaming and incivility performed online (Cicchirillo et al., 2015; Springer & Tröger, 2021; Veletsianos et al., 2018).

In times of crises and uncertainty, discourses debating the appropriateness of emotional reactions may start immediately (Rogers & Seidel, 2002). It is here, where emotions are permanently assessed on the meta-communicative level, contextualised and negotiated in symbolic interaction chains. These discourses contain a strong normative character: Consequently, while using symbols to emotionally connect in collective actions, the appropriateness of conflicting feelings and the ways of dealing with symbolic action are questioned in comments and discussions, leading to new assessments of one's own as well as others' emotional reactions. Specifically, in situations of conflict and ambiguity, discourses among like-minded people have the potential to develop into processes of polarisation and silencing (Neumann et al., 2021).

Belonging: Community building and polarisation

Within the communication of appraisals, language can be understood as the most powerful and essential communicative symbol system of human behaviour (Burkart, 2002). As Nadal et al. (2013) highlight in their linguistic analysis, which includes vital psychological aspects, language, serving as a distinct indication of belonging, plays a vital role in the development of emotional connections within a community and its culture. The authors emphasise that language is one of the most evident indications of community, more meaningful than the total number of individuals of which it is comprised (Nadal et al., 2013: 614). Further, language and specifically the communication of emotions has enabled humankind to convey shared intentionality, which is at the core of culture and human development: “[I]ntentionality and collaborative communication go hand in hand.” (Nadal et al., 2013: 615).

In this manner, belonging and distance between groups are implicitly expressed via symbolic references. Psycho-linguistic phenomena like the Linguistic Intergroup Bias (Maass, 1999) demonstrate that within one linguistic community, people tend to use different terms when describing strangers compared to members of their own group. Negative emotions directed at outgroups are frequently conveyed in a more abstract and generalising manner, often unconsciously, utilising adjectives or state verbs that imply negative group characteristics. Referring to negative characteristics or manners among the in-group, in contrast, group members use concrete language (action verbs) implying an exception to the rule untypical for oneself (Maass, 1999). Hence, language conveys and reinforces stereotypes and prejudice, serving a function of distinction or even exclusion (Collins & Clément, 2012). At the same time, language supports our sense of belonging by reducing complexity. In this context, Oesch (2016: 2) identifies language as intricately linked to social bonding functions, a fundamental evolutionary necessity.

Engagement in social media tends to be highly affective (affective publics, Papacharissi, 2015), and digital affect culture fosters ‘mediatized emotional bonds and collective imaginations’ (Sumiala, 2013: 119) that prompt a feeling of cultural and social belonging. It is here where the psychological concept of ‘social sharing of emotions’ (Rimé et al., 1992) as a cross-cultural phenomenon becomes relevant, highlighting a vital point: humans need social affiliation and strive for belonging via social groups (Cohen & Metzger, 1998). The individual is fundamentally engaged in social constellations, in diverse (digital) encounters (see Harju, 2017).

As a manifestation of emotional connection, a feeling of belonging is forged when worldwide streams of emotion condense into pockets of cultural, social, and ideological understanding, where specific emotions align while others may not necessarily do so. In mediated interaction, meaning is constructed and permanently adjusted (Mead, 1934; Döveling & Sommer, 2012). Within the realms of NMT, affiliation and identity within fandom cultures evolve globally, shaping a sense of belonging in a networked manner (Döveling & Sommer, 2023): Be it the Harry Potter fans, popular music styles like R’n’B or Hip Hop - belonging emerges via shared symbols such as the use of specific language, labels or memes and is thus no longer dependent on national or cultural borders or even specific media channels.

In line with this, Buck (1988), Buck and Powers (2011: 182) and Stifano et al. (2021: 195) take a global perspective on the communication of emotions in and through the media, highlighting the interrelationship between globalised emotions, the media and McLuhan's concept of the 'global village' (McLuhan, 1962, 1964). The authors suggest that the genesis of the 'global village' is based upon the ability of the media to foster emotional communication on a global scale. Thus, the emotional power of electronic media is embedded in their aptitude to stimulate communication that links human beings emotionally with one another, 'for good or ill' (Buck & Powers, 2011: 191).

Such affective connection may lead to compassionate and altruistic feelings, as discussed above, yet it can equally bring about the opposite, such as resentment, public degradation or hatred, and thus, is capable of dehumanising and destroying (Buck & Powers, 2011). Dehumanisation and lowered inhibitions (Buck & Powers, 2011) set the stage for *schadenfreude*, the enjoyment of the suffering of others (Döveling & Suter, 2023; Gehrau et al., 2014). Phenomena like hate speech and cyberbullying are cruel consequences of expressing negative emotions publicly and in often globally dominant discourses through the media (Kowalski et al., 2014; Neumann et al., 2021; Sponholz, 2017).

Nonetheless, the questions persist: how, why, and what factors contribute to the emergence of these DACs?

SPIRAL OF SILENCE IN DIGITAL AFFECT CULTURES

Addressing spirals of communication like the 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) in online communication (Hampton et al., 2014; Porten-Cheé & Eilders, 2015), promises a fruitful way to understand the inherent mechanism of social cohesive processes in digital affect cultures. Noelle-Neumann (1974) assumes that fear of isolation is deeply rooted in human nature. Since people are striving for social belonging, they vigilantly observe their surroundings for trends, majorities, and dominant positions. Online-mediated network societies offer a platform for delving into these observations, acting as a realm for DACs that consistently spark fresh emotional discussions, often quickly spreading to involve a global audience through alignment processes that foster a sense of belonging.

Specifically, the processes of alignment via morally accepted emotional reactions show the vivid relevance and timeliness of the theory: Alignment has a far-reaching impact on public opinion, which can be seen as a form of social control, due to the need to belong to social groups. As people observe their environment and sense which opinion is prevailing in the public sphere, they align their own opinion with what they perceive to be the dominant position. By these alignment processes, the position perceived as dominant will be promoted and reinforced and become stronger – even if its dominance was a misperception in the first place (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Hence, the dynamics of alignment intensify shifting the ratio between majority and minority and thereby establishing the dominant position even more. It is here, where belonging is equally gaining relevance. As no one wants to be isolated, progressively silent minorities support loud and prominent majorities (Hampton et al., 2014; Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

However, as Porten-Che  and Eilders's (2015) findings show, there was no support for the classical spiral of silence theory in online communication, as individuals who perceive themselves in the minority were even more likely to express their opinions. We argue that this is due to the different intensities of emotional engagement in digital affect cultures, which may enable a minority to speak out. The core elements of belonging, alignment and discourse, seem to have different impacts on social media. Furthermore, as Williams et al. (2015) findings disclose: 'social media discussions of climate change often occur within polarising 'echo chambers', but also within 'open forums', mixed-attitude communities that reduce polarisation and stimulate debate.' (Williams et al., 2015: 126). Further investigation into identity formation and strengthening of group cohesive processes within digital affect cultures is needed.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN DIGITAL AFFECT CULTURES

In the sociology of emotions, we note that socialisation plays an important role in how people experience, interpret, and express emotions, including situations that evoke a range of feelings. Hochschild (1983) suggests individuals must perform certain roles that entail abiding by certain feeling rules. Similarly, Goffman, (1956) introduced the concept of dramaturgy in his work, particularly in his book 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.' According to Goffman (1956), individuals engage in impression management where they consciously or unconsciously perform specific roles to present a favourable image of themselves to others. He compared social interactions to a theatrical performance, with individuals playing various roles to conform to societal expectations and norms. Goffman (1956) argued that individuals carefully craft their self-presentation, adapting their behaviour to fit in with the rules and expectations of the given social context. This perspective emphasises the idea that social life involves a continuous process of individuals performing their roles in the ongoing drama of everyday online interactions. Moreover, a micro-level cross-section analysis of those online performances can vary according to an individual's desired image they wish to portray to a particular social media platform's audience. The examples provided below highlight the factors influencing how, why, and to what extent online users may react to a particular event garnering substantial attention across various social media platforms.

On a networked media platform, individuals may feel compelled to express excitement or positivity about certain trends or events, even if their personal feelings are more neutral or indifferent, to align with the prevailing sentiment of the online community.

We note that the user on a networking platform exemplifies impression management, as originally conceptualised by Goffman (1956). The deliberate curation of a profile to present a favourable image reflects a strategic effort to shape perceptions. This aligns with the concept of individuals performing roles to manage the impressions they make, emphasising the significance of online identity construction for professional purposes. Furthermore, the concept of Online Interactions as Theatrical Performances is evident in gaming communities, where players adopt specific personas to conform to established norms. This aligns with Goffman's theatrical metaphor (1956, 2004), highlighting the deliberate crafting of online personas to fit into the expectations of a specific community. In a similar vein, Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) apply Goffman's impression management to the

online presentation of self in blogging, where users re-create their offline self online and at the same time, edited aspects of self: when in the 'front stage'.

VIRTUE SIGNALLING IN DIGITAL AFFECT CULTURES

Virtue Signalling (Wallace et al., 2020) characterises a prevalent trend in the online sphere where individuals strategically express opinions or engage in actions to portray a heightened sense of moral righteousness. This phenomenon operates within the broader landscape of impression management but introduces a distinctive layer centred on moral and ideological alignment. It reflects an individual's conscious effort to align with socially accepted values, often without a genuine commitment to the advocated principles. The term carries a pejorative connotation, suggesting that those engaging in virtue signalling may prioritise social approval over authentic conviction. This behaviour may raise questions about the sincerity behind the expressed virtuous sentiments, implying that the individual might be more interested in appearing virtuous rather than genuinely upholding the values they purport. Virtue signalling can manifest in various online contexts, from social media platforms to public forums, and often involves the public expression of support for popular or widely accepted social causes. The expansion of this behaviour reflects the complex interplay between individuals' self-presentation, societal expectations, and the desire for positive validation within the digital landscape.

While discussing conspicuous virtue signalling online, Wallace et al. (2020) highlight the prosocial and immoral intentions of individuals. The authors describe how conspicuous virtue signalling (CVS) takes on two orientations: self-oriented CVS and other-oriented CVS. Self-oriented CVS involves the expression of virtuous behaviour primarily to attain intrinsic benefits. It allows individuals to bolster their public image on NMTs, leading to a heightened sense of personal satisfaction. On the other hand, other-oriented CVS entails virtue signalling to showcase virtuous behaviour to an audience. In both self- and other-oriented CVS, the behaviour is intentionally public, deliberately crafted to signal the individual's virtue, and strategically deployed on NMTs such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Reddit etc.. This ensures that the display of virtue is widely visible to others, emphasising the intentional nature of these virtue-signalling actions within the context of networked media platforms (Wallace et al., 2020).

In addition, feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979) are evident in the way individuals modify their expressions on social media platforms. The pressure to align with the prevailing emotions reveals a tendency to conform to online community expectations, potentially sacrificing personal authenticity for social acceptance. This illustrates the influence of societal norms on emotional expression in the realms of NMTs.

For instance, micro-level cross-section analysis on a dating app, could showcase how users strategically present themselves to attract like-minded individuals. This aligns with Goffman's (1956) and Hochschild's (1979) ideas, emphasising the role of impression management and feeling rules in shaping online interactions.

Overall, these examples collectively underscore the complex interplay between social con-

cepts and online behaviour, showcasing how individuals navigate the digital realm through the lens of sociological frameworks. They provide insights into sociological concepts related to online behaviour and underpin key mechanisms in DAC as an emotional online global manifestation.

CONCLUSION. PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THEORY OF DAC

This article underscores the intrinsic nature of digital affect cultures (DAC) within the global fabric of daily networked media technology (NMT). Building upon the original theory conceptualised by Döveling et al. (2018), the article expands the theoretical framework by seamlessly integrating the concepts of impression management (Goffman, 1956) and its associated concept of virtue signalling (Wallace et al., 2020) together with feeling rules (Hochschild, 1979) within the context of digital negotiation chains. Additionally, it introduces the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), contributing a nuanced layer to the analysis of DAC dynamics.

Expanding on this foundation, several open questions and challenges emerge, pointing towards avenues for future research and a deeper understanding of digital communication within today's emotionally charged networked society.

Firstly, the article raises the crucial empirical consideration of how the identified phenomena can be effectively grasped in real-world scenarios. Addressing the cultural dimensions of DAC constitutes another vital challenge, prompting exploration into the variations and nuances across diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, the influence of artificial intelligence (AI) on DAC remains an intriguing area that demands scrutiny, delving into the intersection of technology and emotional dynamics in digital communication. These questions serve as fertile ground for future investigations, offering the potential to unveil valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of DACs within the evolving landscape of digital communication in contemporary society. As researchers navigate these uncharted territories, they have the opportunity to contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse on emotions, technology, and communication in today's emotionally networked society.

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**LITERARISCHES ÜBERSETZEN
IN DER KINDER- UND
JUGENDLITERATUR.
DER FALL VON METAPHERN
UND ANDEREN REDEWEND-
UNGEN IM ROMAN TINTENHERZ
VON CORNELIA FUNKE**

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ABSTRACT

Literary translation is of great importance as it enables literature from various countries and cultures to be accessible to a broader international audience. This article focuses on literary translation in the field of children's and young adult literature, with 'Inkheart' by Cornelia Funke highlighted as a prime example. This work is not only popular in Germany but also enjoys international acclaim, as evidenced by the multitude of its translations, including the Albanian version. 'Inkheart' is distinguished by its fascinating fantastical elements, which are particularly popular among readers. The original German text is characterized by its linguistic diversity and artistic expression. However, translating it into Albanian and other languages poses challenges, as certain nuanced words and phrases are difficult to convey, highlighting the complexity and significance of literary translation.

This article aims to illuminate the specific challenges involved in translating artistic expressions including metaphors, similes, idioms, and phraseological turns—from the original German version into Albanian. It centers on a detailed comparative analysis between the German original text and its Albanian translation, incorporating theoretical aspects of literary translation, particularly in children's and young adult literature. Special attention is given to the linguistic transfer of metaphors and stylistic elements, which are not only of aesthetic importance but also contribute significantly to the understanding and interpretation of the text. This comparative examination also reveals the characteristic differences in language patterns and expressions between German and Albanian.

Keywords: *literary translation, children's literature, comparative analysis*

EINLEITUNG

Das Interesse an der Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur hat in den letzten Jahren deutlich zugenommen, was die wachsende globale Bedeutung dieser Literaturgattung unterstreicht. (Lathey, 2006:1) Kinderliteratur, obwohl von Erwachsenen verfasst, erfordert ein tiefes Verständnis der kindlichen Welt – ihrer Denkweise, Sprache und Ausdrucksformen. Die Übersetzung von Kinderbüchern stellt daher eine besondere Herausforderung dar. Übersetzer müssen nicht nur die sprachlichen Nuancen des Originaltexts erfassen, sondern diese auch so adaptieren, dass sie für Kinder verständlich und ansprechend sind. Diese Anpassungen sind entscheidend, um die Brücke zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen und Sprachen zu schlagen und dabei die Einzigartigkeit der kindlichen Wahrnehmung zu bewahren.

Der Fokus dieses Beitrags liegt auf der Übersetzung des Buches 'Tintenherz' aus dem Deutschen ins Albanische. Obwohl Studien zur Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur, insbesondere Fantasy-Literatur, innerhalb der Übersetzungswissenschaft ein Schwerpunktthema sind, fehlen solche Studien in der albanischen Realität. Darüber hinaus wurden bisher keine Untersuchungen zur Qualität von Übersetzungen durchgeführt, wodurch dieses wichtige Feld für die Bildung und Unterhaltung der neuen Generationen vernachlässigt wurde.

Warum gerade dieses Buch und warum Cornelia Funke?

Der Roman 'Tintenherz' von Cornelia Funke wurde in zahlreiche Fremdsprachen übersetzt und erfreut sich sowohl bei Kindern als auch bei Erwachsenen weltweit großer Beliebtheit. Der Roman zeichnet sich durch das Vorherrschen des fantastischen Elements mit hohem ästhetischen Wert aus, das sich in einer bildhaften Sprache manifestiert.

Die Übersetzung eines solchen Werkes stellt eine anspruchsvolle Aufgabe für den Übersetzer¹ dar. Er muss sicherstellen, dass die gleiche Wirkung erzielt wird und dabei Verbindungen zwischen der Kultur der Zielsprache herstellen, in die das Buch übersetzt wird, und der realen sowie der fantastischen Welt des Romans, die in der Kultur der Ursprungssprache verwurzelt ist.

Dieser Beitrag untersucht die albanische Übersetzung von 'Tintenherz' detailliert, um die Perspektiven und angewandten Übersetzungstechniken zu beleuchten. Zentral ist dabei die Frage, inwiefern es dem Übersetzer gelungen ist, die Freude und das Verständnis, das das Originalwerk in der deutschen Sprache hervorruft, in die albanische Kultur zu übertragen. Wie ähnlich oder unterschiedlich sind diese beiden Kulturen in Bezug auf ihre Rezeption und Interpretation des Romans? Durch diese Analyse wird nicht nur die Qualität der Übersetzung bewertet, sondern auch ein Einblick in die interkulturelle Kommunikation und das literarische Verständnis zwischen diesen beiden Sprachwelten gegeben.

Cornelia Funke² ist eine international renommierte deutsche Autorin von Kinder- und Jugendbüchern. Ihr Werk Tintenherz,³ das erste Buch der Tintenwelt-Trilogie, wurde von Elna Mistrovica ins Albanische übersetzt und unter dem Titel 'Zemër si boja' beim Dudaj-Verlag veröffentlicht. Diese Trilogie, bestehend aus 'Tintenherz' (2003), 'Tintenblut' (2005) und 'Tintentod' (2007), ist bekannt für Funkes lebendigen Erzählstil, der intertextuelle Elemente geschickt einbindet und sich auf den Einsatz von Metaphern als konzeptionelle Grundfiguren stützt.⁴ Ihr Schreibstil ist geprägt von einzigartigen Bildern und kraftvollen Ausdrücken, kombiniert mit einer einfachen, verständlichen und fesselnden Schreibweise, die die Leser in eine magisch entwickelte Welt der Vorstellungskraft entführt.

FRAGEN DER ÜBERSETZUNG VON KINDERLITERATUR

- 1 Maskuline Formen im Text umfassen auch die feminine.
- 2 Sie hat mehr als 40 Bücher für Kinder und Jugendliche geschrieben. Die meisten davon gehören zur Fantasy-Literatur. Die Bücher von Cornelia Funke wurden in viele Sprachen übersetzt und ihre Geschichten sind in über 45 Ländern der Welt bekannt. Insgesamt wurden allein in deutscher Sprache 4,5 Millionen Bücher von Cornelia Funke verkauft. URL:<http://www.kinderundjugendmedien.de/index.php/autoren/1297-funke-cornelia> (Zugriffsdatum: 22.12.2022).
- 3 Im Mittelpunkt des Romans stehen ein zwölfjähriges Mädchen namens Maggie und ihr Vater Mortimer Folchart, der von seiner Tochter Mo genannt wird. Ihr Leben ändert sich, als Staubfinger auftaucht, der zu Mo gekommen ist, um ihn vor Capricorn zu warnen. Die Abenteuergeschichte beginnt in diesem Moment. Mo hat eine besondere Gabe: während er liest, kommen die Charaktere der Bücher in die reale Welt. Als Maggie drei Jahre alt war, erschien Capricorn, während Mo eine Geschichte aus dem Buch Tintenherz las.. Im gleichen schicksalhaften Moment verschwindet Maggies Mutter für immer zwischen den Seiten des Buches. Währenddessen bittet der gnadenlose Capricorn Zaubersprache, sein Talent seinen teuflischen Zielen unterzuordnen. Maggie wird in viele Ereignisse verwickelt, in denen die Vorstellung Wirklichkeit wird.
- 4 Intertextualität spielt in der gesamten Trilogie eine wichtige Rolle. Jedes Kapitel beginnt mit einem Zitat oder einem Fragment bekannter Autoren der Weltliteratur. Die Zitate weisen auf den Inhalt des folgenden Kapitels hin. Mit den Zitaten verbindet die Autorin ihren Text mit verschiedenen Motiven der Weltliteratur.

Die Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur⁵ löst oft intensive Diskussionen aus, da sie als besonders anspruchsvoll im Vergleich zur Übersetzung von Erwachsenenliteratur gilt. In diesem Bereich treten einige zentrale Fragen und Überlegungen auf:

- Was ist die Hauptaufgabe des Übersetzers in der Kinderliteratur?

Bei der Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur liegt die Hauptaufgabe des Übersetzers darin, die Botschaften und Geschichten des Originaltexts so zu übertragen, dass sie nicht nur für das junge Publikum verständlich, sondern auch ansprechend und inspirierend sind. Dies erfordert ein ausgeprägtes Gespür für die Auswahl altersgerechter Wörter und Ausdrücke sowie eine kulturelle Sensibilität, die die Besonderheiten der Zielgruppe berücksichtigt. Der Übersetzer muss dabei die Balance zwischen der Treue zum Original und der Anpassung an die kulturellen und sprachlichen Bedürfnisse der jungen Leser finden.

- Wie lassen sich Textteile, die einer anderen Kultur angehören, am besten übersetzen?

Kinderliteratur kann kulturelle Elemente und Feinheiten enthalten, die in der Übersetzung berücksichtigt werden müssen. Hier stellt sich die Frage, wie man diese kulturellen Besonderheiten so übertragen kann, dass sie in der Zielsprache und -kultur verständlich sind, ohne dabei den ursprünglichen Geist des Textes zu verlieren.

- Was ist der akzeptierte Grad der Textmanipulation (Anpassung) und wie weit kann ein Übersetzer gehen, um die sensible Denkweise eines Kindes nicht zu gefährden?

In der Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur gibt es keine allgemeingültige Regel, wie stark ein Text angepasst werden sollte. Dies hängt von verschiedenen Faktoren ab, darunter das Alter der Zielgruppe und deren sprachliche Kompetenzen. Manche Übersetzungen benötigen Anpassungen oder Vereinfachungen, um Lesbarkeit und Verständlichkeit für Kinder zu sichern. Die Herausforderung liegt darin, eine Balance zwischen der Anpassung des Textes und der Bewahrung seines ursprünglichen Geistes zu finden.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass die Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur eine anspruchsvolle Aufgabe ist, die ein tiefgehendes Verständnis für die Bedürfnisse und Empfindungen von Kindern voraussetzt. Ein erfolgreicher Übersetzer von Kinderbüchern muss nicht nur einfühlsam und sprachlich gewandt sein, sondern auch ein kulturelles Bewusstsein besitzen. So kann er die Brücke zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen und Sprachen schlagen und dabei die einzigartige Magie der Kinderliteratur bewahren.

5 Der Begriff Kinderliteratur wird von verschiedenen Forschern definiert. Laut A. Bishqemi (2006:9) vereint 'Kinderliteratur' pädagogische und erzieherische Anforderungen, einschließlich Werke, die für Erwachsene angepasst oder geschrieben sind, die aber verständlich sind oder für die Kleinen dienen können. Oittinen (2000:61) definiert: 'Literatur, die für Kinder produziert und bestimmt ist, oder Literatur, die von Kindern gelesen wird'. Rita Oittinen stellt sogar in Frage, ob es notwendig ist, Kinderliteratur zu definieren. Sie stellt fest, dass literarische Werke und alle literarischen Gattungen in Anspruch genommen werden. So kann es passieren, dass das, was heute Erwachsenenliteratur ist, morgen Kinderliteratur wird. 'Kinderliteratur' umfasst nach Ehlers (1986:19) 'alle Werke, die mündlich und schriftlich sind und Träume, Emotionen und Gedanken der Kinder ansprechen'. Laut Klingberg (1986:12) ist Kinderliteratur Literatur, die speziell für Kinder geschaffen wurde. Kinderbücher sind mehr und mehr in der Weltliteratur erschienen mit dem Ziel, der jüngeren Generation Weltanschauung, Glauben und Kultur der Gesellschaft zu vermitteln.

Das Hauptproblem, das in diesem Beitrag behandelt wird, betrifft die anspruchsvolle Aufgabe, literarische Figuren, Namen und Redewendungen in der Kinderliteratur so zu übersetzen, dass sie dem Originaltext möglichst nahekommen. Puurtinen (2006: 54) argumentiert, dass die Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur, obwohl sie oft als unkompliziert angesehen wird, in Wirklichkeit von Kultur zu Kultur erhebliche Unterschiede aufweist und bestimmten Einschränkungen unterliegt. Dies betrifft Namen, Satzstrukturen sowie sprachliche Nuancen und Konnotationen, die Erwachsenen vertraut sind, für Kinder jedoch oft schwer verständlich sind. Puurtinen hebt hervor, dass das Übersetzen auch von didaktischen, ideologischen, moralischen, ethischen und religiösen Normen beeinflusst wird, die in einer bestimmten Zeit und Kultur von großer Bedeutung sind. Zusätzlich existieren Unterschiede zwischen Sprachen und Kulturen in Bezug auf allgemein akzeptierte Normen, die die Übersetzungsarbeit weiter komplex gestalten.

Auch die Frage der Äquivalenz ist in den Übersetzungsstudien ein zentrales Thema.⁶ Es gibt unterschiedliche Ansichten darüber, was als Äquivalenz betrachtet wird und ob Übersetzer sich eher auf die formale Ähnlichkeit oder die funktionale Ähnlichkeit zwischen Original- und Zieltext konzentrieren sollten. Die Debatte über die Art und den Grad der Äquivalenz beeinflusst maßgeblich die Übersetzungspraxis und die verschiedenen Ansätze in der Übersetzungstheorie. Einige Übersetzer streben eine möglichst enge formale Ähnlichkeit an, während andere mehr Wert auf die funktionale Ähnlichkeit legen, um den kulturellen Kontext und die Kommunikationsabsicht des Originaltextes besser zu berücksichtigen.

Die Übersetzung ist tatsächlich eine komplexe und vielschichtige Aufgabe, die nicht nur sprachliche, sondern auch kulturelle Aspekte berücksichtigen muss. Der gewählte Übersetzungsansatz hängt von verschiedenen Faktoren ab, wie dem spezifischen Zweck der Übersetzung und der Zielgruppe. Er variiert oft, um eine optimale Entsprechung zwischen dem Originaltext und dem Zieltext zu erzielen. Die Entscheidungen des Übersetzers sind dabei ausschlaggebend für die erfolgreiche Übertragung der Botschaft und der kulturellen Bedeutung des Originaltextes in den Zieltext. Diese Entscheidungen beeinflussen maßgeblich, wie treu und effektiv die ursprüngliche Intention und der Kontext des Ausgangstextes im übersetzten Werk vermittelt werden.

METHODOLOGIE

Dieser Artikel basiert auf einer umfassenden Recherche zur Übersetzungsliteratur, mit einem besonderen Fokus auf Kinderliteratur, und stützt sich auf eine detaillierte vergleichende Analyse zwischen dem deutschen Originalwerk und der albanischen Übersetzung. Dabei werden hauptsächlich Fragen untersucht, die in diesem Bereich Debatten und Di-

6 Verschiedene Autoren haben sich mit dem Thema der Äquivalenz beim Übersetzen auseinandergesetzt, darunter:
- D. Robinson (1991) in 'The Translator's Turn' (S. 259)
- R. Oittinen (1995) in 'Käätäjä ja karnevaali' (S. 35)
- R. T. Bell (1991) in 'Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice' (S. 7)
- P. Newmark (1981) in 'Approaches to Translation' (S. 10)

Diese Autoren haben unterschiedliche Aspekte der Äquivalenz im Übersetzungsprozess beleuchtet und zur Entwicklung der Übersetzungstheorie beigetragen.

skussionen eröffnen. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der Sprache und der künstlerischen Gestaltung des Texts, einschließlich Metaphern, Vergleichen und Phraseologie im praktischen Kontext. Das Ziel ist es zu analysieren, wie diese Elemente in die albanische Sprache übertragen werden und welche Übersetzungsstrategien dabei verwendet werden.

Im Rahmen einer philologischen Analyse präsentiert dieser Beitrag detaillierte Daten zu verschiedenen Aspekten des untersuchten Werkes, darunter Informationen zur Veröffentlichung, Varianten des Texts, das Titelblatt, die Kapitelstruktur, Illustrationen im Werk, Anmerkungen des Übersetzers und andere Aspekte.

Die Analyse der Beispiele konzentriert sich nicht nur auf die Übersetzung in die albanische Sprache, sondern untersucht auch, ob es gelingt, die versteckten Bedeutungen bestimmter Phrasen in ihrer vollen Tragweite zu vermitteln. Der theoretische Rahmen der Studie wird durch konkrete Beispiele aus dem untersuchten Korpus veranschaulicht. Diese Beispiele illustrieren auch problematische Bereiche, die während der kontrastiven Analyse identifiziert wurden, wie etwa die Behandlung von Substantiven, Metaphern, Vergleichen und phraseologischen Elementen. Diese Analyse zielt darauf ab, ein umfassendes Bild der Übersetzungsprozesse und der dabei auftretenden Herausforderungen zu bieten.

BEGRIFFE

a. *Metapher/Vergleich*

Metaphern 'sind eine Bedeutungsübertragung von einem Objekt auf ein anderes aufgrund äußerer oder innerer Ähnlichkeit'. (Malá, 2009: 57)

In der Kinderliteratur tauchen meist die einfachsten Formen von Metaphern auf, weil komplizierte Formen Gefahr laufen, von den Kindern nicht richtig verstanden zu werden. Sie sind oft verbale Metaphern, die Handlungen, Substantive und Adjektive veranschaulichen, die Objekte, Phänomene, Menschen usw. charakterisieren. Oft ähneln diese Metaphern einem Vergleich und es gibt Situationen, in denen sie in der Übersetzung gegenseitig ausgetauscht werden können.

b. *Phraseologie in der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*

Der Roman 'Tinteherz' wird für Kinder ab 10 Jahren empfohlen und gehört somit zur Kategorie der Kinder- bzw. Jugendromane. Autoren von Kinderbüchern stehen oft vor der Herausforderung, die geeignete kindgerechte Sprache zu finden. Burger (vergleiche 1997: 234-242) unterscheidet verschiedene Arten der Verwendung von Redewendungen in Kinderbüchern. In Kinder- und Jugendbüchern sollte man nicht allzu häufig komplexe Ausdrücke und Redewendungen erwarten, da diese ein höheres Maß an kognitiven Fähigkeiten erfordern, um verstanden zu werden. In der Regel werden solche Ausdrücke in Kinderbüchern vermieden, da sie das Verständnis der jungen Leser überfordern könnten.

ÜBERSETZUNG INS ALBANISCHE. SPRACHPHILOLOGISCHER ANSATZ

Verschiedene Werke der bekannten Autorin Cornelia Funke wurden ins Albanische über-

setzt und vorrangig beim Verlag DUDAJ veröffentlicht. Der Anfang dieser Übersetzungsreihe wurde mit 'Herr der Diebe' gemacht. Angesichts des bemerkenswerten Erfolgs dieses Buches auf dem albanischen Markt folgten in den nachfolgenden Jahren weitere Übersetzungen von Funkes Werken ins Albanische. Diese Entwicklung gipfelte schließlich in der Veröffentlichung der gesamten Trilogie bestehend aus 'Tintenherz', 'Tintenblut' und 'Tintentod' in albanischer Sprache, was die Beliebtheit von Funkes literarischem Schaffen in Albanien unterstreicht.

Das Cover der albanischen Ausgabe zeigt den Namen der Autorin, Cornelia Funke, sowie den Titel 'Zemër si boja', gefolgt vom Verlag Botimet Dudaj. Diese Informationen sind auch auf der Rückseite des Buchs zu finden. Im Inneren des Buches erfahren wir den Namen der Übersetzerin, Elona Mistrovica, sowie den Originaltitel des Werkes. Die Namen des Herausgebers und des Grafikdesigners sind ebenfalls angegeben. Die Erstausgabe des Buchs erfolgte im Jahr 2011. Das Inhaltsverzeichnis befindet sich am Ende des Buchs und zeigt, dass es wie das Originalwerk in deutscher Sprache 59 Kapitel enthält. Die Titel dieser Kapitel wurden vergleichend in einer Tabelle im Anhang dargestellt.⁷

Die Titel in der albanischen Übersetzung ähneln sehr denen im Original. Bei genauerer Betrachtung und im Vergleich mit dem Original wird jedoch deutlich, dass die Titel wie im Original eine Zusammenfassung der Ereignisse innerhalb der Kapitel sind. In der albanischen Ausgabe gibt es weder ein Vorwort noch ein Nachwort des Übersetzers und es sind auch keine Anmerkungen des Übersetzers am Seitenende oder erläuternde Anmerkungen am Ende des übersetzten Werkes vorhanden.

Es ist erwähnenswert, dass die albanische Ausgabe des Buches 'Zemër si boja' von 2011 ein unterschiedliches Cover im Vergleich zum Original aufweist. Das Cover der Erstausgabe enthält verschiedene Symbole wie einen Schlüssel, eine Münze, eine Eidechse, eine Landschaft, einen Baum, eine Kakerlake, eine Perle und eine Fee sowie die Finger einer Hand. Das Cover spielt eine bedeutende Rolle bei der Wahrnehmung eines Werkes, insbesondere in der Fantasy-Literatur. Im Gegensatz dazu zeigt das Cover des Originals Buchstaben, die mit fabelhaften Tieren, Wesen, Büchern und Feuer verziert sind und somit eine Verbindung zur Welt der Fantasie herstellen.

PRAKTISCHE TEXTANALYSE

Namensübersetzungen im Buch

Die Untersuchung der Charakternamen in der deutschen Ausgabe im Vergleich zu ihren albanischen Entsprechungen ist äußerst aufschlussreich. Sie ermöglicht Einblicke in die Übersetzungsentscheidungen und deren mögliche Gründe. Dabei stellt sich die Frage, ob die Namen direkt ins Albanische übersetzt, abgewandelt oder lediglich transkribiert wurden. Die Analyse dieser Namensänderungen kann wichtige Erkenntnisse darüber liefern, wie der Übersetzer die Charaktere im Zieltext für das albanische Publikum vermitteln wollte.

Außerdem widmet sich unsere Analyse der Identifikation der angewandten Übersetzu-

⁷ Tabelle im Anhang: Übersetzung der Kapitelüberschriften in der albanischen Version (im Anhang)

ngsstrategien für die Übertragung der Namen in die albanische Sprache. Es wird untersucht, inwieweit die semantische Bedeutung der Charakternamen in der albanischen Version erhalten bleibt oder ob Anpassungen vorgenommen wurden, um die Bedeutung und das Wesen der Figuren auf eine dem albanischen Publikum zugängliche Weise zu übermitteln.

Die Namen der Charaktere in 'Tintenherz' spielen eine wichtige Rolle, da sie nicht nur ungewöhnlich klingen, sondern auch metaphorische und symbolische Bedeutungen enthalten. Diese Bedeutungen spiegeln oft die besonderen Fähigkeiten der Charaktere oder spezifische Aspekte ihres äußeren Erscheinungsbildes wider.

a. Der markanteste Name im Roman 'Tintenherz' ist ohne Zweifel 'Zauberzunge'. Diese Bezeichnung verkörpert Mo, Meggies Vater, der eine tiefe und leidenschaftliche Liebe zu Büchern hegt. Seine Sorgfalt und Hingabe im Umgang mit Büchern widerspiegeln diese Leidenschaft eindrucksvoll. Mo besitzt die außergewöhnliche Gabe, Charaktere oder Objekte aus den Geschichten, die er laut vorliest, lebendig werden zu lassen. Diese erscheinen dann real in der Welt des Romans. Diese einzigartige Fähigkeit begründet seinen Namen 'Zauberzunge'. In der albanischen Übersetzung wurde er als 'Gjuhëzanë' benannt, um eine engere Verbindung zur albanischen Kultur herzustellen und den kulturellen Kontext zu bewahren.

Der Name 'Gjuhëzanë' setzt sich aus zwei Wörtern zusammen: 'gjuhë' (Zunge/Sprache) und 'zanë' (Fee). 'Gjuhëzana' ist eine Figur aus der albanischen Folklore, vergleichbar mit Gottheiten wie Artemis in der griechischen und Diana in der römischen Mythologie. Sie ist ein faszinierendes Wesen mit außergewöhnlichen magischen Kräften. Zwei Merkmale zeichnen sie besonders aus: Einerseits unterstützt sie die 'Kreshniks', albanische heroische Figuren, in ihren Kämpfen. Andererseits besitzt sie eine düstere Seite – sie kann Menschen zu Eis erstarren lassen oder verfluchen, sollte ihr Frieden gestört werden. Die Hörner wilder Ziegen sind sowohl der Schutz als auch die Schwachstelle dieser Fee.

Der Name 'Gjuhëzanë' birgt eine etwas andere Bedeutung, als es die erste Assoziation mit dem Begriff 'Fee' vermuten lässt. Diese Bezeichnung bezieht sich eher auf die Magie des gesprochenen Wortes im Buch, welche Wunder wirken und die menschliche Vorstellungskraft über die Grenzen der Realität hinaus erweitern kann, als auf das traditionelle Bild einer Bergfee. In diesem Zusammenhang kann man die fantastischen Fähigkeiten der Fee so interpretieren, dass sie die Menschen entmutigt, indem sie 'die Charaktere auf eine bestimmte Weise hemmt, sie aus dem Buch nimmt und ihre Funktion verändert' oder sie als Symbol des Bösen in die menschliche Welt bringt.

b. Gleich zu Beginn des Romans begegnen wir einer Figur namens Staubfinger, die sich in der Menschenwelt unwohl fühlt, da sie nicht in ihre ursprüngliche Welt zurückkehren kann. Staubfinger, ein Jongleur, wurde von Mo aus einem Buch herausgelesen. Er besitzt außergewöhnliche Fähigkeiten und verdient seinen Lebensunterhalt, indem er auf den Straßen mit Feuer jongliert. Seine Beziehung zum Feuer ist einzigartig, fast so, als würde er mit ihm kommunizieren. Der Name 'Staubfinger' spiegelt diese besondere Fähigkeit wider. Die Metapher ergibt sich aus der Verbindung: Feuer wandelt alles in Staub um, und auf ähnliche Weise könnten Staubfingers Finger zu Staub zerfallen, wenn er seine Kunst nicht

ausübt.

c. Einer der Männer Capricorns trägt den Namen Flache Nase, eine Bezeichnung, die sich direkt auf seine äußeren körperlichen Merkmale bezieht und metaphorisch verwendet wird. In 'Tintenherz' wird er auf Seite 170 beschrieben:

'Der eine der Männer, groß wie ein Schrank, sah aus, als hätte ihm ein Riese mit seinem Daumen das Gesicht eingedrückt.

Alb. 'Njëri prej tyre, trupmadh si një dollap, kishte një fytyrë të rrumbullakët dhe të sheshtë, sikur tia kishte shtypur ndonjë gjigand me hishtin tregues; (Zemër si boja, S.140)

Diese bildhafte Beschreibung verleiht dem Charakter Flache Nase eine unverwechselbare physische Präsenz und verstärkt die metaphorische Bedeutung seines Namens.

d. Der Name 'Ziegenbart' ist ebenfalls eine auf einem Vergleich basierende Metapher. In 'Tintenherz' wird er auf Seite 170 charakterisiert:

'Der zweite, klein und mager, mit einem Ziegenbart auf dem fliehenden Kinn, spielte ständig an seiner Flinte herum und (...)' (Tintenherz, s. 170)

Alb.: '[...tjetri], trupvogël dhe i dobët, me një mjekër të hollë si cjan sillte nëpër duar pushkën [.....]' (Zemër si boja, f.140)

Diese Beschreibung verbindet den Namen 'Ziegenbart' direkt mit dem physischen Erscheinungsbild des Charakters, wobei der Bart als markantes Merkmal hervorgehoben wird.

METAPHERN IM BUCH

In ihrem Roman 'Tintenherz' nutzt Cornelia Funke eine Vielzahl von Metaphern, um abstrakte Konzepte hervorzuheben und zu veranschaulichen sowie um Personen, Objekte und Phänomene zu charakterisieren. In der albanischen Übersetzung des Buches treten zwei bemerkenswerte Phänomene in Bezug auf Metaphern auf: erstens die wörtliche Metapher und zweitens Metaphern, die im Albanischen häufig als Vergleiche genutzt werden.

Dies kann entweder auf eine bewusste Entscheidung des Übersetzers zurückzuführen sein, dem Bild oder Phänomen einen greifbareren Charakter zu geben, der in der albanischen Sprache besser verstanden wird, oder auf die Herausforderungen der Übersetzung und die Tendenz, eine komplexere Sprache zu vereinfachen. Beide Phänomene zeigen die Dynamik und die Anpassungsfähigkeit der Sprache in der Übersetzungsliteratur.

Hier konkrete Beispiele von 'Tintenherz':

<i>Es dauerte jedes Mal ein paar Augenblicke, bis er zurückfand aus der anderen Welt, aus dem Labyrinth der Buchstaben.'</i> (Tintenherz, S. 11)	<i>I duheshin disa sekonda për t'u kthyer nga bota e largët me labirinte shkronjash.</i> (Zemër si boja, S.11)
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Interessant ist, dass die Übersetzerin in diesem Fall eine vollständige Entsprechung zwischen Original und Übersetzung erreicht hat, indem sie 'Labyrinth der Buchstaben' als 'labirinte shkronjash' (auf Deutsch 'Buchstabenlabyrinth') übertragen hat. Dadurch bleibt die Bedeutung weitgehend gleich wie im Original. Bemerkenswert ist auch die Verwendung des Plurals für 'Labyrinth' im Albanischen, was eine zusätzliche Dimension oder Betonung der Vielfalt und Komplexität des Konzepts 'Buchstabenlabyrinth' hinzufügen könnte

Manche Bücher müssen gekostet werden, manche verschlingt man, und nur wenige kaut man und verdaut sie ganz.' (Tintenherz, S. 16)	Disa libra shijohen ngadalë, të tjerë përpihen me një kafshatë. Dhe vetëm disa, pak të tillë, përtypen për t'i tretur plotësisht. (Zemër si boja S.15)
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Es ist bemerkenswert, dass die Übersetzerin in diesem Fall dem Originaltext treu geblieben ist und die metaphorische Sprache erhalten hat. Dies zeigt sich besonders in der Übertragung der Verben 'verschlingen', 'kosten', 'kauen' und 'verdauen', die üblicherweise mit Essen assoziiert werden, in 'përpihen', 'shijohen', 'përtypen' und 'tretur'. Durch die Beibehaltung dieser bildhaften Ausdrücke in der albanischen Übersetzung wird die metaphorische Bedeutung des Textes bewahrt. Dies trägt entscheidend dazu bei, die Vorstellung zu vermitteln, dass die Hauptfigur Bücher auf eine ganz besondere und intensive Weise konsumiert und erlebt.

(...) Er wird bald ganz freiwillig hier hereinstolpern! Wir haben doch alle gesehen, mit was für einer Affenliebe er an dem Gör hängt. (Tintenherz, S. 358)	Ke për ta parë që ka për të ardhur këtu shumë shpejt! Edhe më parë kemi pasur rastin ta provojmë se sa shumë e do të bijën! (Zemër si boja S.295)
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Der umgangssprachliche Ausdruck 'Affenliebe' wird im Deutschen verwendet, um eine übermäßige oder sogar blinde Zuneigung, vor allem von Eltern gegenüber ihren Kindern, zu beschreiben. Diese Nominalphrase, ein Determinativkompositum, trägt eine spezifische emotionale Konnotation. Die Entscheidung der Übersetzerin, in der albanischen Übersetzung auf 'Affenliebe' zu verzichten und stattdessen eine neutralere Formulierung ohne emotionale Färbung zu verwenden, deutet darauf hin, dass sie sich der kulturellen Unterschiede in Bezug auf derartige Ausdrücke und ihrer Verwendung bewusst ist. Dieser Ansatz hilft möglicherweise, Missverständnisse oder unpassende Konnotationen in der Zielkultur zu vermeiden, indem er eine sensiblere und kulturspezifisch angemessenere Übersetzung bietet

Meggies Stimme erstickte fast an ihrer hilflosen Wut.' (Tintenherz, S. 86).	E morën me vete! - tha Megi me zë të mbytur nga dëshpërimi. (Zemër si boja, S.71)
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Der Ausdruck 'an einer Sache ersticken' symbolisiert in der deutschen Sprache eine Geste der Hilflosigkeit und Verzweiflung und ist idiomatisch geprägt. Die Entscheidung der Übersetzerin, diese idiomatische Wendung in der albanischen Übersetzung beizubehalten und eine vollständige Entsprechung zum Original zu schaffen, zeugt von ihrer Kompetenz, idiomatische Ausdrücke erfolgreich zu übertragen.

Die deutsche Phrase 'erstickte fast an ihrer hilflosen Wut' wurde von der Übersetzerin als 'me zë të mbytur nga dëshpërimi' ins Albanische übertragen, was wörtlich 'mit erstickter Stimme vor Verzweiflung' bedeutet. Diese albanische Übersetzung fängt sowohl die Bedeutung als auch die emotionale Tiefe der ursprünglichen deutschen Phrase sehr treffend ein. Damit gelingt eine überzeugende Übertragung der hilflosen Wut und Verzweiflung der Hauptfigur ins Albanische, die die emotionale Resonanz des Originaltextes bewahrt.

'(...) und Mo den Auftrag bekam, ein paar wertvolle alte Bücher von Schimmel und Staub zu befreien oder ihnen ein neues Kleid zu schneiden.' (Tintenherz, S. 22)	(...) çdo herë që ndonjë tregtar objektësh antike, ndonjë koleksionist apo ndonjë bibliotekë e ngarkonin të restauronte libra të çmuara, që ai i çlironte nga pluhuri e lagështia dhe i vishte me rroba të reja e luksoze. (Zemër si boja, S.20)
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In metaphorischem Sinne bezieht sich 'neues Kleid' hier auf ein neues Buchcover. Die Entscheidung der Übersetzerin, die Metapher 'neues Kleid' im Albanischen als 'rroba të reja' (dt. 'neue Kleider') im Plural zu verwenden und das Adjektiv 'luxuriös' ('luksoze') hinzuzufügen, stellt eine geschickte sprachliche Anpassung dar. Diese Ergänzung verleiht dem Buchcover zusätzliche Eleganz und hebt so dessen ästhetischen Wert hervor. Diese Übersetzung vermittelt nicht nur die beabsichtigte metaphorische Bedeutung, sondern betont auch die Wertschätzung des Buches. Sie zeigt, wie die Übersetzerin die Sprache kreativ und einfallsreich nutzt, um die Stimmung und Bedeutung des Originaltextes im albanischen Kontext wirkungsvoll zu bewahren.

Es bohrte schmale Krallen in seinen Ärmel, während es Meggie mit glänzend schwarzen Knopfaugen musterte, und als es gähnte, entblößte es nadelspitze Zähne.' (Tintenherz, S. 36)	Mbërthehej pas mëngëve të tij me ktherrat e vogla dhe vëzhgonte Megjin me sytë që ngjasonin me dy kopsa të errëta të shndritshme. Kur hapi gojën i përgjumur, zbuloi një radhë dhëmbësh të mprehtë. (Zemër si boja, S.32)
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Die Übersetzerin hat sich entschieden, die Metapher 'glänzend schwarzen Knopfaugen' durch den Vergleich 'me sytë që i ngjasonin me dy kopsa të errëta të shndritshme' (dt. 'mit Augen, die wie zwei glänzende dunkle Knöpfe aussahen') zu ersetzen. Diese Entscheidung, die Metapher in einen direkten Vergleich umzuwandeln, macht den Text für junge Leser verständlicher und zeigt ihre Sensibilität für die Zielgruppe des Buches. Durch die Ver-

wendung eines Vergleichs wird die Bedeutung für junge Leser klarer und zugänglicher. Es ist wichtig, dass Übersetzer solche Anpassungen vornehmen, um sicherzustellen, dass das Buch für die beabsichtigte Altersgruppe verständlich und ansprechend bleibt.

Die Übersetzung des Ausdrucks ‚nadelspitze Zähne‘ als ‚dhëmbë të mprehtë‘ (dt. ‚scharfe Zähne‘) im Albanischen ist eine treffende und wirkungsvolle Übertragung. Diese Übersetzung fängt die bildhafte Bedeutung der ‚nadelspitzen Zähne‘ aus dem deutschen Originaltext gut ein und vermittelt effektiv das Bild von scharfen oder spitzen Zähnen. Dieses Beispiel illustriert, wie bildliche Sprache und metaphorische Ausdrücke in einer Übersetzung adäquat übertragen werden können. Es zeigt, wie die Übersetzerin die bildliche Qualität des Originaltextes beibehält und dabei die Essenz des Ausdrucks für das albanische Publikum zugänglich macht.

<p>Mo hatte ihr verboten, nachts Kerzen anzuzünden. Er mochte kein Feuer. »Feuer frisst Bücher.« (Tintenherz, S. 10)</p>	<p>Moja ia kishte ndaluar të lexonte nën dritën e qiririt, ndonëse asaj i pëlqente. Atij nuk i pëlqente zjarri. 'Flakët i përpijnë librat'. (Zemër si boja, S.10)</p>
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Das Verb ‚fressen‘ wird im Deutschen üblicherweise in Bezug auf Tiere verwendet und seine Verwendung in anderen Kontexten, wie in der Phrase ‚Feuer frisst Bücher‘, ist metaphorisch. In der Übersetzung ins Albanische als ‚flakët i përpijnë librat‘ (wörtlich ‚Flammen verschlingen die Bücher‘) findet eine Anpassung statt. Das albanische Wort ‚Zjarr‘ steht für ‚Feuer‘, doch die Übersetzerin entscheidet sich für das Synonym ‚flakët‘, also ‚Flammen‘. Diese Wahl ist stilistisch elegant und bildet eine gut passende Wortmetapher, die die Bildlichkeit des deutschen Originaltextes weitgehend beibehält.

Solche stilistischen und lexikalischen Veränderungen in Übersetzungen sind oft erforderlich, um die beabsichtigte Wirkung des Originaltextes in der Zielsprache zu erreichen, insbesondere wenn es um das Berücksichtigen spezifischer kultureller oder sprachlicher Nuancen geht. Im vorliegenden Fall hat die Übersetzerin eine treffende Entscheidung getroffen, die sowohl die Bedeutung als auch die Bildhaftigkeit des Ausdrucks effektiv bewahrt.

<p>Doch schließlich war er fort und nur der Regen trommelte immer noch mit nassen Fingern gegen Meggies Fenster.' (Tintenherz, S. 18)</p>	<p>Sidoqoftë, më në fund u largua dhe jashtë dëgjohej vetëm shiu që nuk pushonte dhe përplasej pas dritareve. (Zemër si boja, S.17)</p>
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Die originelle verbale Metapher ‚Der Regen trommelte immer noch mit nassen Fingern gegen Meggies Fenster‘ wurde in der albanischen Übersetzung zu ‚Shiu trokiste në dritaret e Megit‘ vereinfacht, indem der Ausdruck ‚mit nassen Fingern‘ weggelassen wurde. Dadurch hat die Übersetzerin die Metapher ausgelassen und die Bildhaftigkeit der Aussage neutralisiert. Dies könnte darauf hindeuten, dass sie entweder Schwierigkeiten hatte, eine adäquate bildliche Entsprechung in der Zielsprache zu finden, oder dass sie die Metapher bewusst vermied, um die Klarheit des Textes für albanische Leser zu gewährleisten. Das Entfernen von metaphorischen Ausdrücken in Übersetzungen kann vorkommen, in-

sbesondere wenn die Übersetzerin der Meinung ist, dass diese in der Zielsprache nicht effektiv sind oder die Verständlichkeit für das Zielpublikum beeinträchtigen könnten. In solchen Fällen ist es entscheidend, ein Gleichgewicht zwischen dem Erhalt der bildlichen Sprache des Originals und der Klarheit in der Übersetzung zu finden.

(...), die Schwalbennester unterm Dach, den ausgetrockneten Brunnen, der einen so schwarz angähnte, als reichte er geradewegs bis hinunter ins Herz der Erde.' (Tintenherz, S. 27-28)	[...], foletë e dallëndysheve poshtë çatisë, pusi që po thahej me gojën e tij të madhe të shqyer dhe atë grykën e zezë dhe të thellë që dukej sikur zbriste deri në zemër të tokës. (Zemër si boja, S. 24)
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Die Umwandlung der Metapher 'Brunnen, der einen so schwarz angähnte' in einen ausführlicheren Vergleich 'pusi që po thahej me gojën e tij të madhe të shqyer dhe atë grykën e zezë dhe të thellë që dukej sikur zbriste deri në zemër të tokës' (etwa: 'der vertrocknende Brunnen mit seinem großen aufgerissenen Maul und diesem schwarzen, tiefen Schlund, der zu reichen schien bis ins Herz der Erde') in der albanischen Übersetzung ermöglicht eine klarere Darstellung. Diese Übersetzungsentscheidung kann dazu beitragen, dass die ZIELLESER die Handlung besser nachvollziehen und die bildliche Bedeutung des Originals auf eine ihnen natürlichere Weise erfassen. Die Umwandlung von Metaphern in Vergleiche ist eine gängige Praxis in Übersetzungen, um die intendierte Bedeutung und Atmosphäre des Originaltexts zu bewahren und gleichzeitig die Verständlichkeit und das Leseerlebnis in der Zielsprache zu verbessern.

VERGLEICHE

Die Autorin nutzt Vergleiche effektiv, um sowohl verschiedene Situationen zu beschreiben als auch Charaktere zu charakterisieren. Dabei werden vergleichende Konjunktionen wie 'wie', 'sowie', 'wenn' und 'als ob' eingesetzt. Ein Beispiel hierfür ist der Satz aus 'Tintenherz', Seite 14: 'Manchmal warf Mo sie aufs Bett wie einen Sack Nüsse.' Ein weiteres Beispiel aus derselben Seite zeigt die Anwendung von Vergleichen in der Charakterbeschreibung: 'Sie ließen Staubfingers Gesicht aussehen, als wäre es irgendwann zerbrochen und wieder zusammengesetzt worden.'

In diesen Kontexten werden Charaktere und Ereignisse mit bildhaften Elementen wie Farben, Blumen, Tieren und deren Merkmalen verglichen. Solche Vergleiche dienen dazu, sowohl abstrakte als auch konkrete Eigenschaften der beschriebenen Objekte oder Personen anschaulich zu machen. Diese literarische Technik verleiht dem Text eine lebendige und bildreiche Qualität, die das Verständnis und die Vorstellungskraft des Lesers anregt.

Konkrete Beispiele aus dem Buch: Charaktere und ihre Eigenschaften:

Die Dunkelheit war blass vom Regen und der Fremde war kaum mehr als ein Schatten.' (Tintenherz, S. 10)	Shiu i jepte natës njëfarë zbehtësie të frikshme, prandaj i panjohuri ngjante më tepër me një hije. (Zemër si boja, S.10)
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Die albanische Übersetzung 'i panjohuri ngjante me një hije' (dt. 'der Fremde ähnelte ei-

nem Schatten’) ist eine direkte Übertragung des deutschen Satzes ‘Der Fremde war als ein Schatten’. In diesem Fall wurde die metaphorische Bedeutung des Schattens bewahrt, was die ursprüngliche Intention des Satzes im albanischen Text erfolgreich erhält. Diese wortgetreue Übertragung trägt dazu bei, die bildliche Sprache des Originals zu bewahren und die Atmosphäre der Szene für albanischsprachige Leser eindrucksvoll nachzubilden. Durch die Beibehaltung der Metapher ‘Schatten’ im albanischen Text wird die gleiche Stimmung und Nuance vermittelt, die im deutschen Original vorhanden ist.

<p>Die Bartstoppeln um den schmallippigen Mund waren rötlich wie das Fell der streunenden Katze, der Meggie manchmal ein Schälchen Milch vor der Tür stellte. Auch auf seinen Backen sprossen sie, spärlich wie der erste Bart eines jungen Mannes, (...).(Tintenherz, S. 14</p>	<p>Mjekra shpuese përreth gojës me buzë të holla kishte ngjyrë të kuqe, si qimet e një maceje rrugësh, së cilës ajo ndonjëherë i linte një tas me qumësht në pragun e shtëpisë. I rritej edhe në faqe, e rrallë, si ajo e ndonjë djali të ri. (Zemër si boja, S.13)</p>
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Die Übersetzungen dieser beiden Sätze ins Albanische sind tatsächlich sehr gut gelungen, da sie die metaphorische Bedeutung und den Kontext der ursprünglichen deutschen Sätze gut bewahren. Hier sind einige Kommentare zu den Übersetzungen:

1. In der Übersetzung des Ausdrucks ‘wie das Fell der streunenden Katze’ als ‘si qimet e një maceje rrugësh’ (dt. ‘wie die Haare einer streunenden Katze’) wird die bildhafte Vorstellung des spärlichen Fells einer streunenden Katze gut beibehalten. Die Wahl des albanischen Wortes ‘qimet’ für ‘Haare’ ist treffend, um die Vorstellung von dünnem, eventuell ungepflegtem Fell zu vermitteln. Diese Übersetzung fängt die Nuancen des Originalsatzes effektiv ein und behält gleichzeitig die bildhafte Qualität und die Stimmung des deutschen Textes bei. Die Anpassung ist gelungen, da sie sowohl die Bedeutung als auch die bildliche Vorstellung des Originaltextes für albanischsprachige Leser zugänglich und verständlich macht.

2. Die Übersetzung des Ausdrucks ‘spärlich wie der erste Bart eines jungen Mannes’ als ‘si ajo e ndonjë djali të ri’ (dt. ‘wie das eines jeden kleinen Jungen’) überträgt die Vorstellung eines jungen Mannes mit einem erst sprießenden Bart effektiv ins Albanische. Der Gebrauch des Wortes ‘ndonjë’, was auf Albanisch ‘irgendein’ oder ‘jeder beliebige’ bedeutet, ist eine passende Wahl, um die allgemeine Idee eines jungen Mannes im Anfangsstadium des Bartwuchses zu vermitteln. Diese Übersetzung schafft es, das Bild des Originals treffend wiederzugeben und bleibt dabei sowohl adäquat als auch verständlich für albanischsprachige Leser.

In beiden Fällen wurde die Metaphorik des deutschen Textes erfolgreich in die albanische Übersetzung übertragen. Die Übersetzungen behalten die bildlichen Vorstellungen des Originals bei und machen diese für albanische Leser zugänglich und nachvollziehbar. Dies deutet auf eine sorgfältige und durchdachte Übersetzungsarbeit hin, die die subtilen Nuancen der deutschen Sprache in die albanische Sprache überträgt.

PHRASEOLOGISCHE AUSDRÜCKE

Phraseologismen lassen sich anhand einiger ihrer besonderen Eigenschaften von freien Wort- oder Satzkombinationen unterscheiden. Zu diesen Merkmalen gehören laut Burger (2010) Polylexikalität, Stabilität und Idiomatik. Andere Merkmale der Phraseologie sind Lexikalisierung und Reproduzierbarkeit. Der Roman Tintenherz enthält zahlreiche Phraseologien, jedoch liegt der Fokus im empirischen Teil nur auf zwei Formen, nämlich Zwillingsformeln und Idiomen.

Zwillingsformeln werden nach folgendem Muster gebildet: Zwei Wörter derselben Wortart oder zweimal dasselbe Wort werden mit der Konjunktion und (oder auch mit einer anderen Konjunktion) oder mit einer Präposition zu einer Paarformel verbunden. Die Reihenfolge der Komponenten ist meist festgelegt oder es wird eine Reihenfolge bevorzugt. Die Reihenfolge von Zwillingsformeln mit einzigartigen Komponenten ist vollständig festgelegt.

Zwillingsformeln geben unterschiedliche idiomatische Grade an:

- idiomatisch - gang und gäbe
- teilweise idiomatisch - klipp und klar
- nicht idiomatisch - dick und fett

BEISPIELE AUS DEM BUCH:

Schritt und Tritt

Heute gehe ich allein. Und wenn ich jemanden brauche, der mir auf Schritt und Tritt nachläuft, schaff ich mir einen Hund an.' (Tintenherz, S. 373)	Sot do të shkoj vetëm. Dhe nëse ndonjëherë do të dua dikë që të më ndjekë nga pas, atëherë do të marr një qen. (Zemër si boja, S.308)
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In diesem Fall handelt es sich um eine nominale Zwillingsformel, die als Kombination zweier Endreim-Synonyme beschrieben werden kann. Die Erklärung zur nominellen Zwillingsformel und zur Bedeutungsverstärkung durch die Verdoppelung ist treffend. In der Übersetzung wurde die Struktur der nominellen Zwillingsformel teilweise beibehalten (nga pas dt. hinterrücks), was die Bedeutung und den Stil des Ausgangstextes wiedergibt. Dies ist eine akzeptable Entscheidung, um den Sinngehalt und die Stimmung des deutschen Textes im Albanischen zu bewahren.

viel zu viel

»Das ist doch Unsinn!«, sagte sie ärgerlich. »Du gibst viel zu viel auf das, was dieser Streichholzfräser erzählt.« (Tintenherz, S. 96)	'Gjepura! - ia ktheu e zemëruar. - I beson si shumë fjalët e atij ngrënësit të shkrepëseve.' (Zemër si boja, S.79)
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Die ursprüngliche Phrase stellt eine stilistisch neutrale Doppeladverbialformel im

Deutschen dar, bei der eine Verdoppelung genutzt wird, um die Bedeutung zu verstärken. In der albanischen Übersetzung hat die Übersetzerin diese Verdopplungsform nicht direkt übernommen, doch die Übersetzung wird als vollständig adäquat angesehen, da sie sowohl zum Kontext passt als auch prägnant ist ('si shumë', dt. 'zu sehr'). Obwohl die exakte semantische Struktur nur teilweise erhalten geblieben ist, wird die Bedeutung des Ausgangstextes dennoch effektiv wiedergegeben. Es haben sich zwar Änderungen auf lexikalischer und grammatikalischer Ebene ergeben (beispielsweise in der Verwendung von Präpositionen und Ortsadverbien), doch diese Anpassungen sind im Rahmen der Übersetzung sinnvoll und tragen dazu bei, den Sinn und Stil des deutschen Originaltextes im Albanischen angemessen zu reflektieren.

dicht an dicht

'Meggie strich mit der Hand über die dicht an dicht stehenden Buchrücken!' (Tintenherz, S. 66)	Megi kaloi dorën në shpinën e veshjes së shqepur
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In diesem Fall liegt eine adverbiale Zwillingformel vor, die in stilistisch neutraler Weise verwendet wird. Die im deutschen Originaltext verwendete Verkürzung trägt zur Bedeutungsentensivierung bei. Die albanische Übersetzung entspricht jedoch nicht dem deutschen Original; der Ausdruck ist in seiner Bedeutung nicht äquivalent. Es ist entscheidend, dass Übersetzungen den Sinn und die Atmosphäre des Ausgangstextes so genau wie möglich wiedergeben. In diesem speziellen Fall scheint eine Überarbeitung der Übersetzung notwendig zu sein, um die Bedeutung und die stilistischen Merkmale der adverbialen Zwillingformel adäquater zu erfassen und zu übertragen. Die Beachtung solcher Feinheiten ist wichtig, um die Integrität und die stilistische Absicht des Originaltextes in der Zielsprache zu erhalten und gleichzeitig ein authentisches Leseerlebnis zu bieten.

IDIOMEN

Diese Konstruktionen bestehen aus mindestens zwei Wörtern. Je nach Grad der Idiomatik werden sie in vollständige, partielle oder nicht idiomatische Ausdrücke unterteilt. Ihre Gesamtbedeutung kann nicht von den Bestandteilen unterschieden werden. Ihre Bedeutung ist nicht wörtlich, sondern im übertragenen Sinne zu verstehen. Das Buch enthält hauptsächlich verbale Idiome.

mit allen Wassern gewaschen sein

Sie [Bücher] waren ihr Zuhause in der Fremde – vertraute Stimmen, Freunde, die sich nie mit ihr stritten, kluge, mächtige Freude, verwegen und mit allen Wassern der Welt gewaschen, weit gereist, abenteuererprobt. (Tintenherz, S. 24)	Ato (librat) ishin shtëpiza e saj, miq me të cilët nuk grindej asnjëherë, miq që din shumë gjëra, miq të pushtetshëm, të guximshëm, me përvojë, njohës të hollë të botës, dhe që i bëjnë ballë çdo të papriturë. (Zemër si boja, S.22)
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Die Übersetzerin hat in diesem Fall die Bedeutung des deutschen Ausdrucks 'mit allen Wassern der Welt gewaschen' durch Paraphrasieren 'njohës të hollë të botës' (dt. subtile Kenner der Welt) wiedergegeben, anstatt eine direkte Äquivalenz zu verwenden. Dadurch

geht die spezifische Formulierung des verbalen Idioms verloren. Es ist wichtig zu beachten, dass solche idiomatischen Ausdrücke oft schwer direkt in andere Sprachen zu übersetzen sind, da sie kulturell geprägt sind und keine wörtliche Entsprechung haben. In diesem Fall scheint die albanische Übersetzung die idiomatische Natur des deutschen Ausdrucks nicht beizubehalten, aber sie versucht, die Bedeutung auf andere Weise zu vermitteln. Dies kann in bestimmten Kontexten akzeptabel sein, sofern die Bedeutung klar bleibt.

jmdn. in die Finger bekommen/kriegen

'Was soll ich Capricorns Männer erzählen, wenn sie mich in die Finger bekommen?' (Tintenherz, S. 31)	Po të më kapin çfarë duhet ti them Bricjapit? (Zemër si boja, S.28)
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Die Übersetzerin hat die bildhafte Natur des deutschen Ausdrucks 'mit allen Wassern der Welt gewaschen' durch eine neutrale Paraphrasierung in der albanischen Übersetzung ersetzt: 'Po të më kapin,' (dt. Wenn sie mich erwischen). Es gibt keine Äquivalenz. Eine bessere Übersetzung dieses Ausdrucks wäre: bie në dorë të dikujt (jmdm in die Hände fallen), was auch die Bildhaftigkeit des Ausdrucks in der deutschen Sprache ausdrückt. In diesem Fall scheint die ursprüngliche Übersetzung nicht die bildliche Bedeutung angemessen beibehalten zu haben.

mit jmdm. unter einer Decke stecken

'Du hast es gestohlen!', schrie Meggie, außer sich vor Wut. 'Und du hast diese Männer geholt, ja, genau. Du und dieser Capricorn, ihr steckt unter einer Decke! [...]'(Tintenherz,S .95)	Ti e ke vjedhur! – e akuzoi vajza e tërbuar nga inati – Dhe dërgove të thërrisnin ata burrat; po ishe ti! Ti dhe Bricjapi jeni marrë vesh me njëri tjetrin. (Zemër si boja, S.78)
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In diesem Fall handelt es sich um eine äquivalente Übersetzung, die die bildliche Bedeutung des Ausdrucks 'ihr steckt unter einer Decke' gut bewahrt. Der albanische Ausdruck 'jeni marrë vesh me njëri tjetrin' (dt. ihr seid miteinander klargekommen) erfasst die Idee, dass zwei Personen in einer vertraulichen und möglicherweise geheimen Zusammenarbeit stehen, auf ähnliche Weise wie der deutsche Ausdruck. Die Bildlichkeit und Bedeutung bleiben in beiden Sprachen erhalten.

FAZIT

Die Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur ist eine anspruchsvolle Aufgabe, die von einer Reihe von Faktoren beeinflusst wird. Dazu gehören der kulturelle Kontext, die sprachlichen Besonderheiten, die kreative Interpretation durch den Übersetzer sowie eine Vielzahl an angewandten Übersetzungsstrategien.

Kinderromane zeichnen sich oft durch einen einfachen Satzbau und Ausdrücke aus, die an das Lesealter und das Sprachniveau der jungen Zielgruppe angepasst sind. Dabei ist es wichtig, dass die Sprache - auch wenn sie künstlerische Stilmittel wie Metaphern, Vergleiche und phraseologische Ausdrücke verwendet - klar und für junge Leser verständlich bleibt. Junge Leser können unter Umständen Schwierigkeiten haben, komplexe stilistische

Elemente zu verstehen. Daher sollte die Sprache in Kinderbüchern nicht nur altersgerecht, sondern auch so gestaltet sein, dass sie die Fantasie anregt, ohne die jungen Leser zu überfordern. Es ist ein Balanceakt, der sowohl die sprachliche Einfachheit als auch die poetische Qualität des Originaltextes berücksichtigen muss.

In der Analyse der Übersetzungen wurde festgestellt, dass die künstlerische Bildsprache der Autorin im Originalwerk nicht immer vollständig durch die angewendeten Übersetzungsstrategien für Kinderliteratur bewahrt wurde. Dieses Phänomen war insbesondere in Bezug auf Metaphern, Vergleiche, Phraseologien und Redewendungen zu beobachten. Die Übersetzerin wendete verschiedene Strategien an, darunter:

- vollständige Äquivalenz
- teilweise Äquivalenz
- Umwandlung von Metaphern in Vergleiche
- synonyme Anpassung
- völliger Mangel an Äquivalenz
- Erweiterung von Metaphern um synonyme und andere Elemente
- Anpassung des Ausdrucks
- neutrale Paraphrasen
- äquivalente Übersetzung und kontextuelle Anpassung, u.a.

Die Übersetzung der Namen erfolgte unter Berücksichtigung der strukturellen und metaphorischen Aspekte des Romans, wobei gleichzeitig Anpassungen an die kulturelle Welt vorgenommen wurden, in die das Werk übertragen wurde.

Die detaillierte Analyse ausgewählter Beispiele aus der Kinderliteratur führt zu einigen wesentlichen Erkenntnissen:

1. Die Übersetzung von Kinderliteratur ist eine anspruchsvolle Aufgabe, die tiefgreifendes Verständnis sowohl für die Eigenheiten der Originalsprache als auch für die der Zielsprache erfordert.
2. Die Übertragung künstlerischer Ausdrucksformen, wie Phraseologien, Redewendungen und Charakternamen, hängt nicht nur von der Fähigkeit des Übersetzers ab, semantische Bedeutungen, emotionale Nuancen und ästhetische Werte präzise zu bewahren. Sie ist auch abhängig von Faktoren wie der Altersgruppe der Leser, der kulturellen Herkunft des Originalwerks und den Eigenheiten der Kultur, in die das Werk übersetzt wird.
3. Der Übersetzer muss das Werk einerseits originalgetreu wiedergeben, andererseits aber auch das Lesevergnügen und die Magie des Buches für die Zielkultur erhalten. Dabei besteht stets das Risiko, dass die Übersetzung zu einer neuen Version des Werks wird, die stark von der Zielsprache und -kultur beeinflusst ist.

Diese Erkenntnisse unterstreichen die Bedeutung einer sorgfältigen und kreativen Übersetzungsarbeit, die über die reine Wiedergabe von Worten hinausgeht und die Kultur, die Leser und den Geist des Originalwerks berücksichtigt.

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(Zugriffsdatum: 22.01.2023)

ANHANG

Tabelle der Kapitalüberschriften

<i>Titel original</i>	<i>Titel in der albanischen Sprache</i>
Ein Fremder in der Nacht	Nje i huaj nëpër nate
Geheimnisse	Te fshehta
Nach Süden	Udhetimi drejt Jugut
Ein Haus voller Bücher	Nje shtëpi e mbushur me libra
Nur ein Bild	Vetem nje figure
Feuer und Sterne	Yje dhe shkëndija
Was die Nacht verbirgt	Tisi i erret i nates
Allein	E vetme
Ein böser Tausch	Nje shkëmbim i rrezikshem
Die Höhle des Löwen	Strofka e Ujkut
Feigling	Frikacak!
Und weiter nach Süden	Drejt detit
Capricorns Dorf	Fshati i Bricjapit
Der erfüllte Auftrag	Mision i përmbushur

Glück und Unglück	Fat në fatkeqesi
Damals	Njëherë e një kohe

WEB SERIES AS AN INSTRUMENT TO INITIATE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

The article is about the importance of the organisation of dialogue in social networks in general and the dialogue of cultures and the intercultural dialogue in particular.

The author's research is based on the concept of intercultural dialogue as well as on the transcultural model of understanding modern culture and the world developed by philosopher W. Welsch.

The article conducts a case study using Deutsche Welle's web project Meet the Germans as an example of a web series that promotes dialogue and intercultural understanding in the online sphere.

The author explores social media methods and techniques, principles of online community building, which are used to successfully develop a brand in social media, create a thriving online community and actively engage the audience in intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: *Intercultural Dialogue, Transculturality, Web Series, Social Media Interaction, Social Media Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

The main trends in modern society include globalisation, digitisation, and mediatisation. In addition, modern social processes are characterised by new social connections and relations that involve cultural diversity, expanding contacts between social groups, ethnic communities, and individuals. In this context, today, recognition and respect for another culture have become important social issues. The concepts of 'multicultural society,' 'transculturality,' 'intercultural dialogue,' and the dichotomies of 'media and dialogue,' and 'media and culture,' are serious reasons to think about the mission and functions of the media in the modern world. In particular, considering the potential of social networks to provoke dialogue and preserve harmony in transformed societies. Social media plays a massive role in human interaction. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim note the phenomenon of using the Internet to connect people from different countries (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2013). Transculturality is a new concept of understanding the existence of the world. Global society can be viewed as a space of a diversity of free individuals rather than of fixed groups and cultures. It is an alternative to the clash of civilizations and a hope for lasting peace (Epstein, 2009).

GOALS AND RESEARCH METHODS

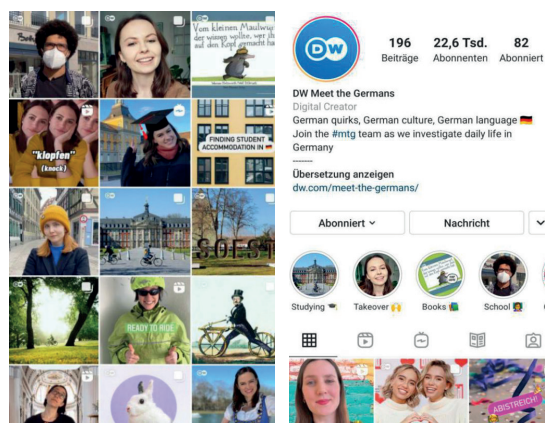
This paper focuses on the importance of organising dialogue on social networks, in particular about intercultural dialogue. The author investigates the characteristics and techniques of web series, based on the example of Deutsche Welle's Meet the Germans web series, which helps engage audiences in dialogue and create a thriving online community. The research method consists of empirical data analysis of the web series and an inter-

view with Rachel Stewart, its editor and host. On March 25, 2021, the author conducted a telephone interview with Rachel Stewart. The author also explores the social media strategies of this web series. The goal of the research is to determine the criteria for a successful format and concept of a web series, as well as web project strategies that provoke dialogue, including intercultural dialogue on Instagram. The content of the Meet the Germans page on Instagram was analysed and the main tasks of the analysis were:

- to study the characteristics of the audience (country, gender, age),
- to identify the main and popular types of posts
- to find out which posts have received more likes and have acquired more comments
- to reveal what means are used to engage the audience in dialogue, particularly an
- intercultural dialogue
- to explore content strategy, and
- to research cross-media tools.

What is the web project Meet the Germans?

Meet the Germans is a DW web series about German cultural idiosyncrasies. In 2016, Rachel Stewart moved to Germany from the UK. Rachel has been working on the project as a host for several years. She has also been involved in production from beginning to end. She writes the scripts, plans the shoots, as well as edits the videos. She thinks that it is really satisfying to see a sequence that she planned in her imagination come to life in the edit suite. A small team works together on research, scouting locations, filming, promoting the videos on social media, and adapting the content from English to German. The series in the English language is published on the Deutsche Welle website, on the Euromaxx page on YouTube and on Facebook, and on some of DW's other pages (DW News, DW Culture, DW Travel) on Facebook and Twitter.



Figs. 1 & 2 show Meet the Germans Instagram page

The web page Meet the Germans appeared on Instagram in June 2020. According to Stewart, they moved to Instagram because it has so many different tools available to use. Currently, the webpage has a nearly equal subscription rate between women and men. Of course, this statistic is prone to fluctuation. As of 26 March 2021, 53.2 % of the subscribers were representatives of the male audience.

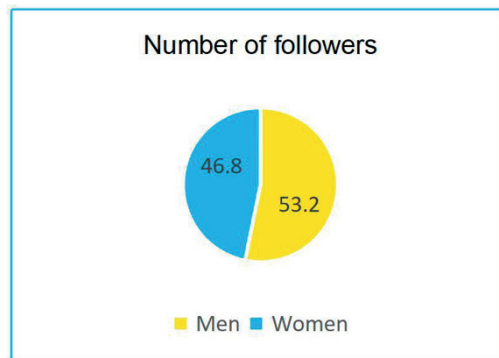


Fig.3. Diagram 1: Audience by gender factor

The audience of the Instagram page consists mostly of residents of Germany (29.1%), the United States (10.9%), and Turkey (6.2%). Of course, the category 'residents of Germany' can include representatives of different nationalities who permanently or temporarily reside or are located in the territory of Germany. For instance, some of them may be international students who came to Germany, such as the author. Approximately half of the audience by age factor is between 25 and 34 years old. About 20% of the subscribers are between the ages of 35 and 44.

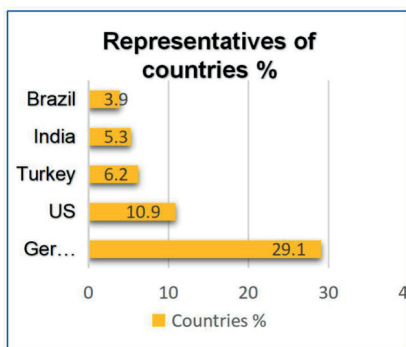


Fig. 4. Graph 1: Audience: countries

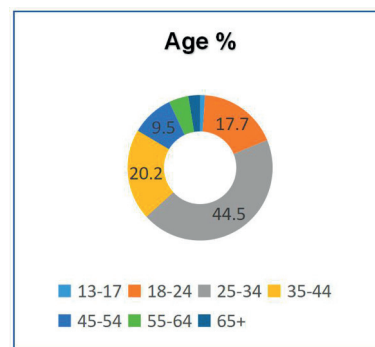


Fig. 5. Diagram 2: Audience: age

According to Rachel, from July 2020 to March 2021, the follower count on the page increased from 10,000 in December 2020 to 21,000.

ABOUT THE FORMAT OF THE WEB PROJECT MEET THE GERMANS

'Our main principle is, first of all, the format. So, most of our content should be somewhat "evergreen" as it should be the content that still is relevant and useful next week or next month,' stressed Rachel in the interview. Periodically, Meet the Germans provides updates, particularly in response to follower requests last year for more information on how people are coping with the pandemic's impact. Regarding the rest of the content, it looks like a mixed spread. 'We really want to be a community,' said Rachel. For the Meet the Germans team, the voices and opinions of the audience are not secondary. The role of the creators of the Instagram account of Meet the Germans is not so much to be journalists reporting

facts, but to allow followers to speak and to be a part of the communication process. 'It's actually a conversation that we want to have with people. So, we wanted to give people space.' The analysis of the Instagram posts was carried out for three months using the fan page Karma Website. In addition, the author considered that it was necessary to make a detailed analysis of the content for one month and collected statistics on her own. From 6 January 2021 to 4 April 2021, the photo with the caption It's time to talk about stereotypes had the highest number of likes. It was published on 31 March 2021 to promote the video episode on YouTube. One sure thing in spring in Germany (1,613) is the second most-liked post. It consists of a photo carousel about cherry blossoms in Germany. The carousel Meet Bahar and Serkan from Turkey is in third place. The post explains that they moved from Istanbul to Munich for Bahar's Master's studies: 'They now live and work all the way up north in Hamburg, but they're still particularly fond of Bavaria's breathtaking nature.'

<i>Date</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Likes</i>
03/31/21	It's time to talk about stereotypes	1827
03/18/21	One sure thing of spring in Germany?	1613
01/21/21	Meet Bahar and Serkan from Turkey	1437

The video English words that Germans use incorrectly (791 likes), published on 9 February 2021, rounds out the top ten posts. The least number of likes is attributed to the post with a call to the audience to build own Denglish words. The photo in the post shows locksmith tools.

It is noteworthy that the post about stereotypes also garnered a greater number of comments from the audience of the Instagram page (138 comments). The post with the photo and the question What is a quark? was also very much discussed and it had 83 comments. The post is a promotion of the story of the day at that time..






DATE	PICTURE	POST	LIKES	COMMENTS
Mar 31, 2021		It's time to talk about stereotypes For an episode...	1,827	138
Jan 8, 2021		The real question on everyone's lips is: What even "is" " ...	1,121	93
Jan 29, 2021		A vegetarian turned luxury meat businesswoman? You bet! ...	460	86
Feb 9, 2021		English words the Germans use wrongly ♀ (Part 1) Rach...	791	57
Mar 5, 2021		Taking over today is Richa, who recently moved to Germany...	546	50

Fig. 7. Top posts by number of comments

The carousel about a vegetarian turned luxury meat businesswoman also caused an active discussion with 86 comments. This is a story about Songül Ballikaya, co-founder of a luxury meat and culinary events company in Bonn that runs a high-end butcher shop. Just two comments from the carousel post with photos and statistics is dedicated to International Women's Day on 8 March 2021.

According to the criterion ‘interaction reached person per post’, the top posts are as follows: a guide to Easter days and rules, about German stereotypes, and about the animator and comedian Vicco von Büllow.

According to the criterion ‘format’, the video about the order in Germany is among the top videos, the photo about stereotypes is in first place among the photos, while the carousel with photos about spring in Germany is in first place among the carousels, accordingly.

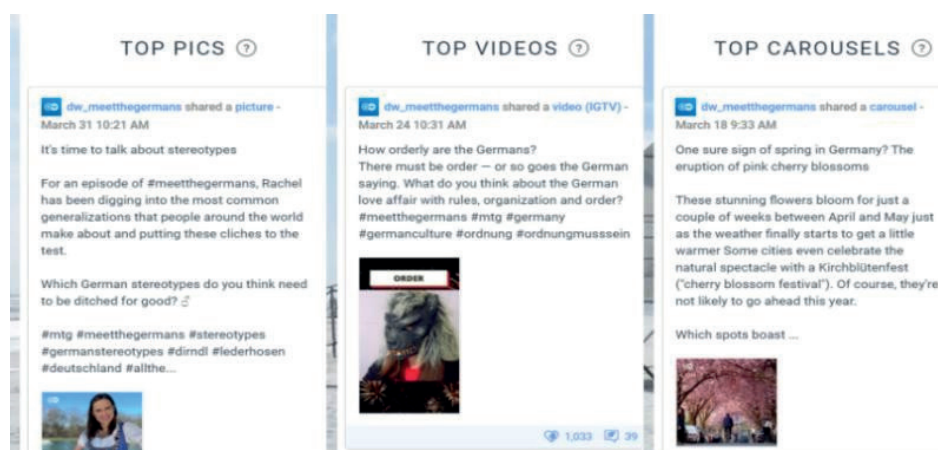


Fig. 8. Top pics, videos and photo carousels

Publications are published on different days of the week, but more often on Thursdays.

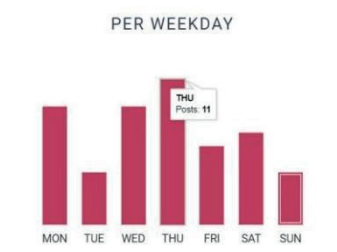


Fig. 9. Days of the publications

To thoroughly analyse the content, the author examined the posts from March 2021. Analysis revealed the topic and what format was used. The statistics were collected on 10 April 2021. The editors published seventeen posts during this period: four videos, ten carousel photos, and two photos. One post about an Italian video editor who left noisy London and moved to a German village combines video interviews and photos. Posts are published at intervals of every three days or more frequently.

The above (see Figure 7) noted that the video about German stereotypes has more likes during the three months studied. Additionally, within one month, the post about stereotypes led in terms of ‘the number of likes and comments’ on the Instagram page, garnering 1,827 likes and 138 comments. According to the number of likes, the post about cherry blossoms (1,614) in German cities is in second place, and the post about German castles (1,428) is in the third.

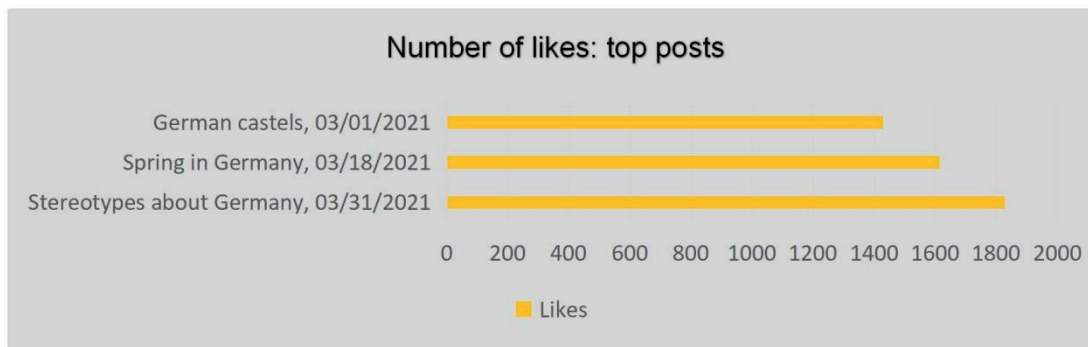


Fig. 10. Graph 2: Top posts by number of likes from 03.01.2021 to 03.31.2021

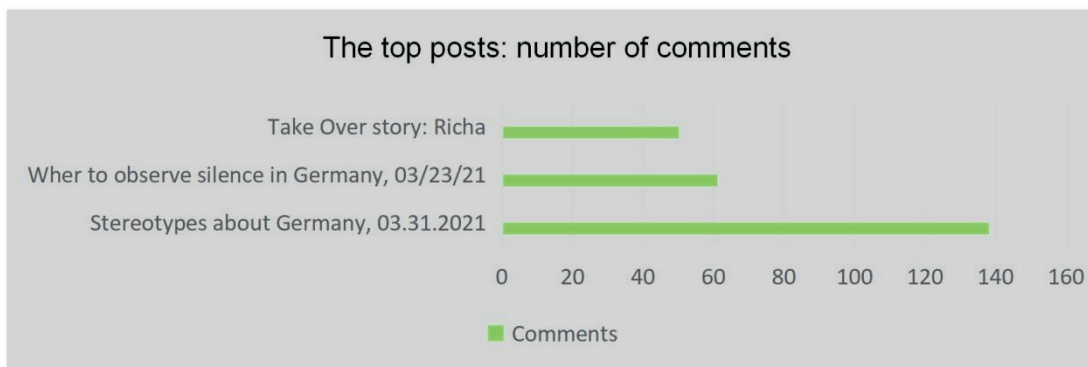


Fig. 11. Graph 3: Top posts by number of comments from 01.03.2021 to 31.03.2021

However, the situation is slightly different for the top posts in terms of ‘number of comments’. As with the number of likes, the post about stereotypes in Germany is still the top post in terms of comments. However, the second most commented-on post is a question about how to keep quiet in Germany, and the third most commented-on post is the story of Rishi, who moved to Germany from India with her husband.

It is possible to say that stories about people is a very popular genre on the Instagram page. Four stories were published in the explored period. Among them are two Take Over stories about people moving to Germany. The other two stories were made in connection with International Women’s Day. They are about what it means to be a transgender woman and about five feminists, respectively.

Analysis of the content strategy and social media techniques of the Meet the Germans Instagram page to promote intercultural dialogue

How does Meet the Germans engage the audience in dialogue, including intercultural dialogue, on Instagram? Firstly, the editors of Meet the Germans encourage the audience to dialogue by using the linguistic means of the text. Posts mainly have a direct appeal to the audience and a question. So, for example, the first post on Instagram asks the audience ‘What do you want to know about the German people and their culture?’



Figs. 12 &13 Instagram page of Meet the Germans

And in the post about silence in Germany, Rachel asks, ‘Whether to observe silence or whether you are very loud for Germany?’. The answers revolve around an entire discussion between representatives of different countries, both living in Germany and abroad. Subscribers share their experiences and have the opportunity to compare the situation in Germany, their home country, or to other countries.

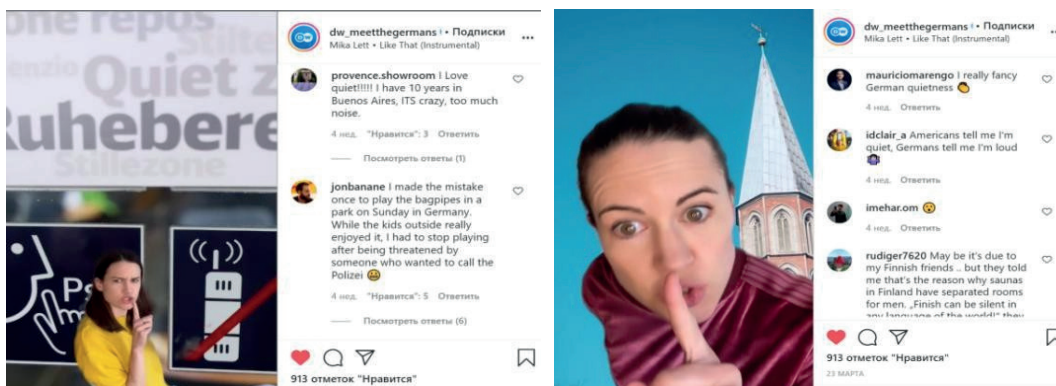


Fig. 14 & 15. The dialogues on the Instagram page of Meet the Germans

Thus, the posts with questions provoke dialogue, particularly intercultural dialogue.

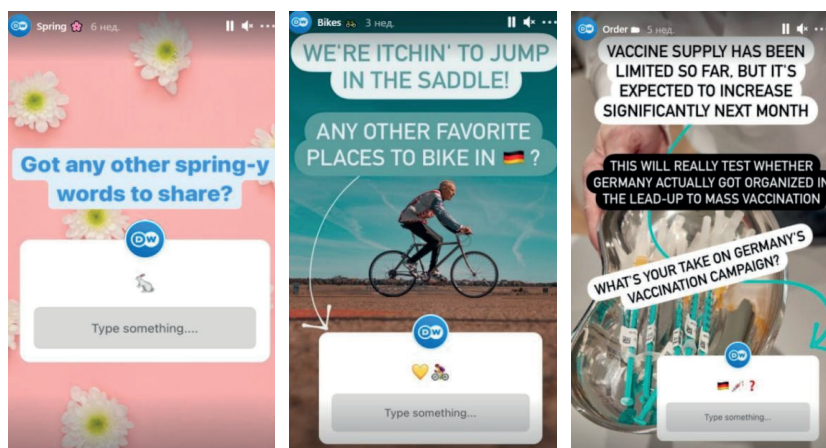


Fig. 16. Instagram page of Meet the Germans: quizzes

Secondly, the page very often includes stories that have a question box. As a rule, open-ended questions are used.

Thirdly, there are also the small interactive elements like quizzes and polls where the team of Meet the Germans can see emerging reactions from followers. Quizzes and surveys are conducted very often – about 3 to 5 times a week. For example, the last quiz about studying in Germany asks, ‘How many students are there in German? What specialists are in demand in the country, etc.?’

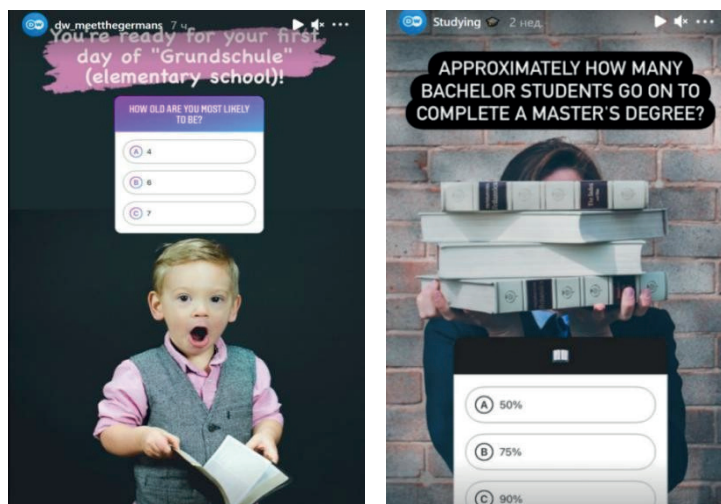
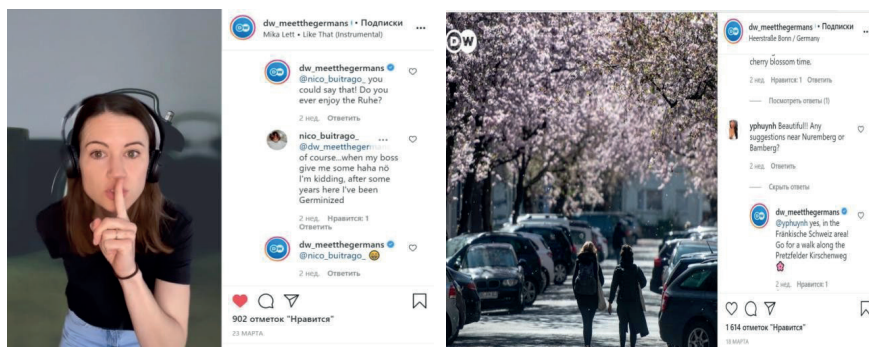


Fig. 17 & 18. Polls on the Instagram page of Meet the Germans

The most important thing is that quizzes and surveys on the page are related to the topics of the released episodes on YouTube. Thus, it shows that the leadership of the project Meet the Germans use transmedia tools. Also, the editors sometimes collect questions in advance to ask an expert. For example, at the moment, the editors are working on an episode about employment in Germany. They posted a story on Instagram where followers could submit their questions, and the editors will select the most interesting ones to ask the expert.

Stewart believes that using such methods actually helps subscribers feel connected to the content and express their reactions: ‘The most important thing really is engagement, being in touch with our followers, being in a conversation.’”

Also, Meet the Germans is highly active and gives a lot of feedback on the comments of the audience. Not a single comment is ignored by the team. Stewart often responds to comments and questions from Instagram subscribers.



Figs. 19 & 20. Instagram page of Meet the Germans: feedback.

Feedback can be a question, advice, as well as a ‘smiley face’ or a ‘heart’ emoticon. The audience is thrilled that Rachel answers them herself. Direct communication helps to build trust and tight relationships, and shows that each member of the community is important.

‘Take over story’ is another form of interaction with the audience. A follower can tell their unique story about their love for Germany. For three months, from January to the end of March 2021, two stories were published. In fact, the subscriber has the opportunity to be a partner of Meet the Germans, not just a spectator and a reader.



Figs. 21 & 22. Instagram page of “Meet the Germans”: stories.

Moreover, as the study shows, such stories are in great demand among the audience. The dialogue occurs between the narrator and a community member and between members. By responding to a post of a story, an online community member can share their experience.

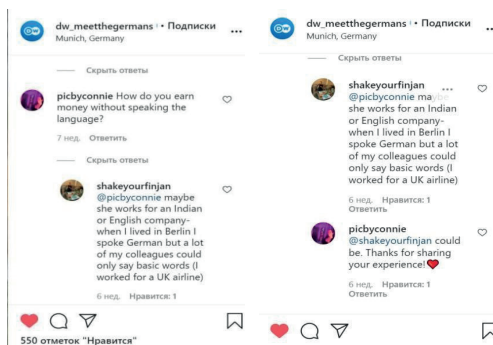


Fig. 23. Two images show dialogues.

For example, a person with the username @picbyconnie from Germany questioned how it is possible to work in Germany without knowing the German language. She received a helpful and detailed response from another community member, an English woman with the username @shakeyourfinjan. In addition, several representatives of the web community can participate in the conversation, and the dialogue can develop into a polylogue.

The editors have created a special questionnaire for those who want to share their story of integration in Germany on the Instagram page of the Meet Germans project. They send this questionnaire to those who are interested and then select interesting stories.

It is impossible not to mention the creation of a friendly atmosphere in the online community. Throughout the entire existence of the web page, there has been no swearing and insults among the subscribers. At the same time, Meet the Germans does not have any special with regard to participation in the community. It is evidenced in Fig. 24 that the community members support and thank each other for their help, advice, and answers to their questions. Stewart is pleased with the atmosphere that has been created.

It seems essential that the Meet the Germans team was introduced in the first posts.

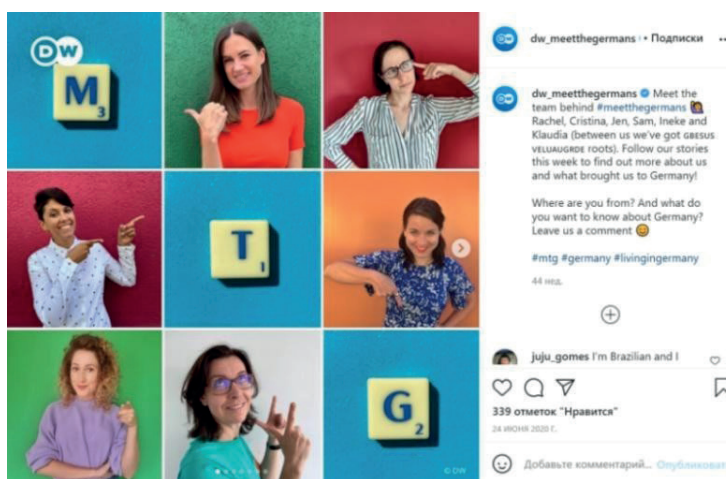


Fig. 24. Instagram page of "Meet the Germans": team presentation.

The audience understands who creates and moderates the web page for them and with whom they communicate.

In terms of 2021, Stewart wants to continue increasing the number of followers. However, in the interview, she mentioned that it was not a primary goal at the moment. Of course, it is necessary to ensure that Meet the Germans increases the number of subscribers; otherwise, Stewart will soon realize that there is a problem. Nevertheless, the editor definitely wants to improve overall engagement.

CONCLUSION

- Based on the statistical analysis of the Meet the Germans Instagram page and the interview with the editor, the author concludes that:
- The number of likes and comments depends on the topic rather than the form of the post (video, photo, carousel).
- Posts are published regularly, not just on the day of the episode launch on YouTube. Content is actively published throughout the week, with a higher frequency on Thursdays.
- During the study period, the post featuring a photo about German stereotypes received the most likes and comments.
- Some posts serve as promotions for the episodes published on YouTube.
- Photo carousels are the most common post format.
- There is significant interaction with followers, and the audience actively engages with videos, photos, and messages.
- Various linguistic and audiovisual methods are used to engage the audience in dialogue, particularly intercultural dialogue. Almost every post includes a caption with a question.
- The communication style is friendly.
- “Question box”, quizzes, surveys, and ‘Take over story’ are frequently used tools for engaging the audience.
- The online community is actively moderated.
- The project team actively participates in communication and provides personal feedback.
- There is strong support for the subscribers’ values and their love for German culture. The community maintains a friendly and trustworthy atmosphere.
- The number of subscribers is continually growing.

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STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON MOBILITY EXPERIENCES: REFLECTIONS, ATTITUDES AND VARIABLES

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents research and findings from a study on educational mobility in an Irish HEI (Higher Education Institution) and provides insights into the experience of both outgoing and incoming Erasmus+ students. The aim of the research was to deepen understanding of students' mobility experiences and practices, and to contextualize findings against broader national and international strategic developments around mobility and language learning.

As international collaboration and study abroad at both European and international levels increases and intensifies, this paper explores the experiences and narratives of mobility participants through a multi-thematic prism. The research draws on a wide literature but concentrates on four key thematic foci: learners' pre-departure motivations to engage in educational mobility, narratives and reflections on language use and development, intercultural competence & socialization and peer network experiences, while abroad. The paper draws on a range of scholarly literature to support both the research approach and the interpretation of data, and offers insights into study abroad and mobility experiences as a context for second language learning more generally. However, the presentation/paper will also provide avenues for discussion and exploration by framing findings against specific EUt+ objectives and aspirations around language competence & multilingualism and student mobility and against ongoing developments within EUt+ and cross-partner plans and actions to develop and improve harmonized programmes, buddy programmes etc. The research thus contributes to developments in the direction of 'feeling at home on every campus'.

Findings presented in the paper are drawn primarily from qualitative analysis of student narratives and reflections. The paper also provides some insight into the wider strategic context through consideration of policy frameworks both nationally (Irish) and at European level that continue to highlight the social, political and cultural value of multilingual competence. The paper considers discourses around the enhanced employability and graduate attributes that a mobility experience may endow. Presentation and discussion of findings are thus contextualized against objectives and aspirations around multilingualism and plurilingualism within the Erasmus+ program, within Europe more broadly, and within the European University of Technology (EUt+) Alliance, in particular. [347]

Student: 'Multilingualism is a gift [] I have so much respect for it, and hope that I will continue to learn languages throughout my life'.

INTRODUCTION

This research explores student experiences of mobility - periods of learning or work abroad as part of a program of study - from a variety of perspectives and deepens understanding of key variables. Although many variables feature in scholarly literature, key questions in this research focused on four key themes. 1) Motivation - and factors identified as positive enablers in mobility experiences 2) Language - Experiences, attitudes and approaches to language learning before and during mobility 3) Intercultural Competence - character-

istics and features such as curiosity, resilience and adaptability, and 4) Social networks – strategies for and impacts of network development during mobility experiences. The research findings, discussion and recommendations draw on HEI-specific insights for ongoing reflection around Erasmus+ objectives, around multilingualism and plurilingualism, and around efforts to enhance and deepen collaboration across the European HE sector.

Keywords: educational mobility, language awareness, intercultural competence, socialization

STRATEGIC CONTEXTS

From a European, national and institutional strategic perspective, mobility for staff and students continues to be a key tenet of Internationalisation (Knight, 2012). The distinctive role of universities in preserving a European way of life and in addressing climate and societal challenges are clearly articulated in a Commission Communication on 18 January 2022 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Universities as key actors are tasked with extending the ‘cumulative asset of education systems and research networks’ and with ‘promoting the European model in line with EU’s interests and values’¹. Adapting to changing skills needs, embedding inclusion and diversity, and delivering on societal goals underpin the rationale for European Strategic action on universities and intensified collaboration in the HE sector.

The European University of Technology Alliance, EUt+, represents one such strand of strategic collaboration. EUt+ articulates an overarching commitment to ‘European Values empowering Technology’ to new frontiers and to a new education model to achieve openness, inclusion and cross-boundary goals. Student mobility is a key pillar in EUt+ as is commitment to leveraging linguistic and cultural diversity for social and sustainable innovation. Multilingualism and plurilingualism are recognised as ‘powerful symbols of the European Union’s aspiration to be united in diversity’; foreign language skills are recognised for how they both ‘equip people better for the labour market and make the most of available opportunities’; repertoires of linguistic and cultural knowledge are thus to be sustained and harnessed in flexible and creative ways.²

Irish national policy frameworks also set out ambitious targets for mobility in HE, for increased access to mobility for more diverse cohorts and for language learning in HE. In Irish Educated, Globally Connected; An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016 – 2020, authors note that ‘the mobility of students, researchers and staff of HEIs is a crucial element of a modern, globally-focused internationalisation strategy, at national and institutional level. Outbound mobility of students and staff is explicitly linked with the ‘intercultural experience’ which this provides (2016:33). The strategy highlighted European Commission mobility targets for 20% of those graduating in 2020. In 2011/12, only 10.14% of

1 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>. “University” is used to refer to the broader tertiary education sector, encompassing research universities, university colleges & universities of applied sciences and vocational & higher arts institutions.

2 <https://www.univ-tech.eu/manifesto-and-identity>; <https://www.univ-tech.eu/mission-statement>

NFQ Level 8 (honours) graduates had studied or worked abroad.³ A 2019 Higher Education Authority report suggests this figure had not changed substantially.⁴ Irish Educated, Globally Connected also highlights the additional support required to encourage outbound mobility for disadvantaged students, noting the need to consider the particular needs of less affluent students, to mitigate potential risks around international mobility becoming a further competitive advantage for the more affluent, and risks around social selectivity with regard to international student mobility (van Damme, 2001: 421 in 2016:33).

Languages Connect – Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026, Ireland’s long-awaited strategy on foreign languages, set out targets both in relation to the number of students learning a foreign language at Higher Education institutions (HEIs) and to the number participating in Erasmus+ programmes. The aim is to increase the number of students in higher education studying a foreign language, in any capacity, to 20% and to increase the number of participants in Erasmus+ by 50%. These are significant targets.

TU Dublin is Ireland’s first Technological University, with approx. 29,000 students and 8000 graduating per year. In 2019/2020 TU Dublin had 655 outgoing Erasmus+ students, its capacity for outward mobility, however, under the Erasmus Charter and its institutional partnerships extends to over 900 students. In 20/21 there were 207 completed Erasmus-supported outgoing mobilities (COVID impacts notwithstanding). Available data for 21/22 indicates approx. 300 Erasmus+-supported mobilities (study and traineeships)⁵. The Technological Universities Act 2018, the Act to provide for the establishment of technological universities as well as their functions and governance, also references the provision of mobility opportunities for staff and students.⁶

An evolving TU Dublin Education Model highlights flexible, inclusive and international perspectives – these also may be realised in increased mobility opportunities.⁷ The transformative potential of a sojourn abroad is widely acknowledged for its development of ‘more positive views of other cultures [] increased world-mindedness and greater intercultural awareness’ (Pederson, 2009 in Schartner, 2016:403). For its impact on wider university communities, mobility - as one of many internationalisation activities - has strategic importance for how universities ‘strive to prepare their students for work and life in a globalized world’ and ‘enable all students, whether internationally mobile or not, to achieve a global perspective’ (Schartner, 2016:403).

3 NFQ National Framework of Qualifications. <https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications>

4 EUROSTUDENT SURVEY VII. REPORT ON THE SOCIAL AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN IRELAND 2019. Higher Education Authority

5 TU Dublin Institutional Profile 2021. <https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/quality-assurance-education-training/reviews>. Figures for 20/21 (74 traineeships, 123 study mobilities) and 21/22 (216 study mobilities, 113 traineeships still ongoing) are provisional

6 Functions of a Technological University include provision of opportunity for staff and students to ‘(i) teach, learn or conduct research at institutions that provide higher education outside the State, or to obtain relevant work experience outside the State and (ii) of institutions that provide higher education outside the State to teach, learn or conduct research at the technological university’. <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/3/section/9/enacted/en/html#sec9>

7 <https://www.tudublin.ie/intranet/education-model/>

EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY: CONSIDERATIONS & VARIABLES IN SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

Multiple factors impact on routes to mobility for students and a broad literature exists on barriers and enablers. Institutional and programme flexibility, peer and parental influences (Gonzalez et al., 2011), socio-economic factors (Kubota, 2016; Van Mol, 2013, King & Raghuram, 2013) and language competence (Cojocaru, 2018), for example, are all significant variables in student decisions around mobility.

Much has been written about the value of mobility programmes and the Erasmus experience, in particular. Erasmus+ is acknowledged for its 'determinedly regional, intra-European' dimension that reflects a 'deliberate decision taken at the supranational level of EU Policy' (Devlin, 2020:5). Considerable attention is given to the impacts on language learning and language awareness within a plurilinguistic Europe (Devlin, 2020; Jung, 2020; Cojocaru, 2018). The potential to develop intercultural competence and enhance global citizenship attributes are also preeminent (Beaven & Borghetti, 2016; Schartner, 2016).

Erasmus+ mobility has been linked with competitive advantage for participants. The programme has always had ambitious aims to enhance employability and develop internationally competent graduates. Benefits for graduates extend beyond linguistic development and early career success; there are longer-term positive impacts on academic and career perspectives, increased openness to international employment and enhanced lifetime earnings (Engel, 2010; Iriundo, 2019). The possibility of participation in Erasmus+ experiences now extends into further education and vocational training, and there are programmes for staff training & development in several sectors (Devlin, 2020).

Risks and challenges exist. Covid-19 and the shift to online learning presented new questions about risk management and sustainability, and persuasive examples of arguments of online and blended alternatives. Some recent research highlights more critical appraisal of study-abroad programmes (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou, 2012). Questions about affordability, equity and student participation, the growing competition from shorter and less expensive study visits, internationalised curricula 'at home' (Leask, 2014), the 'Erasmus bubble' and student motivation to engage and learn rather than merely travel and enjoy (Earls, 2018) – all present concerns. Nor can it be assumed that student educational mobility automatically leads to the acquisition of much-vaunted intercultural and global attributes. While optimistic, Vande Berg et al (2012) concede that although 'many students [] learn abroad in ways they will not if they stay at home' they confess to being 'uneasy about the extent to which most students [] are learning and developing (2012, xii). This American perspective contrasts, however, with a more widely-shared and generally positive and supportive European stance, where the success of Erasmus+ - 'unique in its scope compared to the organization of international mobility in many other regions' - is generally acknowledged. (Devlin, 2020: 5).⁸

8 When the Erasmus programme was launched in 1987, there were approx.. 3,300 participants from the Higher Education sector. In the 2014 to 2018 period two million Higher Education students and staff had participated in training, study or work placement abroad. More recently, the Erasmus+ programme has prioritised extending participation beyond EU borders and widening participation as well as targeting digital transformation, inclusion & diversity and green transition. The 2021 to 2027 Erasmus + programme has an budget of about 26 billion, double that of the previous period. In terms of participation, scope and funding, this is strong evidence of support, success and growth in the Erasmus + programme,

KEY THEMES IN CURRENT RESEARCH – PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Language competence continues to be one of the most significant variables both enabling and impeding mobility. Online Language Support (OLS), the EU tool designed to assist Erasmus+ participants improve their knowledge of the language for work or study abroad acknowledges that the ‘lack of language skills remains one of the main barriers to the participation in European education, training and mobility opportunities’. Re-launched in July 2022, OLS contributes to a specific objective of the Erasmus+ programme, which is to promote language learning and linguistic diversity and serves as a tool used in very different ways across HEIs to capture data on mobility and language proficiency development’.

⁹From a language learning and development perspective, the benefits of mobility extend beyond second language competence. Jung highlights additional benefits for development of participants’ communicative empathy, the experience of multilingual and plurilingual spaces as sites for exploration of linguistic repertoires, and enhanced competence and re-evaluation of relationship with mother tongue (including English); ‘Erasmus+ brings the geographical, geopolitical, generational, socio-economic, educational and cultural limitations of English to the fore (Jung, 2020:8). Jung (2020) also notes the often misplaced anxieties of students with regard to language competence for Erasmus+, and some absence of clear communication in many HEIs about mobility opportunities in countries where there is little expectation that students speak the local language, such as in Eastern European countries.

Data on foreign language learning in Ireland and in Ireland’s HE sector provides relevant context. Although approximately 70% of school leavers complete second-level education with a (Leaving Certificate) qualification in a foreign language, only 4% of university students study a foreign language at third level (Bruen, 2019). Fewer Irish adults (20%) can conduct a conversation in a foreign language relative to the European average (35%). Ireland has one of the lowest proportions of students studying two foreign languages at secondary school. In 2002, the European Council recommended at least two foreign languages at primary level and required secondary schools to teach a second language as part of their curriculum. European Commission commitments and a Council Resolution on a European Strategy for Multilingualism (2008/C 320/01) followed in 2008.¹⁰ Successive reports and studies from both industry and academia indicate that a lack of foreign language capacity in Ireland is negatively impacting the country’s social, cultural and economic development (Bruen, 2019; Earls, 2018).

Links between language capacity and mobility are clear. Foreign languages are essential for people who would like to ‘move, work, and study across the EU (and beyond)’ []. Learning a foreign language is an important factor for participation in society, rendering ‘other

9 <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/resources-and-tools/online-language-support>

10 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign_language_learning_statistics. Ireland, followed only by Portugal (5.8%) and Greece (1%) recorded the third lowest share of students in upper secondary education, learning two or more foreign languages (12.5%) relative to a European average of 60% in 2018, although Ireland had more than doubled this percentage from a very low starting point in 2013.

countries and their cultures accessible' and strengthening intercultural understanding'. Gallagher (2016)¹¹ points to contradictions, however, in the EU approach to multilingual competence and its 'Mother Tongue + Two' aspirations. She cites the increasing hegemony of English at European institutional level, inconsistency in the status afforded mother tongues, bilingualism and minority languages, and complaints around excessive spending on translation and interpreting (at approx. €1 billion per year, it equates to about €2 per citizen per year). Other trends across Europe, increasingly in programme provision through English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education, does mean more availability and choice for non-anglophone students to pursue education at home - but in a foreign language that is predominantly English (Mossman, 2016).¹² Such trends strengthen the imperative for Irish HEIs to address foreign language learning. To support a truly multilingual Europe, we must, as Gallagher (2016) argues, 'ensure that the other languages of Europe survive the Anglophone tide and continue to play a part in the European project' (2016, p.25). Failure to preserve and actively promote multilingualism has implications for economic development and democratic citizenship. The greatest risk, however, may be 'that the predominance of one language gives way to a *pensée unique*, one *Weltanschauung*' and a view of the world against which we must guard (Gallagher, 2016: 27).

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE & MOBILITY

The transformative experience of 'living and studying in a different country is a powerful tool for developing intercultural competence' (Schartner, 2016:403). Interest in the link between Study Abroad and interculturality has been increasing and is now shared well beyond Europe' (Beaven & Borghetti, 2016).

Although a powerful instrument for developing intercultural competencies, Schartner (2016) and Dunne (2011) caution against too uncritical an assumption that educational mobility automatically results in enhanced intercultural competence. They argue the need for greater terminological clarity, more empirical and longitudinal research to explore the interpretation and conceptualization of intercultural competence by policymakers, institutions and students, and approaches to its assessment as part of internationalising policy and practice. Intercultural competence is neither structured, systematic nor rule-governed. It is challenging to teach, mediate and measure, primarily because it concerns 'values, skills, attitudes and behaviours that are rooted in cultural patterns, social structures and individual experiences' (Witte & Harden, 2021:1) and requires 'multiple disciplinary, cultural and political perspectives' (Philburn, 2020:51). There are well-regarded mentalistic or 'mindset' conceptions that focus on the role of mediating cultural patterns, linguistic conceptualisation, social structures and habits (Witte & Harden, 2021). In efforts to increase awareness and develop intercultural competence there is a need for dynamic subjectivity and thematic exploration of identity & belonging as negotiation, diversity,

11 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/142/language-policy>; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Foreign_language_learning_statistics

12 Approximately 8,100 programmes across non-anglophone EU countries were identified in 2014. The Netherlands, followed by Germany rank highest in terms of their offering of EMI programmes. Data from 2015 suggested that 93% of German universities and of German technical universities offer programmes delivered through English (Mossman, 2016, p108)

relocation, mobility, interaction and situated action (Van der Wende, 1996; Dunne, 2011).

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Mobility is explored in several studies from a participant identity and socialization perspective (Kinging, 2013; Murphy le Jeune, 2002; Coleman, 2013; 2015). Perceptions of self and experiences of home/host relationships, and of being and belonging, for example, have shifted interest towards ‘whole people and whole lives’ and to recognition that ‘both contextual and individual variation contribute, together with social networks, to the essential fluidity and complexity of the study abroad experience’ (Coleman, 2013, p. 17).

Social networks are pivotal as they have a significant impact on students’ adaptation processes. Schloe et al (2022) in their adoption of homophily, a sociological approach to social networks that explains their tendency to be homogenous, and Coleman’s research on ‘social circles’ (2015) both highlight international students’ tendency, initially, to form groups with students similar – primarily in language and culture – to themselves. Time (duration), supports, programme design and university infrastructures as well as individual and group attitudes and behaviours all contribute to the formation of more extensive networks. The ‘places and spaces’ explored and inhabited by mobility participants also influence their ability to go beyond home connections and the ‘Erasmus bubble’ of friendship with other Erasmus students (Van Mol & Michielsen, 2014). The ability to establish social connections with different groups of students, and to engage with language speakers and users of the foreign language in a variety of contexts and domains, is ‘significantly enabled or restrained by the specific social spaces exchange students move in’ (Schloe et al, 2022: 144). Such social spaces – be they classrooms, accommodation, nightlife or clubs & societies – even if shared, do not in themselves guarantee meaningful interaction between hosts and exchange students. The broader experience as a student in a HE environment is no exception. Opportunities for learning and growth that arise in informal contexts and how language competence is experienced as an enabler in this (Schloe et al, 2022; Van Mol & Michielsen 2014.) is one of the findings from this research, and discussed below.

METHODOLOGY

The research is rooted in a constructivist paradigm and subscribes to a view that ‘people actively and agentically seek out, select and construct their own views, worlds and learning [] in socio-cultural contexts and interactions’ (Cohen et al, 2018:23). A post-structuralist perspective also recognises that ‘individual agency has prominence [] people are diverse and different [] and may carry contradictions and tensions within themselves (Cohen et al., 2018:25).

The research explores the narrated and lived experiences of learners engaging in mobility. The main research question about the nature of the student experience is approached through a focus on four sub-questions relating to the following:

- 1) *learner motivation and preparedness pre-departure*

- 2) *language awareness and language competence development during mobility*
- 3) *development of intercultural competence during mobility*
- 4) *socialisation and network development experiences during mobility.*

The research adhered to all appropriate ethical guidelines for reflexivity, participant consent, privacy, confidentiality, protection of data and sensitivity to relations of power and influence, and was approved by TU Dublin Ethics Committee.

A mixed methods approach was adopted to gather quantitative and qualitative data. Data gathered for Dataset 1 (online survey) and Dataset II (semi-structured interviews) sought to explore students' 'whole lives' (Coleman, 2015) as well as 'the views of self the participants hold and the meanings the participants accord to phenomena' (Cohen et al., 2018:25). Sampling was purposive to enable the exploration of a targeted group with particular characteristics – namely, participants who had undertaken Erasmus+ mobility in the previous two years (Cohen et al., 2018: 219). The findings presented are primarily drawn from survey data.

For Dataset 1, an online survey was undertaken to elicit information about student's programme, duration & type of mobility experience as well as information about the four key areas of interest - motivation, language learning, intercultural competence and social networks. Data was gathered from a 20-item online survey to which 30 participants responded. Survey questions, aligned with the four themes and drawing on review of relevant literature, elicited participants' perspectives on their educational and mobility experiences, practices and situated actions. The survey included a range of question types, closed and multiple choice questions for quantitative data on program, duration and prior language learning. The survey also included multiple choice, ranking and open questions to produce a panoramic view and some qualitative data upon which the discussion focuses. Follow-up semi-structured interviews were also undertaken, and along with survey data presented a sufficiently 'real example of real people in real situations' to foster a more in-depth understanding of contexts and complexities (Yin, 2011) rather than of isolated variables.

The data presents a view of the world that is not divisible from the language or the participants constructing it. It provides textured, nuanced, in-depth and complex insights into participant identities and experiences. Giving voice to the participants themselves facilitates a bottom-up perspective that both converges with and challenges the more pervasive discourses in official and policy discourses. Biographies of participants unfold to illuminate what is most salient for participant identity and mobility experience. The qualitative data thus presented is an effort to understand the uniqueness of particular settings: what it means 'for participants to be in those settings, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are & what the world looks like in that particular setting' (Merriam, 2002: 5).

Thematic coding was adopted as an appropriately sound and flexible tool for qualitative analysis enabling thick description and identification of prevalent and salient patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Dominant themes and patterns were identified for their alignment with the four areas of interest: motivation, language, intercultural competence and social networks.

RESEARCH FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

PARTICIPANTS

All thirty survey participants had completed an Erasmus+ mobility in the previous two years. Most (70%) were students or graduates of three programmes in TU Dublin requiring a full-year mobility in year three of a four-year programme, Four were incoming Erasmus+ students, for whom mobility was an option. For 89% of all respondents, their time abroad had lasted 6-9 months or longer. For 11% it was between 4 and 6 months, due in part to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions in the 20/21 academic year. Only 13% of incoming Erasmus students were completing mobility in a second or fourth year of a 4-year programme. The programme stage did not feature prominently in the data; however, the duration of stay did, primarily for its influence on social network formation.

The survey covered a wide range of mobility types: just over half had completed full-year study placements, a fifth had combined work and study, and a third had completed an English Language assistantship.¹³

MOTIVATION

In questions relating to motivation, interest and preparedness for mobility, the survey showed strong support for required mobilities as a rationale for programme choice. 97-100% of respondents cited enjoyment and interest in culture, and 90% indicated that employability variables were very important or important to them. All respondents who chose an optional mobility experience indicated that mobility was 'essential' in the world of work.

Macro- meso- and micro-level variables, such as HE structures, policy and market conditions; institutional factors and individual variables all influence student trajectories and pathways through higher education (Xiaujie, 2021), and will also impact mobility choices and experiences. Family and peer influences were considered for this research. Here, respondents' families, friends and fellow TU Dublin students have strikingly little impact on pre-departure thinking. For 70% they were only somewhat important or not important at all.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES

When asked to indicate which language learning experiences prior to mobility had been most significant for them in preparing for mobility, the majority, 22 of the 30 respondents, indicated language learning in university (12) and language learning at 2nd level (10). Eight respondents listed language use in private, family or other study, work or educational settings. Impacts or knowledge transfer from formal learning (classes) in a third foreign

¹³ This is an Irish Department of Education scheme supporting undergraduate students & graduates to work in 2nd-level schools abroad where they assist teachers in English language instruction for up to 12 hours per week.

language in university was not considered. Several participants, however, also cited shorter-term mobilities, school exchanges and their own multilingual experiences and interests, as well as friendships with speakers of other languages as key enablers and motivators that positively impacted preparedness for mobility: I grew up speaking multiple languages and living in different countries [] this made the Erasmus experience less daunting for me; Language learning has always (indirectly) benefitted me throughout life.

For language learning during mobility, only 47% listed formal university tuition as the most significant, 33% indicated self-directed learning and 7% indicated private tuition. It is striking that such a high proportion indicated autonomy, individual initiative and motivation to learn, with less than half ranking university classes as the most significant factor. This is mirrored in findings from the next item, where 60% of participants ranked social interaction and informal conversation outside of the classroom, followed by events and activities for/with Erasmus+ and host students activities as most beneficial and providing most satisfaction. Self-directed learning and language learning through tourist/visitor-type activities were ranked in 3rd and 4th place.

In linked open questions, several respondents identified the variety of skills acquired in different settings and mobility types. English Language Assistant participants were most likely to explicitly link their roles and experiences with their language learning. Findings for these participants suggest a stronger awareness of autonomy, socialisation and domain-specific use as significant factors for participants' language learning experiences. Research also highlights the value of pedagogical interventions and mentoring support to develop students' abilities to form friendships and navigate cultural differences, as well as how to choose and optimize meaningful interactions for language development (Bruna & Goethals, 2020). Interaction, sharing and knowledge exchange between hosts and Erasmus students were included by respondents as the most significant and satisfying learning experiences; they are referenced as enablers and opportunities to improve vocabulary; to gain more confidence, to help and force interaction (sic) in the foreign language. Such encounters are described by participants as beneficial, enhancing their ability for normal and casual conversation, as ways to develop personal relationships, for 'living through' the foreign language, for deeper understanding and a more natural sense of language use - interactions with other learners are ways to learn faster.

LANGUAGE AWARENESS DURING MOBILITY

When asked to indicate attitudes toward language learning & use during mobility, a high percentage of participants indicated strong agreement/agreement with statements that were positive about respondents' language development. They also indicated increased confidence, enhanced awareness of language learning strategies, greater curiosity and appreciation of the language practices of others.

In open questions, most participants focused on their own skill development, but a small number alluded to the skills, practices and usage observed in others. Such observations reflect a view that language learning experiences cannot be disassociated from learning about cultural practices, and that knowledge and competence in other languages can in-

crease awareness and empathy with different cultural values and mindsets.

Findings here revealed increased awareness around learning strategies, and the benefits of exposure to other language users in multilingual and plurilingual contexts. Responses indicated increased linguistic sensitivity and cultural awareness. These are reflected in research findings that point to valuable language-related benefits that go far beyond that of enhanced (foreign) language competence (Jung, 2020). Some responses suggested a degree of translanguaging by participants, i.e. an ability to affirm and leverage diverse language practices – both their own and others’ – to build up language repertoires as resources for their own learning (Rajendram (2021).

Opportunity for language interaction with native speakers or proficient users is clearly recognized by respondents for the value it provides for language development. Such interactions in another language, however, are also recognized for the way in which they contribute to learning more broadly. Students describe these interactions as follows: an indirect way of getting feedback and direction, learning by doing, as opportunity for regular practice, enabling us to learn in a different way, for making sense of different things, a way of finding similarities and patterns that make it easier to learn and retain.

Responses about language learning and language development showed recognition of lifelong and life-relevant aspects; language learning is a lifelong experience for me, the more I developed my language skills the more I realised I still had to learn; Students should think long-term, [] they can plant the seeds now for a future in the host country. Respondents demonstrated awareness of language and cultural context: language skills would be irrelevant without my Erasmus experience; time in the host country is absolutely crucial to understanding both the culture and how the language is used in everyday life.

Plurilingual awareness is also evident in respondents’ statements: I noticed that people growing up with multiple languages seem to have a much better grasp of languages; Most Europeans speak many languages and aren’t as afraid to use their language skills, even if they aren’t perfect; Confidence comes more naturally to people who grew up speaking multiple languages; Allowing use of several languages develops skills in switching between languages rapidly; Gaps in language knowledge can be resolved by looking at other languages you know; You can develop problem-solving skills and the ability to think outside the box to find solutions; Multilingualism is a gift [] I have so much respect for it, and hope that I will continue to learn languages throughout my life.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Participant responses to questions about the development of intercultural competence show a broad understanding of affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects, and of shifts in knowledge, skills and attitudes. Findings suggest more critical reflective approaches to culture and the language being studied, and readiness to suspend judgment and reflect more on the values and presuppositions in students’ cultural practices (Byram et al., 2002).

Findings indicate that curiosity and greater openness to reflect on other behaviours char-

acterize most participants' interpretation of their intercultural development. Indicative responses: I am better able to adapt to different people: it's about not wearing your own bias; you can put your own lens aside and be more impartial; different way of talking about things; I had to pick up different ways to look at things really quickly. Participant observations indicate increased awareness: Flemish and Walloons have to constantly adapt to each other. It was very interesting just to try understand how they live their lives, like they're constantly intercultural; In Germany, although a European country, there are pretty big cultural differences [] in how people interact with each other (sic)

In describing what they might include as intercultural competence development, respondents also listed how they had managed emotional responses and the strategies they had employed to navigate ambiguity, change and (dis)comfort: You have to go and just do things; you just have to be flexible and get used to the new normality; at the beginning, it's like you're on a steep road, and after that it's all sliding down; it's about learning to respect and go that new distance.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Questions about social networks highlighted high degrees of commitment and desire to interact and make friends in the host culture, with 57% and 33% respectively confirming it was very important or important to them. However, 37% of respondents found this difficult, and for approx. 30% of respondents, interactions with home university contacts and friends dominated. Findings suggest a strong awareness of the value of networks and friendships with hosts, but some knowledge, skill and confidence gaps and deficiencies in the realization of those aspirations and hopes.

Open questions to explore participants' interpretation of what 'successful' and 'effective' networking meant for them indicated very nuanced reflection. Participants differ in their description of social network development, for some it is challenging; energy-consuming or exhausting, for others, it is rewarding, inspiring or makes them 'happy'. Dominant discourse threads in the data highlighted a framing of friendships and connections as enduring, authentic and enabling for mutual learning and enrichment.

Enduring qualities are articulated in respondents' statements about making tons of memories; crossing boundaries of mistrust; connections for life; long-lasting friendships; remaining in touch and regular reunions. Authenticity is articulated in the description of friends and friendships as people with whom I connected and could experience things in my Erasmus city; actual and real connections (personal or professional) in different languages. Authentic connection is not forced - it is organic and allows you to be yourself. Shared and mutual enrichment is articulated by respondents in statements such as the following: being informed about cultural differences; being more aware of other people's experiences; to exchange, help and teach each other [] about language or culture; mixing with people of different backgrounds; to develop networks of locals from the area [] with whom to speak as little English as possible.

A question eliciting participants' recommendations for other students provides further

insights into participants' views of social networks and friendships. Several highlighted concerns and gave recommendations around proficiency, access to established groups (including through the use of social media/technology) and limited time. Several respondents also highlighted shared accommodation as a way to extend and develop networks. The positive impacts of shared housing are well documented, but not necessarily well managed for or by students on mobility. 'Unintended segregation' seriously limits the possibilities of 'establishing meaningful contact with host populations' and opportunity for interaction (Schoe et. al., 2022: 152).

Recommendations for students engaging in mobility include the following: don't be afraid to approach students; introduce yourself first, build trust; don't be offended if people speak English & just ask if you can switch; do as many courses as you can where you can only speak the foreign language; to realise people will not make fun of you for your language skills - no-one really cares. Accessing groups is encouraged through advice to keep an open mind, be willing to try new things; accept initial difficulties as it gets much easier; make the most of your colleagues; be open to different environments as this helps greatly in making friends. Recommendations to maximize the limited time that may be expressed in advice to Dive right in; do not wait and think you'll be less embarrassed or scared about new experiences; do not always say no; start off with an open mindset and reach out to others with different backgrounds or languages.

Although not a specific aim in this research, findings from this research indicate that COVID primarily impacted participants' opportunities for language practice by limiting their capacity to maintain and develop relationships, including with those at home.¹⁴

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey findings - in response to key questions about 1) Motivation 2) Language experience 3) Intercultural Competence and 4) Social networks – indicate how participants' agency and voice can elucidate aspects of the lived experiences of mobility and shed light on the contexts and conditions that make mobility possible and desirable. Murphy Lejeune (2002:41) suggested that institutional, official and statistical data can obscure individual voices and called for more nuanced, personalized accounts of experiences. These qualitative insights can more effectively frame mobility as a 'personal project' or adventure and as a distinctive learning process. (Pearson-Evans, 2002:42)¹⁵

14 COVID-19 was not a specific aim in this research. However, an open question captured impacts that participants considered relevant. Findings indicate that COVID primarily impacted participants' perceived experience of lost opportunity for language practice, and relationships, including with those at home. Travelling home or having visitors from home was a challenge; online delivery and restrictions curtailed new friendships and desired foreign language practice.

15 Much larger longitudinal surveys such as The Erasmus+ Higher Education IMPACT Study 2019, are highly recommended. Between 2014 and 2018, two million students and staff in higher education undertook a learning, training or teaching period abroad with the new Erasmus+ programme. The objective of the study was to assess the impact of Erasmus+ mobilities on staff, students and higher education institutions. It was based on almost 77,000 survey responses from these groups. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/94d-97f5c-7ae2-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1>

Findings from this research highlight the welcome opportunity to engage, interact and learn from and with others for language and intercultural development, sometimes with greater intensity and impact relative to experiences at home. Mobility certainly adds ‘new layers’ to student perceptions of otherness (Van Mol, 2013 in Devlin, 2020, p.7). Participants are empowered, and demonstrate new knowledge through their extended social, relational and interactional opportunities while abroad.

‘Unintended segregation’ (Schoe et al., 2022) in the social and learning spaces occupied by exchange and ‘local’ students, and in institutional provision of formal learning, is a factor. Findings here point to a need for ongoing reflection and action to enhance experience. Modules and learning offered only to international students may ‘prove unchallenging or irrelevant’ and adversely impact social network formation and decelerate academic progress (Courtois, 2017:5). Such considerations will be important for EUt+ and the increased mobility it envisages.

In addition to the research on educational mobility, there is also recognition, for example, in research on inter-comprehension approaches (Guimarães et al., 2019) on collaborative online learning projects and on efforts to internationalise at home, that language skill development is complex and uneven. In the latter, however, there is often more explicit accommodation of participants’ concerns and (sometimes unfulfilled) expectations around proficiency development, and focus on linguistic awareness and experience of linguistic diversity as tools towards multiculturalism.

The competitive advantage that a mobility experience affords is well-articulated in policy; it features less prominently in responses here that address students’ motivations and rationale for engaging in mobility experiences. While 90% of respondents indicate agreement with a ‘desire to develop a skillset and enhance profile’ as a motivating factor, in a question about whether they would recommend mobility, only one-third chose ‘essential for graduates and the world in which they will work today’; 72%, however, recommended mobility because ‘it provides many benefits and enhances language skills’. The knowledge and experience acquired through mobility is thus less framed by these participants as the ‘tangible asset, or commodity belonging to an individual [] competing on the market against the knowledge and skill sets of other’ (Holborrow, 2015, p.16) but more convincingly, for the added benefits for plurilingual awareness, linguistic citizenship and learning defined more broadly. Respondents participating in mobility experiences ‘exercise agency and participation through the use of language [] and for transformative purposes’ (Stroud, 2018: 4). Such broader benefits and transformative potential may prove more useful, more appealing and more effective for HEIs seeking to increase participation in (outward) mobility, as they can nuance the more dominant employability discourses of policy documents. For students on programmes in a wide range of disciplines, and in the future for those EUt+ students whose primary focus will be disciplinary but who will also engage in language and cultural learning, these benefits should also be highlighted.

Findings here converge with those of Jung (2020) in presenting mobility as a gateway to a ‘unique multi- and plurilingual space’ where participants ‘explore their whole linguistic repertoires as well as new languages’ and experience opportunity to code-switch, translanguaging and realize the limitations of English as a lingua franca (Jung, 2020:8). Language

competence is a priority in policy and a distinguishing feature of European networks of education. Enhanced opportunities for language learning could dovetail more effectively with strategic efforts to internationalise and increase mobility if HEI's addressed language learning opportunities more ambitiously. To enhance the mobility envisaged across EUt+ universities, language learning must be considered as central in efforts to encourage, support and facilitate students. Elite multilingualism commodifies language and narrows learning to a 'quest for asset enhancement' particularly in dominant languages such as English (de Costa, 2019:454). Institutional thinking and practice around language learning is crucial. Countering monolingualism and English language hegemony in efforts to develop plurilingual skillsets and intercultural competent graduates requires exposure to and recognition of the value of diverse linguistic practices. In other words, language learning and language competence development has to go beyond linguistic entrepreneurship and strategic exploitation of language-related resources to just enhance worth and competitiveness (Da Costa et al, 2021). The transformative, reflective and intercultural attributes, such as some of those presented here, are arguably more valuable..

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Research here on 'whole life' experiences focused primarily on self-reported attitudes and experiences. Consideration of programme/formal learning requirements were beyond the scope of the study; satisfaction, support and success only featured if included by participants in reflections on mobility experiences. Timing of survey, student workload, survey fatigue and participant/researcher distance may also have impacted data. Useful future directions for gathering data would be to embed the survey in structured pre- during- and post-mobility events. A broader and more diverse cohort to include students from a wider range of programmes, and with more varied learning and language experiences such as those on EUt+ programmes would provide for further rich data.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research insights may be useful for HEI planning & communication around language and mobility, and in realizing and achieving policy objectives for outward mobility as part of internationalization strategies. Bruen suggests that metrics, such as the Higher Education Framework Systems Performance Framework 2018-2020 in the Irish context, may have more impact than more aspirational strategy discourse and recommends that management within HEIs 'develop an awareness of the targets set by Languages Connect, and of the need to meet at least some of those targets to secure performance-related government funding (2019, p. 11).

University Alliances such as EUt+ and the evolution of the European Degree, provide new opportunities to address strategic objectives around language learning and mobility. Research presented on experiences of language learning & development, intercultural competence and social networks, and description and interpretation of qualitative data from this exploration of mobility 'within its real-world context' (Yin, 2011: 5) may thus offer insights for consideration by policymakers and practitioners and by decision-makers & pro-

gramme designers adopting a critical stance who generally seek to do more than ‘merely understand situations and phenomena’ – namely the experience of mobility - but to change them’ (Cohen et al., 2018:51).

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BECOMING A LANGUAGE TEACHER: PERSPECTIVES OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS FROM TUCN UNDERGOING INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Due to the demand for highly competent foreign language users in a globalised world, English language teachers are expected to acquire, develop, and perform a wide range of content knowledge and teaching strategies in their own educational contexts. Thus, the main purpose of the pre-service teacher training process is to prepare student teachers to perform successfully in their future professions. This case study aims to highlight the opinions of pre-service language teachers in the Faculty of Humanities, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, regarding their teaching knowledge and skills, encouraging them to reflect upon their own professional development. The results are collected and interpreted based upon an online questionnaire filled in by student teachers of English that used the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) during their pre-service teaching training module.

Keywords: *pre-service language teacher, teaching English as a foreign language, teaching attributes, effective teaching*

Teacher training and professional development are considered essential mechanisms for enhancing teachers' content knowledge and developing their teaching practices in order to teach to high standards (Cohen and Hill, 2001). It is generally acknowledged that in the specialist literature related to teacher professional growth, a variety of views on the methodology, structure, and philosophical perspectives of different approaches to teacher training and the role of teachers in the educational process coexist. The dynamic approach provides teachers with the opportunity to identify their improvement needs and makes use of the available knowledge base in order to develop their action plans for the purpose of improving their teaching skills (Creemers et al., 2013). Teachers are expected to continuously develop and improve their action plans on the basis of the information collected through formative evaluation as well as types of behaviour that need to be developed and associated with learning outcomes. It has been stated (Creemers et al., 2013) that teacher training and professional development should not be concerned with the development of isolated teaching skills, but with different types of teacher behaviour that address specific groupings of teacher factors. Monitoring the implementation of teacher action plans in classroom settings is an essential part. Critical reflection and collaboration with peers are important elements in all aspects of learning and throughout the improvement process. Besides their physical or virtual setting, or pedagogic function, classrooms could be considered 'social environments' (Tudor, 2001: 104); therefore, language lessons might be defined as social events based upon social relationships and social interaction. The beliefs and expectations of parents, institutional managers and governmental agencies beyond the classroom and the relationships between the participants in the classroom, such as teachers and learners, determine classroom practices and behaviour. The roles that teachers and learners perform in class and how teachers manage classrooms will vary according to their beliefs and their teaching context. Consequently, language teaching and learning implies 'a dynamic process whereby teachers and students attempt to negotiate their classroom behaviours' (Tudor, 2001: 207). Teachers become active participants in the design of classroom realities, and they need 'to be aware of the unique contribution which each individual brings to the learning situation' (Tudor, 2001: 17). One of the main responsibilities of a teacher is 'to foster good relationships with the groups ... [of students] so

that they work together cooperatively in a spirit of friendliness and harmonious creativity' (Harmer, 2007: 107). Furthermore, effective teaching depends on teachers 'being able to tune in to the meaning which language learning has for their students both as individuals and as members of a learning group' (Tudor, 2001:35). Thus, diversity and complexity are fundamental elements of language classrooms (Tudor, 2001). According to Stronge, J et al. (2004), quality indicators or input variables such as caring, fairness and respect, and attitude describe the teacher's personality and behaviour; whereas, output variables as promotion of enthusiasm, motivation for learning, social interactions with students, or reflective practice provide support in establishing a positive learning environment. Building awareness regarding the importance of each of these key quality indicators is a first step in a teacher's professional growth. Caring teachers understand and value students as unique individuals. They create relationships where respect and learning are fostered so students feel safe taking risks that are associated with learning. Fairness and respect imply treating students in a balanced and open-minded manner that is considerate of their circumstances, are embodied in class rules, and require ongoing effort to maintain. A pivotal quality that determines a teacher's willingness to develop and grow as a professional is the attitude toward the teaching profession. A positive and productive school climate has the added benefits of infusing its members with increased satisfaction, enthusiasm, commitment, and empowerment as educators (Holloway, 2003). Social interactions between teachers and students play a significant role in cultivating a positive learning environment, both within the classroom and in the school as a whole. 'Teachers need to allow students to see them as complete people with emotions, opinions, and lives outside of school' (Wolk, 2003:18). Promoting enthusiasm and motivation for learning encourages students to work and reach their potential in a variety of ways that result in increased student achievement and confidence. Reflective practice is an internal monitoring process by which teachers develop expertise. Reflection might be regarded as an overarching attitude, behaviour that supports and enhances all personal attributes. Furthermore, research suggests (Stronge et al. 2004) that certain prerequisites highlighting the professional characteristics that teachers bring to their work would set a well-founded and reliable context for effective teaching. Verbal abilities would affect someone's acquisition and mastery of both educational coursework and content knowledge, which together would be prerequisites for teacher certification. Verbal ability has a positive effect on students' achievement (Darling and Hammond, 2000) because the teachers' ability to communicate successfully influences the clarity of teachers' explanations, students' understanding, as well as teacher-student relationships. Therefore, a two-way communication process should be established that increases teacher's self-awareness and students' progress in learning. Content knowledge acquired by majoring or minoring in the subject area or engaging in specific professional development programmes lead to expanded student learning. In terms of teacher certification, research (Darling-Hammond, Berry and Thoreson, 2001) shows that effective educators are certified in their teaching field. In addition, for teachers who embrace the concept of life-long learning, extended professional development results in increased student achievement. Improving professional skills empowers educators to manage changes aimed at enhancing learning experiences that would lead to better student attendance and academic success. Educational coursework provides a framework for effective teaching; thus, it encompasses planning, assessment, classroom management, student development, and instructional pedagogy. For instance, research findings (Wenglinsky, 2002) show that students whose teachers took courses in teaching methods are

likely to perform better than students whose teachers did not. Considering teaching experience in research literature (Stronge et al. 2004), the range appears to be between three and eight years as the point when teachers are first identified as 'experienced'. Experience provides teachers with the opportunity to grow professionally by learning from practice. Becoming professionally experienced, teachers develop an increased depth of understanding about the subject knowledge and how to teach it to students by using a wide range of strategies, instructional materials, and classroom management procedures to meet students' needs. The act of balancing activities, designing meaningful language tasks, motivating students, creating an enjoyable learning environment, and encouraging learners to use the target language as much as possible are significant aspects in teaching English as a foreign language. According to Penny Ur (1999), harder tasks should be performed earlier because students are fresher and more energetic earlier in the lesson; quieter activities should be placed before lively ones; group or individual work is more smoothly organised if it takes place in the middle of the lesson, with clear beginning and ending points. Lesson plans provide a framework, an overall shape of what the students expect to reach and how to reach that; they could be as simple as a mental checklist or a complex document that follows a prescribed format. Thus, a well-prepared teacher has clear lesson objectives and procedures and ensures that all the materials are ready and prepared so that each lesson runs smoothly. Dalmau and Gudjonsdottir (2002) identify a variety of roles that teachers play depending on their circumstances and opportunities: a. pedagogues and experts in teaching and learning who are activist teachers that share their knowledge and understandings in an ongoing professional dialogue; b. reflective and critical problem solvers, such as teachers who continuously monitor pupil progress and learning within the classroom while outside that environment they reflect, both as individuals and as communities of practice, on their practice and pupil progress; c. researchers and change agents who, in seeking a deeper understanding of their practice, use evaluation and action research techniques to collect and interpret findings, to inform their thinking and decision making, and to plan change; d. creators of knowledge and theory builders, who develop new understandings of learning, teaching, and educational change. The use of a teaching portfolio is seen as a positive measure in different teaching contexts and many teacher-educators include work with portfolios in their course syllabuses as a complementary approach for reviewing and monitoring students' academic progress. The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL- <https://www.ecml.at>) is such an instrument that was developed for the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, during a project that had the main aim of addressing the broad question of harmonising teacher education across Europe. The European Portfolio was intended for students undergoing their initial teacher education, which encourages them to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, helps them to assess their own didactic competences, and enables them to monitor their progress and to record their experiences of teaching during the course of their teacher education. Thus, it is regarded as a tool that promotes professional growth through reflection and dialogue. It consists of three main sections: a personal statement section, to help undergraduate students to begin their initial teacher education by reflecting on general questions related to teaching; a self-assessment section, which contains lists of 'can-do' descriptors relating to didactic competences that may be regarded as a set of core competencies which language teachers should strive to attain; a dossier, in which students can document progress and record examples of work relevant to their teacher education and their future profes-

sion. The EPOSTL draws on insights from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and shares similarities concerning aims, functions, approaches, and principles. Self-assessments may take place at different stages of their teacher education.

Pre-Service Language Teachers' Opinions on Teaching- Case Study

The present case study aims at discussing the pre-service language teachers' perspectives in the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca regarding their teaching knowledge and competences, encouraging them to reflect upon their own professional development. The results were collected and interpreted based upon an online questionnaire completed by third-year students in Philology from the Faculty of Humanities, TUCN, who had enrolled in an optional module of initial teacher education. The target group consisted of a group of twenty-seven third-year Philology students in Romanian and English language and literature, who studied the Methodology of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, a two-hour course and a two-hour seminar per week for 14 weeks, receiving 5ECTS. The structure of the questionnaire consists of nine items to be answered:

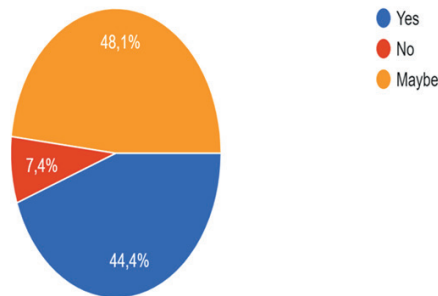
- a multiple-choice question related to the participants' intentions on choosing a future teaching profession;
- four items that use a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, about aspects implying challenges, rewards, job security, and career development in teaching;
- two items in which the respondents have to select the sentences that best fit their opinions on being a language teacher;
- an item about ranking language teachers' qualities from the most important to the least important;
- an open-ended sentence item related to choosing a metaphor of what a language teacher is and providing arguments for their own choice.

The pie chart represented in Figure 1. shows the students' answers regarding their choice of a future language teaching career. 44.4% of them strongly consider becoming a language teacher; 48.1% might think of choosing this profession; whereas, 7.4% are totally against the idea. After collecting the data, some reasons for uncertainty about their responses were revealed during brief interviews: being reluctant or not mature enough at the idea of making a career choice at this stage of their studies; not yet being quite sure about which subject to choose out of the two fields of specialization, Romanian or English language and literature; not being particularly interested in teaching, but being aware that they might need a teaching certificate after graduation and choosing to complete the initial teacher training module just in case of what the future might bring to them.

Figure 1.

1. Would you consider becoming a language teacher after completing your university degree?

27 de răspunsuri

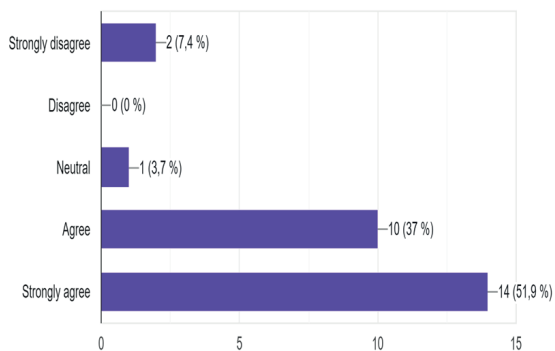


As shown in Figure 2., the majority of the answers provided by our students underline the importance of teachers as role models who have a strong influence at the level of their communities, being totally committed to their students: 51.9% of them strongly agree, 37% agree. There is still a 10% of them who are neutral or strongly disagree.

Figure 2.

2. Teachers impact their communities as role models for their students while helping them learn and grow by providing a safe, supportive, and challenging learning environment.

27 de răspunsuri

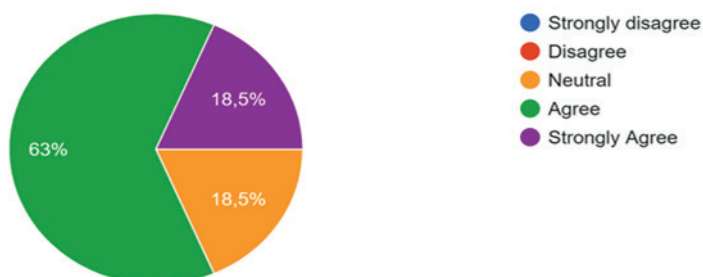


As the responses displayed in Figure 3. most of our students (81.5%) are aware of the fact that a teaching profession definitely provides opportunities for career growth. 18.5% of them tend to be neutral about the provided statement in item 3.

Figure 3.

3. If you have a desire to progress in your career, teaching has a very clear path to do so.

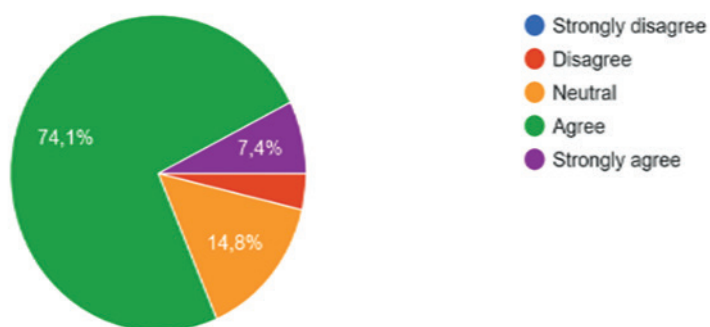
27 de răspunsuri



In terms of job security, the majority of the participants consider that language teaching is a safe job in Romania, as noticed in Figure 4. As long as teachers fulfil a tenure teaching position in a Romanian school, are committed to their jobs, and get all the major certifications needed throughout the years of teaching experience, most of them might work in a school for quite a few decades.

4. Language teaching offers job security at all levels of education.

27 de răspunsuri



Considering challenges and rewards regarding teaching, all the respondents agree with the idea that despite the challenges of the profession, its rewards, in terms of collaboration with all the parties involved in education- students, parents, fellow teachers, school management, education policy makers at the national or international levels well as the definite impact upon generations of students, are fulfilling experiences for a language teacher, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5.

5. Teaching is a challenging profession, but its rewards manifest in the collaboration with a wide variety of people and by inspiring new generations of students.

27 de răspunsuri



Figure 6 includes the choices of answers of our respondents about their one or more reasons for becoming a language teacher related to item 6:

77.8% - I could help students not only to learn new things but also to become independent learners.

63% - I could make a real difference in the lives of the children I will teach in the future.

44.4% - I could share my love of learning with my prospective students.

44.4% - I would have the chance to promote equal education for all my students.

14.8% - I would get variety in my work as I should teach new topics and instruct new students each year.

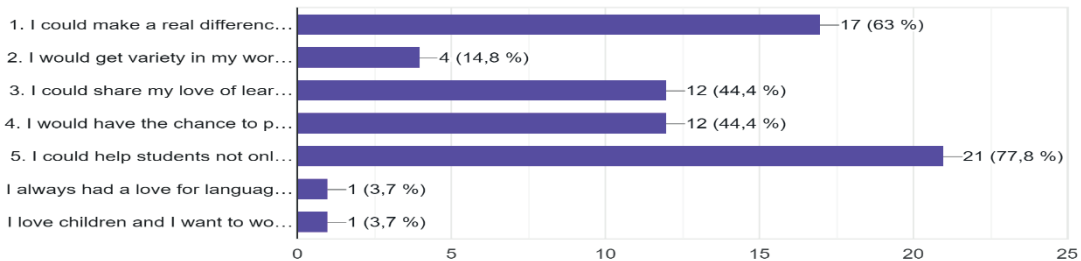
3.7% - I always had a love for languages, and I hope teaching will only enhance that.

3.7% - I love children and I want to work with them.

Figure 6.

6. Why would you like to become a language teacher? Choose one/ more answers that might be appropriate from the list below or write down your own reason.

27 de răspunsuri



In Figure 7., respondents placed high importance (74.1%) on statement 1 and 5, which referred to attributes such as kindness, empathy, and patience; while statement 3 and 2 were about other qualities, such as active listening and positive attitude towards teaching, and were also rated highly (66.7%, 63%).

Figure 7.

7. Read the statements below. Which ones would you consider following in your future profession?

27 de răspunsuri

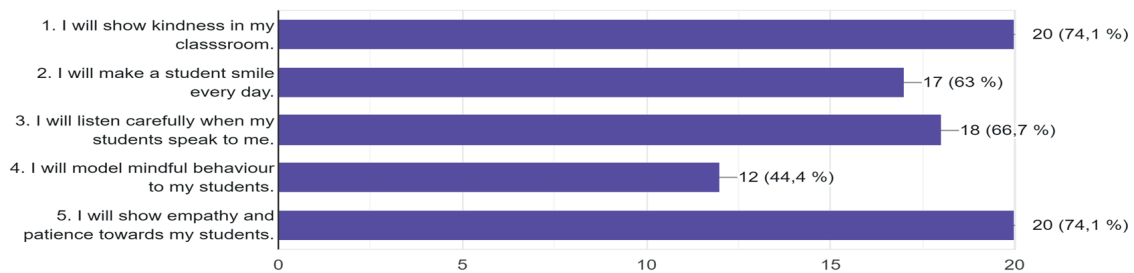
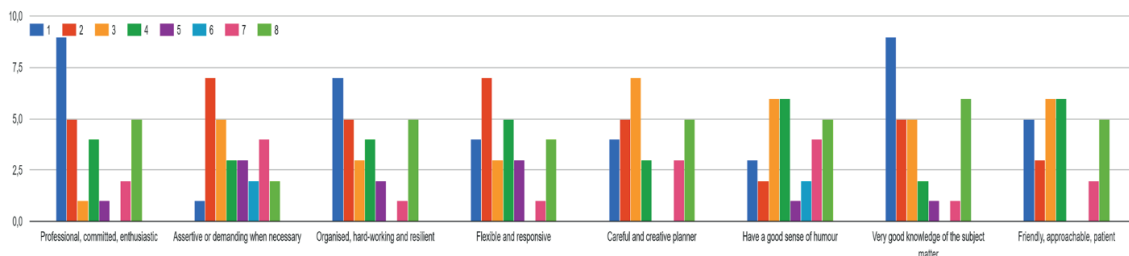


Figure 8.

8. Which do you think are the most important qualities of a language teacher to make learning enjoyable and successful? (1- the most important...8- the least important)



In item 8, the respondents had to rank the most important qualities of a language teacher to make learning enjoyable and successful from '1' (the most important) to '8' (the least important). Item 8 covers different categories of teacher attributes related to the teaching profession, such as rapport, content knowledge, organization and preparation, delivery and fairness (Faranda and Clarke, 2004). The respondents' top three choices that can be observed in Figure 8. are included in the following table:

Table 1.

Choice nr.	Teacher's Qualities	Nr. Answers
1.	Professional, committed, enthusiastic	9
	Very good knowledge of the subject matter	9
	Organised, hard-working and resilient	7
2.	Assertive or demanding when necessary	7
	Flexible and responsive	7
	Professional, committed, enthusiastic	5
	Organised, hard-working and resilient	5
	Careful and creative planner	5
3.	Careful and creative planner	7
	Have a good sense of humour	6
	Friendly, approachable, patient	6
	Very good knowledge of the subject matter	5
	Assertive or demanding when necessary	5

In item 9, students were asked to identify and select a metaphor that would correspond to their view of what or who a language teacher is. "Metaphors capture multiple meanings of experience ... metaphors have a function of organizing systematic concepts in teachers' cultural-cognitive models of learning" (Oxford, 1998: 43). In the cultural transmission perspective, the language teacher must exert strong control over both the curriculum and the students, employing such metaphors as book, dictionary, encyclopaedia, mountain of knowledge, candle. Language is regarded as an object of study, a historical and cultural achievement that must be appreciated for its intrinsic worth, certainly not something to be negotiated or questioned, but a body of knowledge that must be ingested. The metaphors in the cultural transmission perspective tend to represent education as a one-way flow of information, skills and values from the teacher as expert to learners as empty containers (Oxford, 1998).

Students' answers provide statements as such: a gift that keeps on giving; a book, after you get to know them, you realize how many things you can learn from your teachers; a dictionary, with every letter you check, you always get a new word to learn from them; a book of knowledge that is waiting to be explored; a living encyclopaedia; a mountain of knowledge and creativity because a teacher must have the necessary knowledge to teach,

but also be creative in structuring the lessons; a candle, they burn themselves to light the way for others, being open to innovations, accepting rejection, it is all about the students and how they perceive the information; a light that illuminates the dark road to success for students; the key to the door of an amazing world; a language teacher offers the pupils another window from which to look at the world; a language teacher is like the sun, even though not always present, its warmth can always be felt through knowledge and memories; a ray of sunshine in a gloomy day.

In the learner-centred growth perspective, the teacher is seen as nurturer- gardener, coach, builder, friend, trailblazer, whose job is to create the optimal environment in which they become a facilitator of personal growth and a protector of the individual. Caring teachers are vitally concerned with students' emotional development as well as their intellectual evolution. They create a safe and competent learning environment in order to bring out the best in their students. An important metaphor in the learner-centred growth perspective is the Teacher-as-Nurturer, whose job, like a gardener, is to construct the optimal environment in which the inner nature of the mind could grow and flourish, and, like a teacher is regarded as a facilitator of personal growth and a protector of the individual. A different metaphor comes from the world of sports: coaching. The coach encourages the learner to perform well, to play the best game possible. Thus, the teacher as a provider of support introduces structure when needed and in the right amount, and organises the materials and activities systematically for students so that they can develop essential sets of skills and competencies. The teacher as entertainer often helps break down affective barriers that prevent communication on the part of the students by using acting and surprise as part of teaching (Oxford, 1998).

According to the responses of our students: A language teacher is like a friend or a good friend who guides you in the right direction, or a trailblazer, because the teacher guides the students in choosing a profession; a gardener. Everyone requires the best care suitable for them, but they all need light, and the teacher is a source of light, love, beauty, harmony, and soul warmth; a builder, who helps the student to build, brick-by-brick, their way to understanding and learning; a coach, because they believe in their students, encourages them every time, and pushes them to get out of their bubble and to do the things that they are capable of doing; or a businessman, because everyone is curious to discover a new language, and the teacher, introducing us to the 'world' of the new language, makes us want to discover that language more and more and learn to use it; a gold fish, because with them more doors and opportunities are opening for you; a butterfly, because their heart must be full of kindness, but also sensible in front of their students; or a flower blooming on a dawn spring day, the petals representing the qualities they have, for example, patience, creativity, etc.

All the metaphors of our study reveal an authentic concern for the wellbeing of the students along with guiding and commitment for the teaching profession.

The results of the survey also provide valuable insights into student-teacher opinions about various issues related to becoming a language teacher and contain information about what the focus should be with regard to the design and development of the teacher training course to meet their needs. The questionnaire was designed to cover certain cat-

egories of teacher attributes related to the teaching profession, such as rapport, content knowledge, organization and preparation, delivery and fairness (Faranda and Clarke, 2004).

The analysis of the results provides a useful overview of the comparative importance placed on each of the included categories. Pre-service teachers value teacher preparation highly as a requirement that provides them with an adequate tool to create and maintain a learning environment of mutual trust and respect in the classroom. In conclusion, this study confirms that students are supportive of generally accepted standards of effective teaching; teacher qualifications and target language proficiency are considered more important than rapport attributes: relationship with students, such as friendliness, sociability, empathy, accessibility, and attitude. As a result, a deeper understanding of undergraduate students' perceptions of effective foreign language teaching should support educators in order to guide them successfully throughout their teacher training module and furthermore in their prospective future teaching careers.

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PART FOUR

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