FROM MIRRORS AND WINDOWS TO BRIDGES IN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

Edited by

DOROTTYA HOLLÓ & **KRISZTINA KÁROLY**

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ELTE | EÖTVÖS
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the authorized University Press of ELTE

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To Ildikó Lázár

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TURNING FROM "MIRRORS AND WINDOWS TO BRIDGES" IN LIVING UP TO THE DEMANDS OF 21ST-CENTURY COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION: INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

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With today's technological advancements, rapid pace, and the constant social–cultural–economic changes induced by globalization, there is much more to communication and language education in the 21st century than envisaged ever before. Future professionals need to be prepared for meeting demands that our constantly changing technical, cultural, social, personal and environmental contexts produce day by day. This volume focuses on some of these demands in training foreign language educators and language specialists (language teachers, mentors, language mediators, communication experts, etc.) and provides guidance for the various actors of these fields based on conceptual and empirical research and our teaching experiences in the Hungarian higher education context.

The book has been inspired by our colleague and friend's work and ideas at the Department of English Language Pedagogy of Eötvös Loránd University: it is built around Ildikó Lázár's metaphor, appearing repeatedly in her publications for some time (Lázár, 2022; Kozák & Lázár, 2018; Huber-Kriegler, Lázár, & Strange, 2003). As a teacher and teacher trainer specializing in intercultural communication in language education, she has long been stressing the need to turn to our "mirrors" (to see ourselves) and to look out of the "windows" around us (to see others) to understand the world better. These approaches reflect a mindset that allows people to develop transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge (Mompoint-Gaillard & Lázár, 2017), which we now propose to use as "bridges" if – as foreign language teachers, trainers or other language professionals – we intend to get across to and support our students, colleagues or fellow citizens in not merely surviving, but also successfully dealing with the requirements of today's world. The papers published

in this volume all reflect the significance of Ildikó Lázár's ideas, and we, together with the authors contributing, would like to express our sincere appreciation for her work as a researcher, a teacher and a colleague.

The volume has three parts. Part 1 reports on conceptual and empirical research related to **language and culture** in the age of globalization. Michael Byram's conceptual paper shows that critical cultural awareness is a key notion in modelling intercultural competence if we intend to aid language teachers in including intercultural communicative competence in the aims and objectives of their work. He explains what the concept of critical cultural awareness entails, how it is connected to criticality and to making value judgements. He considers different perspectives on values (universal, relativistic and pluralistic) to finally argue that a pluralist approach is more appropriate and better founded in education than relativism or universalism. He concludes the chapter by analysing the implications for making judgments about values as a key component of critical cultural awareness and the aim that students will cooperate with others who may have different values, and thus develop a sense of what he calls "intercultural citizenship". Intercultural citizenship is, in his view, one of the most important goals of language teaching.

The next paper, by Ximena Buendía and Pedro Martínez Luna, is an empirical study dealing with a specific cultural context, namely South America. It explores the dynamics of Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teachers' English as a foreign language (EFL) learning experience on the Colombian Caribbean Coast. They conducted an exploratory case study with a Zenú Indigenous EFL teacher and a non-Indigenous language teacher educator to reveal the dynamics of a Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teacher's EFL Learning Experience (referred to as EFL-LE in short) at a Colombian public university. A special feature of their research is that it centers on Indigenous research paradigms. Applying Indigenous relationality as their principal approach to data analysis and using social network analysis, symbolic interactionism, and thematic analysis, they show that in the Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teachers' EFL-LE, their University represents a territory of socialization with power, and they identify both Indigenous ways of learning and mainstream ones. Their study concludes by discussing the epistemological and ontological limitations of the non-Indigenous participant researcher.

The third chapter of Part 1, by Thomas Mansell, turns to problems related to interlingual mediation, more specifically the intralingual dubbing of two children's cartoons. He investigates dubbing from American English to British English in the case of two recent animated series for children: Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood (2012) and Vida the Vet (2024). The paper discusses some of the historical reasons behind the current status of English as a global *lingua franca*, and points to the observable shift in dominance within that from British to American English. The study demonstrates the role of dubbing within Audiovisual Translation and introduces the two series briefly. The paper asks whether localising the text and voices deprives speakers of British English of

an opportunity to encounter linguistic difference, or whether the existence of both an American and a British English version represent that linguistic difference.

Part 2 of the volume focuses on **language teacher education** and reports on research related to 21st-century needs and experiences in the area. Éva Szabó's paper reviews the state of the art in research in the field. It tackles what has fundamentally shaped our students in the 21st century, how social changes and the different technological innovations have influenced their needs, and what factors have to be considered if we are to be able to provide meaningful learning experiences for them. The review looks at the different names and characteristics of students born shortly before and already in the 21st century. It then outlines the skills and competences students need to manage their studies and work, and reveals what impacts have been instrumental in shaping them. The paper highlights what the notions of surface and deep approaches to learning mean in the context of higher education to be able to examine how engagement and active learning can enhance students' deep learning. In closing, the study also deals with the role of positive group dynamics, which is considered as one of the key conditions of successful learning.

The subsequent chapter, by Francis J. Prescott-Pickup, reveals some of the experiences of English-as-a-foreign-language teacher trainees to see if we can learn some lessons from them. The paper describes an ongoing research study conducted by the author that began following the periods of Emergency Remote Teaching in Hungary during the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, he interviewed 13 teacher trainees about their experiences with remote teaching during their long and short teaching practices. The outcomes of this investigation, however, motivated the author to also find out how trainees' experience during their training affected their thinking about their future career path, and specifically their view of themselves as teachers. The paper reports on some of the most important findings and also discusses their implications for public education and teacher educators.

The third chapter of Part 2, by Katalin Hubai, explores the reflective practices of university-based EFL teacher educators in Hungary to understand how these practices may serve as models for teacher trainees. Her research uses semi-structured interviews with 10 educators teaching subject-specific pedagogy courses. The findings reveal that the university-based teacher trainers investigated model professional identity development and well-being through consciously engaging in reflection. She shows that by authentically reflecting on their own journeys and professional realities, the trainers provide non-prescriptive frameworks for novice teachers to be able to navigate their own identity formation and cultivate resilience. The research also highlights how these reflections can help novice teachers grow professionally and understand their own mental health and well-being. The paper ends by demonstrating the implications of the research for Hungarian teacher preparation in a context of continuous restructuring and shortages.

After mainly group-related projects, the final study in Part 2, by Gabriella Jenei, focuses on one-to-one teaching and, within that, adaptive course planning. This study explores how self-identification and planning processes appear in this special teaching context.

The results presented in the chapter are based on a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with 10 participants with varying amounts of teaching experience and distinct professional backgrounds. Jenei's findings indicate that participants have certain preferences regarding the terms they normally use to identify themselves as teachers (language teacher, instructor, mentor, etc.), and they also have special conceptions concerning what the given terms imply for them. They seem to be inclined to 'planning for spontaneity' and express a shared responsibility with the learner. Given the relative frequency of this teaching configuration, the results of the study highlight the need for further professional discussions and research to reveal trainable one-to-one teaching methods and techniques.

The third and final part of the volume turns to some of the **good practices** the authors have identified in dealing with new challenges in 21st-century foreign language teacher education. Dorottya Holló's paper presents the contribution of the Department of English Language Pedagogy to teaching culture, language, communication and interculturality in English major programmes at BA, MA and PhD levels at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. She argues that the training of foreign language professionals puts the responsibility on education providers to design the curricula to best suit the students' needs. She also notes that while language development and the study of various aspects of English have always been part of the training, culture related courses, and classes fostering the students' cultural understanding, cultural awareness and intercultural competence have only received their due attention in the past two decades. Based on the department's course descriptions, she shows that now about a quarter of the department's courses are devoted to these areas, and the courses display diverse approaches to engage the students and nurture their cultural and intercultural growth. The chapter concludes by highlighting the department's good practices in course design and teaching activities.

The next study in Part 3 reveals good practices at another faculty of humanities at a Hungarian university. Andrea Ágnes Reményi's paper deals with a problem related to the internationalization of their institution, namely that it did not have a magazine for incoming international students. Therefore, she reports on the outcomes of a language development course, run with fourth-year English teacher trainees, aiming to produce the manuscript for a magazine for international students. They produced the texts in group work, via recursive process writing, through online cooperation and peer assessment. The students conducted interviews too with international students and wrote these up for the magazine. Finally, the majority of the texts to be published in the magazine by the university were selected by another anonymous group ballot at the end of the course. With faculty support, altogether 250 copies of the colourful 52-page magazine were printed and distributed among the incoming international students at the start of the following semester.

Rita Divéki's chapter shows how AI-enhanced discussions of controversial issues in the classroom may contribute to educating "globally competent" teacher trainees. She directly addresses the problem that in today's globalised world, it is the task of education systems to prepare students to face particular environmental, social, and personal challenges.

She claims that a possible way to meet this demand is by developing students' global competence. English language teachers, in her view, have a unique opportunity to do so, as they can discuss real-world problems within the classroom, while effectively developing their students' language and global skills. She also notes that even though AI is adding another layer of expectations to our educational systems and is already transforming our pedagogical practices, it also holds great potential for educating globally competent students. The chapter presents a language development course designed to develop university students' global competence by engaging them in AI-enhanced discussions on controversial issues. It also offers three activities for teachers who would like to experiment with using AI in their classes to the same end.

Finally, Márta Barbarics's paper in Part 3 puts assessment in a new light with the help of applying gamification to the evaluation of students participating in five EFL teacher training university seminars. She shares her good practices primarily from the instructor's point of view, but occasionally the students' opinions are also shared. The first part of the paper defines assessment and its main categories according to different purposes. Secondly, Barbarics presents different gamification-based point-collecting assessment systems to encourage teachers working in different contexts to explore how the various goals of assessment might be achieved with their students and to aid the adaptation of these for different learning environments.

We are grateful to the authors for contributing to this volume and for sharing their most recent research findings and good practices that bear relevance to Ildikó Lázár's metaphors guiding the themes discussed. The volume may be useful for language and communication students and teachers, for university programmes training language teachers, mentor teachers, language mediators, communication experts and educational policy makers as well as for researchers working in these fields.

Budapest, 19 October 2025

Krisztina Károly and Dorottya Holló
editors

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Part 1

CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON 'CRITICAL CULTURAL AWARENESS'

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Abstract

Critical cultural awareness is a central concept in a model of intercultural competence designed to help language teachers to develop teaching which systematically includes intercultural communicative competence in the aims and objectives. In this text I explain in detail what critical cultural awareness is, how it is linked to key concepts of criticality and of making judgements about values. After analysing these key concepts, I consider different perspectives on values: whether there are universal values, whether values are relative to specific cultures or whether a pluralist approach is a better basis for pedagogy. I take the view that a pluralist approach is more appropriate and better founded than relativism or universalism. I then analyse the implications for making judgements about values as a key element of critical cultural awareness and the intention that learners will cooperate with others who may have different values, and develop a sense of intercultural citizenship, which I consider to be one of the ultimate aims of language teaching.

Keywords: language teaching, critical cultural awareness, values, relativism and universalism, pluralism

1 Introduction

On 7 November 2024, Google Scholar gave the number of citations of *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (Byram, 1997/2021) as 12788, and 10189 for Kramsch's *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (1994). The three most cited books in language teaching given by ChatGPT: *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom* (1983) by Krashen and Terrell, cited 9994 times according to Google Scholar; *Techniques and*

Principles in Language Teaching by Larsen-Freeman (2000), 9833 times; *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* by H. Douglas Brown (1994), 28940 times[1]. The high citations for Kramsch (1994) and Byram (1997/2021) are encouraging indications that the (inter)cultural dimension of foreign language teaching is being taken seriously.

However, once a text is published, how it is used and interpreted is beyond an author's control, unless they are asked to explain or take an opportunity to respond. My text from 1997 has also had critics (e.g. Belz, 2007; Kramsch, 2009; Holliday, 2011) and one of the reasons for re-visiting the text in 2021 was to address criticisms and mis-apprehensions. This included a significant revision of 'critical cultural awareness' which is the central element of the model, giving foreign language teaching educational as well as instrumental value, and which is the element I am often asked to explain further. Here I take another opportunity to do so, and in particular to consider the challenge presented by clashes of values among different social groups and their cultures, and how teachers and learners may respond.

2 Critical Cultural Awareness – The Description

"An ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of an explicit, systematic process of reasoning, values present in one's own and other cultures and countries." (Byram, 2021, p. 90)

This is the description of critical cultural awareness (CCA) in *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence – revisited* (2021). It is a description of what should be taught and assessed, as the title of the book states[2]. The core is the notion of critical evaluation of values. The process is a matter of 'reasoning' and rationalism, and Popper's account of rationalism is a solid base for this process:

> rationalism is an attitude of readiness to listen to critical arguments and to learn from experience (...) the rationalist attitude, or, as I may perhaps label it, the 'attitude of reasonableness', is very similar to the scientific attitude, to the belief that in the search for truth we need co-operation, and that, with the help of argument, we can in time attain something like objectivity. (1966, p. 225)

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1   Care is of course needed with ChatGPT. When asked for the three most cited books in intercultural language teaching it gave: "The Culture of Learning: An Intercultural Approach to Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages" by Michael Byram (1997), "Teaching and Learning English through Intercultural Communication" by Claire Kramsch (1993) as the first two. I am surprised that I wrote a book with this title and Claire Kramsch would I think be equally surprised by the title attributed to her.

2   The model has often been understood as a description of intercultural communicative competence. I state early in the book that it is a model of what I think can be taught and assessed; it is not a model which includes all aspects of ICC. Some authors have used it in research and added further competences or 'savoirs' (e.g. Parks, 2018; Beecroft, 2022) in order to capture other aspects of intercultural communicative competence which they discover among manifestations of learners' competences. I have no objection to the model being used in this way, but such authors will then discuss how any new 'savoir' is to be taught, if they wish to follow my original intention.

The general description of CCA is followed by three 'objectives' which clarify what a learner should be able to do in order to evaluate values, after being (successfully) taught.

The first objective refers to where learners might find the values which they should evaluate; they should be able to:

> identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one's own and other cultures

The second objective separates out the process of evaluation, i.e. 'a conscious process of reasoning'; learners should be able to:

> make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events based on a conscious process of reasoning

The third objective adds a new dimension, namely that, once a learner has evaluated using reasoning, they can take action as a mediator; learners should be able to:

> interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges on the basis of a reasoned analysis, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of them by drawing upon one's knowledge, skills and attitudes

The exhortation to negotiate acceptance is optimistic. I am aware how clashing values and bodies of knowledge may be very difficult to reconcile, as we shall see below.

The different components of Intercultural Competence were given French designations too[3]. CCA was called 'savoir s'engager', which was a deliberate nod to the notion of (political) *engagement* and being *engagé*. I also explained, in 1997, that the concept of CCA had been influenced by the work on *politische Bildung* in Germany (literally: political education) (Gagel, 2000), a literature to which I returned in 2008.

In 2002, Guilherme developed the notion of 'intercultural responsibility' from CCA, defined as:

> A reflective, exploratory, dialogical, and active stance toward cultural knowledge and life that allows for dissonance, contradiction, and conflict as well as for consensus, concurrence, and transformation. It is a cognitive and emotional endeavour that aims at individual and collective emancipation, social justice, and political commitment. (2002, p. 219)

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3   This was a result of working together with Geneviève Zarate on the early versions of the model which were in a paper supporting the development of the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; learning, teaching, assessment.* The notion of CCA was not however included at that time, and was added later by me alone.

The first sentence focuses on the fundamental 'stance', and the second says what the 'aims' are. With the use of 'aims' and the listing of 'emancipation', 'social justice'[4] and 'political commitment', there is an implication that 'intercultural responsibility' should lead learners to act, in some way.

In 2008, in *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship. Essays and Reflections,* where the emphasis was on the theory of *Demokratie Lernen* (literally: Learning democracy) (Himmelmann, 2001), I elaborated the implicit call for action in CCA/savoir s'engager and in 'intercultural responsibility', and used the term 'intercultural citizenship' which has since served as a basis for classroom-based projects in which learners are encouraged[5] to take "action in the world", a phrase borrowed from Barnett (1997).

Actions should be based on critical evaluation of values, one's own and those of others. It is this process which needs 'further thoughts' and which is the focus of this text. I will deal with it by discussing first 'criticality' and then 'evaluation of values'.

3 Criticality

Criticality needs to be distinguished from 'critical thinking' (Dunne, 2014, p. 93). Criticality includes, but is more than, critical thinking, for criticality is realised in 'critical being' (Barnett, 1997; Johnston et al., 2011), whereas critical thinking is a set of skills which a person who inhabits criticality can use. The use of these skills – and an explanation of how they are being used – is part of the 'process of reasoning' in CCA[6].

'Critical being' is composed of 'critical self-reflection', 'critical reason' and 'critical action' which are directed towards 'formal knowledge', 'the self' and 'the world' (Barnett, 1997; repeated and developed by Johnston et al., 2011). Barnett (1997, p. 70 ff) also describes levels of criticality: from 'critical thinking skills' to 'metacritique'. Johnston et al (2011, p. 82) complement this with a description of a continuum of criticality development which learners might be expected to traverse: 'early', 'guided' and 'late' criticality. Both Barnett (1997) and Johnston et al. (2011) also elaborate on the pedagogical implications for higher education. The question of adapting these to schools is a further task, illustrated in Byram et al. (2017).

CCA is however different from critical being. The latter is a more comprehensive description of what, in Barnett's view – further developed by Johnston et al., (2011) – should be the outcome of education in universities. CCA can complement what is understood

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4   Reagan and Osborn (2020) address the issue of social justice and critical pedagogy in language education.

5   Precisely how and to what extent learners are 'encouraged' to take action and what the ethical implications of this are for teachers is an important issue which would however be a digression here. Manuela Wagner, Melina Porto, Irina Golubeva and I have addressed this theme elsewhere (Byram et al., 2021; Byram, 2022; Byram et al., 2025; Porto et al., 2025).

6   Simpson and Dervin (2020) argue that there are and should be 'multipolar' approaches to criticality. Mine is no doubt what Bekar and Fay (2020) designate as 'Anglo-centred academic literacy'.

by critical being since the latter concept – as elaborated by Barnett – does not explicitly include evaluation of values, although Johnston et al., do have something to say on this.

The highest level of criticality for Barnett is 'transformatory critique' which leads to 'collective reconstruction' through 'action in the world', perhaps what Guilherme would formulate as 'emancipation, social justice and political commitment', and what Banks (2017) would call 'transformative citizenship'. For Johnston et al. (2011), an integral part of transformatory criticality is a consideration of values and taking a 'value position (which) will generally encompass notions of human rights, impartial justice and fairness in a largely secular environment', a position they contextualise as founded in the Western university of the 21st century. They also recognise that criticality leads to reflection, analysis and discussion of different moral positions.

CCA goes further than simply recognising – as Johnston et al. (2011) do – that there is a variety of moral positions; it introduces evaluation and judgement of moral positions. It does not commit to the one position of 'human rights, impartial justice and fairness'. The question then arises as to how and on what basis we can evaluate and make judgements about other people's and our own values and moral positions, a question which requires a discussion of value relativism, universalism and pluralism.

4 Values and Evaluations/Judgements

Although education systems, and schools in particular, have the transmission of a 'national' culture[7] as one of their main purposes, some teachers – not least language teachers – deliberately introduce their learners to other cultures in their own and in other countries. In doing so, they expose their learners to other values and moralities, some of which conflict with the values and morality of their own national tradition. Such exposure to other values and the moralities which incorporate them is not trivial. At the beginning of his book on pluralistic relativism, Wong (2006) introduces the concept of 'moral ambivalence' which is experienced when people encounter values other than their own, and the possible 'destabilising' effect this can have[8]. Within education systems and

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7   Whether a national culture exists or is part of the myth of the 'nation–state', and whether it is possible to describe a national culture in a specific case are questions which could lead to a digression for which there is no space here. Let it be said that politicians and others responsible for curricula – often referred to as 'national' curricula – often assume this. Barrett reviews the empirical research on the role of schools in the national enculturation of children, concluding that schools are a 'very important influence', through direct teaching about the state, through ethnocentric bias in textbooks and curricula, and through the daily practices in a school such as a daily pledge to the flag. Barrett says nonetheless that the impact of all of this on children is still in need of research (2007, pp. 102–117), and there appears to be as yet no response to this need.

8   Another way of reflecting on this experience is that it comes as a surprise or even a shock when we realise that what we do and think is not 'natural' but 'cultural', that what we assumed, because we had no other experience than our own, is the only way of acting and thinking, in fact is just one among many. This 'intercultural encounter' can be analysed and reflected on. The "Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters" (Council of Europe, n.d.) is a pedagogical tool which gives shape and direction to such reflection.

institutions[9], language learners are particularly exposed to the 'risk' of moral ambivalence and possible destabilisation, either as an unintended consequence of language learning and experience of other values and moral systems, or as a deliberate consequence created and planned by their teachers. In this second case that word 'risk' – deliberately in quote marks above – has a specific application and connotations. The risk is taken by the teacher who accepts the responsibility of exposing their learners to potential destabilisation of their existing values and sense of security. The possible reactions – relativist, universalist or pluralist – which learners may have or be taught need to be considered next.

4.1 Relativism, Universalism and Pluralism

CCA is an element of a model of Intercultural Competence which can be taught in any part of the curriculum, but in my work it is linked to foreign language teaching and Intercultural *Communicative* Competence. The issues which arise in evaluating values are therefore not confined to foreign language teaching, but there are particular reasons for addressing the question of values in foreign language teaching:

- some anthropologists are among the strongest defenders of relativism in values (and of cognitive relativism) and language learners can/should be taking their perspective on other cultures and countries from ethnographers (Roberts et al., 2001)
- the discussion of translatability as a dimension of the relativism/universalism debate has theoretical relevance but also practical relevance for language learners and their success in communication
- liberalism (and human rights) is related to the debate on value pluralism and is significant for the question of responding to and evaluating (or not) other people's values and one's own, and is therefore of practical significance for language learners.

I will therefore focus on specific aspects of values and evaluation/judgement of them:

- the question of universalism and relativism (and value pluralism or pluralistic relativism);
- the significance of translation from one language to another and its relevance for the relativism versus universalism debate.

A strong form of (value) *relativism* argues that it is not possible for someone from group X to understand the morality of someone in group Y, and that language is one of the causes of this lack of understanding because translation from language X to language Y is impossible. As a consequence, a person from group X does not have the right to comment on the values of group Y. Let us call this the 'tolerance position'. It depends on

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9 I do not consider here how experience outside education, through exposure to a multitude of perspectives and attitudes in social media and the globalised world, may also lead to the risk of moral ambivalence. This goes beyond the limits of the language learning classroom but should no doubt be an issue for educationists and the ways in which they help young people to analyse their experience in parts of the curriculum which deal with media studies and literacy.

the 'impossibility' of translation between languages, but this in fact raises a more general issue of mutual comprehension and translatability to which I turn below.

When directed at moral values in particular, tolerance is problematic. Popper (1966, p. 265) argues that, in the 'paradox of tolerance', 'unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance' because others who are intolerant will destroy those who are tolerant. This perspective stems from the 1940s, from the experience of fascism and the limits of rational argument, an experience which is returning today as I write this. His argument is therefore worth quoting in detail:

> In this formulation, I do not imply, for instance, that we should always suppress the utterance of intolerant philosophies; as long as we can counter them by rational argument and keep them in check by public opinion, suppression would certainly be most unwise. But we should claim the *right* to suppress them if necessary even by force; for it may easily turn out that they are not prepared to meet us on the level of rational argument, but begin by denouncing all argument; they may forbid their followers to listen to rational argument, because it is deceptive, and teach them to answer arguments by the use of their fists or pistols. We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. We should claim that any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law, and we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal, in the same way as we should consider incitement to murder, or to kidnapping, or to the revival of the slave trade, as criminal.

A weak(er) form of relativism argues that an X person can understand a Y person, that translation is possible. Given that understanding is possible, even though Y's values and morality may appear questionable from X's standpoint, X can accept the validity of a Y person's morality because X does not have the right to pass judgement on Y. Every social group and its members must be allowed to determine its own way of living. Let us call this the 'acceptance position'. It is different from the 'tolerance position' but suffers from the same weaknesses that Popper identifies.

In contrast, a strong *universalist* position argues that there are values and a morality which can and should be expected of everyone because everyone – whether an X or a Y – is a human being. From this standpoint, both X and Y have the right to question what, seen in the light of universal values and morality, is unacceptable and wrong. There seem to be no doubts expressed here about understanding and translatability, or the right to pass judgement. Let us call this the 'no tolerance position'. Here, again taking Popper's emphasis on rational argument, the danger is that we do not engage in rational argument and hence cut ourselves off from possible extensions and modifications of the moral position we assume is universal.

Between 'acceptance' and 'no tolerance', there lies a third position. This position assumes that all (groups of) people are essentially the same, i.e. they are human beings

and have common (universal) values as a consequence. It also assumes – and observes empirically – that all (groups of) people face similar problems in their different ways of life and have to make choices according to the morality of their group. It therefore recognises that, although there are common values, different groups prioritise values differently and make different choices. The empirical research conducted by Schwartz (2012) over many years and in many countries among many social groups argues that there are common values found in all societies but given different emphasis in different groups. This means that any evaluation of others' views and morality has to take into account the local constraints and priorities.

Wong's (2006) 'pluralistic relativism' approach to this view of commonalities and locally-determined differences and priorities, is to begin by identifying the conditions for an acceptable/defensible morality by arguing that it is in the nature of human beings to cooperate and live together, and that this requires 'reciprocity'. Acceptable moralities must therefore fulfil three conditions facilitating reciprocity. Moralities which do not do so – if they exist – are not worthy of consideration. The conditions are:

- intrapersonal: a morality must satisfy the individual's (natural) desires and motivations to live a worthwhile life
- interpersonal: since individuals live in (natural) groups, the morality must include a system of norms which enable people to live together and these norms must be accepted by all who belong to the group in question; the morality of group X must be acceptable to all those who consider themselves to be Xs.
- since disagreement (about priorities and choices) within any group – and among groups whether in 'our' society or in 'other' societies – is inevitable, a morality must include a principle and process of 'accommodation', i.e. willingness to compromise in order for cooperation to be successful. Moral systems which do not meet these conditions, can (and should) be evaluated, criticised and rejected.

With the phrase 'pluralistic relativism', Wong argues that more than one morality meets these conditions. This means that, assuming the moralities of both (person and group) X and (person and group) Y meet the conditions, there are inevitably both common values and differing values and priorities. The former are a consequence of the general conditions. The latter are a consequence of the specific material context within which each group and its culture have evolved.

A second approach, attributed to Isaiah Berlin, is 'value pluralism' (Crowder, 2019) which has much in common with 'pluralistic relativism', but is associated more strongly with a liberal political standpoint, and is more 'empirical'. It is 'empirical' because it argues that to find the commonalities of values among cultures X, Y, etc. it is necessary to research actual contemporary and historic cultures (as has been done by Schwartz (2012)). As Crowder (2019, p. 12) says, Berlin does not provide a single and definitive definition or description of value pluralism, but the spirit is captured here where the significance of rationality is again evident:

the conception that there are many different ends that men (sic) may seek and still be fully rational, fully men, capable of understanding each other and sympathising and deriving light from each other, as we derive it from reading Plato or the novels of medieval Japan – worlds, outlooks, very remote from our own. (Berlin, 2013, p. 1)

Berlin's value pluralism position implies that there will be commonalities and differences between values and moralities of different groups, and he also introduces the notion of 'incommensurability'. Among the 'common values' – which Berlin sometimes calls 'foundational' values – as held by a specific group, it is not always possible to act simultaneously in accordance with all common values since some will be in practice incommensurable with others. In principle, foundational values are all of equal status but, in practice in a specific situation, an individual or a group will be forced to prioritise one (or some) over others. However, because the values are of equal status, there can be no reasoned decision to prioritise one over others, and the decision may be a practical one or one which is instinctive, although this does not mean abandoning reasoning in making choices (Berlin & Williams, 1994). The decision will be a matter of reasoning in 'context' and decisions are never taken in a vacuum, which implies that judgements about decisions and evaluations of the values and morality they are based on must take account of the context; it is not meaningful to make judgements in the abstract.

Because there are constraints on an acceptable morality but also recognition of the significance of context both in the evolution of moralities over time and in the prioritisation of one or more value over others at a single point in time when decisions for action have to be made, let us call this a 'context-dependent tolerance' standpoint.

4.2 Translatability and Mutual Intelligibility

Context-dependent tolerance depends on there being common values and understanding of context. The view that there are fundamental common values and that there is overlap, despite difference among moralities, which can be the basis of mutual understanding, pre-supposes mutual intelligibility. X and Y can only cooperate and act together in their essentially human way – as in the pedagogy of intercultural citizenship (Porto, 2014) – if they can grasp the meaning of others' values in the 'same' or in a 'different' language[10.]

When groups X and Y have their own languages, understanding pre-supposes translatability, and this is not simply a matter of clearly and perceived different languages. Even if X and Y appear to have 'the same' language, for example that British people and US Americans have the same language, as do Muslim British people and Christian British people, the difficulties of mutual comprehension are present, and the effort needed for understanding other people's language, concepts and values, is potentially enormous.

10 I have used scare quotes here because the notion of 'a language' is much debated, but it is a debate I cannot enter here. Suffice it to say – for my purposes – that I here refer to the codified variety which is standardised through dictionaries and grammars (and sometimes language academies), and which is taught in education systems.

Mutual comprehension presupposes linguistic competence in the others' language, including the ability to locate concepts in a semantic 'scheme' where concepts are interrelated and, then, knowing the contemporary and historical context for a concept or scheme. Furthermore, in any given situation, meaning has to be constantly negotiated and created, on the basis of a shared understanding of semantics and syntax. As Lloyd (2014) says, we have to be realistic and recognise that, even within the same language and under optimal conditions, full mutual comprehension is impossible; Lawrence's (2024) description of our 'limited bandwidth' would also suggest that we cannot expect to be completely successful. The difficulty is all the more evident when people with different languages seek mutual understanding, but Lloyd (2014) argues that we seldom if ever have to admit defeat and say we cannot understand at all. We can 'stretch' our vocabulary and grasp at least some of the resonances of another group's concepts, perhaps with the help of an interlocutor, provided we know how to inquire into those resonances[11].

For Davidson (2001), this is a matter of applying a 'principle of charity', which 'prompts the interpreter to maximize the intelligibility of the speaker, not sameness of belief', an approach which also implies, according to Corradetti, that "it is not possible in principle to conceive of any difference in beliefs, without simultaneously presupposing agreement over the majority of shared background beliefs" (2022, p. 13). In other words, we should approach others with the assumption that what they say can be made sense of in our language and concepts, but 'accommodation' – to use Wong's (2006) word – is not simply a linguistic matter. Linguistic accommodation is a necessary element of deciding whether a morality meets the fundamental conditions, or must be rejected as beyond the pale[12], but Wong describes full 'accommodation' as a matter of there being non-coercive and constructive relations with others, in the inevitable interaction which is part of being human. He also stresses that, whatever a theoretical perspective might suggest, in practice conflicting views on a specific situation are usually about 'priorities' rather than 'principles'. Principles are held in common and, in practice, not usually in dispute in situations of conflicting values. What has to be resolved in a 'non-coercive and constructive' way is how to agree or to disagree. Wong says that we may, as a consequence, understand others' choices or priorities without agreeing with them. X should be open to expand their own 'conceptions of the good' from Y but, according to Wong, this 'accommodation' cannot simply take precedence over everything, and ultimately one will – in my phrase – 'understand but not condone.'

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11   The notion of 'language awareness' is relevant here and teaching language awareness should be an integral part of language teaching, but this is not an argument that can be pursued here.

12   We can add here de Sousa Santos's (2014) concept of 'intercultural translation'. Although de Sousa Santos is more concerned with the socio-political purposes of translation, and the processes and roles/positions of translators, he argues that there are 'isomorphic concerns' in different cultures, for example 'concern with aspiration to human dignity'. In identifying such concerns and the 'commonplaces' of one culture, and attempting to translate them into the language of another, the incompleteness of commonplaces becomes visible, which otherwise goes unnoticed. The objective is not to 'achieve completeness' but to raise awareness by engaging in dialogue 'as it were, with one foot in one culture, and one foot in another'.

Whilst emphasizing this kind of interaction and cooperation, it is important not to reduce or essentialize 'culture X' and 'culture Y', even though some simplification is necessary for good theoretical explanation. In practice, in the contemporary world – more than in isolated communities such as were frequent in Europe in the past and may be found perhaps in other regions in the present – communities and their cultures are heterogeneous and moralities are hybrid. This makes 'accommodation' more necessary in practice but also more easily attainable.

4.3 Pluralism and Liberalism

The relationship between pluralism and liberalism is strongly associated with the work of Berlin, who, Crowder (2020, p. 2) says, is concerned above all to respond to the totalitarianism of the 20th century, to find an alternative to the monism of totalitarianism without falling into relativism.

If the purpose of developing the concept of value pluralism is political, the approach taken can be philosophical, developing an argument for a connection between value pluralism and liberalism. This is the subject of much debate (Myers, 2010; Zakaras, 2013).

Another approach is psychological: to say that people who embrace pluralism in their thinking will be liberalist because they are more likely to exhibit empathy, imagination, openness to other ways of life all of which 'motivate tolerance' (Zakaras, 2013, pp. 69–70). Pluralism involves making decisions and choices (between incommensurable values), and this enhances the humanity of pluralists, in contrast to monists who accept totalitarian authority and 'self-induced myopia' (Berlin, 1990, p. 14, as cited in Zakaras, 2013, p. 73). For Zakaras, paraphrasing Berlin, a value pluralist "can easily affirm the value of her own way of life while also acknowledging that other, incompatible cultures and ways of life contain objectively valuable human goods" (2013, p. 88). Furthermore, curiosity about others is inherent in the value pluralist whereas both relativist and monist assume that they already know all they need to know, thus cutting themselves off from the diversity which would enrich their experience and understanding.

This psychological relationship has implications for teaching, as we shall see.

5 Implications for Evaluating and Cooperating

5.1 Accommodating Value Conflict

There are two dimensions to conflicts in values. One is when conflicts arise among incommensurable values within one morality and a decision has to be taken, as we have seen. Another is when conflicts are observed to exist between two or more moralities and the values on which they are based. I now address the latter because it has significance for foreign language teaching.

The first issue and the temporally first step is 'understanding'. As we saw above, one argument for a relativist position is that understanding of other (groups of) people is not possible. This position seems tenable in principle: we experience that we never fully understand other languages and modes of communication. In practice however, provided we take a 'charitable' view and expect and assume that 'others' are essentially like 'us', i.e. are also human beings like us, and that if we are willing to 'stretch' our own language to accommodate new meanings, understanding can be achieved.

Linguistic accommodation and stretching of language is an aspect of general accommodation, i.e. the willingness to envisage that others prioritise shared values differently, and also have 'local' values which are new to us. Accommodation may also involve integrating unfamiliar values into our own system of values and/or accepting that other people may prioritise unfamiliar values in their intrapersonal lives and in their interpersonal cooperation.

However, if another morality does not include the principle of accommodation, then one-sided accommodation by 'us' is unlikely to lead to cooperation with 'them', which is why a morality which does not meet the condition of accommodation is not usually worthy of consideration. Yet, to ignore a group with such a morality is problematic, since it may lead to separation or ghettoisation, or even to physical conflict. On the other hand, an entire absence of accommodation is unlikely since a functioning morality is only possible if accommodation exists within a group, and the experience of accommodation can in principle be turned outwards to other groups and their moralities.

In fine, accommodation is crucial, and yet it is not all-important. It may not be possible or desirable in all cases. Individuals or groups may be unable to accommodate the values of others while remaining committed to their own morality and values. We may understand other people's morality and their priorities, but not condone them. Yet this may not apply to all the values of (a group of) other people. Some of other people's values and priorities may be incompatible with ours and beyond accommodation, but not all, and we can seek cooperation on the basis of shared values[13].

We may reject some but not all the values of another group and, in practice, we may see that some of those 'others' (members of the group whose morality we are observing and analysing) themselves have doubts and a critical position, and then we may not reject outright but take into consideration the actual and current context in which those conflicting values are experienced.

Values and the associated morality are the foundation for activity in general and planned action in particular. In evaluating and passing judgement on others' actions, we can judge them according to their own morality – provided that their morality meets the conditions for an acceptable morality – which may lead to accommodation and enrichment for us. Or we may base our judgement on our own morality, after ensuring that we have operated our sense of accommodation as far as possible. 'As far as possible' means, again,

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13 One starting point for seeking shared values is the UN sustainable development goals which have worldwide agreement if not yet implementation.

that in practice it is the degree of importance of the values in question which matters. In some cases, then, a normative perspective is taken in principle, but in practice the complexity of cases may lead to a complex response, a position which is aptly formulated by Berlin (as cited in Myers, 2010, p. 613):

> Or, if we do condemn societies or individuals, do so only after taking into account the social and material conditions, the aspirations, codes of value, degree of progress and reaction, measured in terms of their own situation and outlook; and judge them, when we do (and why in the world should we not?), as we judge anyone or anything else: in terms partly of what we like, approve, believe in, and think right ourselves, partly of the views of the societies and individuals in question, and of what we think about such views, and of how far we, being what we are, think it natural or desirable to have a wide variety of views. We judge as we judge, we take the risk that this entails.

Myers (2010, p. 613) describes this as a "practice-centred approach to the question of judgement", which is always a 'situated activity' taking into account our beliefs and values and, as far as we can ascertain them, the beliefs and values of others.

5.2 Cooperation

If we are to cooperate with others in practice – for example in taking action in the (political and social) world – cooperation can be realised on matters where there are shared values and accommodation. If there is disagreement on other values, the disagreement may have to be put in abeyance while action is taken, and the focus of cooperation carefully chosen. For example, we may disagree on capital punishment but agree on environmentalism, and proceed to cooperate on environmental action.

For the purposes of teaching and learning, this argument suggests that cooperation is in principle possible and in practice feasible if accompanied by an accommodating attitude towards other moralities – a context-dependent tolerance – and an accommodating, charitable approach to understanding and finding mutual intelligibility.

Accommodation is most likely to succeed where differences are small, and cooperation among people of different moralities is more likely to succeed when cooperation is based on shared values and/or values which can be accommodated. Furthermore, cooperation takes place in practice and in specific circumstances. Context is important.

5.3 Beyond the Rationalist Attitude

I quoted above Popper's definition of rationalism because CCA is based on 'an explicit, systematic process of reasoning'. This is the formulation from the 2021 definition of CCA rather than the 1997 definition which was: "an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (Byram, 1997, p. 63). It reveals more clearly my bias towards rationalism and excludes the emotional response to other values and events, and this might well be considered a weakness in my position.

In a recent project stimulated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Porto and Golubeva[14] corrected this bias (Porto et al., 2021) by turning to pedagogies of discomfort and arts-based education. They argue that, not least where teachers and learners engage with traumatic events such as the pandemic, "[t]he arts nurture social imagination and moral understanding through emotional engagement" (2021, p. 6). They locate their work within a humanistic approach with a focus on the development of learners as ethical beings who "cultivate an appreciation of diversity and otherness, and foster empathy, care, love, unity and solidarity in human relations." They also maintain a critical perspective and an active engagement with social issues. For they further argue and demonstrate that this can be combined with action in learners' communities which is 'political and activist' and in the spirit of that *engagement* at the heart and origin of *savoir s'engager*.

6 Pedagogical Implications

This is not the place nor does space allow for a full discussion of pedagogical implications, and I merely outline some principles and notions.

There are two stages to discussing the pedagogical implications: first, we must consider the learning process, for example Johnston et al.'s (2011) continuum mentioned above, broken into three levels of development of criticality. The second stage is the question of teaching methods and a curriculum which might lead learners along a developmental continuum. Furthermore, this work originating in higher education of adults needs to be directed towards schooling and children, i.e. young people who have not reached a legal age of adulthood. The reference to legal adulthood is important because of the implications it has for the ethical responsibilities of teachers.

The first stage is a matter of 'learning', i.e. developmental, but it also introduces the issue of whether criticality and evaluation can be taught 'generally' or need to be introduced through specific discipline teaching. Barnett (1997) seems to argue for discipline-related teaching. I would say that perhaps the teaching of the skills of critical thinking could be taught in separate disciplines, but the teaching/development of 'critical

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14 This work belongs to Melina Porto and Irina Golubeva. I am cited as a co-author but this was through the generosity of my two colleagues when all I did was contribute to shaping the text.

being' is more complex and needs to be approached differently. Barnett says (1997, p. 109), for example, that it is important that teachers should show that they too are (re) searching rather than providing determined/finalised knowledge. Johnston et al. (2011) develop the notion of what knowledge needs to be acquired as part of being a critical being. This includes disciplinary knowledge but also other kinds of knowledge. All of this has implications for curriculum design.

There is a particular significance in how criticality is introduced into curricula for intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008; Porto, 2014; Porto et al., 2025). Critical cultural awareness, as stated above, was influenced by work on *politische Bildung* and, later, *Demokratie Lernen*. Berlin's interest in clarifying value pluralism and Wong's approach to pluralist relativism both have political purposes. There is also the motivation to find a modus vivendi in countries and regions where groups with different moralities live – 'multicultural societies' – or within any group of any size where there are debates about major moral issues.

The theory and practice (in projects with students) of 'intercultural citizenship' is a realisation of human need for cooperation and reciprocity. It is (usually) deliberately structured, by teachers, so that learners meet other moralities than their own, or so that they reflect on the debates within the morality in which they have been brought up and educated. The work of Melina Porto and colleagues, some of which is cited above, has shown how art-based pedagogy can help learners to deal emotionally with difficult or even traumatic topics, such as response to Covid. In earlier work, she and a colleague brought together higher education students in Britain and Argentina to work on the contrasting views and nationalist values arising from the Malvinas/Falklands war between the two countries (Porto, 2014), and in a second project help Argentinian students to address the disturbing human rights issues during a military dictatorship (Yulita, 2017).

'Accommodation' is important here. Accommodation is easier if the differences between the relevant elements of the moralities are not (too) great. This implies that teachers have a responsibility when facilitating interactions with 'others' to consider how wide the differences are and whether the differences are incompatible. In the latter case, the risks of moral ambiguity and destabilisation are (too) great and should perhaps be avoided.

The underlying condition for all of this is that learners need to be curious and ready to suspend belief that their own way of life is the only possible one and therefore 'natural', and suspend disbelief about others' way of life, seeing it as unnatural and 'cultural'. The association of value pluralism with curiosity suggests that learners who are already curious about others will easily accept a value pluralist perspective. On the other hand those who are not curious, for whatever reason, might be encouraged and taught to be so by being introduced, in a pedagogically structured way, to other value systems. In the spirit of Berlin, who emphasised the significance of context and practice, this needs to be based on engaging with the dilemmas and choices of specific examples, not debating general principles.

The ethical dimensions are significant (Byram et al., 2025). Teachers of languages who consider their work includes teaching not only the skills, knowledge and attitudes of intercultural competence but also critical cultural awareness/*savoir s'engager*, engage in education and not just instruction, in *Bildung*. There are significant responsibilities which they share with other teachers who teach values. Many of those others promote the values of the national education system, of the nation and the state, as they are expected to do, and look inwards. Language teachers turn the gaze of their learners outwards and, traditionally, inform them about other countries and ways of life. If they also use this perspective to introduce criticality and then turn their learners' gaze back onto their own way of life, language teachers may meet challenge and censure from the nationalist perspective and need to be prepared for this. There are then implications for teacher education here too.

7 Conclusion

The notion of 'critical cultural awareness', and its political implications in *savoir s'engager*, has not always been well understood and the first purpose of this text has been to elucidate the meaning. One element of this is the need to consider the translatability of concepts from one language to another and the issue of mutual intelligibility when critical cultural awareness/*savoir s'engager* is included in foreign language education and the teaching of communicative competence.

The crucial element in the definition of CCA is the evaluation of our own and other people's values. This requires consideration of the debate about the universalism or otherwise of values, and the focus on pluralistic relativism and value pluralism, and this in turn takes us back to the political, to the association between value pluralism and liberalism, and the implications for teaching.

At the beginning I asked the question: How and on what basis can we evaluate and make judgements about other people's and our own values and moral positions? The answer which has emerged is that it is wise to avoid generalisations, that it is important to focus on particular cases and their contexts, whilst maintaining a pluralist stance.

Teaching CCA as part of foreign language pedagogy, and its implied social and political activism of cooperation with others who speak other languages, rests on the notion of accommodation and cooperation in particular circumstances of time and place, of working together with people with some other values and some shared values, finding a basis for mutual intelligibility in taking action in the world, in 'intercultural citizenship'.

Encouraging or even requiring learners to take action involves teachers in ethical decisions, and encouraging critique of their own values as well as those of others. There is risk involved. The questioning of the 'national values' a national education system is usually expected to promote, may lead to teachers being exposed to criticism and censure, especially in the current nationalist times in some countries. The implications that

language teachers need to be prepared for this in teacher education are clear although they cannot be pursued here.

Particularly as I write this text, the significance of nationalism, national values and jingoism is growing in many countries in the world, including in the 'West' which has hitherto a strong history of democratic freedom of speech. In a recent online lecture in Iran, I sensed the resistance to my views about teachers' responsibility to encourage critique because of the risk involved. I suspect that such resistance may appear in countries where hitherto we would not expect it. It is not for me to say what teachers must do, whether in Iran or any other country, but reflection on the critical stance of a Voltaire in the face of absolutism may remind us of the significance of criticality, and of the courage needed to exercise the right to free speech wherever it exists and despite the threats which are made by Trump-like figures and their acolytes.

Acknowledgement

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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF ZENÚ INDIGENOUS PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' EFL LEARNING EXPERIENCE ON THE COLOMBIAN CARIBBEAN COAST

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https://doi.org/10.21862/Intercultural/2025/8641/37

Abstract

Through an exploratory case study conducted by a Zenú Indigenous EFL teacher and a non-Indigenous language teacher educator, we aimed to explore the dynamics of a Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teacher's English as a Foreign Language Learning Experience (EFL-LE) at a Colombian public university. Our research contributes to the exploration of the EFL-LE theoretically, and empirically by centering Indigenous research paradigms (Wilson, 2008), Indigenous relationality, and Indigenous knowledge systems of the Americas (Rosado-May et al., 2020) as well as utilizing them to initiate a diverse, non-hierarchical dialogue with some theoretical constructs from the dominant society. Following Indigenous orality, spiral thinking, symbolism, and cyclical and relational time, we designed and piloted a multimodal narrative interview consisting of four sessions. Employing Indigenous relationality as the main approach to data analysis and using social network analysis, symbolic interactionism, and thematic analysis, we found that

in the Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teachers' EFL-LE, the University represents a territory of socialization with power, displaying several adaptations and resistances that took forms of partial and complete assimilation. Conflicts and alignments between Indigenous ways of learning and mainstream ones were also identified, along with the significance of finding purposes for the EFL-LE that serve and support the Zenú people. The epistemological and ontological limitations of the non-Indigenous researcher are also indicated and addressed.

Keywords: foreign language, Indigenous learners, learning experience

1 Introduction

The present study seeks to explore and understand the dynamics of a Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teacher's EFL-LE at a Colombian public university. As the second-largest Indigenous group in Colombia, the Zenú people lost their language during the colonization period but still have a rich cultural heritage, and many of them speak a sociolinguistic variety of Spanish. Understanding their foreign language learning experiences within mainstream education becomes particularly relevant, given their distinctive features. Although the notion of EFL-LE is not novel, its nature among Indigenous students remains unexplored theoretically and empirically. Nowadays, however, a growing body of literature (Mutuota, 2023; Ortiz & Aguirre, 2024) shows how school and university teachers oppose a standard education still rooted in a colonial and capitalist view of the world where hegemonic knowledge and learning systems are imposed on Indigenous learners, offering them an EFL-LE that excludes and undervalues their identities, worldviews, ways of learning, and cultural practices and traditions. Failure to understand what Indigenous students' EFL-LE entails may contribute to uncertainty about how Indigenous learners are involved. Rosado-May et al. (2020) explain that bringing the concept of Indigenous learning into majority education is complex because what Indigenous learning embraces is often not well-defined, and there is also the misconception that Indigenous learning and knowledge systems are static. EFL-LE among Indigenous learners in conventional education clearly demands further examination.

A fruitful conceptualization and operationalization of EFL-LE among Indigenous students can only be developed through Indigenous and critical perspectives. Different studies adopting decolonial and critical intercultural approaches have demonstrated that neglecting the value of Indigenous people's worldviews, paradigms, learning and knowledge systems in research and education has often resulted in less effective research outcomes (Pesambili, 2021), in lower achievements and demotivation to learn English as a foreign language (Tavella & Fernández, 2024), and loss of their culture, knowledge, and worldviews (Pesambili, 2021). Consequently, fostering an EFL-LE using Indigenous paradigms and critical perspectives has proved in recent studies to help Indigenous

learners to be more motivated to learn English, feel emotionally supported, increase their self-esteem, value their identity and culture (Mutuota, 2023), position themselves critically towards intercultural relations inside and outside classrooms (Ortiz & Aguirre, 2024), and acknowledge the importance of community members and territories in foreign language learning (Tavella & Fernández, 2024). Although current research has identified essential elements in the EFL-LE among Indigenous students, it is not yet fully understood which specific dimensions and components constitute it and how to operationalize and measure it holistically.

An in-depth understanding of the EFL-LE among Indigenous students is crucial because an improved EFL-LE can help Indigenous learners find the actual function of English in their communities and invest sustained effort in learning it. It has long been believed that Indigenous students need to learn English as a Foreign Language because it is the language that will allow them to have better social status (Tavella & Fernández, 2024), travel, interact with people from other cultures, and have better job opportunities (Heras et al., 2023). However, Baker et al. (2024) argue that it is uncertain whether English learning leads to such benefits among Indigenous peoples and to what extent English levels the field for them. These authors further state that "the material orientation of 'opening doors' suggests an alignment with neoliberal rather than decolonial discourses [as well as] imbue[s] English with a high degree of material and social capital" (p. 24) that may not favor Indigenous communities' continuance in the long run. Understanding the use of EFL in Indigenous contexts is vital to motivate and engage Indigenous learners in EFL learning. Rosado-May et al. (2020) explain that for Indigenous communities, "learning by itself without a goal to serve the community makes little sense […] [and that goal seeks the] communities' survival, sustainability, and futurities" (p. 82). Undoubtedly, the struggle of Indigenous learners to sustain motivation and apply their EFL learning effectively without a well-established community purpose is a compelling reason to explore their EFL-LE.

2 Review of Literature

2.1 Epistemic Diversity: An Indigenous Interculturality to Connect Indigenous and EFL Mainstream Education

English is not a neutral language (Gobbo & Russo, 2019), and its learning by Indigenous people advocates for an epistemic diversity approach to research and educational matters. Therefore, in countries such as Colombia that were colonized and then classified as peripheral, EFL education still promotes the idea that English is the language of superior cultures (e.g., the US and UK) and that it should be taught from the native speaker perspective, their cultures, values, epistemologies, and so on. In light of these considerations and the fact that this study aims to explore the EFL learning experience of a Zenú Indigenous student studying at a mainstream university, it is essential to center

Indigenous epistemologies and conceptualizations and use them as a tool to engage in a diverse, non-hierarchical epistemic dialogue with the dominant society. Thus, this investigation adopts the Indigenous concept of interculturality suggested by the Colombian Nasa Indigenous leaders and researchers:

> We understand interculturality as the possibility of dialogue between cultures. It is a political project that transcends education to envision the construction of different societies. We understand the concept of interculturality as starting from the knowledge of one's culture to integrating knowledge from outside. The practice of interculturality is inherently political, as it seeks to create the conditions for establishing horizontal relationships of dialogue between different cultures. In other words, interculturality encompasses relationships generated and experienced through valuing and respecting the other. [...] The goal is to establish horizontal relationships between Indigenous peoples and other social movements and between Indigenous organizations and the dominant society (CRIC–PEBI, 2004, p.123).

This definition of interculturality shows that although Indigenous people are open to dialogue with other cultures and the Colombian dominant society, this intercultural dialogue can only be conducted and achieved under conditions of equality, equity, respect, and horizontality. In this sense, Zenú people state that "universal knowledge coming from hegemonic cultures can be accepted as long as it does not foster the acculturation or loss of their own identity; and it acknowledges that there is not a culture, but cultures, and that there are not superior or inferior cultures, but that we are all part of the same human species" (PEC Zenú, 2014, p. 45). Therefore, Zenú people demand that just as universal knowledge has been researched utilizing Western and/or Eurocentric frameworks, their traditional knowledge and associated practices are to be explored and investigated from their worldview. From their perspective, "research should reveal who [they] are, allow [them] to define [themselves] as '[them]' and differentiate [themselves] from 'the others'; to generate new knowledge and attitudes; and to strengthen the cultural identity and values belonging to a social group" (PEC Zenú, 2014, p. 45). Zenú researcher Montaño Flórez (2021) also points out that the interculturality they advocate poses the possibility of epistemic, philosophical, and pedagogical decolonization and aims to acknowledge and revive Indigenous knowledge, meanings, and identities. On that account, this research only attempts to utilize the Nasa Indigenous concept of interculturality as a mechanism to maintain a horizontal epistemically diverse dialogue that values Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate and essential form of knowledge creation. This dialogue is evidenced in the following sections.

2.2 Conceptualizing Indigenous Students' EFL-LE

The notion of EFL-LE applies to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts, yet it is largely unaddressed with Indigenous students. Although English is taught to Indigenous people within their own and through mainstream education, no concept of the EFL-LE is suggested within Indigenous theories. Consequently, this research proposes to engage Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) definition of the EFL-LE into a dialogue with scholarship on Indigenous ways of knowing and learning that also represent Zenú people. A dialogic approach that reflects epistemic diversity allows for a conceptual reframing of what the EFL-LE could mean in an Indigenous context and serves as a starting point for this study. A definition that may authentically represent the EFL-LE of Zenú Indigenous students can only emerge after several studies have been conducted. Consequently, Table 1 illustrates the deconstruction of Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) definition through a comparative analysis with excerpts from Indigenous scholarship on their ways of knowing and learning. The table shows similarities and differences between the two perspectives, analyzing how Indigenous knowledge systems align or deviate from the components of the EFL-LE suggested by Csizér and Kálmán.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of the Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning and Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) Definition of the EFL-LE

Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning (Excerpts from Indigenous Scholarship)	Segments of Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) Definition of the EFL-LE	Analysis
"Embodies a web of relationships" (Battiste, 2002, p.14) "Relationships between the living and the non-living" (Wilson, 2008) "Indigenous worldview and spirituality are the basis of the educational system" (PEC Zenú, 2014) "Feeling and thinking perspective [...] Feeling the community as a whole" (PEC Zenú, 2014) "Symbolism affects their ritual practices, ways of daily life, and perceptions of the world" (Martínez-Luna, 2024)	"The L2 learning experience is the perception of internal cognitive and emotional processes,	Comparing the segments presented in this first part, the EFL-LE of Indigenous students may be the perception of interconnected relational processes involving spiritual, cultural, intercultural, cognitive, emotional, social, corporeal, territorial, communal, and symbolic dimensions. The worldview of each Indigenous people must also be considered.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning (Excerpts from Indigenous Scholarship)	Segments of Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) Definition of the EFL-LE	Analysis
"Learning is present in every instance, at every moment, and in every space of everyday life in the community" (Pérez, 1999, p. 35) "They think of the other and their territory as inherent parts of themselves" (PEC Zenú, 2014)	as well as external stimuli and circumstances that the learner experiences in the course of learning a foreign language in and outside the classroom;	The contextual (in and outside the classroom) dimensions of EFL-LE are key among Indigenous students' EFL-LE. Emphasis of and regard for the territory's role and the daily life of the Indigenous community are needed.
"Stories go in circles" (Wilson, 2008) "Spiral thinking" (Tafoya, 1995) "A cyclical and dynamic way of learning that is experienced in everyday life" (Rosado-May et al., 2020) "Intergenerational learning" (van der Hammen & Rodríguez, 1999)	it is shaped and determined by attributions stemming from past L2 learning, and L2 use experiences that continually evolve after the actual language learning and language use has taken place."	Although Csizér and Kálmán (2019b) broaden initial notions of EFL-LE by including the temporal (past and current EFL learning and EFL use experiences) dimension, it still follows the hegemonic linear concept of time that emphasizes a one-directional progression (e.g., beginning, middle, end; past, present, future) and is future-oriented. However, the Indigenous notion of time is cyclical and relates to the life cycle. Thus, past, present, and future are often interconnected, with time understood as a living entity that interacts with humans and the natural realm.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning (Excerpts from Indigenous Scholarship)	Segments of Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) Definition of the EFL-LE	Analysis
		Indigenous people's use of orality and the emphasis on stories involves a narrative dimension of the EFL-LE. The concepts of 'attributions' and 'perception' as builders and shapers of the EFL-LE in Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) definition also opens this possibility. "Indigenous methodologies draw from the narrative methods [and find them beneficial for gathering] information about one's physical space, cultural location, ecological connection, and relationships to others and the living and the nonliving." (Chilisa, 2020, p.127)
		Learning for Indigenous people is dynamic, as Rosado-May et al. (2020) suggested. This perspective aligns with Csizér and Kálmán's (2019b) use of the expression 'continually evolve'. The authors clearly acknowledge that the EFL-LE is dynamic, continuously changing, and developing.
"Learning by itself without a goal to serve the community makes little sense" (Rosado-May et al., 2020, p. 82) "Safeguard their cultural continuity" (Little Bear, 2009)	No related terms were found.	Indigenous peoples attach great importance to the purpose of learning. Therefore, a conceptualization of Indigenous students' EFL-LE should include learning English as a foreign language to serve the community and ensure and nurture their cultural continuity.

2.3 Approaching EFL-LE through Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Complemented by Selected Complex Dynamic System Theory (CDST) Elements

The fact that Indigenous learning and knowledge systems are dynamic, relational, and nonlinear cannot be overlooked when exploring Zenú Indigenous learners' EFL-LE. Thus, the current study adopts the relational Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and the expanded version of the LOPI (Learning by Observing and Pitching In to family and community endeavors) framework that is central in the Indigenous knowledge systems of the Americas (Rosado-May et al., 2020). From the ontology and epistemology of an Indigenous relational paradigm, learning experiences can be considered relational and collective since the truth is not limited to contextual variables, but instead, multiple realities and truths are part of an interconnected web of life in which all parts (e.g., living and non-living things, the cosmos, land, earth, invisible beings) influence and intertwine with each other (Wilson, 2008). Additionally, given that knowledge is collective, and the body is seen as a territory from which knowledge emerges through the mutual weaving of bodily and territorial experiences (CRIC-UAIIN, 2021), the EFL-LE among Indigenous learners may be corporealized and intricately connected to other relations that are not necessarily between human beings (e.g., territory, ancestral wisdom/traditions). Undeniably, this relational nature of Indigenous learning systems must be considered.

Within the LOPI framework, Indigenous learning and knowledge systems are dynamic, cyclical, and perennial (Rosado-May et al., 2020); thus, the EFL-LE can be perceived as such. Rosado-May et al. (2020) explain that the way knowledge and learning work in Indigenous communities shares principles with the dynamic systems theory since knowledge construction for many Indigenous communities is a "system of dynamics without motion" (p. 83) that, in a nonlinear way, is constantly evolving and renewing through dynamic and complex structured community practices and innovation. The latter is often achieved through contact among different cultural groups, including hegemonic societies. These authors stress that part of the Indigenous students' learning process is to learn how to combine Indigenous and hegemonic knowledge so that they coexist and bring innovation to the Indigenous communities without jeopardizing the endurance and legitimacy of their learning and knowledge systems. Consequently, the EFL-LE as a dynamic and changing construct may also relate to intercultural components between Indigenous and hegemonic worlds that have not yet been considered in its conceptualization and operationalization.

In non-Indigenous research, approaching the EFL-LE from a CDST perspective that acknowledges its dynamic, relational, and nonlinear nature is also being advocated. Consequently, the present study seeks to use elements from this metatheory to complement the relational Indigenous paradigm and the Indigenous knowledge system framework. This investigation does not adopt the whole CDST metatheory, but only some elements that can benefit the exploration of the Indigenous learners' EFL-LE and align with the

Indigenous frameworks followed in this research. For example, CDST adds to this study the importance of the butterfly effect and the adaptive nature of systems. Although CDST does not follow spiral thinking and the cyclical Indigenous concept of time, it acknowledges the nonlinearity and circular/reciprocal causality that characterizes language learners' interactions when perceived as complex dynamic subsystems and suggests the butterfly effect when studying the EFL-LE. Larsen-Freeman (2017) explains how a small change can have a considerable impact further along in the learner experience, cause-effect relationships are not direct and proportional, and the evolving nature of the experience can take different paths since the same cause can produce different effects in different circumstances.

Finally, adaptation also plays a key role in the EFL-LE. Larsen-Freeman (2017) explains that "complex systems are adaptive; they can 'learn' as a result of experience. Moreover, an adaptive system changes in response to changes in its environment. Successful adaptive behavior entails the ability to respond to novelty" (Larsen-Freeman, 2017, p. 16). This study emphasizes the nonlinear adaptation of systems in CDST because it has been well-documented in Indigenous literature how Indigenous learners do not experience a successful adaptation when enrolled in mainstream education but instead go through a process of assimilation of knowledge and values that are foreign to their realities and culture (Trillos, 1999). Zenú researcher Montaño-Flórez (2021) states that the exposure of educational action to processes of domination in which other epistemic and ontological frameworks are imposed turns education into an element of acculturation and symbolic violence that also leads to cultural resistance. This draws attention to the forms of adaptations Indigenous students adopt and/or engage with in their EFL-LE. Given the complexities identified, this study addresses the following research question: What characterizes the dynamics of a Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teacher' EFL learning experience at a Colombian public university?

3 Research Design

The qualitative exploratory case study reported on in this paper centered on Indigenous philosophical assumptions and methodologies while engaging selectively with mainstream perspectives in some cases. Our approach allowed us to a) generate an instrument and analysis methods that permit a respectful and authentic representation of the Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teacher's EFL-LE; b) understand and address the non-Indigenous researcher's epistemological and ontological limitations. This approach is illustrated in detail in the following sections.

3.1 Philosophical Assumptions: An Indigenous Research Paradigm Complemented with Interpretive and Constructivist Paradigms

Since the present study is committed to researching with Indigenous peoples through open dialogue, respect, and an epistemic diverse approach, it centers an Indigenous research paradigm while using interpretive and constructivist approach as support for the non-Indigenous researcher. Although some scholars have stated that Indigenous research can find allies in the constructivist paradigm (Kovach, 2009; Chilisa, 2020) and that the hermeneutics in the interpretive approach are an essential component of Indigenous epistemology (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous scholars (Barrett, 2017; Chilisa, 2020) sustain that knowledge generation within these paradigms has been shaped by hegemonic philosophies and cultures that in turn have excluded the worldviews and practices of formerly colonized societies. Although this investigation acknowledges that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have different epistemologies, ontologies, axiologies, and methodologies to conduct research, this study is conducted not only by a Zenú Indigenous researcher but also by a non-Indigenous researcher who is a product of Western schooling. Therefore, we propose to anchor the present study on an Indigenous research paradigm and employ interpretive and constructive paradigms as tools to help comprehend the non-Indigenous researcher's own epistemological and ontological limitations. A comparative analysis was conducted to understand the points of convergence and divergence among these three research paradigms (Indigenous, interpretive, constructivist). These reflections, alongside the non-Indigenous researcher's openness to learning and collaborative work with Zenú people, helped her approximate Indigenous ways of being, feeling, knowing, and doing.

Some of the non-Indigenous researcher's epistemological and ontological limitations identified were:

- The non-Indigenous researcher found it challenging to foresee research implications when knowledge construction involves an interconnected web of living, non-living, and visible and invisible elements. She lacked personal experience of understanding and incorporating spiritual, ancestral, and territorial elements into the research process. For instance, when interconnections, including ancestral forces, emerged, the non-Indigenous researcher had difficulty further exploring the topic.
- The non-Indigenous researcher struggled with using Indigenous relationality and spiral thinking to design the research instrument and analyze the data. She experienced obstacles when designing and piloting an interview that followed Indigenous perspectives. She also wrestled with distancing herself from the categorization and reductionist approaches while analyzing the data.

A brief explanation of the adopted Indigenous research paradigm is also needed. Although two similar Indigenous research paradigms can be found in the literature (CRIC-UAIIN, 2021; Wilson, 2008), the current study integrates the two: one international (Wilson,

2008) and one national (CRIC–UAIIN, 2021). The national research paradigm reflects the perspectives of the Indigenous peoples of the Cauca and Nariño regions in Colombia. While grounded in the international framework, the national paradigm redefines the international model by interpreting it through the principles and worldviews of the Indigenous peoples from Cauca and Nariño. Consequently, these two paradigms share common foundations but differ in specificities that characterize the heterogeneity among Indigenous peoples across contexts.

Considering that this study focuses on Zenú Indigenous people who are mostly concentrated on the Colombian Caribbean Coast and have not yet formally developed a research paradigm that responds to their distinctive features, we draw upon both the national and international paradigms to adapt them to the specific context, features, and worldview of the Zenú people. This adaptation is based on key principles that Zenú people have articulated in their Law of Self-Government (Ley de Gobierno Propio del Pueblo Zenú, 2017) and their PEC Zenú (2014) and that resonate with both the national and international paradigms previously mentioned. Consequently, this investigation follows an Indigenous relational epistemology, ontology, and methodologies. The relational axiology follows general Indigenous principles (Relationality, Relational Accountability, Respect, Reciprocity, and Rights and Regulations) as well as specific Zenú people's principles (Territory, Law of Origin, Spirituality, Interculturality, Communality, The Word, Love, Complementarity, and Zenú Worldview).

3.2 The Case of Manexca: A Zenú Indigenous Pre-Service English Teacher

Manexca[1] is a member of a Zenú Indigenous Cabildo located in the Sabanas subregion of Western Sucre on the Colombian Caribbean Coast. Manexca's home is nestled in a rural area that is legally and culturally considered Zenú territory, and therefore everyday life is rooted in Zenú worldviews, knowledge systems, and practices. After finishing her studies in the school in her community, she enrolled in a ten-semester bachelor's program in foreign language teacher education at a public university. This university is located an hour away from her home. Manexca's parents did not allow her to live elsewhere; instead, her dad took her to the university daily by motorcycle. Manexca explained that her parents' decision was mainly grounded in their fear of something bad happening to her and their belief that women should not leave their homes to settle elsewhere.

Upon entering university, Manexca's English language proficiency was low. This situation is typical for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the context of this research. The high school students' low scores are often evidenced in the national high school exit exam (Gobernación de Sucre, 2024). This situation can be attributed to the fact that English is generally not used outside the classroom in Sucre. Students also rarely go

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1   The Zenú participant asked for her pseudonym to be Manexca. Manexca is the mother of Zenú people and symbolizes the feminine spirit of Mother Earth and her capacity to provide for Zenú people and their territory.

abroad or interact with foreign people. In addition, the usual number of English classes per week at schools ranges from one to three.

It is worth noting that Manexca is familiar with the non-Indigenous researcher conducting this study. The non-Indigenous researcher is an associate professor in the same foreign language teacher education program Manexca enrolled in. Manexca was never her student, but they have known each other since 2020 and have organically and gradually built an academic and personal relationship based on trust, respect, and mutual interests.

3.3 Designing, Piloting, and Implementing a Multimodal Narrative Interview

We worked on designing and piloting an interview that could reflect a respectful representation of Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teachers. The interview was first piloted with a Zenú Indigenous in-service English teacher who graduated from the same bachelor's program that Manexca enrolled in. Considering that Indigenous orality follows spiral thinking, is made of stories, and is permeated by the territorial, symbolic, and corporealized nature of Indigenous learning, we created a *multimodal narrative interview* divided into four sessions, including a multimodal activity per session. The metaphor of stories as rhizomes proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) also gave us the idea of naming and associating each session with rhizomatic plants. Table 2 shows an outline of the topics covered per session.

Table 2. Outline of the Topics Covered per Session in the Multimodal Narrative Interview

Interview Session	Sections
First seeds of the Indigenous learner	The learner's territory and community The learner's family context The learner himself/herself/themselves
First Sprouts: Being an EFL learner across contexts	Connections to community/ territory/ family and being a language learner Transitioning from school to university – from a rural to an urban area
Roots, Nodes, and Internodes: Experiences as an EFL Language Learner	English language learning experiences Turning points in your English language learning process
Roots, Nodes, and Internodes: Personal Ideology and Follow-up Questions	Value of learning English Ways of learning English as a foreign language Change of views Follow-up questions

The piloting with the Zenú in-service English teacher and the interviews with Manexca were conducted by the non-Indigenous researcher via Zoom and subsequently recorded and transcribed. During the piloting, the non-Indigenous researcher and the Zenú one revised, discussed and reflected on the transcripts of the interviews and improved the interview guide and protocol for each session. These discussion meetings also helped the non-Indigenous researcher develop her interview skills with Zenú participants and broaden her knowledge about Zenú people's experiences, ways of thinking, feeling, and being. The interviews were conducted in Spanish.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

This study employed NVivo 15 to process and analyze the collected data. We adopted Indigenous relationality as the primary approach to analyze the data gathered. Social network analysis (Hiver & Al-Hoorie, 2020), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were also used to complement the data analysis procedures and to help the non-Indigenous researcher approximate the Zenú researcher's Indigenous relational, territorial, and symbolic approach to the data. Lastly, both researchers analyzed the data individually and then discussed and reflected on their analyses to produce a more credible, authentic, and respectful representation of Manexca's EFL-LE.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical measures were taken. Credibility was achieved through piloting the multimodal narrative interview and member checking. A research report draft was shared and discussed with Manexca before the study's findings and conclusions were finalized. The participant signed an informed consent, and Manexca was used as a pseudonym to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. Indigenous relational accountability was also achieved by a) grounding the study in Zenú people's worldview, territory, context, and learning and knowledge systems; b) demonstrating respect, reciprocity, and responsibility to the Zenú people and the broader web of life; and c) showing the non-Indigenous researcher's commitment to Zenú people. The non-Indigenous researcher showed her commitment by studying, respecting, and honoring Indigenous scholarship and Zenú people's culture and worldview, reflecting honestly on her limitations, perceiving this study as a learning experience, and deeply caring about understanding the EFL-LE of Zenú Indigenous pre-service English teachers.

4 Results

This study explored the dynamics of Manexca's EFL-LE at a Colombian public university. The data analysis revealed that Manexca's EFL-LE revolved around the university as a space of socialization with power that offered limited but meaningful support. Conflicts and alignments between Indigenous and mainstream learning systems were identified. Manexca also mentioned the significance of finding purposes for her EFL-LE that served and supported her Zenú community.

4.1 The University as a Territory of Socialization with Power Offering Limited Support for a Zenú Student's EFL-LE

Out of 253 references in the data, 101 linked the university as a site with power and influence, with some support spaces for Manexca's EFL-LE. Manexca's relationships with her classmates and teachers emerged as a prominent theme (77 out of 101 references) in the data. Manexca's EFL teachers and classmates discriminated against and marginalized her because of her Indigenous identity and her ways of knowing and learning. These classroom experiences substantially affected her self-esteem, motivation, and development of her EFL communicative competencies. Manexca's stories illustrated her deep fear of public speaking in English because every time she made errors, she received derisive giggles and disparaging comments: "You got it wrong. Why did you get into this?" "You are wrong because you are Indigenous." "We won't understand you, so why stand up in public?" (2nd Interview)

Such comments seemed to arise from her teachers' and classmates' prejudiced perceptions of her non-standard sociolinguistic variation of Spanish, her Indigenous origins, and her appearance. Manexca's Spanish differed from her classmates' and affected her accent and English pronunciation in a way that others found weird, non-acceptable, and a subject of mockery. Her English teacher told her: "What you have to do is to adapt to here and there in your culture, do your culture" (2nd Interview). She expressed in her third interview: "Encountering this new idea that the teachers are mocking me, that fellow students are mocking me. I thought it was too difficult for me; I didn't want to continue." Additionally, Manexca's teacher advised her to dress in a more professional, mature, and serious manner that aligns with being a teacher. Her appearance and dress style represented how many Zenú women look, with long dark hair and brightly colored (e.g., pink) clothes. Manexca also described how the English competencies she was developing and the knowledge she could convey in English were undervalued in group work activities. In team-based work, her viewpoint was dismissed, and even if the topic concerned Indigenous people, her voice was overlooked, and the conversation remained superficial. Manexca explained that to avoid being judged; she mostly remained silent in the classroom. She also expressed her confusion by emphasizing that errors are not

used as a source of humiliation in her community. Instead, communication focuses on intention and mutual understanding more than accuracy in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Manexca's classroom experiences negatively affected her performance; therefore, she often received bad grades that undermined her self-perception as an EFL learner.

In response to her classroom experiences, Manexca resorted to adaptations and resistances that helped her fit into the new context and not abandon her studies. According to her, changing her dress style was necessary to be accepted. She had her hair cut and stated that the advice to change her dress style was good because now she has more appropriate clothes for a teacher. Bright colors may be convenient only when teaching children. She added that these changes were negative for her culture because she no longer wears those colors for Indigenous events and that her long hair was a symbol of Zenú Indigenous female identity. Manexca's adaptation is a form of assimilation.

Regarding the impact of her Spanish variety Manexca acquired standard Spanish for communication within the university and continued to use her sociolinguistic variety in her Zenú community. Standard Spanish helped her improve her English pronunciation and build relationships with her classmates. She said: "I felt just like everyone else" (2nd Interview). For Manexca, her EFL-LE is not an individual experience but a process of connection between two worlds. Her linguistic forced adaptation shows her attempt to make her university and Indigenous identity coexist. This adaptation involves a form of resistance in which she also preserves her sociolinguistic variation in specific environments and tries to resist complete assimilation.

Manexca's narratives draw attention to the symbolic and relational nature of the EFL-LE. In them, her appearance and linguistic elements are symbols of her Indigenous identity and sense of belonging to Zenú people and territory. However, these symbols were displaced within the university system and became markers of difference, adaptation, and resistance. Manexca's desire to be accepted as a member of the university social network led her to adopt symbols better comprehended and valued academically. Likewise, meanings of inferiority and illegitimacy attributed to Indigenous identity and knowledge systems inhibited Manexca from building a community in her EFL classroom, rupturing the relationality and reciprocity that characterized her Zenú people. These battles between her community and the university reveal a symbolic frontier, where her Zenú territory represents the belonging interconnections to the territory and specific expressions, knowledge, and practices. Simultaneously, the university environment represents a system with different norms and expectations that limits a profound comprehension of Indigenous people's culture and identity and does not offer a genuine intercultural dialogue. Through resistance and assimilation-based adaptation strategies, Manexca's EFL-LE demonstrates that the university works as a node that has the power to influence her perception of her identity and culture and subsequently negatively impacts her EFL-LE.

On the other hand, Manexca's fear of public speaking and being ridiculed and discriminated against by her classmates and teachers had some positive results. Manexca

took an English teaching job in the school of her community as a resistance strategy. She decided to use the university EFL classroom as a space to acquire the theory and her local school as a space to put that theory into practice. She described how her community valued her English communicative competencies and provided a supportive and safe emotional environment for her to enhance her English language proficiency. After over a year, she finally spoke English in front of her classmates, surprising them with her proficiency. This story shows that a strengthened relationality positively influences Manexca's EFL-LE. While teaching English in her local school, Manexca noticed the Zenú students' particular accent and English pronunciation because of their variety of Spanish. Since she shared their EFL-LE and Spanish variety, she identified the conflicting pronunciation areas and strategies to deal with them. She realized that her EFL teachers' deficient response to her pronunciation issues was because they were unaware of a Spanish variety interfering with English pronunciation; there was nothing flawed about her; she was simply different. Manexca added that her teaching experience also gave her EFL-LE a sense of purpose and agency since she could use it to serve her community and enhance her EFL-LE.

Similarly, in 24 of 101 references, Manexca's narratives showed that she found some supportive spaces within the university that positively influenced her EFL-LE, but not often in her English language courses. A psycholinguistics teacher and a research student group acted as supporting nodes in Manexca's university social network. The psycholinguistics teacher used a variety of teaching methodologies, and although the class was taught in English, Manexca felt comfortable. She remembered her teacher explaining that not everyone learns in the same way and that some students need other learning methodologies but had not met a teacher who taught how they learned. Manexca shared that she felt profoundly motivated and reinterpreted her difficulties in learning English not as a personal flaw but as a problem of teachers' methodological adjustment. The butterfly effect of her psycholinguistics teacher was so substantial that Manexca experienced a strong drive to attend different English classes at the university and research ways she and her Zenú students could learn English more easily.

The research student group allowed for horizontal relationships in which she and her Indigenous culture and knowledge systems were treated as equally valid and legitimate. Manexca felt valued in the group and said that while working with the teacher coordinating the research group, she thought: "This is my territory in this university" (4th Interview). Territory here refers to a geographical site and a symbolic space of belonging, safety, and empowerment. She could build a community and actively participate in knowledge production in that territory. Manexca described how motivated she felt by finally connecting English and her Indigenous culture. She added that interactions with the teacher made her feel more confident about speaking in public, projecting her voice within the classroom, and reflecting on ways her EFL-LE could be helpful in her community.

The above-mentioned supporting university networks had a ripple effect on her EFL-LE and other Indigenous students' EFL-LE. Manexca detailed how she encouraged other Indigenous friends not to give up on their studies and not to hide their Indigenous identity

either. Manexca herself became a supporting node in Indigenous students' relationality, and her behavior can be perceived as a form of community resistance. It is an active resistance in which she encourages others not to succumb to rejection and exclusion. She suggests a reterritorialization process where she and other Indigenous students can reclaim the university as a space where they can also belong. Manexca's sustained efforts to bring her Indigenous culture, knowledge, and learning systems into her EFL-LE portrayed a form of protective resistance to the university's devaluation of her culture.

4.2 Indigenous and Mainstream Learning Systems: Conflicting and Aligning

In 52 references out of 253, Manexca's stories touched on how she adapted or resisted the conflicts and disconnection between Indigenous and mainstream ways of learning. She said:

> Yes, in some way, it changed the way I learn. I used to say, "But how do I learn English?" Then some classmates would give me tips, but they were *their* tips, *their* learning methods, and I'd say, "But I don't get it." No matter how much I tried to copy their methods, I didn't see that learning happen. (3ʳᵈ Interview)

Clearly, Manexca's classmates' learning methodologies were not transferable to her and her Zenú learning context. Manexca remembered using the university learning methods to teach her Zenú students and realized they also had difficulty learning with those approaches. This shared EFL-LE with her students led Manexca to actively search for ways of learning English that proved effective for her and her Zenú pupils. The data demonstrated that Manexca's EFL-LE proved arduous and demanding because mainstream education is unresponsive to Indigenous ways of learning and because of three initial conflicting roots between Indigenous and mainstream learning systems. The first is linked to Indigenous intergenerational Learning, as evidenced in Manexca's second interview:

> The context of learning the language and here the community was something different because when they taught me how to weave if I didn't learn it with my mom, my aunt taught it to me; if I didn't learn it with my aunt, my grandmother taught it to me. And there were three different ways of learning. Suddenly, my mom did it with love, my aunt did it as if, "Let's do it quickly so you can learn quickly," but my grandmother sometimes did it like, "Look, this is how it's done, step by step" […] At the university, I was only going to have one teacher, and they weren't going to say, "No, if you don't learn with him, we're going to change your teacher; we'll find you another teacher with different methods…

Manexca's words illustrate how Indigenous intergenerational learning is not about transmitting Indigenous knowledge vertically (teacher to student) but through supporting networks that involve different family members. This example shows that relationality is not a mechanical experience but a shared contextualized one that involves emotions and personal bonds. Similarly, intergenerational learning works as a self-correcting system by adjusting the teaching style to the learner's needs.

Another underlying conflict concerns the concept of orality. Manexca recounted that she struggled with the English language being so linguistically structured. Initially, she was skeptical about the premise that communication in English only happens if she carefully follows the grammatical structures and specific patterns of coherence. She said she tried to avoid those rules and communicate with a native speaker, and he could not understand her. She made another attempt, applying linguistic and coherence principles, and communication happened. This EFL-LE was a realization for Manexca. She explained that in her Zenú community, orality has a more spontaneous and fluid approach where rigid grammatical structures or punctuation forms are not essential to their daily linguistic practice. This result indicates that orality has a more community approach that centers on mutual understanding and relationality, not the language's technical formality. The difference between concepts such as spoken English language and orality caused a hardship in Manexca's EFL-LE.

The last conflict is tied to the tension between Indigenous experiential learning and academic theoretical learning. Manexca stated, "When I was at school, I thought learning English was like learning how to walk or ride a bicycle, but then at the university, I realized it wasn't like that" (4th Interview). Manexca's analogy between her EFL-LE and learning to ride a bicycle can be interpreted as an Indigenous relationship with knowledge, in which learning is experiential and profoundly linked to imitation, daily life practice, and collaboration. However, her EFL-LE at the university involves more structures and memorization, which distances her from experiential learning. This structural gap may represent a rupture in Manexca's relationality with knowledge, which forces her to adapt and reconsider her learning approach to English.

Manexca incorporated five ways of learning in her EFL-LE through sustained efforts to learn and help her Zenú students learn. Her learning methodologies illustrate an alignment between Indigenous and mainstream learning systems. The first way of learning assembles observation, corporeality, and Indigenous relationality. For instance, she was highly motivated by an in-class activity in which they had to work in groups. One student mimicked an action (e.g., to rain), and they had to guess the verb in English. She added: "I never played that game because I did not talk in the second semester, but I observed how they did it, and only by observing I learned [...] I also thought that my students would like that activity" (4th Interview). Did Manexca's EFL teacher consider her non-participation as not learning, or was he aware that she was learning through active observation? Another example is that Manexca also observed and utilized learning activities conducted by Zenú community mothers. Their activities also involved observation, teamwork, and

body movement. These examples resonate with Indigenous ways of learning in which it is through observing others performing a task that the younger ones develop skills and knowledge. Instead of learning through exhaustive instruction, learning is based on attention, patience, experiential learning, horizontal relationships, and co-creation, in which learning occurs through collaboration and the community. In Manexca's EFL-LE, different people (e.g., teachers, Zenú community mothers, peers) became nodes that impacted her knowledge construction and ways of learning English.

The second way of learning relates to establishing connections between words, visuals, and Zenú artifacts and symbols. Manexca used different elements from her environment to create an English dictionary that included words, images drawn by herself, and sample sentences indicating in which context she could use those words. She said the dictionary felt like a diary to her. Similarly, she used artifacts to collectively create word maps with her Zenú students and individually generate their own ideas about a topic. Finding connections echoes Indigenous ways of learning, in which knowledge is organized through logical relations from the learners' standpoint. This relationality promotes symbolic learning since each word becomes a symbol, metaphor, or visual representation, allowing for the construction of more complex ideas and narratives when connected to other words. Consequently, Manexca's EFL-LE utilized Zenú cultural elements and visuals to actively construct knowledge individually and collectively.

A third way of learning concerns relationality in the EFL classroom at the university and the school in her community. The best EFL-LE Manexca had at the university involved a teacher who implemented diverse learning activities and always had a cheerful and enthusiastic attitude. This teacher was a source of motivation in her EFL-LE since she allowed her to feel emotionally safe and build meaningful relations with her and her peers. Manexca talked with her Zenú students about activities they enjoyed doing in her community that could be used as resources of their ways of learning English. Additionally, her stories illustrated that her ways of learning also linked to learning how to socialize and resolve conflicts among peers. Manexca's EFL experiences connect with Indigenous ways of learning where knowledge is not an individual cognitive process but a relational and community-based process in which collective welfare and harmony are fundamental. The idea that all members in a classroom contribute to the creation and organization of learning fosters a sense of community and collaboration. For Manexca, people build ways of learning through social interaction and negotiation of meanings.

Finally, Manexca incorporated ways of learning that are associated with technology. She considers technology important for Zenú Indigenous young generations. Consequently, she shared stories about movies, TikTok, the occasional projector use, and karaoke in the EFL classroom, positively influencing her students' and her EFL-LE. In Manexca's EFL-LE, learning through movies, TikTok, and karaoke emphasized a collective experience and oral and visual narratives. Manexca started watching movies and TikTok videos in English with her family and tried teaching them English words. This practice shows how Manexca inserted her EFL-LE in her family environment, making it a collective experience

and acting as an intercultural bridge between external knowledge and her community. Now, her family can access new symbols through her. The karaoke experience reinforces a way of learning that encourages active participation within a group, where students simultaneously learn a language and experience symbolic interactions related to rhythm, melody, and meanings. Karaoke allowed her to learn through affective and sensorial channels.

Manexca's agency-driven reaction to mainstream, pre-established learning approaches and discovery of her ways of learning demonstrate a form of active resistance that allowed her to adapt and help her Zenú students. Manexca's narratives illustrated that she was reterritorializing the EFL classroom as an educational space where both her Zenú students and she could have a positive EFL-LE that allowed for meaningful and authentic learning based on their own terms.

4.3 EFL-LE Purposes that Connect with Manexca's Life and her Community

In 100 references (out of 253), Manexca mentioned the significance of finding purposes for her ELF-LE in a way that they served and supported her Zenú community and culture. Manexca noted that the EFL-LE offered at the University had no connection with her life and community. Only after individual reflections and collective conversations with Zenú teachers and community members did she find a place for her EFL-LE in her life and the life of the Zenú people in her territory. This finding reveals that Manexca's EFL-LE purposes were collectively, inductively generated, and community-based. Her EFL-LE purposes related to two main themes: Manexca's role as a Zenú Indigenous EFL teacher and expanding her relationality to serve and participate in her community.

Manexca reported that utilizing her EFL-LE to help her Zenú students learn English was core to her motivation to persist and continue her university studies. She expressed: "It was a huge experience to find my own ways of learning through the children [Zenú students]; I said, well, now that I have found a horizon to follow and know how to learn [English], I have the responsibility to take that knowledge to the children" (3rd Interview). Her multiple attempts to link her EFL-LE and her community life resulted in her reflection on introducing the EFL-LE in the classroom without risking her Zenú students' cultural identity. She reflected on using the projector properly, alternating with Zenú traditional games, and using technology to encourage her students to learn more about the Zenú culture. Using her EFL-LE to offer an enhanced EFL-LE to her Zenú students in which they feel comfortable, valued, included, and participate actively shows Manexca's resistance to the non-reciprocal/unidirectional teaching given at the University. She also mentioned the need to use the English class and the school as a space to foster the participation of Elders and Indigenous alums and include territory–related vocabulary (e.g., *jornal de palmas*), rituals, and spiritual practices. She said: "I hope that my students do not have to adapt to what outsiders bring" (4th Interview). Manexca's conceptions of what the EFL-LE should

embrace highlight the inclusion of interactions that foster relationality in learning and that legitimate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

Other purposes identified by Manexca for her EFL-LE include expanding her social and professional networks, which, in some cases, also leads to recognition at local, national, and international levels. Manexca shared her EFL-LE with Zenú high school students to help them better prepare for the University and the negative experiences they could encounter in that academic context. This EFL-LE purpose generates an intergenerational support relationship that strengthens the relationality within Manexca's community by creating a space where University and high school students can interact, share their fears, and collectively find ways to overcome them. Manexca found other uses for her EFL-LE related to performing consecutive translations when foreign visitors (e.g., missionaries and tourists) visited her territory or while traveling with her family to other Caribbean regions where foreigners are more prevalent. Manexca's translation skills were also helpful in projects financially supported by foreign organizations. Manexca's role as a translator shows how interdependence is a feature of Indigenous relationality in which each member contributes to collective well-being. Likewise, her EFL-LE evolves into a tool that allows her to become a node that connects networks that could remain unconnected, such as the Indigenous community and foreign tourists. Additionally, Manexca narrated that her EFL-LE helped her become more self-confident when speaking in public, allowing her to participate actively at the University and the school in her community, Indigenous assemblies, and Indigenous women's meetings. Manexca's new forms of participation reveal that she expanded her relationality and learned how to navigate within diverse social networks. This expansion of her relationality seems to bring her more recognition within her community and a bonding social capital.

Manexca also shared future purposes for her EFL-LE. She wants to visit other countries to bring their knowledge to conduct projects in her community "that do not transform but benefit her community [...] and Indigenous peoples in the [Caribbean] region" (3rd Interview). She added that she would also like to share her culture, knowledge, and skills as a Zenú EFL teacher in other territories inside and outside Colombia. These purposes indicate Manexca's intentions to enrich her knowledge and share hers in return. This intercultural exchange at the national and international level shows how relationality and reciprocity are expanded and consolidated at all times in her EFL-LE. Manexca's EFL-LE suggests that language learning and culture complement each other without compromising the identity and legitimacy of the parts involved.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

Manexca's collective narratives indicate an EFL-LE influenced by relational and symbolic elements. Manexca's teachers' and classmates' discriminatory behaviors and questioning of her place within the university reflect a rupture in relationality and reciprocity. This disjunction indicates, in turn, a disconnection between Indigenous and mainstream education. In the Indigenous educational system, the classroom is a microcosm of the community in which its members support each other, and the teachers are guides (Pérez, 1999). However, Manexca's EFL classroom demonstrates how the university can become a hostile environment in which horizontal (classmates) and vertical (teachers) relationships negatively affect Indigenous students' self-esteem and sense of belonging. This broken relationality and reciprocity turned Manexca's EFL-LE into an exhausting and emotionally challenging integrating experience. With several Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2002; Little Bear, 2009; Wilson, 2008) emphasizing the importance of relationality and reciprocity in Indigenous ways of learning, further inquiries on how these two principles can be built and maintained within Indigenous students' EFL-LE are not only welcome but necessary.

Additionally, Manexca's stories suggest that relational elements of the EFL-LE are closely tied to the learner's Indigenous community and territory. This is unsurprising as Zenú people are essentially interconnected to their territory, and when they move away, they take it with them; they think of the other Zenú people and their territory as inherent parts of themselves (PEC Zenú, 2014). Manexca's community and her Zenú students act as supporting nodes in her relationality that provide a reinforcing cycle of positive feedback within the system of her EFL-LE. Her interactions with her community reinforce a sense of success, achievement, and belonging that helps her resist the pressure at the university. Her knowledge and English communicative competencies are valuable to the community, indicating that an EFL-LE is a personal and community achievement that is used beneficially in Indigenous relationality.

Consequently, this finding highlights the critical aspects of distancing Indigenous learners' EFL-LE from their communities and territories. In this study, both the university and the Indigenous community can modulate the Indigenous student's levels of anxiety and self-confidence, influencing her performance and behavior in English class. Thus, an enriched EFL-LE for Indigenous students can only be realized through integrating universities and Indigenous communities as interconnected nodes within the learners' relationality. For example, the EFL university classroom working as a disconnected node in this investigation creates an inhibitory dynamic. In contrast, the Indigenous community acts as a facilitator that allows the Indigenous learner to exploit their potential. This proves the importance of bringing these two contexts together since the EFL-LE is clearly sensitive to the environment, and certain contextual elements can unblock skills that remain repressed in other contexts.

Manexca's EFL-LE is highly influenced by the structural gap between the university and her community and the power structures that permeate that disconnection. The

lack of connections between the university and Manexca's community leads to processes of adaptations and resistances that take different forms. Manexca's forced adaptations concerning her appearance and linguistic elements reveal that the university tends to act as an asymmetric network in which original Indigenous expressions have less prestige and visibility, and therefore, a partial or complete assimilation process takes place. Trillos stated in 1999 that Colombian mainstream education was considered one of the primary means of Indigenous cultural disintegration and uncritical assimilation of knowledge and values foreign to Indigenous peoples and their needs. This conclusion, unfortunately, still appears to be true 26 years later. Manexca's EFL-LE illustrates often unidirectional cultural adaptations in which the EFL-LE offered at the university requires the Indigenous student to fully adopt its norms, values, and ways of knowing and learning without any institutional effort to integrate Indigenous cultures within the educational system. This lack of reciprocity in adaptations may prevent the EFL-LE of Indigenous students from having an intercultural dimension rooted in interconnectedness, relational accountability, and respect for diverse epistemologies instead of engaging them in limited and superficial intercultural connections.

In addition, Manexca's active resistances imply a sense of agency over her EFL-LE. Although learner's agency has been acknowledged in Indigenous knowledge and learning systems (Rosado-May et al., 2020) as well as from a CDST perspective of the EFL-LE (Larsen-Freeman, 2017), this study reveals that agency in the case of Indigenous students takes a different form. The Indigenous EFL learner's agency seems confused with the disproportionate burden of adapting to and resisting a dominant system that excludes them instead of being transformed to include and value their knowledge and learning systems. This approach shifts the responsibility of the mainstream educational system onto the Indigenous student, perpetuating the inequity instead of addressing it.

Consequently, the conflict between the two systems (university and Indigenous people) led Manexca to resist in such a way that she behaves as an agent of change of her EFL-LE and its impact on her community and other Indigenous students. This agency aims to navigate an EFL-LE that does not compromise her essence as an Indigenous person. Manexca's resistances are also tied to supporting nodes (e.g., the psycholinguistics teacher, the research student group) in such a way that it is through them that an Indigenous student such as Manexca can reclaim the university space as hers, redefine her role within the university, and regain her sense of belonging. This symbolic fight for a legitimate place in an academic territory traditionally dominated by non-Indigenous perspectives is an act of resistance and reterritorialization. Lastly, Manexca's agency led her to develop high English communicative competencies and increased her chances of being perceived as an equal in the EFL classroom. Thus, for Indigenous EFL learners, English is a communication tool and a means to negotiate their identity and social status within the university and be acknowledged as a legitimate participant within the academic community.

Additionally, Manexca's EFL-LE shows that Indigenous ways of learning are strongly interconnected with an enhanced Indigenous learner's EFL-LE. Features of Indigenous

knowledge and learning systems pointed out by several Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2002; PEC Zenú, 2014; Pérez, 1999; Rosado–May et al., 2020) are fundamental in Indigenous learners' EFL-LE. Among those features, Manexca's EFL-LE included relationality, corporeality, observation, unobtrusive teaching methods, Elders as teachers, reciprocity, horizontal relationships, symbolism, daily life practice, cultural artifacts, emotions and feelings, collective and experiential learning, and learning with real purpose to serve the community. Similarly, conflicted roots, such as the non-possibility of accessing intergenerational learning, corroborate what some scholars (van der Hammen & Rodríguez, 1999; Rosado–May et al., 2020) have pointed out: integrating Indigenous knowledge and learning systems into mainstream education is challenging and not all Indigenous ways of learning can be brought into the dominant system. This means the university system cannot integrate Indigenous knowledge and learning systems without Indigenous people deciding who can access their systems, how, where, and when. Non-Indigenous people involved in mainstream education must avoid co-opting Indigenous knowledge and learning systems. Instead, it is necessary to work together with Indigenous people, get proper consent, acknowledge and respect them, and not usurp their right to decide whether or not their cultures can be part of the dominant schooling system, to what extent, and under what conditions.

Indigenous pre-service teachers such as Manexca use their EFL-LE to build their teacher identity and roles as EFL teachers in their community. Manexca, using her EFL-LE to build an inclusive and enhanced EFL-LE for her Zenú students, emphasizes the need to make Indigenous students feel that the learning space is also theirs, acknowledging their own experiences and ways of learning. However, this inclusive EFL-LE appears to come with appropriate mainstream knowledge integration. Manexca's use of technology in her and her students' EFL-LE to promote Zenú Indigenous culture represents an example of how social and cultural systems can adapt in order to remain relevant in a constantly changing world. This aligns with Rosado–May et al. (2020), who explain that Indigenous ways of learning are not limited to what is already known [and that] "innovations [result] from combining Indigenous ways of learning with the ways of Western universities, [and exemplify] the co-creation of new knowledge" (p.80). Technology is not a threat but a tool to expand the scope of Indigenous culture and a symbol of cultural empowerment and continuity. Therefore, EFL-LE's purposes should stem from maintaining unity and connecting mainstream academic and Indigenous worlds in a way that is relevant to Indigenous peoples: meaningful from their perspective, not from outsiders' perspective.

Similarly, Manexca's EFL-LE purposes seek to strengthen her relational role within her territory and beyond. This finding indicates that the EFL-LE helps Indigenous learners participate more actively in their community and grow into community members who serve as an intercultural bridge between Indigenous peoples and other cultures (e.g., foreign and dominant). Likewise, Zenú EFL learners may not hold the dream or desire to worship, or replace their culture with, what comes from dominant knowledge systems. Instead, the contact with foreign or other cultures may represent an expansion of their

relationality. EFL-LE purposes, such as consecutive translations for community projects/business and intercultural exchange of knowledge to show Zenú culture and also benefit it from other knowledge systems, indicate that the EFL-LE has not only a communicative value but a social one that helps Indigenous learners to make their culture and their learning and knowledge systems visible as well as promote respect for them among foreign or non-Indigenous people.

Lastly, in Manexca's stories, the EFL-LE symbolizes a temporary and functional purpose. The EFL-LE only emerges when needed without representing a loss of the Indigenous cultural identity and practices, and it does not become a permanent element in their daily lives. Consequently, learning English should be an experience that allows Indigenous students to grow and connect with the world, but it should also make sense in their lives as Indigenous people. In this study, Manexca appeals for an EFL-LE whose purpose is not cultural assimilation but a transformation of the system from within, an EFL-LE that strengthens Indigenous knowledge and learning systems instead of eroding them. Consequently, we advocate for an intercultural dimension of the EFL-LE that harmonizes with the interculturalism proposed by the Maya scholar Francisco Rosado-May et al., (2015), who suggests that interculturalism is the result of a process that arises when diverse ways of approaching learning and creating knowledge collaborate in a safe environment to analyze a situation or to tackle a problem.

Acknowledgments from Ximena Paola Buendía-Arias

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"ARE YOU IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD?" THE INTRALINGUAL DUBBING OF TWO CHILDREN'S CARTOONS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the intralingual dubbing (from American English (AmE) to British English (BrE)) of two recent animated series for children: *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* (2012) and *Vida the Vet* (2024). It discusses the historical reasons behind English's current status as a global *lingua franca*, and also the observable shift in dominance within that from BrE to AmE, both within traditional EFL teaching and culture more generally. After a brief discussion of the role of dubbing within Audiovisual Translation (AVT), the two series are briefly introduced, including their prosocial aims. The costly and perhaps counterintuitive AVT decision to redub is considered through lexical examples (principally "Trolley/Trammie" and "hustle/hurry"), raising the possibility that preservation of accent is another motivating factor. It asks whether localising the text and voices denies speakers of British English – still a powerful setter of norms – an early opportunity to encounter linguistic difference, or whether the existence of both an AmE and a BrE version in fact represents exactly that. Finally, it returns to the prosocial aims of the programmes, and reflects on the irony that one of the most obvious differences between American and British English is announced by the absence or presence of "u" in the word "neighbo[u]r/hood".

Keywords: AVT, dubbing, localisation, unequal Englishes

1 Introduction

This article has been prompted by two series our family watches at home: *Daniel Tiger's Neighbourhood* and *Vida the Vet*. Both were originally made in North America, but we encountered them after they had been dubbed into British English. This piqued my curiosity. American accents are hardly a rare occurrence on British television, even on the BBC, and even in children's programmes. Who, then, had thought it necessary to "translate" the source text (ST) from American English (AmE) into British English (BrE), and why?

Beginning with a brief account of how English became the global *lingua franca*, and highlighting some shifting power dynamics within that dominance between different varieties of English, this article will proceed to consider the unique characteristics of dubbing within the larger field of Audiovisual Translation (AVT), and some particular considerations regarding animated programmes aimed at the (very) young. It will then introduce the two series in more detail, before analysing some of the differences between the (original) AmE and (dubbed) BrE versions. Although several lexical features will be evaluated, these will be deemed insufficient to justify the decision to redub, the reasons for which must therefore be sought elsewhere. Finally, it will offer some reflections on what these examples tell us about the status of British and American English in today's world.

2 [British/American] English as a *Lingua Franca*

2.1 How English Became the World's Latest *Lingua Franca*

The current prevalence of English and English speakers throughout the world is largely due to the histories of two distinct but related empires, the British and the American. From its beginnings in the plantations of Ulster in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the establishment of colonies on the north-east coast of America, the British Empire grew to become one of the most extensive ever seen. While the 1763 Treaty of Paris ensured that English, and not French, would be the dominant language in North America, its subsequent global hegemony was, arguably, due to the British *loss* of theAmerican War of Independence (1775—1783), with Britain's colonial ambitions subsequently redirected towards India, Australasia, and Africa. As David Crystal puts it, "British political imperialism had sent English around the globe, during the nineteenth century, so that it was a language 'on which the sun never sets'" (Crystal, 2003, p. 10). At its peak of its reach and power, in the aftermath of the First World War (1914—1918), the British Empire comprised nearly a quarter of the world's population (412—438 million people) and more than a quarter [35.5 million km²] of its land.

The Second World War (1939—1945) demonstrated that the centre of power had shifted decisively westwards, from the United Kingdom (UK) to the United States of America (USA),

which had formerly been "one of its first colonies" (Gonçalves et al., 2018, p. 1). During the Cold War, the "world presence" of English was "maintained and promoted almost single-handedly through the economic supremacy of the new American superpower" (Crystal, 2003, p. 10), aided and abetted by the rapid spread of mass media. With English already established as "the dominant means of international communication", "its position as the global lingua franca was further strengthened after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc" (Kimmel, 2020, p. 11), and "was only reinforced with the advent and popularization of the Internet just a decade later" (Gonçalves et al., 2018, p. 12).

Estimates vary, but there are now thought to be over 1.5 billion speakers of English worldwide (Statista, 2025), with the number of *native* English speakers comprising only a small proportion (perhaps between one quarter and one third) of that overall number: ICLS (2024) gives the figures as 1.52 billion and 25%; the American TESOL Institute (quoting the British Council) suggests that there are approximately 1.5 billion non-native English speakers and (citing Ethnologue) around 370 million native speakers (American TESOL Institute, n.d.) – a total of 1.87 billion speakers of English. ICLS (2024) also states that "English is spoken in 186 countries, making it the most widely spread language in the world", and that "English also dominates online media, with over half of all websites (52.1%) using it". Overall, "English has achieved an unparalleled status as a global lingua franca, transcending its origins as a native language" (American TESOL Institute, n.d.).

2.2 British English (BrE) and American English (AmE)

What the above account masks is a long-standing reality only acknowledged in recent decades, namely that it would be truer to speak not of "English" (singular) but plural, multiple "Englishes". Both BrE and AmE have special status within the many varieties of World Englishes (WE):

> Within the IC [Inner Circle], BrE and AmE are recognised as "reference" varieties: the influence of BrE being in evidence in its role as colonial "parent" in the evolution of postcolonial varieties [...]; the influence of AmE in evidence latterly in its strong impact on English worldwide, a reflection of the global dominance of the USA. (Collins, 2021, p. 8)

It is, therefore, legitimate to ask which of these "reference" varieties of English is in fact the dominant *lingua franca*. Kimmel (2020) observes that "textbook English is basically standard, usually British English" (p.15), although the picture in her native Hungary (which is not untypical) is mixed: "one of the standard varieties is taught, in some contexts British, in others American" (p.15). Gonçalves et al. (2018, p.11) observe a "pronounced Britishization [*sic*] of American English" post-Second World War, but argue that in recent decades that trend has been reversed: even in "Western Europe where English teaching has traditionally followed British norms the American influence is undeniable" (p.7). Indeed, they find that

American English is not only "the dominant form of English outside the UK" but that "its influence is felt even within the UK borders" (Gonçalves et al., 2018. p.1).

For Kimmel (2020), as for Gonçalves et al, (2018), this situation is not merely of interest in and of itself, but raises a related question of cultural influence, although it is difficult to extract a clear line of cause-and-effect – especially when there are other factors at play.

> As global political preeminence gradually shifted from the United Kingdom to the United States, so did the capacity to culturally influence the rest of the world. (Gonçalves et al., 2018. p.1)

The "[a]s [...] so" construction implies an interdependent relationship without explicitly stating the direction of cause and effect: does political power precede cultural influence, the latter inevitably following in its wake, or might cultural influence, equally, promote political power? Similarly, in speaking of "the triad thought—language—culture", Polzenhagen et al. (2024, p. 361) stop short of nominating any one of the three elements as the prime mover: each influences and is influenced by the others – but equally? Do the changes in relative culturo-political power between the UK and USA *explain* the recent rise in AmE compared to BrE, including within the UK itself? Or is the shift in language norms from BrE to AmE itself a factor in the reach of cultural and political ideas? Either way, such questions might seem moot from a non-native-English-speaking perspective, and indeed it does often make sense to speak of "Anglo-American" or "Anglophone" values. Nevertheless, the old saw of "two countries separated by the same language" is not without meaning.[1]

When Kramsch and Zhu (2016) argue that "the distinction between English as a foreign, second[,] or international language is sometimes difficult to uphold" (p. 40), they are thinking principally of "the transnational training" (p.40) of many English teachers – but the causes surely go beyond that. The example they cite complicates matters further:

> [...] when Hungary's national school system hires British-trained or native English teachers, and uses British textbooks to teach in Hungarian public schools, is British English being taught as a foreign language in Hungary or as an international second language or lingua franca? (Kramsch & Zhu, 2016, p. 40)

By "native English teachers", they presumably mean, more precisely, "native-English-*speaking* teachers" – a category neither synonymous with nor mutually exclusive of "British-trained". If Gonçalves et al. (2018) are correct in observing that the influence of American English is now felt within the UK itself, then it may even be apparent within the

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[1] The phrase is often attributed to George Bernard Shaw in anthologies of quotations, although it is not to be found anywhere in his published writings (see English Language & Usage, 2012). A very similar remark is made in Shaw's compatriot Oscar Wilde's short story "The Canterville Ghost": "we [English] have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language" (Wilde, 1887).

pages of so-called "British textbooks"; and the question they ask of "British English" could equally be asked of American English.

Asking such a similar question may be considered meaningless from some perspectives, particularly from a "World Englishes" or "English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)" perspective. "In Kachru's words [1995], English is now a 'repertoire of cultural pluralism' –, a "pluricentric language" (Sharifian, 2011, p. 433). English may well have "become a major language of 'intercultural' communication *par excellence*, used as a language of international and intranational communication between speakers of WEs from all three circles" (Sharifian, 2011, p.433); however, as Amy Soto points out, "ELF [...] is no one's native language. It is difficult to draw the line between where English as a lingua franca ends and English which is influenced by the culture [...] of the native speaker populations begins" (Soto, 2020, p. 162). "[C] an a language be consigned to the role of a mere functional tool? Or, on a more general level: can a language be 'de-culturized'?" (Kimmel, 2020, p. 13) are further pertinent questions. Such questions may best be answered by the field of "Unequal Englishes" (UE), which focuses on "the unequal ways and situations in which Englishes are arranged, configured, and contested [...] in broader geopolitical, sociocultural, and theoretical contexts" (Tupas & Rubdy, 2015, p. 3). Through such a lens, one can still make out the contours of "national" elements apparently subsumed within the notion of the "transnational".

Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic societies are indeed "WEIRD", with just *how* weird being a matter of much debate (see Henrich et al., 2010). This paper's admittedly narrow focus on the relatively minor differences between the two overwhelmingly dominant varieties of Inner-Circle English, British (BrE) and American (AmE), may seem perverse or even offensive given the far larger and more consequential structural inequalities that continue to operate. Nevertheless, it addresses, albeit perhaps obliquely, issues of cultural difference and identity, localisation and globalisation, and scratches at the notion that any form of English, or ELF, can be a value-free medium.

3 Audiovisual Translation and Children's Television

3.1 AVT, Localisation, and Dubbing

Within Translation Studies (TS), itself a relatively young discipline that originated in the 1970s (Holmes, 1972), the field of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) has become particularly rich, due to the ubiquity of television and, more recently, streaming services (see Díaz Cintas, 2003, pp. 192–193). In their recent volume *Introducing Audiovisual Translation* (2025), Szarkowska and Jankowska describe how "English-language content, predominantly from Hollywood, has historically dominated the global media and entertainment industry, resulting in translations *from* English rather than into it" (p. 74 – my emphasis). As Minutella (2021, p. 20) explains, "American companies invest a lot of money in such films",

including in translating and adapting their products to be attractive to diverse global markets ("localisation") and ensure the best possible return.

This can be achieved by various means, including subtitling and voice-over (VO) – but a key element in "localisation" has always been a process called *dubbing*. In Díaz Cintas's account (2003),

> [d]ubbing involves replacing the original soundtrack containing the actors' dialogue with a target language (TL) recording that reproduces the original message [in the source language (SL)], while at the same time ensuring that the TL sounds and the actors' lip movements are more or less synchronized ["lip synchronisation" or "lip sync"]. (p. 195)

István Fodor, who Szarkowska and Jankowska credit as the first scholar to devote particular attention to dubbing (2025, p .64 [Fodor, 1969, 1976]), had earlier delineated three types of synchrony – phonetic, character, and content – as necessary for a fully satisfactory outcome. "Needless to say, all this makes dubbing a highly constrained and demanding type of translation" (Szarkowska & Jankowska, 2025, p. 62), not to mention a potentially expensive one. Nevertheless, dubbing not only remains a common strategy in AVT, but is, if anything, on the rise – particularly dubbing *into English* (see Sánchez-Mompeán, 2021), in Anglophone countries where until recently subtitling had been the preferred option. The short-form title of Sofía Sánchez-Mompeán's 2021 article about this phenomenon neatly captures the main cause: "Netflix likes it dubbed".

Localisation into English is, therefore, a burgeoning field in AVT research, and specifically the expensive but potentially lucrative process of dubbing into English. The examples under consideration here, however, are of a particular and perhaps peculiar kind: both are cases of "translation" *within* English (*intra*lingual AVT), between two forms of English – between, moreover, two "inner-circle" countries (either the USA or Canada and the United Kingdom (UK)), where English is used as the primary language. If, as Kachru argued, inner-circle countries "provide norms to the expanding circle" (Sharifian, 2011, p. 429), then what is at stake when one set of inner-circle norms is replaced by another? Is one of the inner-circle countries at risk of being ejected from the centre? Depending on your perspective, it is arguably still a case of "cross-cultural translation" – "a mode of 'translation' [...] between more or less remote cultures" (D'hulst, 2008, p. 221) – but certainly the two cultures here are very much *less* remote from each other than from others. Perhaps particularly surprising is the fact that in both cases considered below the source language (SL) is AmE and the target language (TL) BrE, representing the far smaller UK market. It would be true to say that achieving a convincing and effective "lip sync" is far easier where the ST is an *animated* film or series, because the lip movements are less precise, and where it is intended for young viewers, who tend (in this regard at least) to be less particular. However, children's programmes, whether animated or no, bring their own specific set of challenges.

3.2 Children's Television and Language

Children's programming has always been controversial, with concerns that (particularly unsupervised) screen-time is detrimental to children's development. In more recent years, however, there has been a shift towards creating programmes for very young children, pre-schoolers and toddlers, which only raises the stakes. Particularly controversial in this regard was the BBC programme *Teletubbies* (1997) (see Cowart, 2003), which some studies found to be "negatively associated with both vocabulary acquisition and expressive language use" (Linebarger & Walker, 2005, p. 640). It does not seem to have done any lasting harm to the people behind the programme, Anne Wood and Andrew Davenport, who have gone on to make several more popular series for the BBC – which, indeed, launched an entire dedicated channel for preschoolers (CBeebies) on 11 February 2002 – including *In the Night Garden* (2007) and *Moon and Me* (2019) both of which received similar criticism (see Jonze, 2019). Across the Atlantic, programme makers have taken a different approach, particularly with shows such as *Blue's Clues* (1996) and *Super Why!* (1999).

Both the series considered here originated in North America: *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* (2012—present) and *Vida the Vet* (2024); both have been picked up by CBeebies and are available to watch on the BBC iPlayer; both have been redubbed from AmE to BrE.[2] *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* (2012) is the "virtual descendant" (Rasmussen et al., 2016, p.446) or "cartoon descendant" (Rasmussen, 2016) of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* (1968—2001), a long-running and much-loved series created and presented by Fred Rogers (1928—2003) (played by Tom Hanks in the film *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* (2019)). According to Rasmussen et al. (2016), *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* "was one of the first programs to focus on children's prosocial development" (p. 444) – a legacy which Angela C. Santomero (who had co-created *Blue's Clues*) was keen to continue (see Santomero, 2012, and Zax, 2012). Centring on the eponymous 4-to-5-year-old hero, Daniel Tiger (the son of Fred Rogers' original "Daniel Striped Tiger" puppet), the programme aims to promote "prosocial learning" among 2-to-4-year-olds using a variety of established and age-specific methods such as "interactive learning approaches", "elements of fantasy or make-believe", and, above all, "repeatable, simple songs" (Rasmussen et al., 2016, p. 446).

Vida the Vet (2024) might have a less impressive lineage than *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood*, but seems to share many of its motivations. Every episode sees the eponymous 10-year-old bid farewell to her parents and enter, through a small door in the hedge at the bottom of her garden, a magical place called "Sweetwood" (see Molander, 2024). Once there, her pet hamster, Popcorn (who travels in Vida's pocket), gains the ability to speak; he serves as Vida's faithful "vet tech" (veterinary technician) as she cares for the local fauna – which include not only the predictable mice, rabbits, and insects, but also tortoises, bears, hippos, and tigers. Again, songs are very much to the fore, although rather than the repeated short jingles of *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood*, the songs in *Vida the Vet* last about a minute and a half and encapsulate the main message of each episode, be it emotional, moral, or physical well-being.

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2   Strictly speaking, the original of *Vida the Vet* is in *Canadian* English.

4 Comparison of AmE Originals and BrE Adaptations

4.1 Opening Titles

Indeed, the songs in both series are one of the most noticeable differences between the original AmE versions of the programmes and their BrE redubs, both of which can be encountered in a typical YouTube search, right from the opening titles.

4.1.1 *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood*

Table 1. *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* Opening Title Sequence
(see DubDB, n.d.–a)

	AmE	**BrE**
YouTube reference	Daniel Tiger's Neighbourhood (2015)	LouBlu07 (2022)
Length	0:46	0:43
Key	C Major	C-sharp/D-flat Major
Sung by	Jake Beale (Daniel Tiger) and Graeme Cornies	Joanna Ruiz (Daniel Tiger) and David Holt

The first few lines of the theme tune to *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* (based on ones once sung by Fred Rogers) are sung by Daniel Tiger himself as he puts on his shoes and heads off into town (the former Land of Make-Believe):

It's a beautiful day in the neighbo[u]rhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbo[u]r!
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
Won't you be my neighbo[u]r?
(Daniel Tiger's Neighbourhood, 2015; LouBlu07, 2022)

In the AmE original, as sung by Jake Beale, Daniel's voice has a somewhat husky or hoarse quality, whereas in the BrE version (sung by Joanna Ruiz) Daniel sounds bright – the entire track is set a semitone higher – and only very slightly congested. The music then abruptly stops only to instantly restart, with an ascending triplet scale and something of a climax as a different (adult, male) voice takes over the main melody:

It's Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood,
A Land of Make-Believe!
Won't you ride along with me? (Daniel: Ride along!)

Those of us who have long since left the target demographic might already be struggling to comprehend whether this is envisaged as a "Land of Make-Believe" or a diegetically real world – and who exactly, apart from Daniel Tiger, is asking us to "ride along" with them? Perhaps the confusion is part of its magic. The AmE singer (Graeme Cornies) sounds very synthetic and strangely disinterested; the BrE singer (David Holt), meanwhile, sounds almost nervous in his earnestness. While Holt's tuning and tone in the BrE version are absolutely fine, his performance (perhaps intentionally) sounds less like the confident rendition of a professional singer than the well-intentioned effort of a friendly uncle. (Indeed, the BrE adaptation as a whole is notable for the often rather indifferent quality of its singing, particularly that of Daddy Tiger – consider, for example, "Look for the Helpers" (US Season 2:13/BBC Series 1:20) or "When Something Is New, Holding A Hand Can Help You" (US Season 2:20/BBC Series 1:46).) In the AmE original, in contrast, Graeme Cornies's performance is off-puttingly blasé and slick, and uncomfortably close; In the bridge ("I've got lots of friends for you to meet [...]"), the AmE singer is supplemented by equally overproduced backing singers; whereas in the BrE version, backing duties are carried out (very low in the mix) by "Daniel" himself (Joanna Ruiz). For the final phrase, Holt (BrE) is double-tracked, providing his own harmony; in the AmE original, Cornies's final, ascending phrase, and his sense-defeating breath just before it ("*in Daniel [breath] TIGER'S NEIGHBORHOOD!*") are particularly irksome – at least to these British ears.

4.1.2 *Vida the Vet*

The opening theme of the AmE and BrE versions of *Vida the Vet* are also quite markedly different (see Table 2), although in this case the actors playing Vida (who sings the whole song) have similar voices (see DubDB, n.d.-b).

Table 2. *Vida the Vet* Opening Title Sequence
(see DubDB, n.d.-b)

	AmE	**BrE**
YouTube reference	(Vida The Vet – Official Channel, 2023)	(Oskar Tysoe Entertainment, 2025)
Length	0:46	0:20
Key	E Major	E-flat Major
Sung by	Mia SwamiNathan and Chorus	Victoria Alsina and Chorus

The AmE original (set a semitone higher than its BrE adaptation) begins with something of a fanfare, whereas the BrE version has a briefer, harp-like introduction, before the vocalist enters:

> *Need a check-up?*
> *Need a cast?*
> *Come on in: I'll fix you up!*
> *I'll fix you fast!*
> *[Chorus] Vida the Vet – that's me!*
> *I'll have you feeling better in '1, 2, 3'!*
> (Vida The Vet – Official Channel, 2023; Oskar Tysoe Entertainment, 2025)

The vowel sounds in "cast/fast" and the central consonant of "better", as sung by Mia SwamiNathan (AmE) and Victoria Alsina (BrE), immediately signal whether you are encountering the AmE or BrE version; although both have a rather odd way of saying the word "come". In a major difference, the AmE version then embarks on a second verse which is cut entirely from the BrE adaptation – and perhaps this is the first example of something which simply is not possible to render convincingly in British English, especially given the constraints of meter and rhyme:

> *Got a boo-boo?*
> *Got a rash?*
> *Got you covered: you'll be fixed up in a flash!*
> (Vida The Vet – Official Channel, 2023)

The subsequent chorus is then followed in the AmE version by an entire section of the song which is not in the BrE theme-tune ("*I have tigers, mice, and bunnies, turtles, bears, and bugs; I care for all the Sweetwood and give everybody hugs!*" (Vida The Vet – Official Channel, 2023)) before a final chorus, in which Vida phrases the "me" in a new way (in both versions). There is still time for one final difference, though: as at the very start, the AmE adds a further (some might say superfluous) fanfare (whereas the BrE version adds just a simple "chime" after "*3*"), before Vida's final appearance in front of the door of her veterinary surgery (which is inside a large tree), before the programme's logo commandeers the screen. All in all, the BrE theme clocks in at an efficient twenty seconds, while the AmE theme, at forty-six seconds, is more than twice as long.

4.2 Lexical Differences

The opening title sequence of *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* features his favourite mode of public transport, a handsome red and yellow vehicle that rides on the streets rather than on tracks/rails, faithfully based on the large model that Fred Rogers would summon (by

means of a lever) in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* to "take" viewers to the puppet-show of "the Land of Make-Believe". In *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, a model-sized version of it is (along with Tigey) one of Daniel's favourite toys. It is clearly an important object for Daniel Tiger and his neighbo[u]rhood... and it just so happens to be referred to by different terms in AmE and BrE (and other Englishes), posing a specific and unavoidable challenge to the "translators".

> Part of the business of the translator is to understand what people actually say in a particular location and to bring this knowledge to another location, the target language. This is why the education and training of translators takes years. It is not so much an abstraction from as an engagement in local attachments that is demanded by the translator's task, and this task takes time. (Cronin, 2008, p.269)

In the original AmE show, Daniel and his neighbors call it "Trolley"; in the BrE programme, they call it "Trammie" – apparently the makers were concerned that British people might associate the word "trolley" with supermarkets and shopping (and with what in North America is called a "shopping cart"). While this cannot exactly be classed as one of those "ideologically loaded and culture-specific elements" (Bosseaux, 2018, p. 49) or "cultural keywords" (see Wierzbicka, 1997) that pose a particular challenge to translators, it is central to the world of Daniel Tiger, "Make-Believe" or no. If there were not already a familiar philosophical thought experiment known by this name (see Lillehammer, 2023), one might refer to this as the "Trolley Problem".

Is it such a problem, though? Would young British viewers really have been left completely bewildered if the original word "Trolley" had been retained untranslated – especially considering they might not yet have learned the word "tram"? Would not its frequently recurring contexts soon have cleared up any possible confusion? If the word remained unfamiliar, would the viewers' parents have proved unable to provide a ready explanation ("we'd call it a tram, dear. (We don't have them here.)")? One would love to have some insight into the decision-making process, as those involved weighed the potential harm to already-vulnerable speakers of BrE by allowing the AmE version to be broadcast on the BBC against the cost and effort of having it redubbed in BrE. (Unfortunately, to date, no one from the BBC has responded to my enquiries.) "Trammie" was no doubt chosen over "tram" to match the number of syllables in "trolley", an important consideration for the "lip sync", but it has other merits, too. As a diminutive it also conveys Daniel's fondness for the familiar vehicle, his excitement and gratitude for what it enables him to do. In the programme, Daniel and his family state their destination directly to "Trolley/Trammie", whose "*ding-ding!*" is treated anthropomorphically as an answer. It thereby becomes something more like a proper noun, not a mere term of reference but rather one of endearment. (No other proper nouns, however, are changed.)

No example from *Vida the Vet* is as fundamental as "Trolley/Trammie" is to *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood*, although several names are changed: "Jojo" becomes "Juno",

"Piper" becomes "Pippen"; perhaps surprisingly, however, "Tidbit" remains "Tidbit" (and not the more typically BrE "Titbit"). If one watches enough episodes, one does notice further subtle instances of localisation. For example, the episode entitled "The Vida the Vet Book" (Season 1:26/Series 1:47) starts *in medias res*, at Vida's veterinary surgery in Sweetwood, where an agitated (but still smiling) Popcorn is pacing up and down: "Hustle, Vida, hustle! We've got housecalls to make, and temperatures to take!" (AmE) (Vida the Vet – Official Channel, 2024)

In the BrE version, this has been changed, with 'hustle' replaced on each occasion by "hurry" (CBeebies And CBBC Fan 2002, 2024) (which the English Popcorn pronounces something like "horry"). Vida appreciates the hamster's wordplay ("Nice rhyme, Popcorn!"), but sees no reason to rush ("why are we hustling/hurrying?"). With Vida ("finally") ready to go, Popcorn leaps into her pocket; his final urging of "HUSTLE!" in AmE amply justifies Vida's subsequent little giggle, whereas his "hurry!" in BrE falls rather flat. However, the next time he repeats the instruction (after Vida pauses to chat to Sunny the Mouse) is similarly tuneful and cajoling in both versions.

Again, the translators did not have too much difficulty finding a comparable term from British English which 1) started with the same consonant and 2) shared the same number of syllables – although one could perhaps evaluate in more detail the difference resonances of "hustle" in the North-American context and "hurry" in the British. Other equivalent terms encountered in Vida's line of work are less akin: for example, "bandage/plaster", "diaper/nappy", "candy/sweets". While these changes might have posed more of a problem were this a programme featuring real actors, in an animated series, the "lip sync" does not have to be so precise, and the viewer barely registers an issue. While the examples just mentioned all feature in Gonçalves *et al.*'s word lists of "vocabulary variants" between AmE and BrE (2018, p. 5), a list of such terms from *Vida the Vet* would not be extensive, and, as with "Trolley/Trammie" in *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood*, would probably not have utterly derailed comprehension had they been left unaltered.

4.3 Accent

If the differences in lexis between AmE and BrE proved not to be insurmountable for the makers of *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* and *Vida the Vet*, nor were they such as to actually *necessitate* the wholesale redubbing of both series. The proof of this comes quite literally in the pudding: in the "Baking Mistakes" episode of *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* (US Season 2:16/BBC Series 1:22), Daniel and Prince Wednesday opt to make "Trolley Cookies" with Baker Aker – a conflagration of "vocabulary variants" which the BrE dub quite simply renders "Trammie Biscuits" without any ado (see Daniel Tiger's Neighbourhood, 2023 (11:14)). (That session with Baker Aker contains several other interesting examples, such as a "stick/knob" of butter.) Perhaps *accent*, not lexis, was the stronger reason?

Differences in accent/pronunciation between AmE and BrE have recently become an issue in children's programming, particularly regarding the British series *Peppa Pig* (see

Hutchings, 2024 (and Horton, 2021 for the preemptive scepticism)). (When *Peppa Pig* was first exported to American television, it was dubbed into AmE; however, the series was not well received, and (coincidentally?) the channel it was shown on (Tickle-U) went under (see LMW, n.d.). Since 2007, the versions broadcast in the USA are the same as those shown in the UK.) In general, however, it seems that families in America are not keen on their children acquiring a British accent – and the feeling is mutual. In a 2013 interview, Joanna Ruiz, who voices Daniel Tiger in the BrE version, said that she finds, "'especially if [she has] been doing an American voice, that [she]'ll be speaking it for a couple of hours afterwards'" (Tims, 2013). If dubbing artists themselves can find certain accents quite "sticky", one can perhaps understand parents' fears that the children's accent might owe more to their favourite TV characters than to their family and local environment.

With standardisation, it is usually accepted that subtle regional differences in the source language will be lost in translation. Interestingly, this is not the case with *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* and *Vida the Vet*, which in their BrE incarnations retain a range of native dialectical accents. Although Vida and her parents speak standard English, with Popcorn's accent only very slightly inflected, the surrounding menagerie represent a diverse mix of Englishes (particularly Koa the Tiger and Juno the Hippo). Unusually, in the BrE version of *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood*, the title character himself has a regional accent, apparently hailing from somewhere in Yorkshire. Daddy Tiger's accent is somewhat softer – and Mummy Tiger speaks with quite a broad *Welsh* accent. Grandpere retains his French accent – indeed, his lines were not even redubbed.

One can only speculate on the reasons for these decisions. Research has shown that "several regional [British] accents are now perceived as being 'warm' and 'friendly'", with the Yorkshire accent being (along with Edinburgh's) the most positively received (Valleriani, 2021, p.197 (citing Ranzato, 2017)). If *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* both aims to develop children's empathy for that character and relies on that empathy to achieve its other prosocial goals, then giving Daniel one of the most welcomed regional accents would seem to support that mission– even if it seems incongruous for someone growing up in a place called "Jungle Beach". Minutella (2021) relates how "[s]everal scholars and critics have noticed that villains in Hollywood films including animations often speak British English" (p.187), and "the variety that is typically used for villains is upper class British English termed Received Pronunciation (RP)" (p.220). Perhaps, given that it is the client who decides (Minutella, 2021), it was a certain antipathy towards Received Pronunciation (RP) among speakers of *Am*E that caused its deliberate omission.

5 Conclusion

> The effectiveness of dubbed programmes is at times assessed by their capacity to make audiences disregard that what they are watching is not an "original" AV text, but one that has been rewritten, extensively rehearsed, recorded and brought to life in a different language by a team of professionals. (Baños, 2020, p. 879)

The BrE-dubbed adaptations of *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* and *Vida the Vet* are indeed lively and watchable – and if they were the only versions a viewer saw, the matter would end there, However, with clips and full episodes circulating on YouTube, families are likely to experience both original and adaptation at some stage. Whichever version of these shows one sees first, encountering the *other* version is a somewhat disconcerting, almost uncanny, experience. Watching children's television, one is used to suspending disbelief: one becomes familiar with the characters and their worlds, however far they be from everyday reality. Accidentally watching the "other" version forces one to confront the very obvious but nevertheless unmentioned fact that a series of human decisions underlies these finished products, and that each and every decision might have been different. It is not a question of preferring one version or another; the choice in both cases was made to domesticate. One presumes that financial considerations played at least a part – but *why* did the makers feel that these programmes would be more successful with UK audiences if they were redubbed into BrE?

Children watching in the UK might perhaps slightly less likely to speak with an American accent – although American cultural hegemony remains supreme, and among Unequal Englishes, it is now the American strand of English that has become the global standard, shaping both traditional EFL teaching and learning as well as ELF conventions. In being thus shielded from these facts, UK-based children (the vast majority of whom will become native speakers of the most spoken language in the world) may be denied an early chance to experience something of what speakers of all other languages sense sooner rather than later: not 'linguistic relativity' necessarily, but at least a realisation that one's own language is not the only one. Conversely, one might argue that the very attempt to protect BrE speakers from this realisation or to defer the moment when BrE itself, once so powerful, is totally subsumed by its bold cousin, by creating versions of the same programme in English, is what will grant both them and AmE speakers some appreciation, from their linguistically WEIRD position, of the plurilinguistic world.

The decision to redub *Daniel Tiger's Neighbo[u]rhood* and *Vida the Vet* from AmE to BrE is, quite possibly, an intralingual case of "[t]he interests of the global community, from which, by definition, no social group can be excluded, [coming] into conflict with the interests of 'bounded' institutions such as nation-states" (Lu & Corbett, 2011, pp. 448–449). The British Broadcasting Corporation, a quasi-governmental body ultimately accountable to parliament, proffers these programmes only when voiced in BrE, although traces of their AmE origins survive on other, non-linguistic levels. The decision to switch from one variety of the world's *lingua franca* to another encapsulates the tensions between the notion of a "global community" and of more local bastions of identity-formation such as "nation-states" but also neighbourhoods. Daniel Tiger's innocent and idealistic invitations ("Could you be mine? Would you be mine? Won't you be my neighbo[u]r?") are more than rhetorical questions, the spread of his programme into diverse and superficially similar territories exposing a paradox at the heart of the very concept of "neighbo[u]rliness" which his prosocially-minded series is so keen to

instil in its young viewers. Indeed, the paradox is distilled even further, in the awkward character that has recurred throughout this article – ironically, like children of old, seen but not heard: the "u" ("you") in "neighbo[u]r".

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Part 2

LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION: RESEARCH ON 21ST-CENTURY NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

RETHINKING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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https://doi.org/10.21862/Intercultural/2025/8641/85

Abstract

The present study[1] is a review of the relevant literature on what has fundamentally shaped our students in the 21st century, how social changes and the different technological innovations have affected their needs and what we need to consider to successfully engage them and provide meaningful learning experiences for them. First, it looks at the different characteristics and names attached to students born shortly before and in the 21st century. It then outlines the skills and competences students need to possess in order to manage their study and work and discusses what influences have been instrumental in shaping them. After highlighting what surface and deep approaches to learning mean in the context of higher education, the paper examines how engagement and active learning can enhance students' deep learning. It also considers the role of positive group dynamics, one of the key conditions of successful learning.

Keywords: engagement, active learning, deep learning, 21st-century skills, group dynamics

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[1] This paper is an adapted version of a chapter from the following work in progress: Szabó, É. (2025). *Rethinking student engagement in blended learning: Opportunities and challenges in higher education* [Manuscript in preparation]. Eötvös Loránd University.

1 Introduction

Understanding how to successfully engage students in meaningful learning experiences in the 21st century requires a closer look at the specific characteristics and needs of students as well as the roles and competences of teachers that emerged in response to the changes and challenges in the field of education in general, and in online education in particular. In accordance with the idea that "if you want to learn about teaching, start by looking into learning" (Szesztay, 1996, p. 36) this paper sets out to examine students, based on the assumption that anything teachers do to support learning should primarily be led by who the students are and what they need. This paper is, therefore, about the students as they are today. Although no specific attention will be given to teachers, it is important to emphasise that the needs and behaviour of students are rarely independent of the behaviour and actions of the teacher due to the dynamic interplay between them. A good example for this is provided by Sulis and Mercer's (2025) study, which set out to investigate student and teacher engagement in the same lesson and found that they are "co-constructed in the classroom environment" (p. 11) and affect each other in multiple ways. As Sulis and Mercer noted, when both teachers and students "are engaged and enjoying their respective roles in class, both are likely to flourish and achieve more of their respective goals and ambitions" (p. 11).

2 Students of the 21st Century

Students in the 21st century are believed to differ from those in the 20th century in terms of their needs, the knowledge they acquire outside formal learning contexts, and the skills they develop in response. Although their individual characteristics, such as interests, aptitudes, personality traits, motivation, family and social backgrounds are just as diverse as those of earlier generations, it is often argued that life in a fast-paced, ever-changing world, with digitalisation permeating all human activities, has a profound effect on what today's students are like. This, in turn, is thought to result in certain traits that are commonly observed among them.

However, it is almost impossible to identify the general characteristics of entire generations (Bates, 2019; Jones & Shao, 2011), even though there have been several attempts. What is possible though is to examine some of the most significant influences that people belonging to the same generation are exposed to, and to consider the most immediate expectations of the job market that whole generations of students need to be prepared for. At the same time, there are quite a few 'generation names' attached to the different cohorts of generations between the 1980s and the 2010s, terms that are worth knowing as they are often used in everyday and educational discourse. While there is no general agreement on how to define the generational boundaries between the different cohorts (Giray, 2022; Rue, 2018), young people born in the 1980s and before the mid-1990s are often referred to

as *Millennials*, and those born between the mid-1990s and 2010 have been given various names, such as *iGen*, *Centennials, Post-Millennials*, or, *Generation Ƶ (Gen Ƶ),* with *GenƵ* being the most commonly used name for them (Fekete & Divéki, 2023; Rue, 2018). Certain studies simply call them the *Internet-* or *Net generation* (Molnár, 2011).

In an attempt to identify the most important characteristics of 21st century students, scholars often turned to creating metaphors to capture these traits. One of the most well-known and widely debated metaphors was proposed by Prensky (2001), who claimed that students born in the digital age are 'natives' in the digital world, as opposed to their parents and teachers, who are 'immigrants' – that is, people who will never feel fully at home in the digital environment having arrived there at a mature age. To illustrate the contrast between these two groups, Prensky (2004) provided a list of activities that digital natives, unlike their immigrant parents and teachers, can undertake due to their easy access to and familiarity with digital technologies. He argued that education systems that fail to respond to the new skills students have developed through these activities must be fundamentally reformed to accommodate their evolving needs. Though Prensky's concepts of digital natives and immigrants might explain some differences between generations, albeit only a few, they were challenged on the grounds that neither empirical evidence nor factual data support them (Benini & Murray, 2014). Another argument against age as an indicator of differences between students and their teachers is that, despite similarities in their everyday digital activities, students vary enormously in how proficient they are in technology use (Bates, 2019).

Instead of focusing on age as a determining factor, White and Le Cornu (2011) proposed the metaphor of 'visitors' and 'residents' to describe the difference in how individuals use digital technology. In their model, people who use the internet occasionally and for specific purposes are considered visitors, while those who are immersed in the digital world and live their life there are seen as residents. Although many young people from the Internet generation are likely to be residents, it is their habits, attitudes, online behaviours and perceived need to belong to a digital community that define them as such, and not their age. The visitor-resident distinction, though still lacking sufficient empirical support, is more helpful than age-based models because it acknowledges the profound impact of digital technology on how students live and learn, without assuming that all young people possess the same digital skills or engage in online activities with the same level of proficiency.

Metaphors like generational stereotypes can be misleading as they assume that the people described by them share many common characteristics (Jones & Shao, 2011). A more useful approach is to identify the key influences and factors that shape how people live in order to gain a better understanding of general patterns and characteristics. One such determining influence in the life of today's students is *digital technology*. Having grown up with technology, they carry out most of their daily activities, including work, studying and socializing, with the help of technology. Social connections and constant interactions, both online and in person, play a central role in their lives, and because of the richness of

written and visual information they are exposed to on a daily basis, they appreciate being stimulated in a variety of ways.

It is often claimed that, due to quick access to information, today's students are used to doing several things at once and rarely focus on a single activity. As a result, they are often described as superficial, with short attention spans, frequent multitasking, and little ability to become deeply immersed in one task. It has, however, been pointed out that these observations are somewhat exaggerated (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011), and that today's students are capable of much more. For example, what is perceived as multitasking and a lack of sufficient focus on one single task can be, in fact, 'task-switching' or 'switch-tasking'. In other words, young people can be very "good at switching between different things at different points and doing all tasks effectively" (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011, p. 43). In addition, thanks to their advanced technology use, they can take a more active part in a range of tasks than the generations before them (Tóth-Mózer, 2014). While for their parents' and grandparents one of the most common free time activities was watching TV – an entirely passive way of spending free time – digital technology seems to encourage activities that enable active involvement, and it also stimulates students' creativity by ensuring diverse ways of communication and collaboration, as well as the production of written and visual content on various online forums.

In considering how well students of the present generation can explore technology for their own learning, it is important to divide the first quarter of the 21st century into two periods: (i) the pre-Covid one and the (ii) Covid and post-Covid ones. Although students were quick to discover new technologies (Kelly, 2011) and use various sources, such as the Internet and their friends to seek information already in the pre-Covid era, they were found to be more proficient in using technology for entertainment than for learning in that period (Fekete, 2023). This, however, changed in the Covid- and post-Covid eras starting in March 2020, when the transition to online education forced students to develop entirely new learning habits and enhanced their skills of learning with technology.

In sum, it is possible to say that students in the 21st century vary as much as those in the 20th century in terms of their individual characteristics. At the same time, due to the central role technology plays in their lives, many are natural users of digital tools, which they can exploit creatively in a range of everyday activities. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, students' technology-related skills for learning appeared to be less developed than those used for entertainment, while their skills of searching for information on the Internet and consulting various sources other than their teachers were relatively well-developed. This changed significantly after March 2020, when the pandemic forced education into the online sphere, and all courses moved fully online. The next section discusses what students need to succeed in learning, whether in person or online, and how this relates to engagement.

3 Skills and Competences Required in the 21st Century

Apart from digital technologies, another very important factor that determines today's students' needs, including their learning needs, is the demands of the job market. Though one cannot generalize in this respect, it can often be observed that today's students reject 'too much' theoretical knowledge and prefer to acquire 'useful' knowledge – an opinion which may not be shared by universities. For example, in a study of English majors' motivational profile, Menyhárt and Kormos (2006) found that students' needs and aims were in sharp contrast to the structure and content of the education provided by the university. While students expected to gain practical knowledge they considered useful in their future careers, the programme took a strong theoretical approach, reflected in its heavy emphasis on theoretical content.

In order to do well in both study and work, students of this generation need certain skills commonly referred to as *21st century skills*. These are considered to be a broad set of knowledge, skills, and personality traits enabling success in learning and working. However, the problem is that the term *21st century skills* is, as Mishra and Kereluik (2011) put it, "a term that we all think we understand and yet are hard-pressed to clearly define" (p.1). It is difficult to provide a clear-cut definition because the challenges facing students in a fast-changing world of study and work are highly diverse. This also means that 21st century skills are not static but are continuously shaped by the momentary needs of society; what seems to be essential one day may no longer be needed the next or may simply be replaced by a different skill. An additional problem is that in everyday discourse, 21st century skills are often associated with the future, even though we are 25 years into the century (in 2025). Despite these uncertainties, this paper uses the term *21st century skills* when it refers to works that use it in this form.

There have been several attempts to pinpoint which skills are essential in the 21st century, showing a rather loose consensus on certain core skills, such as *collaboration, communication, creativity* and *critical thinking*. However, as Mishra and Kereluik (2011) emphasised:

> … it is clear that not all of the knowledge and skills are unique and novel to this century. Cognitive skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, job and life skills, and synthesis have a long empirical history closely connected with academic achievement. These skills rather than being novel to the 21st century and necessary for success in the 21st century, are skills that are required for successful learning and achievement in any time, including but not limited to the 21st century. Additionally, interpersonal skills such as communication, collaboration, and ethical awareness/emotional regulation have been integral to successful interpersonal relationships for centuries. (p. 12)

In their analysis of ten frameworks of 21st century skills, Mishra and Kereluik (2011) created their own categorization and concluded that among the many skills emerging from any framework, the ones that are unique to the 21st century belong to two kinds of competence areas. One such area is what they call *information literacy*, which covers "new skills and knowledge [...] needed at all levels of interaction with digital media" (p. 13). Although somewhat less comprehensive, their definition of information literacy seems to cover the same knowledge and skills as *digital competence*, which, somewhat later, in 2019, was acknowledged as one of the eight key competences to develop for life-long learning by the European Union (European Commission, 2019). It also came to be regarded as the most critical skill to improve in education during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (Getenet et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2021).

Another area of skills needed more than ever as identified by Mishra and Kereluik (2011) is *cultural competence and awareness*. This is due to the increased diversity of people from different cultural backgrounds, which is currently experienced in most environments, including education and higher education. As Mishra and Kereluik explain, "with increased globalization and digital media individuals from diverse cultures are exposed to one another on an unprecedented level" (p. 13) and this requires "the ability to work productively and respectfully with diverse individuals" (p. 13). The concept of cultural competence and awareness seems to be synonymous with *intercultural communicative competence* (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2020)*,* involving linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competences as well as intercultural competence, which students need to possess if they want to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. Supporting Mishra and Kereluik's view, Lázár (2020) emphasizes that in today's world, where openness and tolerance toward difference are vital, developing intercultural communicative competence is crucial for successful communication and cooperation. This is particularly true in higher education, where increasing study-abroad opportunities mean that universities, "entrusted with the training of intercultural intellectuals" (Holló, 2017, p. 72), are places where students from different cultural groups within and across countries come into contact with each other increasingly often.

Although Mishra and Kereluik (2011) mention globalisation as a factor affecting diversity and call for strengthening cultural competence and awareness, they do not discuss *global competence* separately. However, it must be acknowledged in its own right as the third fundamental competence area involving skills that are critical in the 21st century, given the growing need for individuals to understand and respond to local and global issues. The skills entailed by global competence and to be developed along with other critical skills include, among others, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and collaboration skills (Divéki, 2020, 2024).

4 Influential Factors of Learning in the 21st Century

Mishra and Kereluik's (2011) discussion of the most essential skills, unique to the 21st century, helps identify the key influences and factors that have shaped students' learning over the past two decades. Three of these – (i) *digital technology*, (ii) *diversity*, and (iii) *globalisation*, which demand the development of students' information literacy, cultural competence and awareness, and global competence – were mentioned above. A fourth major force, closely tied to the use of digital technology, was the (iv) *Covid-19 pandemic*. It drastically changed how today's young people studied and socialized during lockdowns and university closures, leaving lasting effects on their lives through the many changes it brought about.

Finally, a fifth and relatively recent influence is the emergence of (v) *generative artificial intelligence (GenAI)* at the end of 2022. The possibilities GenAI introduced for learning fundamentally changed traditional ways of searching for and analysing information, and affected other activities, such as creating or summarizing texts. This provoked a shock in higher education, prompting educators to reconsider a number of tried-and-tested teaching and assessment practices, often in response to the 'essay', a commonly used assessment tool in the social sciences and humanities, which could now be easily produced with AI tools with little cognitive effort.

Beyond the challenges posed by the emergence of GenAI, it has also led to new insights into how teaching and learning can benefit from AI. It became clear that meaningful and ethical AI use requires a specific set of knowledge and skills (Miao, 2023), and that tasks designed to exploit AI can help students develop these. For example, if students use Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) for creating a text, they need a range of *cognitive skills* to critically evaluate the language and the content of the text, check the validity of the information, judge whether it is appropriate for the purpose and the intended audience, and, if necessary, modify the essay's argumentation. In other words, they need a variety of *critical thinking* skills to complete a task, and the task itself may improve these skills by providing opportunities for practice. What this suggests is that the use of AI in various fields of life, including teaching and learning, requires the use of a specific competence – *AI competence* – with some distinctive elements, given that "future learning and training systems must equip all people with core AI competencies, including understanding of how AI collects and can manipulate data, and skills to ensure safety and protection of personal data" (UNESCO, 2021, Foreword).

5 Learning in Higher Education: Surface and Deep Approaches

If teachers want their students to be successful at learning, they need to be aware that teaching 21st century students requires a complete review of practices dating from the 20th century, as they are no longer appropriate for current students' needs and tackling the challenges that emerge (Molnár, 2011). However, it is important to bear in mind that change in education is not as fast as the emerging needs of students. Even when today's teacher education aims to equip future teachers with cutting-edge knowledge of the profession, previous learner experience and students' beliefs about what constitutes good teaching strongly influence classroom practices (Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992; Rádai & Shanklin, 1996). This suggests that even teachers who were trained in the 21st century might fall back on 20th century practices that they had experienced as learners.

What, then, do we need to know about how to teach students in the 21st century? Again, we should start out from the idea quoted at the beginning of this paper: "if you want to learn about teaching, start by looking into learning" (Szesztay, 1996, p. 36). It is, therefore, essential to understand how students learn in the 21st century. What makes this difficult is that learning is a highly complex process involving a wide range of activities and cognitive processes, such as remembering facts, discussing and debating ideas, putting forward arguments, reconsidering one's own approach to specific situations, all of which ultimately result in a *change* in how one sees the world (Fry et al., 2008).

Additionally, the questions of how learning takes place and what conditions need to be provided to facilitate it are made more complex by the diversity of ways in which students in higher education perceive learning. There is no 'average' student, as each student is different in terms of their abilities, academic orientation, commitment and background knowledge (Biggs & Tang, 2011). This can be well-illustrated by the 'Robert and Susan problem' explained by Biggs and Tang (p. 5), in which Susan is a highly committed student with a sound background knowledge and an ability to self-regulate and organise her learning. She learns by formulating questions and actively seeking answers which she later reflects on and revisits if necessary. Robert's learning is, however, qualitatively different. His learning activities remain at the level of notetaking and memorizing, and he is rarely engaged to the point where he would question any information. As Biggs and Tang (2011) put it "students like Susan virtually teach themselves" (p. 5), while teaching Robert is more challenging as he needs a lot more support, encouragement and motivation from his teachers. The main question is, therefore, how university teachers can cater for the needs of both Susan and Robert. In addition, it is important for them to understand how to create conditions that foster meaningful learning, encouraging more students to learn as Susan does.

To answer these questions, Biggs and Tang (2011) identify three important factors, of which two can be controlled by teachers and teaching. One is (i) the student's level of *engagement* in exploiting their full creative-cognitive capacities in a way that the learning activities they are involved in are not simply memorizing and notetaking, but

are higher-order cognitive activities, such as applying and theorizing. The other is (ii) the extent to which the learning activities encourage *active learning*. The third factor, which is beyond the teacher's control, is the student's academic orientation.

Without suggesting that students can be stereotypically categorized into Susans and Roberts, or that 'academic' students are women and 'non-academic' students are men, the 'Robert and Susan problem' (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 5) highlights two very important points that are related to the central topic of this paper. One is that *engagement* facilitates students' learning, which was emphasised by several other researchers when looking for ways of offering memorable learning experiences (Getenet et al., 2024; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Redmond et al., 2018). The other is that *active learning* which can be achieved by active student involvement in various tasks also has a key role in enhancing the success of learning (Castelli & Sarvary, 2021; Cavanagh, 2011; Lumpkin et al., 2015; Machemer & Crawford, 2007; Millis, 2012; Venton & Pompano, 2021).

Another reason why Susan and Robert's example might be informative from the perspective of how students learn is that it exemplifies two dominant approaches to learning. Susan's example shows that when appropriately engaged and involved actively in tasks that require higher-order thinking processes, for example, in problem-based tasks where questioning, looking for solutions and evaluating outcomes are essential and collaboration is a fruitful way to improve learning outcomes, students adopt a *deep approach* to learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Fry et al., 2008; Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). In contrast, when students like Robert, are engaged in lower-level cognitive processes, such as memorizing or notetaking only to complete a task, and instead of taking an active role, they are passive participants in their own learning, they adopt a *surface* approach to learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Fry et al., 2008; Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). As Fry et al. (2008) put it, when the surface approach is adopted "facts are learnt without a meaningful framework" (p.11). What this seems to suggest is that if higher education aims to foster students' deep-learning to promote higher-order cognitive processes that yield better learning results, university teaching should pay specific attention to fully engage students and support active learning practices. The good news is that approaches are not fixed, and it is possible to guide students from using surface approaches towards deep ones (Fry et al., 2008).

6 Fostering Deep Approaches to Learning: The Role of Student Engagement and Active Learning

To understand how deep approaches to learning can be enhanced, it is essential to examine what the two important concepts – *engagement* and *active learning* – identified above as factors that positively influence learning success. A closer examination reveals that engagement is defined differently by scholars (Redmond et al., 2018; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Although numerous attempts have been made to grasp the meaning of

this highly complex term to the extent that it has become a buzzword in higher education (Gibbs, 2014), it is still difficult to define (Redmond et al., 2018) and is "used to refer to so many different things that it is difficult to keep track of what people are actually talking about" (Gibbs, 2014). One way to gain a clearer understanding of the concept is to look at the activities identified as central to it. In Biggs and Tang's (2011) work, engagement is described in terms of *cognitive activities* with 'memorizing' and 'notetaking' being at the low end that require little creative thinking, while 'applying' and 'theorizing' are at the high end, engaging students in high-level cognitive processes that require creative and critical thinking. According to Dixson's (2015) definition, student engagement is "the extent to which students actively engage by *thinking, talking, and interacting* with the content of a course, the other students in the course, and the instructor" (p. 2). For Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) the very essence of student engagement is "*active participation* and *involvement* in certain behaviours" (p. 2). What emerges as a common feature of these definitions is the centrality of specific cognitive activities requiring interaction and involvement.

Recognizing students' needs and characteristics and adapting engagement techniques in response can be crucial as engaged students are more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning. These can be fostered in various ways. One way is to provide opportunities for *active learning,* which, according to its most widely cited definition, is accomplished when students are "doing things and thinking about what they are doing" (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. iii). This approach – learning by 'doing things' and reflecting on them, which involves taking an active role in one's own learning and making sense of the experience, has been found to result in more effective learning than passively listening and taking in information (Cavanagh, 2011; Machemer & Crawford, 2007; Millis, 2012).

Another approach to promote active learning is involving students in various forms of *interaction* and *collaboration*. These have the potential to cater for a very important need of many students today, for whom interacting with their peers – whether in person or through the interactive features of online communication – is a natural way of being. Additionally, when designed well and used creatively with a clear purpose, interactive tasks develop students' skills to collaborate with each other, and most importantly, provide variety, which is badly needed by most students to stay alert and energized. This was confirmed by the observations made by Menyhárt and Kormos (2006) in their study of English majors' motivational profile. They found that many university seminars on language development, literature and linguistics were delivered in a lecture form with the teacher presenting and the students listening. What Menyhárt and Kormos concluded was that the lack of opportunities to communicate prevented students of English from getting actively involved and improving their English language skills, which might have been possible if the seminars had been more interactive.

6.1 Lectures: Scenes of Engaging Students in Active Learning?[2]

The results of a small-scale survey on interactive presentations and lectures (Szabó, 2019b) also highlight some important learning needs of today's students and reveal the tension between how students would like to learn and what university lectures can offer. The survey was part of a larger research project, which explored students' views on lectures as the primary form of instruction at the university, and which was then developed into a training course for lecturers in response to the survey findings. The participants of the survey were students from two different groups in a pre-service EFL teacher education programme. The first task of the survey aimed to elicit their experiences by asking them to share the words they first associated with the word 'lecture'. The two word clouds, created in the two groups based on the students' words, are illustrated with Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1. Words Students Associate with '*Lecture*' in Group 1 (Szabó, 2019b, p. 328)

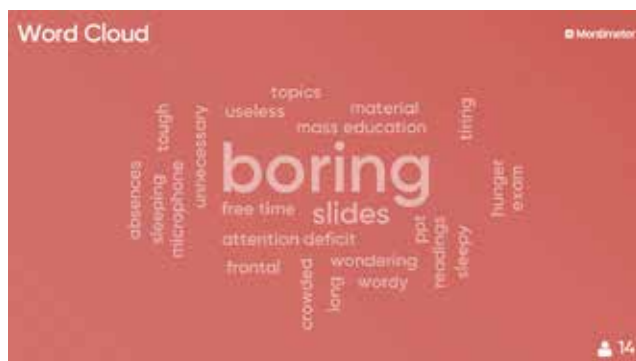Figure 2. Words Students Associate with '*Lecture*' in Group 2 (Szabó, 2019b, p.328)

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2   This section is based on the following paper: Szabó, É. (2019). Interactive presentations and lectures in higher education. In D. Omrcen & V. Cigan (Eds.), *IV. International Conference From Theory to Practice in Language For Specific Purposes* (pp. 323–335). Association of LSP Teachers at Higher Education Institutions.

In the second task, the students were asked to share words they associated with an ideal learning environment. The two word clouds created, are illustrated with Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3. Words Students Associate with an *Ideal Learning Environment'* in Group 1 (Szabó, 2019b, p. 329)

Figure 4. Words Students Associate with an *Ideal Learning Environment'* in Group 2 (Szabó, 2019b, p. 329)

As Figures 1 and 2 show, the word that was most often associated with 'lecture' was 'boring'. Some of the other words in the word cloud, such as 'attention deficit' 'sleepy', 'tiring', 'useless', 'mass education' or 'monotonous' capture how the students involved felt about lectures. The words in the second set (Figures 3 and 4) describing the 'ideal learning environment' were more varied. In Group 1, the most frequently associated word was 'silent', likely referring to conditions that facilitate being fully absorbed and paying

attention. In contrast, in Group 2, the most common word was 'interactive', possibly referring to the missing element of lectures which, when provided, offers opportunities to get actively involved and interact with the others. It can also be observed that many of the words associated with an ideal learning environment are positive, such as 'bright', 'interesting, 'informative', 'positive', 'relaxing', 'supportive', 'cooperation' and 'community', which suggest that positive emotions and a sense of belonging to a community as well as interactions and cooperation are key conditions for learning for the participating students.

The survey on university lectures and ideal learning environments is not meant to claim that lectures are inappropriate forms of instruction. Nor does it intend to suggest that students' judgement, especially with such a small sample, is the only factor to consider when evaluating the usefulness of lectures in general. On the contrary, lectures can be very effective forms of transferring knowledge, and most people have memories of great lectures which were engaging, thought-provoking and sources of intellectual joy and achievement. At the same time, the survey results draw attention to the fact that *transmissive lectures*, which are for "learning by listening" (Bates, 2019, p.88) should be reconsidered, and, where possible, may be turned into *interactive lectures,* which are for "learning by talking" (Bates, 2019, p.95).

6.2 Empirical Studies on Engaging Students in Active Learning with Interactive Activities

The need to introduce interactive tasks into university seminars and lectures to enhance student engagement and active learning was addressed by three more studies, two of which (Cavanagh, 2011; Herrmann, 2013) were carried out in-person, and one in an online teaching environment (Vuopala et al., 2016). Starting out from the assumption that active student engagement in lectures contributes to more effective understanding of the lecture material, Cavanagh (2011) decided to combine traditional lecturing - that is the frontal transmission of information - with interactive tasks in a lecture series for a whole semester and asked his students to evaluate the experience at the end of the semester. His results show that students valued the combination of traditional and interactive teaching, especially the variety of activities and the opportunities to take part in small group discussions. Among the reasons students found interactions conducive to learning were the positive effects of getting actively involved, the discussions that "promoted a much deeper analysis of the subject matter than if they had simply copied down notes" (p.27), and that by articulating their thinking and listening to their peers "they became more acutely aware of how much of the material they comprehended" (p.27).

In another study investigating whether the active engagement of undergraduate students, typically accustomed to a passive role in their university sessions, could be increased, Herrmann (2013) set out to measure students' in-class participation and their approaches to learning before and after using cooperative learning techniques. His results seem less positive than those of Cavanagh's (2011). He found that while students' in-class

participation increased thanks to the interactive activities, there was little change in their approach to learning, and no evidence of deeper learning compared to traditional courses without any form of interaction. He also found that students reacted very differently to the experience. While some were positive, others were somewhat frustrated as they felt that there was less time for the lecturer to 'teach'. This highlights an important problem: students with a "transmission conception of teaching" (p. 183) may altogether reject interactive techniques and their beliefs about what constitutes good teaching at university should also be addressed. In his final conclusions, Hermann shed light on the importance of cognitive activity without which cooperative activities may not enhance deep learning by saying that:

> changing the instructional method is in itself not enough to discourage a surface approach and promote a deep approach to learning. Working cooperatively thus seems to have affected the students' learning behaviours without affecting the students' motives which are essential to the quality of the students' approaches to learning (Biggs and Tang, 2011). [...] Students may have appeared to engage more actively in discussion, still, this does not necessarily imply that cooperative learning increased their cognitive activity. (pp. 182–183)

In a third study, Vuopala et al. (2016) examined how interaction occurs in computer-supported collaborative learning situations. They worked with students from three different European countries whom they divided into smaller groups, each comprising students of three different nationalities. While the students in the same group worked on a task together, Vuopala et al. evaluated the way they interacted with each other. They found that although students were quite successful at planning and coordinating group activities, they still needed to learn skills for productive contribution, such as asking questions or making well-argued comments.

The three studies (Cavanagh, 2011; Herrmann, 2013; Vuopala et al., 2016) highlighted different aspects of the role and the potential of interactive activities in enhancing engagement and active learning, and each offered specific insights into what needs to be considered when introducing them. While Cavanagh's (2011) findings regarding interactive lectures and active student involvement were very positive, Herrmann's (2013) results were less promising. As it was pointed out above, he raised the issue of students having a "transmission conception of teaching" (p. 183) and recognized that for real, deep learning to take place, ensuring the right level of *cognitive challenge* is just as important as providing opportunities for interactions. This is in line with Garrison and Cleveland-Innes' study (2005), which claimed that no matter how much learning potential interactive activities have, they are not enough to fully engage students as "meaningful engagement does not simply correspond to sending lots of messages" (p.144). What should be provided together with opportunities for interactions and collaboration is cognitive challenge requiring cognitive effort from the students. This idea is reflected by Bigg and Tang's

(2011) definition of engagement (see above), in which cognition is a central element. Finally, Vuopala et al.'s (2016) study offered specific insights into how interactions in an online learning environment could best be exploited and promoted. One of the main conclusions of their study was that for collaboration to be successful, students need to be taught *specific skills* that they can adopt in oral interactions, such as asking questions and formulating arguments – a finding that can be exploited in other learning contexts.

6.3 Positive Group Dynamics for Enhancing Student Engagement and Active Learning

Although the literature identifies several factors that positively affect student engagement and active learning, this short section is devoted to just one – positive group dynamics – which is understood to be one of the most powerful. As it was pointed out by Prabhu (1992), lessons that engage students through varied interactions to provide active learning opportunities with sufficient cognitive challenge can be regarded as social events. This raises the question of what conditions are conducive to making the event as successful as possible so that deep learning takes place. First of all, for students to listen to one another and respond meaningfully, both indispensable for effective collaboration, they must be able to *pay attention* to each other and *maintain focus* (Szabó, 2019a). This can be more easily achieved in *cohesive learning groups*, where *positive peer relationships* and *strong teacher–student rapport* foster *psychological safety*, allowing students to take risks and cooperate with the teacher and one another (Edmondson, 1999; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Being part of a cohesive learning group enhances students' sense of *relatedness*, which, at the same time, is a core condition for feeling motivated and wanting to be active in one's own learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997), strengthens students *well-being* and nurtures *positive emotions* – all of which are basic conditions of successful learning, in general (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), particularly in higher education (Kahu et al., 2020; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Morton et al., 2014; Thomas, 2013). Therefore, adopting a *group-centred approach* is essential for successful interactions and learning to happen (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1999).

Finally, cohesive learning groups are more likely to offer cognitive challenges as well as opportunities for students to learn from each other compared to groups where individuals do not develop personal relationships. That is, they are better suited for learning, as students feel more comfortable to open up and take an active part. Thus, increased collaboration and participation in discussions create the right conditions for students to explore different perspectives and relate those to already existing knowledge structures, which, according to the social constructivist view, is how learning takes place (Vigotsky, 1978).

7 Summary

This paper reviewed the literature on student characteristics and needs in the 21st century and discussed the specific skills and competences required for successful learning. It argued that to create the conditions for deep learning in higher education, teachers need to be aware of the importance of providing opportunities for active student involvement through interaction and collaboration. Such opportunities are crucial due to the role they play in enhancing student engagement and active learning, thus facilitating deep learning. The paper also emphasised that positive group dynamics and cohesive learning groups are of key importance in this process. Drawing on the results of empirical studies that integrated various forms of interactive activities in both in-person and online higher education contexts, it confirmed earlier findings that interactive activities alone may not be sufficient to ensure the right conditions for deep learning, even though they are powerful tools for facilitating the learning process. What should also be given careful attention is the design of these activities, with special emphasis on the cognitive challenge they provide. This points to the need to explore task design and identify teaching approaches that facilitate student engagement so that learning can be meaningful and memorable, while it can also become a source of joy for students and teachers.

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THE EXPERIENCE OF ENGLISH-AS-A-FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINEES: SOME LESSONS TO LEARN?

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https://doi.org/10.21862/Intercultural/2025/8641/105

Abstract

This paper describes an ongoing research study that began following the periods of Emergency Remote Teaching in Hungary during the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, 13 teacher trainees were interviewed about their experiences with remote teaching during their long and short teaching practices. Out of this study the author became interested in how trainees' experience during their training affected their thinking about their future career path. In particular, the focus was on their short and long teaching practicums and how they affected their view of themselves as teachers. At the centre of this formative experience was their relationship with their in-school mentors. In the subsequent phases of the research in 2023 and 2024, 33 and 15 trainees were interviewed respectively. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide. They were almost exclusively online on Microsoft Teams and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes each. Transcriptions were generated automatically and then checked for accuracy. Memo writing and open coding followed by more focused coding allowed the construction of categories and subcategories. This paper will report on some of the most important outcomes of the research and consider their implications for public education and teacher educators.

Keywords: teacher trainees, teaching practice, mentor-mentee relationships, in-depth qualitative interviews

1 Introduction

Given the need not only for better teacher retention within public education systems in many countries but also for providing a steady input of qualified and competent novice teachers (Kelchtermans, 2017), gaining a better understanding of the overall experience of pre-service teacher trainees during their training would seem to be essential. In this ongoing qualitative study, the experience of teacher trainees during their six-year-long training in a prestigious university in Budapest, Hungary, is the focus of enquiry. All of the participants were being trained to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as well as another subject. As part of their six-year training they were required to do a short, 15-lesson, teaching practice (STP) in a practice school affiliated with the university for both their subjects, and they also had to do a long teaching practice (LTP) in both subjects over two full semesters in a school they could choose. The paper begins by briefly examining the rise of public education and the concomitant need for effective teacher training, with a particular emphasis on Hungary. It then describes the situation in Hungarian public education over the last two decades, before moving on to a detailed discussion of the research itself.

1.1 The Rise of Public Education and the Demand for Qualified Teachers

The end of the nineteenth century saw a flourishing of compulsory public education mandated by the state in developed nations. In Europe this was influenced by the Prussian model, which was the first such system to be established in 1763 (Soysal & Strang, 1989). By the outbreak of the First World War "almost every European state [had] institutionalized mass education" (Soysal & Strong, 1989, p. 278), and at the beginning of the twentieth century, state sponsored mass education had spread to almost every single country around the globe, although with wide disparities between more wealthy and impoverished nations (UNESCO, 2006). With mass education came the need for an increased supply of qualified teachers, but at the same time tensions arose concerning the financing of training institutions and teacher salaries:

> There is an increasing recognition that teachers play the central role in efforts aimed at improving the functioning of education systems and raising learning outcomes. But do government policies consistently reflect this awareness? Does what is demanded of existing and prospective teachers match what is offered to them in terms of economic incentives and career prospects? (OECD, 2001)

Increasingly in the current century, there has been a narrative of teacher shortages, which has become a widespread phenomenon affecting many areas of the globe (UNESCO, 2024). In Europe an EU Commission report in 2023 noted that out of 27 countries, only Croatia

and Cyprus did not mention experiencing teacher shortages (European Commission, 2023). While concerns over a lack of teachers in public education are nothing new (Antonucci, 2016; Cowan et al., 2016), there can be no doubt that in many countries this is a serious problem. One such country is Hungary, and this paper reports on one small but important part of the Hungarian public education system: the training of pre-service EFL teachers in the largest university programme to offer such a course.

1.2 Initial Teacher Training in the University – Taking a "Practice Turn"

In the twenty-first century there has been a general movement within global education policy for pre-service teacher training at tertiary level to take what has been termed a "practice" or "practicum turn" (Mattsson et al., 2011; Merket, 2022), which itself has been influenced by a theory of practice within education generally (Reid, 2011). This practice turn in teacher training has been promoted by the Council of the European Union (2014) and the OECD (2019), and as a result, higher education training programmes have been working in close partnership with public schools so as to provide within-school practicums of varying length under the direction of in-school mentors, who are usually trained for the job. Thus, the in-school mentor's role has acquired great importance in the development of trainee teachers.

This has certainly been true of Hungary, where a long struggle for standardized training of secondary school teachers in universities became a realistic aim after the fall of Communism. However, there was no separation of teacher trainees and non-teacher trainee students specializing in subjects within the university, which resulted in a tendency for other departments to look down on teacher training departments (Szebenyi, 1991). As with other countries in the region, there were various types of practice involved, although with considerable differences between countries and even between universities in the same country in the early 90s (Bonsunowska-Kuska & Wysocka, 1992).

In Hungary there was a pressing need for thousands of extra teachers of English as English (along with German) suddenly became the most important foreign language, and teacher training institutions were created in the main universities to cater for this need (Medgyes, 1996, 2015). The first Centre for English Teacher Training (CETT) was created in the largest university in Hungary running a three-year teaching programme. Given high importance by the government, CETT received considerable support and professional help from the British Council (Medgyes, 1996). Several members of the institute were from Britain or had been trained in Britain and two of them oversaw the practicum component of the programme.

1.3 The Role of the In-School Mentor in CETT

The in-school practice component of the original CETT programme involved the trainees in pairs teaching a class for a whole year. It differed from the traditional approach in a number of ways; in the existing approach trainees were "supported by a designated member of staff whose duties included practical help, observation and giving, in the main, summative feedback" (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1996, p. 58), whereas, in the new system in-school mentors received a 120-hour training course based on "models of teacher education that promote reflective practice" (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1996, p. 65). A key difference in the role of the mentor was that, "different from the old supervisory role, where it would be the supervisor's view and model of teaching which the trainee was often expected to internalise" (p. 65), the focus was now on "building on the existing constructs and experience of the trainee" (p. 65). Among the key objectives of this course was to develop the mentor's skills to help "student-teachers become capable of self-evaluation and resultant action planning, leading to continuing professional development" (Bodóczky & Malderez, 1996, p. 67).

It was this original three-year CETT course that provided the future DNA for EFL teacher training in Hungary, even though CETT itself was eventually assimilated into the university in 2006, becoming the Department of English Language Pedagogy (DELP), the same department in which the current study took place. By the time the final cohort of trainees graduated in 2009, the programme had produced more than 1000 teachers (Ryan, n.d.). With the implementation of the Bologna process in Hungary (Ministry of National Resources, 2008), the initial three-year programme eventually became the six-year programme that the student-teachers in this study were on. However, the underlying philosophy remained one of teacher development through reflection on experience, and indeed, several of the original members of CETT remained in the new programme.

1.4 The Situation in the Hungarian Public Education System Since 2020

Before describing the study itself, some description of recent developments in Hungarian state education is necessary, as this affects teacher trainees and teachers alike. The single most impactful event on public education in Hungary and most likely in all countries this decade was the Covid-19 pandemic. In Hungary, the announcement of the closure of public schools came on March 13, 2020 (Orbán, 2020), and it lasted for the remaining part of the academic year. A second lockdown was imposed on schools from November 2020 to May 2021.

The effect of the lockdowns was to expose and accentuate the current trends in public education, in particular the problem of teacher shortages in many subjects (Juhász, 2021) as well as the ageing of the workforce (European Commission, 2023). Moreover, the much lower socio-economic status of some parts of the country (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal,

2017) is reflected in the resourcing of schools and the digital divide between students from better and worse off areas (Huszti, 2020). This exacerbated the effect of the lockdowns, particularly in terms of teachers' readiness to switch to online learning during the periods of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) but also in terms of how much access students had to digital technology (Czifra et al., 2021). Of course, the lockdowns put a further strain on resources and added to the burden on teachers' shoulders. It also severely impacted teacher trainees doing their in-school practicums.

A second event that has had a major impact on state education is the imposing of the so-called "Status Law" in 2023, which affected both the official status of teachers in the public sector and their duties (Magyar Közlöny, 2023). This law changed the legal status of teachers, stripping them of rights they had previously enjoyed as public servants and imposing a number of extra duties upon them (TASZ, 2023). In the later phases of this study, the trainees doing their teaching practices found themselves in the middle of ongoing teacher protests, resignations, and dismissals, which had a significant effect not just on their experience in their schools but on their view of the education system as a whole.

There are two other factors that affected the trainees in this study which should be mentioned. The first is the practice of employing pre-service teachers as "lesson givers" in many schools over recent years in order to cope with teacher shortages. Several of the trainees in this study were employed by schools to teach classes alongside their in-school practice, a situation which obviously complicated their status within the school. The second important point is the existence of a large private education sector in which many trainees, not to mention full-time teachers, were involved, either by giving private lessons or by working in language schools. This so-called shadow education sector (Byun & Baker, 2015; Hegedüs, 2021; Varga, 2015) reflects the perceived ineffectiveness of state education and the low salaries of teachers (Eurydice, 2023). It can also be seen as potentially perpetuating the problems within public education. Many of the graduates in this study stated their intention to teach privately rather than enter the state system.

2 Research Design

As already mentioned, this is an ongoing research study which aims to find out more about teacher trainees' experience over the entire span of their six-year training programme (now five years in the new system which began in 2022, but all the participants to date have been on the six-year track). This section reports on the development of the study up to the time of writing and provides an overview of how each phase was planned and carried out.

2.1 Phase 1 – How Teacher Trainees Dealt with Emergency Remote Teaching

The first phase of the research was intended to investigate the experience of teacher trainees during the two periods of ERT caused by the closure of public schools in Hungary as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The initial research aims were to find out what specific challenges the trainees were faced with and how they overcame them, and also to discover how their teaching had changed, particularly in terms of their use of digital technology. The participants were 13 trainees, nine females and four males, at the end of their training who volunteered to do online interviews on Skype in response to a request sent by email or social media. All of them had attended one or more courses taught by the author during their training. The interviews took place in May and June 2022 and were video-recorded with a smartphone being used as a backup recorder. The phone recordings were used to generate a transcription in a Word document using the transcribe function in Microsoft 365. Altogether, the transcriptions came to over 60,000 words with the interviews lasting an average of about 40 minutes.

A basic interview guide was used for the interviews following the principles described by Patton (2015) and Maykut and Morehouse (1994). The guide consisted of four key points: how the trainee taught before the lockdowns; their experience of teaching during the lockdowns, focusing on the challenges they faced and how they overcame them; their teaching after returning to in-person teaching; and their opinion about the future of education in Hungary. This basic guide was further developed as the interviews proceeded to include the trainees' thinking about staying in the profession or leaving it, since this quickly emerged as being a salient point in the first few interviews.

The transcribed interviews were analysed in stages. First, open coding was used for the first couple of interviews; coding at this stage was done by looking for units of meaning (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) at the level of sentences and short passages. The next stage consisted of focused or selective coding to link similar codes together and generate thematic domains or main categories. As Flick (2023) explains, this approach, which he terms Thematic Coding, was developed from the principles used in grounded theory in such a way that it begins with a case-by-case analysis to explore the meanings that the participant attaches to the phenomenon under investigation. It aims "to develop a system of categories [first] for the analysis of the single case" (p. 436), but then by crosschecking and refining, a thematic structure is created which "will then underlie the analysis of further cases in order to increase their comparability" (p. 436). The structure must be continually reviewed and modified as further cases are analysed.

2.2 Phases 2 and 3 of the Study – Investigating the Experience of Teacher Trainees over their Whole Practice

Two important themes emerged clearly from the first phase of the research as a result of which I resolved to extend the study. The first concerned the complex relationship between the trainees and their in-school mentors and the role it played in their experience during their teaching practice. The second was their largely negative view of the current situation in public education and how that affected their future plans. These two themes helped direct the next broader phases of the research.

In the second and third phases, I decided to extend my view to the trainees' whole experience during their training, beginning with their first thoughts of being a teacher, and framing the interviews as a kind of narrative or teacher story in which the participants could reflect on and construct a meaningful narrative for themselves. This approach was influenced by previous interview studies that used a life history approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson, 1997; Lorist & Swennen, 2016; Smith, 2001). The initial research aims were to find out how their training as a whole had affected their thinking about being a teacher and, in particular, how their experiences during their long and short teaching practices had affected their development. On top of this I wanted to probe their thinking about their immediate future after finishing their training and find out what factors this was influenced by.

An interview guide was again used but this one was longer and split into several sections (see Appendix A). The opening asked about their current feelings after having finished their training. The topic then shifted to asking them about their first thoughts of becoming a teacher, and inviting them to tell the story of their teacher training from beginning to end. Further sections concentrated on their long and short teaching practices, their plans for the future, and their feelings about the state of public education. The interview guide was refined after the first few interviews to further explore new subjects that emerged from them and was used in both phases.

In these subsequent phases teacher trainees were again contacted by email or through the university Microsoft Teams platform and interviewed on a voluntary basis. In Phase 2, 33 trainees, 31 females and two males, were interviewed from June to September in 2023. Almost all the interviews were done on Teams (one was done in person) and a transcription was automatically generated. The interviews lasted over 27 hours in total and the transcripts totalled over 200,000 words. In 2024, Phase 3 of the study was carried out with 15 trainees, 13 females and two males, 12 of whom were interviewed in July 2024 and the others in August and September of the same year. Again, Teams was used for the interviews. The recorded interviews totalled over 19 hours and the processed transcripts were nearly 150,000 words.

It is important to mention that throughout all phases of the study the participants were assured of their identities being protected and were sent the interview transcripts to comment on. They were also asked if they would be available for further discussion in

the future and were offered any professional help the author could give if they wanted it. Table 1 below gives a full breakdown of the participants in each stage of the study as well as showing how they will be referred to in the rest of the paper.

Table 1 Participants in Each Phase of the Study

Phase of Study	Year	Number of Participants	Female	Male	Code
1	2022	13	9	4	Ph1 T1–T13[1]
2	2023	33	31	2	Ph2 T1–T33
3	2024	15	13	2	Ph3 T1–T15

After the transcripts had been formatted and checked for accuracy, the data analysis was done in a similar way to the first phase, beginning with open coding of a few interviews, then more focused coding followed by category building or "theming the data categorically" (Saldana, 2021, p. 259). Memo writing and interview notes were also used to help develop the overall thematic structure. Through every stage of the research a journal was kept to record the researcher's thoughts. Brief notes were taken during each interview and immediately afterwards a reflective description of the interview was written to help the researcher remember key points and begin thinking about what was in the data. From time to time, as more interviews were done and data analysis progressed, the researcher wrote reflective memos on aspects of the research which were uppermost in his thinking at the time. This practice of memo writing as a part of ongoing data analysis is taken from grounded theory, particularly the constructivist approach to grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2006, 2014). Charmaz recommends the keeping of "a methodological journal in which you jot down your methodological dilemmas, directions, and decisions" (2014, p.165). This writing of periodic memos was found to be extremely useful in developing a clearer understanding of the data and in indicating areas to explore in more depth as the interviews proceeded.

3 Results and Discussion

This section briefly reports on the first phase of the research before focusing on some of the major categories to emerge from the subsequent phases. In particular, the categories dealing with the trainees' reasons for starting their training, their experiences during their long and short teaching practices, and their thinking about their next steps are described and discussed.

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1   The codes for the participants in each phase of the study will be used to identify interview extracts in the rest of the paper.

Before beginning, it is important to stress that the interview data, which is the primary data source, cannot be taken as being representative of reality – qualitative interviews are already several steps removed from the phenomena they discuss, as Holliday (2016) points out in his description of how researchers process and write about their data. Rather, in-depth qualitative interviews allow the participants to construct their own narratives, and by doing so, create a "portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). This sense-making activity shows which aspects the interviewee chooses to foreground as being particularly significant and allows the researcher to see how the interviewee constructs their lived experience conceptually and what words they use to do so.

3.1 Phase 1 – How Trainees Dealt with Emergency Remote Teaching

In this initial phase, the main aim was to find out how trainees coped with having to teach during the first and second periods of ERT in Hungary. In the first period there was very little notice given and both trainees and teachers found themselves having to deal with a situation which none of them were adequately prepared for, a situation repeated in country after country as lockdowns spread:

> Since many countries have imposed a lockdown on movement, and many schools have subsequently closed their doors, vast numbers of previously tech-shy teachers are having to learn very quickly how to teach using online resources. This might be through delivering lessons using virtual classrooms or providing online self-study material for students, both of which may be new modes of lesson delivery for many. (Harrison, 2020)

This was certainly the case for the 13 trainees and the teachers in the schools where they were doing their teaching practice:

> Well, I had to learn how to use these different platforms, because I'm not a technical genius. (Laughs) But it was also great because I always wanted to learn how to use them and I'm much more comfortable now using them. (Ph1 T7, p. 2)

However, there was a marked difference between how well the trainees adapted and how well their in-school mentors adapted. In some cases there was a partnership between the mentor and the mentee which involved them working out together how to cope with the situation, with the mentor tending to provide the subject expertise and the mentee working more with the technical issues:

> It was challenging, but we could design, with the help of my mentor teacher, online classes, and I mean they weren't the most effective English lessons, like ever, you know, but I think we did enough to survive this online teaching or digital period. (Ph1 T3, p. 2)

At the same time, in some cases, rather than a partnership, the mentee was the one helping the teacher to cope:

> So, the thing is that one of the teachers realised that this online teaching is too much for her and, and she seriously got sleeping disorders and things, and that's why I got two Teams from her to just, lower the, the weight on her back or something. (Ph1 T5, p. 3)

Since the focus of this paper is on the trainees' experience during their whole training, I will not go into detail about what happened to trainees who were doing their practice during this specific period. Nevertheless, one key finding was that Prensky's (2001) well known dichotomy of digital natives and digital immigrants did not hold true, as some of the trainees were already highly competent with digital technology and others had only a basic knowledge. As Bennett et al. (2008) point out, Prensky fails to take into account the fact that the use of technology and the level of skill in using it are not uniform across any particular age cohort. In this case, a better way of characterising these trainees was the ease with which they adapted to teaching online, even if they were not very familiar with digital technology to begin with. I coined the term "digital comfort" to describe this phenomenon (Prescott-Pickup, 2025). The digital comfort which novice teachers can bring to the education system is vitally important for the future of any country, particularly in light of the current rapid changes in digital technology (Zancajo et al., 2022).

The most significant outcomes of this first phase of the study for the ensuing phases was the realisation of how important the complex relationship between the in-school mentor and the mentee was in determining the quality of the trainees' experience during their practice, and how their training as a whole could influence their thinking about being a teacher. Along with this, another striking theme which emerged from the interviews was how few of the trainees intended to carry on teaching in public education and their very negative perceptions of the public education system in general. In several cases this seems to have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the way it emphasized already existing problems, as previously discussed.

As a result of these findings, I determined to carry on my research but with an extended focus to include their whole training:

> Think about asking about their experience of their training as well and how it affected their motivation and their view of themselves as teachers [...] If I interview graduating teachers in June, their training will be an important part of the

interview; it has already emerged as a significant factor in the case of several teachers, and in one case their experience during their training was a major influence in deciding not to teach. (Ph1, Extract from Memo 4, May 20, 2022, p. 29[2])

3.2 The Experience of Being a Teacher Trainee

In this section, some of the major categories to emerge from all three phases of the research are described, with particular attention paid to those categories which emerged from the second and third phases. In these two phases the aim of the research was broadened to encompass the whole of the trainees' experience on their journey towards qualifying as novice teachers.

3.2.1 Thinking about Being a Teacher – A Vocation or an Afterthought?

The first major category examined relates to how the trainees decided to pursue teaching as a further education option. This is an important category because it indicates the nature of each trainee's initial motivation, and in this regard the trainees can be divided into three broad groups. The first group contains those trainees who actively sought teacher training because they had a strong inclination to be a teacher, or as one trainee put it, "when I started the teacher trainee education, I was aware of the problems of the system, but I figured it's kind of a calling for me" (Ph2 T12, p. 1). In this group perhaps 13 interviewees can be placed with some confidence, based on their accounts. Another example would be the answer of Trainee 16 in Phase 2 when asked when she first thought of being a teacher:

> A long, long time ago, I think first or second, first or second grade, or at least this is what I'm told by my parents that I was always teaching my toys and this is how I was studying. Uh, and yes, and I stick [sic] to this for a long time. (Ph2 T16, p. 3)

Or Trainee 4 in Phase 3, who was influenced by her teachers in primary school:

> I've always thought about how I could present it or how, what alternative methods would there be to learn that material and then it's kind of stick [sic] with me and I just, my English teacher in primary school was, like, enormous and also my Hungarian teacher. So yeah, I realised that I wanted to be like the mixture of them in the future and I always loved helping out my classmates. (Ph3 T4, p. 2)

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2   For extracts from Memos and journal notes, the page number refers to the page of the relevant research journal.

The second group consists of those trainees, 15 in total, who chose teacher training for one of three reasons: either they chose teacher training at the last moment because it seemed the best available option, or they turned to it after having started their studies in a subject that they found they were not suited for, or they chose teacher training because they failed to get into another programme. For instance, Trainee 5 in Phase 2 "described her path to being a teacher almost as if it was something that she found herself doing despite her intention not to" (Ph2 Journal notes, p. 15). She originally wanted just to study Hungarian, but then she started to worry that a BA degree would not be enough to get a stable job and she also "wanted to […] become more proficient in English, so that's why I chose the English subject" (Ph2 T5, p. 2). She described the final part of the process in the following way:

> I started to think about what it is like to be a teacher. What kind of a teacher should I be? And slowly I got around it I would say. And so when I started university, I already had this kind of passion. (Ph2 T5, p. 2)

Although she uses the word "passion", her thinking process was more one of choosing the best option available to her in order to study Hungarian and English. Several other trainees gave similar accounts of being principally interested in studying English or sometimes English and another subject, such as Trainee 21: "I never wanted to be a teacher, but I really liked music and English and I didn't know what to do at the end of the high school" (Ph2 T21, p. 2).

In the case of Trainee 9, she originally wanted to be an actor or a theatre director but was unsuccessful and picked English teaching as a second option despite her awareness "that the Hungarian education system was not very good and teachers were not well paid" (Ph2 T9, p. 1). She also mentioned that "I was going to have a degree that I can basically use for anything because I heard that the teachers' degree is basically good for anything" (Ph2 T9, p. 2). Similarly, Trainee 22 wanted to study Psychology but did not get enough points and only started thinking about teaching while working in an electronics store: "I never thought of becoming a teacher […] only in my gap year" (Ph2 T22, p. 2). In Phase 3, Trainee 11 had actually started a degree in Psychology but decided it was not for her: "I had a gap year. Well, I started another university, I started learning Psychology, but I've realised it wasn't really my path so I then, I reapplied to ELTE. That's where I started this teacher training programme" (Ph3 T11, p. 1).

Many of the students in this second group closely resemble the picture given by Johnston (1997) of Polish EFL teachers' apparent lack of a teacher life story or sense of agency in choosing their career. Instead of talking about themselves as career teachers, they found coherence in their construction of their life histories by framing themselves as an "expert speaker of English" (p. 700). This allowed them to see teaching as just one of the roles they could take as a high-level English speaker and it seems the situation for many teacher trainees in present-day Hungary is not very different as one more example from this group demonstrates:

> I was sure I want to go to university, but I had no idea what I wanted to study and then, just on a whim, I decided that teaching gave me the best choice because I realised English, so that was my favourite subject. I think I was like, I think it was naturally good at it. (Ph2 T32, p. 2)

In between these two groups was a much larger group of trainees who first thought about teaching when they were at high school, but perhaps it was not their first choice or they were not entirely sure it was right for them. This larger group of trainees could be placed on a spectrum depending on whether they were nearer the trainees with a longstanding intention to become teachers or the trainees who just decided to become teachers at the last minute. An example of the first kind would be Trainee 3 in Phase 2 who, although she did not have good experiences in her primary and secondary schools, "started to be motivated to become a teacher, to, to make a difference here and, and change the attitude a little bit" (Ph.2 T3, p. 2) when she transferred to a two-year vocational school in order to get a profession. At the other end of the spectrum would be Trainee 5 in Phase 3, who first thought of teaching "a long, long time ago because my grandparents are teachers as well" (Ph3 T5, p. 1), but then told everyone she did not plan to be a teacher:

> And the interesting thing is that I never wanted to be a teacher. I mean for like from 8th grade to grade 10, I was telling everyone I'm not gonna become a teacher ever. I just wanted to go against it. Do something different. Connected to English, of course. (Ph3 T5, pp. 1–2)

But when it came to choosing a university programme, she made teaching her first choice because "language may come in handy and I didn't have any specific ideas that what I wanted to do [...] and somewhere inside I knew that I want to do it. I just wanted to" Ph3 T5, p. 2). By the end of her training, she had decided to continue working in the school where she did her long teaching practice.

How trainees first decided to enter the teacher training programme is an indication of their initial motivation, but it does not determine how they will feel about being a teacher by the end of their training. In an article about whether good teachers are born or made, Ur (2006) argues that teaching is a skill that needs to be developed through a combination of practical experience, training, and reflection, and there is plenty of evidence in this research to support this view. Several of those teachers who seemed to choose teacher training at the last minute or as a second option ended up deciding to continue teaching, such as T15 in Phase 3, who had a very bad experience studying Biology and decided to switch to the teaching programme after a year and a half, and now sees herself continuing to teach in high school for the foreseeable future: "In five years. Well. I think I will teach. I don't know whether in this school or whether in another one. But I'm really sure about that" (Ph3 T15, p. 25). She was also sure that she did not want to become a private teacher in the shadow education sector, unlike many of the other trainees:

> I really want to teach and that is unquestionable. The form is questionable. So I don't really know where or how. But yet I think high school is the best for me. There I love, I love teaching groups. […] It's just really nice to teach groups and not individuals. So I don't think I will go, well, to have, I don't know, private lessons or work as a private teacher full time. (Ph3 T15, p. 25)

Sadly, there were also those who began with a strong motivation to become teachers who by the end of their training had decided against it. In Phase 2 Trainee 16, who had wanted to be a teacher from a very young age, knew that she would not continue:

> Unfortunately, I won't be teaching. Not in public education, I think. I will keep my private students. I'm not sure whether I will teach new ones or just teach those who I have right now. But I won't teach. And this was a very hard decision because as I mentioned, I was preparing for this for very, very long years. (Ph2 T16, p. 12)

Her decision was influenced by what she perceived as the generally low opinion of teachers in society and the lack of solidarity between teachers in the school where she did her long teaching practice during the teacher protests in 2023. The trainees' views of public education and how these views affected their thinking about becoming teachers will be discussed in a later section.

3.2.2 Experiencing Difficulties During Teacher Training

This is a large category containing many subcategories, but for reasons of space, only two emergent themes, both of which affected many of the participants, are discussed here. The first involves the trainees' language proficiency and the second relates to the feelings of exhaustion mentioned by many of them.

3.2.2.1 Doubts About Language Proficiency. Two subcategories are included together here because they both relate to problems with language and they are somewhat connected. The first concerns the problems many trainees had in passing obligatory language exams, primarily English. However, there were some trainees who taught two foreign languages who had problems with their second language, as well. One such was Trainee 14 in Phase 2, who had to hire a private French teacher to help her pass her exam. For the English track, trainees had to pass a B2+ and a C1 exam during their studies, and many of them mentioned having problems with them.

Related to their problems with exams was the realisation that their language level was not good enough. One trainee in Phase 2 used a particularly vivid metaphor to describe this: "then I came to ELTE and it was a big punch in my face because I realised that I don't know English" (Ph2 T24, p. 3). She was so concerned about her proficiency that she did a private C1 exam because at ELTE there was only a C1 oral exam during the pandemic.

Doubts about language ability are very debilitating – and being corrected by students in high-level practice schools was something that several trainees mentioned – but it may also be an indication of the general ineffectiveness of foreign language teaching in the Hungarian education system, with those who cannot afford private tutors being at a significant disadvantage.

3.2.2.2 Experiencing Burnout. Although the notion of burnout has been investigated in a variety of occupational groups, researchers have struggled to provide a single working definition. However, for the purposes of this paper the original definition given by psychologist Herbert Freudenberger will suffice:

> Burnout is a process that comes about as a consequence of depletion of energies, as well as feelings of being overwhelmed with many issues that may confront an individual. […] Burnout manifests itself in various symptoms of a physical, mental, behavioural and/or emotional nature. It is also accompanied by a feeling of being overloaded, by loss of motivation that at one time served as a major stimulus. (1986, p. 247)

Although Freudenberger was describing clinical therapists, this description seems to closely match the feelings of many of the participants at the end of their training: "This last year was extremely hard, so compared to all the others, it was very, very exhausting and we had this first full year as a teacher and then writing your thesis and portfolio and everything else" (Ph2 T16, p. 13). Not every trainee found the need to write a thesis problematic, but there were many who did because they had to do it alongside their LTP. Exhaustion was a word often used to describe the trainee's final year: "it's just crazy how exhausting teaching is and dealing with colleagues and the kids and their parents. And I don't know. So it's just so exhausting" (Ph2 T23, p. 8).

Many researchers have noted how demanding the first experience of teaching is (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991; Burrant et al., 2010; Hobson et al., 2009; Malderez, 2024; Schrier 2008), so it is important to make sure pre-service teachers are well supported in order to maintain their motivation to teach and avoid losing them before they even enter the profession:

> To be honest, after I graduated I felt a little bit relieved because it was A REALLY LONG WAY. Six years and it took a lot of dedication and time and years. And I felt tired and a little bit (pauses) overwhelmed at that time. And I wanted to relax a little bit, and the, the fact that I knew, that time, that now I wouldn't like to teach at all, and after that I, I got this job opportunity. (Ph1 T11, p. 8)

3.2.3 The Mentor-Mentee Relationship During Long and Short Teaching Practices

This category is at the centre of the trainees' experience as the nature of this relationship can have a profound effect on the quality of their teaching practice when they are taking what for many is their first step as classroom teachers, but it can also have a major impact on their thinking about their future. In all three phases of the study examples of both good and bad relationships were found, and it was rare for a trainee not to experience at least some problems with one or more of their mentors. On the other hand, there were many examples of positive relationships, as well. In both cases, there were certain key points that tended to characterize either a good or bad relationship, and to some extent these sets of characteristics mirrored each other. In the following discussion the characteristics of problematic mentor-mentee relationships will be examined first and then those of positive relationships.

3.2.3.1 The Characteristics of Bad Relationships. All of the characteristics discussed here occurred in several cases and formed significant subcategories within the main category of mentor–mentee relationships. In all cases, mentor refers exclusively to the trainees' in-school mentors during their short and long practicums.

3.2.3.1.1 The Mentor's Need for Control. Perhaps the most frequent complaint of trainees when they had problems with their mentor was that they had to teach in the same way as their mentor and they were not able try things out for themselves. Of course, during the ERT, especially at the beginning, this was not necessarily a bad thing: "I tried to use those kinds of methodology what my mentor teacher used. And I think it was easier for them [the students] to, to follow me during the lessons" (Ph.1 T8, p. 4). In an unprecedented situation it made sense to lean on the mentor's much greater experience: "That was the beginning. And I really relied on my mentor teachers' advice and their ideas" (Ph.1 T10, p. 2). However, later on when the trainees had adjusted to online teaching, it could be extremely frustrating: "I couldn't do anything on my own. I couldn't use my own tools. I just got the lesson plan, please teach this, do this from the book" (Ph1 T4, p. 4).

This frustration was shared by several of the trainees from the subsequent phases when mentors were too controlling:

> My mentor teacher was very dominating, she exactly told me what to teach and she called me on the phone and she was telling me literally hours and hours that what do I have to say during the lesson. And she expected the frontal lessons. (Ph2 T3, p. 4)

Some of the trainees in Phase 3 had similar experiences. During her long practice Trainee 3 felt compelled to teach in the same way as her mentor: "My mentor teacher basically told me that she doesn't want for me to do any pair work or any group work, just do the frontal,

just the traditional" (Ph3 T3, p. 27), and for Trainee 13 the problem was that her mentor did not allow her to do very much with her beginner group:

> It wasn't difficult because my mentor thought that they were much worse than they actually were, so we had to just revise most of the time. So yeah, I mean when we have the differences, it always was because I found it very boring that we were practicing the same stuff all the time. (Ph3 T13, p. 8)

There were also some mentors who would not leave the classroom when their mentees were teaching, and this also could be frustrating. In her LTP in Phase 2, her English mentor would not let Trainee 9 teach her advanced group on her own, even though she asked:

> This mentor didn't leave me alone, even though I asked him not to come to the lesson. And I tried a couple of times when he was not there and I was, I felt so much better. And I asked him, like, is it OK? Like I go alone and I can do it myself. And he insisted on coming in and didn't get the message that I was not comfortable. He is a good guy, but he just didn't get this message. (Ph2 T9, p. 5)

Trainee 31's Hungarian LTP mentor was extremely controlling and also insisted on being present during all her lessons: "So I was teaching, but she just always wanted to be there somewhere, and she even interrupted my lessons sometimes. And yeah, I felt so little" (Ph2 T31, p. 10). As this quote shows, being constantly watched and being denied agency could be extremely damaging for a trainee's self-image.

3.2.3.1.2 Being Given Negative Feedback. In this subcategory, negative feedback refers to feedback which does not help the trainee and can threaten their face. Such feedback can be extremely damaging for the confidence of a pre-service teacher taking their first steps. Trainee 6 in Phase 3 had a bad experience with her Hungarian mentor teacher in her STP: "I didn't have any possibilities to try out things [...] and sometimes it happened that we sat down after my lesson and she said that, OK, I can't say anything good about your lesson" (Ph3 T6, p. 4). Not surprisingly this had an effect on her self-confidence:

> So yes, it was a little bit hard and yes, and I couldn't see that I'm going to be a teacher. So I, I was sure that, OK, I'm not able to do this. I can't do this, so yes, maybe this was the reason. So my mentor teacher, it was, it wasn't a good experience. (Ph3 T6, p. 4)

Trainee 8 had a very similar experience with her Hungarian mentor during her STP:

> He killed me. So he was, I won't say that a horrible person. But with me he really behaved that way and always criticised me, and for example, after my first teaching, I nearly cried because I was so scared and he told me that he won't say a positive thing. (Ph3 T8, p. 7)

In her STP in English, Trainee 27 felt that she received exclusively negative feedback:

> She never gave us any positive feedback. It was always just the negative side of things, which I can take constructive criticism. So, though I don't have any problem with that, but I want to get some positive feedback as well so I can have some motivation and go on, and this never happened. (Ph2 T27, p.7)

Even though she received a top grade from the mentor at the end of her practice, she found the experience extremely demotivating: "Everybody got a 5 from her at the end. This wasn't the problem. The problem was the journey" (Ph2 T27, p. 7).

There were even cases where mentees were criticised in front of the students they were trying to teach, which could be a humiliating experience: "I did not like my mentor teacher that much because she (pauses) she wasn't that supportive and she talked badly about me in front of my students" (Ph2 T2, p. 3). In this case, the relationship completely broke down and the trainee reported the mentor to the university.

In the 1980s, learner-centred educators were well aware of the destructive nature of criticism in the language classroom; Stevick emphasized the importance of not correcting students and suggested several alternatives (Stevick, 1980), while Rogers stressed the need for educators to show empathy, congruence, and positive regard in the classroom (Rogers, 1983). As can be seen in the data presented here, negative feedback from the mentor can be highly damaging to trainee teachers, too. Hobson and Malderez (2013) coined the term "judgementoring" to describe judgemental evaluation from mentors which can jeopardize the relationship between mentor and mentee. The above examples would seem to fit this concept.

3.2.3.1.3 Not Being Given Enough Support. There were several instances where the trainee felt that they were not given enough support. During the ERT some trainees felt they had been left to fend for themselves, as was the case with Trainee 1:

> Kind of nothing (laughing) actually, because, you know, in our school, it's also a problem that many of our teachers are getting old and they needed the support. So we as younger students, we were kind of the ones giving the support. (Ph1 T1, p. 4)

It is perhaps understandable that in an emergency situation, trainees, assumed to be more capable of handling digital technology, might find themselves left alone, but there were also cases in the other phases of the study. Trainee 24 in Phase 2 felt unsupported by both her LTP mentors: "I could feel that they are not interested in my work and they are not mentoring [...] it was just like doing the things, so the needed things. They signed my papers and so it was not so improving" (Ph2 T24, p. 10). And in Phase 3, Trainee 15 also felt neglected by her Russian mentor:

> My mentor teacher couldn't be there with me and she couldn't really give feedback on my work. So it was like I was pretty lonely. She said, like, if I have any questions, I can ask her, she helps me and so on, but I felt like she doesn't really care about what I do. (Ph3 T15, p. 13)

Obviously, there is a line somewhere between giving a mentee freedom and leaving them alone, but if a trainee is not supported in their development, then it can make their practice more difficult and less effective. It may also affect their view of teaching as a whole.

3.2.3.2 The Characteristics of Good Relationships. In this section those characteristics of positive mentor–mentee relationships which applied to the majority of the trainees who experienced such relationships are discussed.

3.2.3.2.1 Being Given the Freedom to Experiment. Whereas trainees were frustrated when forced to teach in a certain way, they all highly valued being given the freedom to experiment in the classroom. This was frequently mentioned when trainees were asked about what makes an ideal mentor and actual examples occur in all three phases.

In Phase 1, Trainee 4 was grateful to her STP English mentor who gave her the freedom to try things out before the first lockdown: "So my mentor teacher was really nice, I could try everything I wanted, so it was a very good experience" (Ph1 T4, p. 2). In Phase 2, Trainee 5 appreciated the freedom she was given by both her LTP mentors: "Both of my mentors were really great. They also gave me freedom and autonomy in my decisions and it meant a lot to me that they trusted me with this" (Ph2 T5, p. 8). Several other trainees had similar experiences, such as Trainee 11 with her STP mentor in Hungarian: "I had to teach the poetry of Ady Endre and she helped me a lot and she was really just a mentor. She helped me when I needed it, but she let me do my things" (Ph2 T11, p. 3). In Phase 3 also, several trainees mentioned how appreciative they were of being given the chance to try things out: "I could discuss everything with my mentor teacher. I could try out anything that I wanted to" (Ph3 TT6, p. 6); "She was nice, she let me try out everything" (Ph3 TT8, p. 9); "She let me experience, basically everything and try out everything" (Ph3 TT10, p. 4).

In any approach to teacher development that is based upon practical experience and reflection, it is vital that trainees are given the opportunity to experiment, and this seems to be at the heart of successful mentor–mentee relationships.

3.2.3.2.2 Being Given Enough Support. As we have already seen, when trainees begin their teaching practices, they find it very demanding in addition to the other tasks they have to do, particularly in the LTP. It is not surprising that they appreciated the practical and emotional support given to them by their mentor, and giving enough support was also a frequently mentioned quality when describing an ideal mentor.

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Trainee 11 was struggling with behaviour problems with her English class during her LTP and her mentor gave her a practical tip which helped: "At PPK [the Faculty of Educational Psychology] we studied psychology, but it was my mentor teacher who helped me with this. So she had this idea, this colouring thing" (Ph2 T11, p. 3). In Phase 3, Trainee 2's Maths mentor during his LTP helped him with giving clear instructions:

> I asked my students complex questions or the structure of the language or the sentences were quite complex, so it was not so authentic to them, and my mentor teacher told me that, well, you should use a simpler language and ask simpler questions and it helped me a lot. (Ph3 T2, p. 12)

Trainees also appreciated being given emotional support when it was needed in difficult times. There were several instances mentioned by trainees in Phase 2 in their LTP: "And when she saw that I was maybe a bit overwhelmed, then she immediately offered help and I was really grateful for that" (Ph2 T4, p. 12); "She was very supportive. And very motivating. And for example, when I had a bad time, she brought me coffee, so she went out to bring me coffee" (Ph2 T8, p. 14); "But my other mentor she concentrated much more on my wellbeing and just came to me and asked me, how you doing, and in this sense we had [a] much more informal relationship" (Ph2 T25, p. 12). Trainee 31 enjoyed a particularly close relationship with her history mentor during her LTP in her home town: "So she asked me every day, how do I feel, am I too tired to teach this class today, and she even visited me in my home and she brought me some chocolate when I felt low" (Ph2 T31, p. 11).

Hobson et al. (2009) note that emotional highs and lows are typical of the experience of novice teachers, and Malderez (2024) suggests the first role of a mentor should be to support the mentee as a person, which is what can be seen in the above examples.

3.2.3.2.3 Being Treated as a Colleague. Working in partnership with mentees is also mentioned repeatedly by Malderez (2024), and it was often mentioned by the trainees in this study, too. Sometimes it was identified as a desirable trait of a good mentor: "I think a good mentor teacher is someone who, umm, who kind of treats you as a colleague" (Ph2 T12, p. 7). But it was also experienced in real life. In her LTP, Trainee 23 felt that she had a good partnership with her Russian mentor:

> I felt like we worked together super well. She let me, so she gave me like, a free hand. Like you can do whatever you want. You can try whatever methods you want. Just please discuss it with me first. (Ph2 T23, p. 8)

Similarly, Trainee 5 in Phase 3 spoke of having a good partnership with her English LTP mentor:

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> We kept eye contact through the class and by her body language indicated how can I do. But she didn't interrupt my teaching with her speech. After the classes we always talked. She told me what she thinks was good or bad, can be improved, and I also put out that should I do it differently like this or what do you think about that? So our partnership was pretty good even in private. (Ph3 T5, p. 13)

The feeling of being treated as a colleague could extend to the whole school, creating an impression of being welcomed into a professional community:

> ...the other teachers were treating me as a colleague and that not only felt good, but also helped me, you know, take on this teacher role, which was difficult for me at the beginning and the first few months I really struggled with it. (Ph2 T5, p. 8)

Conversely, if a trainee was not treated as a colleague in their LTP school, it could have an alienating effect, as in the case of Trainee 14 in her German LTP:

> I think I was received as an outsider, didn't really, uh, they didn't really let me in on the occasions for the teachers. [...] And also, especially in the German one, I didn't really feel like I could go to and talk to anyone about any problems I had in German or if I wanted to ask, OK, how should I do this? And how should I do that? (Ph3 T14, p. 13)

She felt teachers in the English department were much more approachable. The negative consequences of being treated as an outsider for a trainee's development are obvious; it can have an emotional and a long-term impact.

3.2.4 Trainees' Thoughts about the Teaching Profession and their Decisions about their Future

These two themes formed two distinct categories, but they are closely related because the trainees' feelings about the state of public education had a significant influence on their thinking about their future steps; therefore, it makes sense to discuss them together.

Already in Phase 1 it became clear that only a small number of the trainees would spend a significant amount of time teaching in public education. At the time of being interviewed, four trainees were actually working in public education, but only two of them expressed the intention to carry on working there for the foreseeable future. Three of the trainees were on maternity leave but only one said she would return to the school where she had already been teaching. One trainee had not yet completed her studies, two were working in private language schools, and three chose to not even begin teaching as a full-time job, selecting other jobs instead. A commonly mentioned reason was the pay: "So,

for me it's, it might be really ugly, but it's a finance question, like, can I allow myself to be a teacher or not?" (Ph1 T6, p. 9). Another trainee spoke about "the elephant in the room":

> And, well (pauses) well, the elephant in the room, like, money so. It's, like, I'm not motivated by money. I've NEVER BEEN. Like, I don't care about money. I don't like to, like when I tutor, I hate to ask for money, like, I hate the whole thing. But, like, people need money, so... (laughs). (Ph1 T13, pp. 11–12)

This pattern was repeated in Phase 2, where out of 33 trainees only three were intending to teach in public education for more than three years, 12 were intending to teach for the next year (three as part timers), nine were going to teach privately, and nine were going to do something else. In Phase 3, the situation seemed to be a little more positive, with only one of the 15 participants deciding to take a job in a multinational company, but most of the others were intending to teach for a short time, with only five saying they wanted to carry on teaching for several years in their high school.

Apart from the issue of low pay, which was mentioned very often, the participants' feelings about the education system as a whole were strongly negative, especially in the first two phases: "If I was to use a metaphor, I would say a sinking ship, with huge, huge problems" (Ph2 T13, p. 12). In Phase 1, trainees who had experienced teaching in small schools in the east of the country were particularly harsh about the disparities between prestigious schools in Budapest and village schools in underprivileged areas:

> There's a huge difference between R_____ in Budapest and this little school in T_____ where, I don't really (pauses) well, teaching them English or History – that's my other major – is not my first job. Basically, my first job is to make sure they eat enough because sometimes, on weekends, they don't. (Ph1 T9, p. 7)

Many of the trainees also felt that the public image of teachers was extremely negative. There was repeated mention of negative comments in social media during the period of the teacher protests: "I sometimes read some of the comments on social media about the teachers. And ohh, I can get really angry from time to time" (Ph2 T30, p. 28). Trainee 11 in Phase 3, who was taking a job in a large company, spoke of the effect of this low status, calling it an "evil circle":

> Teachers are not appreciated and I think that's the core problem. So they're not appreciated in salary or generally by the state or by society as well. And I think that that makes the whole situation just worse because that's, that's why youngsters do not want to be teachers and that's just, the, I don't know, evil circle. So, yeah, I'm very sad about this situation, to be honest. (Ph3, T11, p. 12)

What emerges here is not an encouraging picture. It is strongly reminiscent of the situation described in UNESCO's *Global Report on Teachers* (2024), where issues with teacher shortages "may deter future generations from joining the profession, which can create a cycle of low-quality education, disadvantaging students throughout life and reproducing and perpetuating educational inequalities" (p. 30).

4 Conclusion

This ongoing longitudinal study has already succeeded in shining a spotlight on the experience of EFL teacher trainees in a large university department of English language pedagogy. Several key findings have emerged from the research indicating those factors that can serve to motivate or demotivate trainees in their long journeys. This is summed up well in one of the memos from Phase 2 of the study, which was written about teacher identity construction:

> During their 6-year training the trainees embark on a process (eventually!) of constructing a teacher identity for themselves. The most important phase in this process is the STP and especially the LTP, when they get to "see if they can do it" and can begin constructing a working teacher identity for themselves.
>
> The relationship between the trainee and their mentors plays a crucial role in this process of identity construction and sometimes this can act as a hindrance or a negative influence on the trainee's sense of themselves as teachers.
>
> But it's equally important to realise that there are quite a lot of other factors involved as well:
>
> - the trainee's own personality and motivation
> - the schools where they are teaching
> - the way they are received in the community
> - the trainee's language proficiency/subject knowledge
> - the groups that they are given to teach
> - outside factors such as having a job, having university classes, being ill (Covid) etc.
> - personal problems or issues.
>
> BUT on top of all this, and forming the background and undercurrent is the current situation in public education, and this can be seen again and again in the teachers' testimony about burned out mentors, sacked and leaving teachers, understaffed schools, demoralised and demotivated teachers, and teachers who have no interest in the trainees. (Phase 2, Memo 3, pp. 137–138)

There are some limitations of the study, for instance, that its findings are based only on a small self-selected section of the total population of pre-service teacher trainees, and that it only involves participants from one institution, albeit the largest one nationally. Another possible limitation of the study is its scope – rather than focusing on just one significant part of the trainees' experience, such as their development during their LTP, it attempts to capture the complexity of their experience as a whole, starting with the participants first thoughts of becoming a teacher and attempting to trace the ups and downs of their long training. This broad-brush approach could indeed be seen as a weakness, but it does allow the trainee to reflect on and make sense of their journey, and in doing so it allows the researcher to see the complexity of each individual story as well as what common points emerge between the participants.

There are several practical implications which are suggested by the study. Perhaps the first one that should be mentioned is the immense stress placed on students by their long and demanding training. One of the most common responses in the interviews to the opening question, "How do you feel now?" was a variation on relieved or happy that it's over. This is highly revealing and indicates that perhaps too much is being asked of trainees. The end of their training is a particularly stressful period, combining as it does the need to take full responsibility as a classroom teacher while at the same time having to research and write an empirical thesis. For many trainees, they are also working to support themselves, and in some cases they are employed as lesson givers in the schools they are doing their teaching practice in.

Related to this first point is the experience of the trainees during their teaching practicums, and most importantly their relationship with their mentors. It is clear from the data that this relationship has the potential to have a very strong motivating or demotivating effect on the trainee, and many examples were found of each. Given the very strong impact this could have on trainees thinking about themselves as teachers and their decision-making about their future, it seems particularly important to emphasise to mentors their role in influencing pre-service teachers not just professionally but also emotionally. As Maldarez (2024) points out, in addition to scaffolding the mentee's learning and development as a classroom practitioner, an important role of a mentor is to offer emotional support. It would seem clear that university mentors also have an important part to play in this regard, both in terms of maintaining links with in-school mentors and in ensuring that trainees get plenty of support during their practicums and throughout their training. Increased mental health awareness and measures for dealing with fatigue and stress of all parties would also be a step in the right direction.

One other important outcome of the research relates to the participants' thinking about teaching as a profession. It is clear that many participants are keenly aware of the reduced status of teaching within Hungarian society, and some of them have spoken of the negative reactions of friends and family to their decision to enrol in a teacher training programme. Even more alarming are those cases in which practicing school teachers have tried to discourage or dissuade their students before they even began their studies or

when trainees have been met with negative attitudes in their practice schools. It would be very important for university mentors and trainers as well as in-school mentors to both encourage and inform trainees of the rewarding side of the profession and to advocate for improved conditions and status of teachers generally.

As Kelchtermans (2017) points out, "as an educational issue, teacher attrition and retention refers to the need to prevent good teachers from leaving the job for the wrong reasons" (p. 961). He also mentions that this issue is "complex and multi-layered" (p. 961) and the present study has revealed that for pre-service teachers in Hungary this is no less true. In order to benefit from the expense and effort of a long training programme and to keep qualified, talented, and digitally comfortable novice teachers working in state schools for more than just a couple of years, we need to have a thorough understanding of the experience and thinking of our trainee students, and in particular the obstacles that most deter them. If we can learn these lessons, then we may be able to begin bailing out a sinking ship.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide for Phases 2 and 3
The Experience of Graduating Teacher Trainees
Interview Guide

- ASK PERMISSION TO RECORD
- STATE THE DATE AND TIME
- THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO DO THE INTERVIEW

I INTRO
"I'll start with a couple of simple questions..."
How are you feeling right now?
When did you start your studies?
What is your other subject?

II YOUR LIFE UP TO NOW
Could you tell me the story of your life as a teacher trainee up to the present time?
When did you first think of becoming a teacher?
- What motivated you to choose teaching as a degree?
What were the most important turning points during your studies?
- What were the highs and lows?
- Who were the important people?
- What events shaped your experience?
- What courses did you most enjoy/not enjoy?
- What kept you going?

III YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

A. SHORT TEACHING PRACTICE
Where did you do your short teaching practice in English? (+in your other subject)
- How did it go?
- What challenges did you meet?
- How did you overcome them?
How was your relationship with your mentor?
How was your relationship with your students?
(REPEAT QUESTIONS FOR OTHER SUBJECT)
Is there anything else that was important for you during your short teaching practice?

B. LONG TEACHING PRACTICE

Where did you do your long teaching practice?

- How did it go?
- What difficulties and challenges did you have?
- How did you deal with them?

How was your relationship with your mentor?

How was your relationship with your students?

(ASK ABOUT OTHER SUBJECT AS WELL)

How did you feel as a trainee among professional teachers?

C. OTHER TRAINEES

How important has your relationship with other trainees been during your teaching practice?

(and during your studies generally?)

D. YOU AS A TEACHER

What is your approach to teaching?

- How do you teach English?
- What are the most important elements for you?

How important is the use of technology in your teaching?

IV THE PRESENT

"Now moving to the present…"

What have you decided to do next?

When did you make your decision?

What factors influenced you?

- How did your studies affect your thinking?
- How did your teaching practice affect your thinking?
- What else affected your thinking?

V YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

How do you feel about the state of the teaching profession right now in Hungary?

In your opinion, what is the status of teachers in Hungary at the moment?

What would be the most important changes that you'd like to see?

OR

What would it take to keep you in teaching or bring you back to teaching (in state schools)?

If you could change anything about the teacher training, what would it be?

PROMISE TO SEND THE TRANSCRIPT

ASK ABOUT FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS IN THE FUTURE

OFFER PROFESSIONAL HELP IF WANTED

"I AM SURE THERE WILL BE THINGS I WANT TO CHANGE A LITTLE BIT AGAIN": EFL TEACHER EDUCATORS' REFLECTIONS ON DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND WELL-BEING

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Abstract

This study investigates the reflective practices of university-based English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher educators in Hungary to understand how these practices serve as models for teacher trainees. The paper, a sub-study of a larger research project, draws on semi-structured interviews with 10 educators teaching subject-specific pedagogy courses. The analysis reveals that these university-based teacher trainers model professional identity development and well-being through consciously engaging in reflection. Key themes that emerged include how educators integrate personal experiences into their teaching, foster authenticity in their practice, value diverse teaching models, and embrace experimentation and collaborative learning. The findings indicate that by authentically reflecting on their own journeys and professional realities, these trainers provide non-prescriptive frameworks for novice teachers to navigate their own identity formation and cultivate resilience. The research highlights the ways in which these reflections can help new teachers grow professionally and better understand their own mental health and well-being. The findings offer significant implications for Hungarian teacher preparation

amidst restructuring and shortages, proposing to improve communication and ultimately to strengthen support for novice teachers to stay and thrive in the profession.

Keywords: teacher preparation, teacher educator, EFL, reflection, professional identity, teacher well-being

> "English classes offer more than just language learning opportunities. I think that within the language classroom teachers can use many different methods to make their lessons exciting and cover many topics that are not addressed in other classes. Therefore, I believe that English classes are a perfect opportunity to discuss some 'big questions in life' with students and broaden their horizons thanks to the wide variety of topics covered." (a teacher trainee in their final year of studies)

> "The aim of this [the EFL methodology] course is really to provide a very comprehensive overview of how English is taught. I think that this plays a very important role in shaping attitudes, especially since I think the way we want them to teach is very different from what they have mostly experienced [as students]." (a teacher educator: T8)

1 Introduction

Understanding the lived experiences and views of those directly involved in teacher training is fundamental to educational research. These opening quotations represent the voices of two crucial groups in teacher education: teacher trainees, preparing to enter a profession where their energies and dedication are much needed to fight teacher attrition, and teacher educators, essential for supporting this transition into in-service teaching. As participants in the process of teacher preparation, both groups possess unique perspectives on its aims, values, and challenges. While the benefits of researching teacher education have been widely discussed (Borg, 2015; Cochran-Smith, 2021; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Johnson, 2009; Symeonidis, 2024), it is also paramount to give voice to and gain fresh insights into the practices of key actors in Hungarian teacher preparation. The Hungarian public education landscape is defined by serious teacher turnover and shortages (Varga, 2023), the aftermath of widespread teacher protests, and ongoing restructuring in teacher education (Hungarian Government, 2021).

These quotes also exemplify the value of understanding the diverse beliefs and expectations motivating both future teachers and their trainers. Exploring the views of teacher candidates, school-based mentor teachers, and university teacher trainers can foster dialogue on training challenges and solutions. This enhances teacher preparation effectiveness, and in turn, supports novice teacher well-being, thereby combating teacher attrition (Hubai, 2025; Lázár, 2024a, 2024b; Major, 2015; Szegedy-Maszák, 2025). This paper

delves into the perspectives of university-based teacher educators working with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher candidates. For reasons detailed in the following sections, these trainers can successfully bridge the gap between theory and practice – a gap for which traditional teacher education institutions were previously criticized (Darling-Hammond, 2006). They also model and reflect on effective practices across various aspects of teaching and professional identity.

This chapter reports on a sub-study of a larger research project that investigates the views, priorities, and practices of university EFL teacher educators at a Hungarian teacher training university through classroom observations and trainer interviews. A preliminary review of the interviews revealed that the trainers instinctively and purposefully engage in reflective practices that provide valuable frameworks for teacher candidates to grow professionally and better understand how to support their own mental health. Therefore, this paper aims to document a variety of thought-provoking examples of these reflective practices to identify patterns in the trainers' reflections that can serve as important models for novice teachers on developing a professional identity and navigating well-being.

2 Teacher Educators' Reflective Practice: Why It Matters

While teacher education's impact on educational quality has been widely discussed (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2021; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013), greater emphasis is needed on what teacher educators think, know, and do. Their diverse backgrounds and professional identities (Czető et al., 2024; Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Goodwin et al., 2014; White, 2019) mirror the diversity of teachers and trainees themselves. Commitment to reflective practice contributes to the quality of teaching, evolving from "the dialogue, competing agendas, and varied contexts surrounding teaching" (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013). Crucially, reflectivity plays a vital role in teacher learning (see also Richards & Farrell, 2005), making it paramount to position teacher educators as reflective practitioners (following Schön, 1983). The development of one's reflective skills, however, depends on multiple factors (Kimmel, 2006), and different stages of teacher development require varied reflective approaches (Anspal et al., 2012; Szivák, 2014). Subject-specific pedagogy courses hold a critical position in preparing teacher candidates for in-service teaching. Teacher educators teaching these courses significantly contribute to trainees' consolidation of disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, facilitating "structured and well-supported reflections" (Kimmel, 2017).

Such a comprehensive approach to fostering reflectivity and integrating knowledge is central to successful teacher education programs. In this regard, teacher educators are increasingly recognized for their vital role in enhancing trainees' awareness of teacher well-being, a critical factor in staying and growing in the profession (Briner & Dewberry, 2007; European Commission, EACEA, 2021; McCallum et al., 2017; Mercer & Gregersen,

2020; Paksi et al., 2015). Cultivating reflective skills, as discussed, is a crucial pathway to achieving this awareness, enabling trainees to identify stressors, build resilience, develop coping mechanisms, and maintain a sustainable teaching career (Balázs & Szalay, 2016; Bordás, 2020; Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019; Mansfield et al., 2016; Soini et al., 2010). Additionally, while school-based mentors can raise awareness of best practices, share personal experiences, and advocate a healthy work-life balance (Dreer-Goethe, 2023), teacher educators play a comparably crucial role in supporting their trainees' transition into the profession. Notably, concentrating on well-being is particularly pertinent for EFL trainers and teachers, who may face unique challenges, such as those arising from the rapid and continuous changes in language education, making attention to their well-being even more imperative (MacIntyre, 2019; Mercer, 2022).

Explicitly addressing well-being not only encourages collaborative learning and a holistic perspective but also profoundly aligns with key characteristics of high-quality teacher education. For instance, Darling-Hammond (2006) outlined three characteristics of successful teacher education programs, in all of which teacher educators play a crucial role. One characteristic is the consistency and continuity of courses offered, where subject-related knowledge is cross-referenced with methodological implications, and courses build on one another. Inevitably, streamlining, sharing, and discussing course content and teaching experiences will enhance consistency. The second characteristic is the conscious establishment of theory-practice integrity, both through coursework and during teaching practicum. Arguably, teacher educators, especially those teaching subject-specific pedagogy courses, play a prominent role in this process, preparing trainees to transition into the teaching practicum.

The third essential feature of teacher education is a powerful relationship with actual schools that become "such strong models of practice and collaboration that the environment itself serves as a learning experience" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 309). Literature on the transition of new teachers into in-service teaching also highlights the role of community-building among the individual professionals involved in teacher preparation to support new teachers more successfully (Day, 2012; Everett et al., 2017; Halász, 2023; Zeichner, 2014). In the current Hungarian context, much emphasis is placed on building and sustaining school-university partnerships, and it can be argued that the involvement of teacher educators, especially those responsible for subject-specific pedagogy (methodology) courses, is crucial in this process. For instance, a new element of the teaching practicum is the group teaching practice, which is supervised collaboratively by a university-based trainer and a school-based mentor teacher. Another example is the teaching support seminar course that teacher candidates take in their final university year to reflect on their practicum experiences, facilitated by a teacher trainer, typically a university-based teacher educator specializing in methodology courses.

These considerations demonstrate the multifaceted role of teacher educators and in the next section interview data is analyzed to reveal the specific ways these trainers' reflections model professional growth and well-being for their trainees.

3 EFL Teacher Educator Interviews: Developing Professional Identities and Well-Being

The insights presented in this paper were drawn from interviews conducted as part of a broader research project aimed at understanding university-based teacher educators' work on preparing EFL teacher candidates at a Hungarian teacher training university. The study included all educators (T1–T10) who, at the time of the research, taught the two-semester subject-specific pedagogy course, Methodology of Teaching EFL. This course is widely recognized as the core component directly supporting trainees' transition into real EFL classrooms. The data collection process involved an individual lesson observation for each participant, which was then followed by a 30–45-minute semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian and in English, depending on the respondents' mother tongue, either in person or online.

Interview questions elicited the trainers' views on the aims and priorities of the EFL methodology course within the teacher preparation program, their perceived role as course instructors, and key course design decisions they make. These questions also explored individual pedagogical emphases on specific aspects of teaching EFL in schools, strategies for adapting the course to trainees' needs, and how the educators perceive their trainees' preparedness for real classrooms. The interviews also delved into the dilemmas these trainers face, such as the challenges of preparing teachers for 21st-century classrooms, differentiating based on the trainees' competence and support needs, as well as the importance of modeling feedback for the teacher candidates to use as a professional practice.

All participants agreed to the recording of the interviews, and their anonymity was ensured. However, as the researcher of this project also taught the same course, their own identity and experiences likely influenced the interviews. This potential influence was also a subject of continuous reflection throughout the interview process. Transparent communication about being a "play participant" (Tracy, 2019, pp. 132–133) in this study played a vital role in maintaining confidentiality and leveraging the benefits of this embedded position.

A preliminary review of all interview transcripts revealed a rich source of data on the reflective practices these educators engage in around the formation of their professional identity and attending to their professional well-being. Therefore, this paper aims to seek answers to what patterns can be identified in these trainers' reflections on the development of a resilient professional identity and a sense of well-being that serve as important models for novice teachers. These reflections not only illuminate their role in preparing future teachers but also highlight key ideas for all teacher training stakeholders to continually reflect on. This ongoing reflection is crucial for creating a teacher education system that consistently and effectively strengthens teacher candidates' awareness of their transition into in-service teaching.

An inductive coding approach emerged from the initial analysis of the first two interviews, which was subsequently applied to all remaining interviews. Similar codes were then grouped into overarching themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The selected Hungarian quotes were translated into English at the end of the data analysis process. To explore these insights, the two emergent themes – Professional Journeys and Developing Identities, and Navigating Professional Well-Being – are analyzed in the following sections.

3.1 Professional Journeys and Developing Identities

A recurring theme across the interviews was teacher educators embracing their own teaching journeys, drawing on examples from their professional growth and the shaping of their professional identity. This theme underscored challenges faced by beginner teachers and the dilemmas of either leveraging previous teaching experiences or addressing gaps in their professional background.

> I found it very difficult to start out as a teacher. Or rather for a long time I didn't have confidence in myself, I thought I wasn't doing it right, and I wasn't doing it right actually. So, I think I'm an example of how this can be learned, and that's why I'm trying to pass this on somehow. That there is something to learn here, not everyone is born [to be a teacher]. (T1)

> Before that, I never wanted to teach, but the teaching practice went so well, and I had such a good mentor that it completely changed my mind. (…) This is my personal example that I never wanted to teach. I don't make a secret of this, so if it comes up in class, I usually tell [my students] what happened, and I hope that those who don't yet know that they want to teach will start to think about it. (T5)

It appears that trainers who recounted a trajectory from initial self-doubt possessed a unique understanding of similar struggles faced by novice teachers, enabling them to more readily identify with trainees' individual training needs and offer insightful personal examples. The second quote also demonstrates for student teachers how one's relationship with teaching can evolve during the preparation period and beyond.

Contemplating the roles of teacher educators is integral to personal and professional development. In the following quotation, the interviewee explained how they conceptualized their contributions to trainees as teacher educators, particularly in overcoming uncertainty about the depth of their experience as former teachers.

> I thought a lot about what I could bring to the table with my limited experience, or how I can be credible in this role. My goal was to convey the struggles of a novice teacher, which was still relatively fresh to me too. So, I tried to approach it from

the perspective that we were all in the same boat, and then I tried to convey how I experienced it all, what it was like after university, what the practical difficulties were, and to incorporate that into the course. I also reflected a lot on those years now that we were talking about it again and again. (T9)

The relevance of this excerpt lies not only in the trainer's willingness to elaborate on shared experience with their trainees – even at the risk of some questioning their expertise – but also in how sharing these teaching memories offers an opportunity for re-evaluating such experiences, leading to deeper understanding.

Many interview participants constructed their professional identity within the methodology classroom by reflecting on how their previous teaching and related experiences shaped their understanding of their roles as course instructors. One educator articulated this intrinsic connection between personal experience and authentic teaching preparation:

Whenever I was able to bring in personal stories, I somehow felt that I was preparing more enthusiastically because I felt that I was being myself, or that I wasn't just reciting what was in the book, but that I could also share my experiences. (T9)

This idea, showcasing genuine self-expression and shared lived experience, resonated throughout the trainers' pedagogical approaches, as further illustrated by the following quotations.

When I suggest anything to them methodologically, I run it through my filters to see how students would have reacted if I had introduced it in an elementary school, or in one high school or in another. (T2)

[One trainee in this class], she's already quite experienced. (…) She's good because she keeps me kind of grounded. I have to think carefully and make sure I don't say stupid things because she's got more classroom experience than I have. (T3)

My primary function personally is to maybe bring in new ideas, new ways, because I have a background teaching in a different country, where teaching is really different and learning is really different (…), maybe I can bring those approaches in as well. (T4)

I felt that I had new ideas (…) and the part of teaching that interested me was very much lacking in teacher education at the time. And I really wanted to strongly represent this. (…) This was my underlying motivation, and I felt that by working in teacher preparation, by teaching methodology, I actually would have a ripple effect, so I may not be teaching in high school, but the people who will be teaching in high

school may take something away from this, and then perhaps the impact of what I wanted to achieve will be greater. (T8)

These reflections collectively highlight how prior teaching experiences serve as lenses through which instructors evaluate and adapt their pedagogical strategies. Instructors not only drew upon their own backgrounds to inform their teaching but also acknowledged valuable input from experienced trainees and articulated how they aimed to promote positive changes they wanted to see in teacher education.

The interviewed teacher educators also demonstrated their developing educator selves through shifts in their preferred ways of learning and teaching. Several mentioned developing an intuitive understanding of the balance of theory and practical ideas, often gained through experience with how their trainee students responded to specific activities – mirroring the unpredictability of classroom teaching itself: "just as when you start teaching, you don't know how [the students] will react or what will happen" (T2).

In parallel with these evolving pedagogical approaches, a distinct pattern emerged in interviewees' spontaneous reflections on whether teachers are born or made. These reflections revealed that trainers' professional values and attitudes towards teacher preparation were shaped by their underlying beliefs on this core dilemma: the balance between inherent aptitude and the teachable nature of teaching skills. Their own experiences of learning and developing as teachers informed this perspective: effective teaching can be learned and honed. A few interviewees emphasized the importance of confidence and its gradual development: "if someone is talented, we can see that, but just because [the trainee] is, say, an anxious and worrying beginner, they can easily become anything later" (T2); "I have seen some very nice development, many trainees [I taught in their first year] are now back as fourth-year students, and they have opened up so much" (T9). One mentor specifically highlighted the instructor's role in boosting confidence: "It is precisely what I think can be developed. I also think it matters a lot how we assess them and what we say to them. Any confidence boost we can give counts a lot" (T8).

Beyond confidence development, several interviewed teacher educators identified that trainees' exposure to diverse teaching personalities during their university years offered potential for professional growth. Some mentioned the benefits of classroom visits, with one particular example where the group of trainees requested to see a novice teacher teach. Others appreciated occasions when the trainers could experiment with different roles in their own classes, offering both effective and less effective teaching models, or simply the chance for teacher candidates to encounter multiple teaching styles through their university courses:

It's great that many of us teach methodology in different years, so they get a lot of different input. They see many different personalities and many different teachers around them, and they can shape this into something that suits their own personalities. (T6)

The educators' personal and professional reflections revealed a comprehensive approach to teacher preparation, emphasizing the teachable nature of teaching, the importance of confidence, and the value of diverse teaching models. This understanding was powerfully underpinned by another significant theme in the interviews: a commitment to authenticity. This self-congruence offers a powerful message for beginner teachers: a rewarding and sustainable teaching career involves integrating one's unique identity into their professional practice rather than adopting a prescriptive or inauthentic style, as the following examples illustrate.

> Here, I don't feel any pressure to be someone I'm not, because I can be whoever I want to be. And I think I can convey this to my students so that they too can be whatever they want to be. We talked about this with them earlier, and I think it's also important that you don't have to be extroverted to be a good teacher. (…) What's important is that I'm in control, that I always know what we're doing and why, that I'm a kind of guideline, but then they do the work, and I take a step back to some extent. (T6)

> Let's say I wouldn't always be able to use ICT tools easily because I don't have the equipment, but in fact I could do more. But I don't use them more because although I know how to use Kahoot and Quizlet and LearningApps, or whatever, I don't want to, because I want the trainees to be able to teach with minimal resources. (…) Let's focus on why we do what we do and then on what its advantages and disadvantages are. Then we can talk about what great apps or whatever else we could use to do this, but that shouldn't be the main point. (T10)

Through these reflections, both trainers offered insightful perspectives on teacher identity. T6 underscored the importance of being true to oneself, a principle they also believed was essential for successful student engagement. T10, meanwhile, modeled freedom of choice by demonstrating a technology-free alternative, encouraging trainees to find their own authentic voice in teaching.

All the insights outlined in this section – encompassing teacher educators' evolving professional identities, their beliefs about teacher development, the benefits of diverse teaching models, and the overarching importance of authenticity – cumulatively provide a framework for fostering teacher well-being through themes explored in the following section.

3.2 Navigating Professional Well-Being

The analysis of the interviews revealed that acknowledging experimentation, making mistakes, and accepting perceived imperfections served as important indicators of well-being and professional growth. The trainers conveyed this by breaking down

idealized notions of teaching. Reflecting on their role in preparing future teachers in the methodology course, one participant noted:

> [I represent] a little reassurance that it's okay not to be perfect, or that we can show strategies for 'I'm not good at this, I'm aware that I'm not good at this, so I'm flawed in this or that way, and I am trying to compensate for it by doing this or that'. (T2)

This sentiment resonated with T3, who shared a relatable struggle common to both experienced trainers and teacher candidates: that everyone at times feels overwhelmed by the workload: "we also have the same problem as our students, we are coming and going, and some of us, including me, have another job". This collective experience fosters mutual empathy and helps normalize the challenges for more productive conversations on overcoming them.

T7 also admitted that they were "also just human", and "made mistakes" on the one hand, but emphasized the value of being dedicated to their profession and taking it seriously on the other. To explore this further, T4 illustrated their preference for prioritizing their areas of expertise and simultaneously modeled continuous reflection on their perceived gaps:

> I like to be conscientious and follow the topics that are prescribed for us. But some of the topics I don't really know too much about. So, I'm struggling with that. How am I going to cover that? Or am I going to cover that at all? Because I don't really have much experience in that. I don't think that I can be authentic enough to teach something that I don't know too much about.

Similarly, other trainers exemplified the importance of being aware of and leveraging one's strengths as educators, which proved especially useful in planning: "I plan everything, I am not all about improvisation" (T1); "unfortunately I always over-plan and end up with a lot of things undone" (T6).

The interviews illuminated how constant experimentation and professional learning were crucial to the teacher educators' routine, based on their actual experiences in the methodology classroom and engagement in collaborative learning with trainees. T10 emphasized the value of getting to know the group of teacher candidates better at the outset to learn about their motivation and to tailor the course accordingly: "I'm sure there will be things I want to change a little bit again". T6 noted how much they learned about the trainees from how they formed opinions, partly reflecting their value systems and partly their difficulties. All the respondents provided examples of gaining fresh insights from the teacher candidates on different classroom activities and digital technologies.

Professional learning naturally led to a recurring pattern in the interviews revolving around navigating the realities of the profession and the broader education system – a skill and mindset crucial for sustaining a healthy teaching career. Some educators mentioned

reconsidering the requirements of the course based on the "significant change in the trainees' ability to handle the workload" (T8). Strategies are also needed for working with trainees who have decided not to pursue teaching in the future: "We develop soft skills. I console myself with this, because a lot of them won't become teachers, and then they'll be able to use these skills elsewhere, because that's really how it is" (T1).

Beyond these direct adjustments, teacher educators also demonstrated a pragmatic understanding of the inherent limitations of a single course within the whole preparation program. Many respondents saw their role in shaping trainees' fundamental attitudes and providing initial guidelines: "within the methodology course, we may try to convey this [21st century roles of a language teacher] to them implicitly, but there is no time to do so explicitly" (T5); "I need to let go of things that don't fit (…), we don't have to teach them everything in a year, so we just set them off in a certain direction (…), make them aware of a certain perspective" (T6). Furthermore, several interviewed trainers highlighted that many of their trainees arrived with deeply fixed routines from very traditional school environments, which are "very different from how we [the trainers] want them to teach" (T6). These previous exposures often presented a significant challenge, as the teacher candidates had to actively unlearn longstanding perceptions that the educators recognized would take considerable time and additional experiences: "they describe their experience with a certain activity, and then they leave and I can see that they do not do that, but continue with their own ingrained patterns" (T2).

Additional experiences, as mentioned above, also indicated that there were interview participants who had a comprehensive overview of the entire preparation program and the ecosystem of the schools that novice teachers would transition into. Trainers involved in one or more aspects of the teaching practicum underscored the advantages of evaluating and reconsidering their methodology course syllabus through those lenses. Meanwhile, teacher educators who frequently took their groups to school visits acknowledged valuable information on school mentor teachers' perceptions of the trainees' preparedness. Beyond these insights into external contexts, the interviewees also expressed the need for more opportunities to share experiences, best practices, and dilemmas with colleagues. By recognizing the value of this sense of community, these teacher educators modeled an important contributor to teacher well-being, illustrating that resilience and professional development can be strengthened in a collaborative environment.

4 Conclusion and Implications

This paper documented insights into the reflective practices of university-based EFL teacher educators at a teacher training university in Hungary. The analysis revealed how these educators consciously draw on their professional growth, a process shaped by their own experiences as novice teachers or trainers, as well as their practical work with trainees in the methodology classroom, which aligns with research on diverse teacher

educator identities (Cző et al., 2024; Goodwin et al., 2014). This journey is further enhanced by their openness to continuous learning, their acknowledgement of the benefits of experiencing diverse teaching styles and identities, and their strong commitment to authenticity. By modeling such non-prescriptive practices, the educators demonstrate how reflective practice evolves from the complexities of teaching, contributing significantly to the trainees' engagement with structured reflections (Kimmel, 2017).

Furthermore, the interviews highlighted the educators' engagement with well-being as an integral part of sustainable professional practice. Their narratives underscored the importance of embracing experimentation and adapting to constantly changing professional realities, recognizing the critical role of community and collaborative learning. This resonates strongly with the literature identifying teacher well-being as a crucial factor in retention (McCallum et al., 2017; Paksi et al., 2015). By discussing aspects of their work fundamental for a sustainable and happy teaching career, alongside their experiences with the limitations of their specific roles within the broader educational ecosystem, these university-based teacher trainers model reflective skills that are vital for building resilience and coping mechanisms (Balázs & Szalay, 2016; Dreer-Goethe, 2023; Soini et al., 2010). The insights also implicitly exemplify the unique challenges faced by EFL teachers, for whom well-being is particularly imperative (MacIntyre, 2019; Mercer, 2022).

These findings, supported by the multitude of insightful narratives, hold significant implications for teacher preparation, particularly within the dynamic Hungarian context. The university trainers' approaches can directly inform curriculum development and the reconsideration of the aims and priorities of the teaching practicum elements, especially when ongoing restructuring of teacher education is underway. Modeling very concrete reflective practices on developing professional identities and navigating well-being potentially also provides teacher candidates with a more profound understanding of two areas of teacher competences: communication, professional collaboration, and career identity; and autonomy and responsibility (Ministry of Human Resources, 2013). Clarifying what these competences actually mean in practice and brainstorming best practices for improving them would also help trainees take better ownership for their professional development.

This also highlights the critical need for improved communication of teacher preparation priorities among all stakeholders – teacher candidates, mentor teachers, university faculty, and policy makers – to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of programs overall, fostering continuous professional development from pre-service training onward, and strengthening the transition into in-service teaching. Such considerations contribute to establishing the integrity of theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006), and also call for stronger professional networks to support new teachers more successfully (Day, 2012; Everett et al., 2017; Halász, 2023; Hubai, 2025). Furthermore, listening to teacher educators' authentic voices and views on teacher preparation would provide invaluable insights for shaping more effective and responsive teacher preparation. Ultimately, reflecting on professional identities and teacher well-being would be

instrumental in supporting the retention of novice teachers and sustained professional growth. Fostering environments where reflection, vulnerability, and collaborative problem-solving are normalized among university-based trainers and school-based mentor teachers can empower novice teachers to navigate their own professional paths with greater self-awareness and sustainability.

Since the insights shared in this paper were not entirely subject-specific, they can inform the work of teacher educators across various specializations and contexts. That said, a more extensive investigation into the specific strategies both university-based trainers and school-based mentors use to foster novice teacher well-being deserves further attention. Additionally, research into teacher trainer well-being is also called for, given the understanding that teacher educators' own well-being is foundational to their ability to model and support sustainable professional practice in their trainees. Ultimately, collecting rich qualitative data from the professional voices and reflective minds of key stakeholder groups invested in preparing novice teachers can initiate more focused dialogue on addressing the contemporary challenges of teacher education in a productive and meaningful way.

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ADAPTIVE COURSE PLANNING IN ONE-TO-ONE TEACHING: PLANNING FOR SPONTANEITY

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Abstract

This study contributes to the field of language teaching methodology – which is otherwise largely focussed on teaching groups – by exploring self-identification and planning processes in the one-to-one teaching context. The research results presented here are based on a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with 10 participants with varying teaching experience and professional backgrounds. In addition, information about the same participants' responses to a previous questionnaire study (Jenei, in press), was used to initiate discussion with the interviewees. Participants expressed their preferences concerning the terms they normally use to identify themselves as teachers (e.g., *language teacher*, *instructor*, *mentor*), and what the given term implies for them. They were also asked to reflect on their planning processes, and the findings indicate teachers' preference towards 'planning for spontaneity' and a shared responsibility with the learner. Participants of the study reflected on their use of teaching materials and to what extent and how they involve learners in planning the content and structure of the lessons. By examining a wide array of approaches to one-to-one teaching, this study not only contributes to the existing literature on language teaching but also offers practical examples for those untrained in language teaching methodology. The findings highlight the need for further professional discussions and research to reveal trainable one-to-one teaching methods and techniques. Furthermore, the study provides teacher educators with insights into the range of approaches that exist in one-to-one teachers' practices.

Keywords: one-to-one teaching, language teaching, planning, materials, learner autonomy

1 Introduction

This study contributes to the field of language teaching in one-to-one teaching contexts, a field that is highly relevant to language teaching professionals, but where teachers need more guidance as it is unexplored and underrepresented in the literature on language pedagogy. Taking inspiration from the concept of mirrors and windows, this paper encourages teachers to reflect on their teaching practices by comparing their one-to-one teaching approaches to those presented by our interviewees. The variety of approaches to teaching and how teachers think about planning based on what they expressed in this interview study opens windows not only to their worlds but also to those of their students. This study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of teachers' approaches to a one-to-one setting, and it seeks options for teachers to adapt to learners when moving from the world of teaching groups to working with individuals. While the focus of this article is not intercultural competence, as such, several aspects of the concept are present in this teaching context. Teaching one particular learner requires both the teacher and the student to be able to co-create a safe teaching and learning environment, where opinions and ideas can be expressed freely, in a non-judgmental context. This is especially important because such settings are highly personalized and rely heavily on mutual understanding and trust, and are influenced by both parties' adaptability, flexibility and patience to create a productive working relationship between two human beings fulfilling multiple roles at the same time (see Wilberg (1987); Wisniewska (2010)). In addition to knowledge about methodology (e.g., clarifying learning goals, forms of feedback, selecting materials), further skills, such as the willingness to learn from each other and the adjustment of, for example, the tempo, strategies, or responsibility for the learning process is required from both the teacher and the learner.

While internet-based surveys (Biró, 2020; Lannert & Sinka, 2009) reveal that around three-fourths of language teachers teach in one-to-one contexts, this field is largely unexplored. Among the reasons for the lack of research in this area is that it includes an extensive variety of specific contexts covered by the term, characterized by a broad range of individual differences (e.g., the learner's age, learning goal, the level of learner autonomy, or the medium of learning, just to mention a few), which makes it almost impossible to reach conclusions that would be relevant for all of the professionals working in this area. While there is a large number of trained practitioners willing to share their experiences, there are few platforms to do so, with not many communities, workshops or teacher training programs specifically focused on the professional development of one-to-one teachers. A further difficulty for researchers in this field is posed by the unexplored population of untrained individuals who may not have received formal pedagogical training and may be hesitant to openly discuss their professional practices, partly due to concerns about the legitimacy of their professional status.

This paper reports the results of an exploratory study based on 10 semi-structured interviews with one-to-one teachers and a selection of related questions from a larger

questionnaire study (N = 95) conducted a year earlier (Jenei et al., 2024). The main questions to guide the interviews included the following (for the interview questions see Appendix B):

(1) What term would the interviewed one-to-one teachers use to identify themselves as teachers? How does this relate to structuring their sessions?
(2) How do these one-to-one teachers plan their lessons or courses? How much do they involve their learners/clients in the planning process?
(3) Do one-to-one teachers make an effort to adapt to their learner's needs? If so, how? What are the main factors that influence their decisions?

The study examines teachers' perspectives; and while both the teacher and the learner need to adapt to each other, the present investigation focuses primarily on the teacher's approach to the context, especially regarding course planning and learner involvement.

2 Teaching Approaches and Adaptive Planning

The terminology used to refer to the one-to-one teaching situation may be confusing: apart from *one-to-one* teaching, the terms *private teaching* or *tutoring* – among others – may be used to cover minor meaning variations. When referring to the teacher, the variety of terms include not only *private teacher* or *tutor*, but also *one-to-one teacher*, *instructor* and even *language coach*, though this latter term is largely misunderstood. The present study investigates how these terms are interpreted by the interviewees and what their connotations are for them. Teaching languages one-to-one usually involves two participant roles, a teacher and a learner. In this paper, the term *teacher* or *one-to-one teacher* is used broadly to describe the participant who assumes the role of the teacher during the lesson or session, independently of whether they are untrained, trained or a teacher educator.

According to Ur (2024), the role of the teacher as an "instructor" (p. 17) primarily involves providing teaching materials and assigning tasks. In contrast, language coaching – as defined by the International Language Coaching Association (ILCA) and discussed by Kovács (2022) – refers to a different approach which emphasizes that it is "a learner-led process aimed at creating optimal target-language acquisition while working towards effective international communication skills in order to reach future-related goals" (p. 289). A coaching approach to teaching, in Kovács's (2022) view blends a "solid language teaching framework" (p. 289) with elements of coaching when it serves the learner's needs.

The methodology of long- and short-term planning taught at teacher training programs applies mostly to formal instructional settings (e.g., primary or secondary schools) or to teaching groups in language schools (e.g., English for business purposes or exam preparation courses). For these contexts, there is usually some external curriculum

requirement transformed into a syllabus that the teacher is supposed to 'cover' in a given period of time with the group, often defined in terms of coursebook chapters. One of the major differences between teaching groups and teaching one-to-one is that for the latter there is usually no such external requirement imposed upon teachers. Furthermore, the teacher has no chance to create plans according to the needs of 'the majority' of the learners in the group, but will have to focus on the individual, weigh all imaginable options, and design and adjust the course plan specifically according to the learner's needs (Wilberg, 1987). This is only possible through using the adequate tools for needs analysis, creating a learner profile, getting to know the learner and incorporating this knowledge into procedures of assessment, course and lesson planning. These processes are interrelated and are influenced by each other (Graves, 2000). Indeed, a previous questionnaire survey (N = 79) found that one-to-one teachers regard flexibility, patience, being supportive and adaptive as desirable characteristics (Jenei, in press). The concept of adaptive planning as used in this paper is rooted in the idea that effective teaching requires ongoing adjustments based on real-time insights into learner progress and engagement. Its success depends partly on the teacher's ability to really listen and be responsive (or *response-able*, in Wilberg's (1987) terminology) – but it also depends on how much the learner is willing to be involved in learning-related processes.

One-to-one teaching allows learners to contribute to their learning or to create their own learning space, but the extent to which they are able or willing to do so depends on their ability to be autonomous learners and to be responsible for their own learning process. A more dynamic notion is covered by the term *agency*, which assumes a conscious intention to learn on the part of the student and willingness to co-construct the course with the teacher; it is "the feeling of ownership and sense of control that students have over their learning" (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2021, p. 30). Werbinska et al. (2019) also found that some private teachers believe that their role extends to "teaching learners beyond the language skills or using language skills to 'improve' a person, be it through successfully addressing students' individual needs or helping them acquire important life competencies, such as autonomy" (p. 190). Learner autonomy can be developed gradually, step-by-step through raising the awareness of learners about how they can contribute to the language learning process, and by giving them an opportunity to practice what actions they need to perform to assume more responsibility. Processes of learner autonomy may involve organizing materials or resources autonomously, providing content for learning or self-directed learning (see Benson, 2009). This ultimately leads to role-transfer, when the learner is ready to take over some roles from the teacher and enjoy the freedom provided by their increased responsibility (Scharle & Szabó, 2000).

Concerning the methodology of teaching groups, adapting to a variety of individual learner needs and abilities is covered by the term *differentiated instruction* (DI). This concept, however, implies that it is a group of learners that the teacher is dealing with, whereas in a one-to-one context there is only one student, and the approaches, methods and techniques used by the teacher need to be adjusted to that one student. This process

implies the teacher adapting to the student's needs in every sense of the word, whether planning for lessons or a series of lessons, or courses. While learner differences are infinite, it may be argued that a one-to-one teacher can be better prepared if they specialize in teaching a specific type of learner, allowing them to specifically train and develop their methodological knowledge with this smaller segment of student population in mind.

3 Research Methods and Instruments

The study has a qualitative exploratory approach and is based on a thematic analysis of interviews with 10 participants (7 female, 3 male). The participants volunteered to participate in an interview when they filled in a previous questionnaire survey (N = 95) also related to the field of one-to-one teaching (see survey and interview questions pertinent to this study in Appendices A and B). Out of the many volunteers, 10 were selected according to two criteria: what terms they would use to identify themselves (e.g., *language teacher, instructor, coach*, and so on), and their language teaching experience as one-to-one teachers. This ensured that even though there were only 10 participants, they have a wide range of experiences and views which makes the results transferable to similar contexts.

Replies of the 10 participants to the relevant questions from a previous questionnaire survey (see Appendix A) were used as a starting point for the interviews. The interviews took place on Google Meet or Zoom based on the preferences of the participants. Seven interviews were conducted and transcribed by the author and three by her colleague, Ágnes Sváb. The interviews were 45-60 minutes long. They were conducted either in English or Hungarian according to the interviewee's preference and were transcribed using the Riverside transcription tool, which resulted in a 46,503-word corpus. Hungarian responses were translated using DeepL and were proofread by the author for obvious language errors. Transcripts of the interviews were sent to participants to confirm that the ideas expressed in the interviews were represented appropriately. Only two minor modifications were made by one of the participants. Thematic analysis was conducted with Taguette (a simple-to-use qualitative analytical tool) along the lines of the research questions that were in the focus of this study and emerging subthemes. Throughout the data analysis procedures, codes (T1, T2, etc.) were used to identify the participants, but in this paper, codes were replaced with either pseudonyms chosen by the participant, or one provided by the author.

3.1 Participants of the Study

Participants of the present study (see Table 1) teach English or German as a foreign language to 2-14 one-to-one students and for two of them, it is their primary source of income. Except for one participant, they all have at least an MA degree, one of them in English language and literature, and seven interviewees have an MA degree in English Language Teaching. Three participants have a PhD degree in a teaching-related field

and two of them are teacher educators. Four participants have more than 25 years of experience in teaching, three interviewees have 16-20 years of experience and three have been teaching for 5-10 years. Unfortunately, no novice teachers indicated willingness to participate in this interview study. For ethical reasons, instead of their real names, pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants.

Table 1. Participants of the Study

Pseudonym	Teaching Experience[1]	Online or Face-to-Face	Professional Background	No. of Students Taught (Age)
Norbert	5-10	online	MA in English language and literature, TEFL[2], PhD	14 (18-50)
Rita	5-10	online	MA – teacher training, language coach	does not say
Tímea	5-10	both	no qualifications, some related courses	3 (7-10; 18-21)
Mokka	16-20	both	OTAK-MA in ELT	14 (11-40; and above 60)
Bálint	16-20	both	MA in ELT	3 (15-17; 31-40)
Nelli	16-20	both	MA in ELT	7 (22-30; 41-50)
Rózsa	more than 25	both	MA in ELT, CELTA	5 (18-60)
Feri	more than 25	both	MA in teaching, PhD in a teaching-related field	2 (31-40)
Renáta	more than 25	both	MA – teacher teaching	does not say
Virág	more than 25	both	PhD in a teaching-related field	4 (15-21; 41-60)

Note: [1]expressed in the number of years; [2]one-year training in teaching English as a foreign language

In terms of the age groups of students taught, the full range is covered from the age of 11 to above 60-year-olds. Regarding the mode of teaching, two teachers work online only and eight teach either online or face-to-face, mostly depending on the learner's preference. Three participants indicated that during the Covid pandemic, they slowly shifted to online lessons and stayed there, as did many of their students.

3.2 Limitations

Although every effort has been made to ensure that the participants in this study are as diverse as possible, with various backgrounds, belief systems, teaching experience, and the age of learners taught, a small-scale study like this always has its limitations. It being an exploratory interview study with a qualitative approach, it is hoped that the interviews still provide interesting insights into the approaches that one-to-one teachers may take and help professionals in the same field broaden their horizons. One aspect in which it was not possible to create a balance is gender; most of the participants are female (as is usually the case in the teaching profession) and unfortunately, no novice teachers volunteered to be interviewed. In addition, while most participants (n = 8) reported that they teach both online and face-to-face, two only teach online, therefore the views of teachers who only teach face-to-face are not represented here.

4 Results of the Study

4.1 Participants' Self-Identification and its Implications on the Teacher's Approach

Interviewees were asked to select – from a set of terms commonly used to describe teachers in a one-to-one context – the best one that would describe what they do in a one-to-one lesson. Then, they were asked to explain their choices. Table 2 summarizes the list of options respondents were given in the questionnaire survey.

Table 2. Terms Used for Self-Identification by One-to-One Teachers

Survey Question: **Which of the following terms would you use to refer to yourself if you work in a one-to-one situation with a language learner?**	
• private teacher • language teacher • language coach • language instructor	• tutor • teacher trainer • mentor • other: ....

The participants could select multiple options, but the interviews provided an opportunity to express what the differences meant to them, and which ones were, in their views, overlapping categories. None of the participants marked *tutor*, and Tímea was the only one who identified herself as a *private teacher* and referred to it as a commonly used term, but she was also the only one without an MA degree or training in teaching. Norbert felt that the terms *language teacher* or *language instructor* sound "*more serious and professional*" than

the term *private teacher,* which does not fully cover what one-to-one teachers do. Virág expressed her disagreement with labelling in general, and marked l*anguage teacher, teacher trainer* and *mentor.* Despite her view of labels, she emphasized the necessity of making a decision, as different labels have different market values. In her opinion, a good language teacher or a professional working in a helping profession is both a coach and a mentor when working as a language teacher. She explains that teachers also share responsibility – much like in coaching – for setting goals, identifying the steps needed to achieve those goals, and providing constructive feedback. In addition, they are expected to reflect on the learning process through learning cycles and to support autonomous learning. At the same time, awareness of the learner's learning style and strategies and supporting them by teaching learning strategies is also part of the process – that is, "*I learn about the person to teach them to learn*" (Renáta), but in Renáta's view, this does not make her a language coach. She also acts as a mentor teacher – both in her work with language learners and teacher trainees – emphasizing that mentoring is not about traditional teaching, but rather about asking the right questions and focusing on finding solutions, rather than dwelling on problems, which, as Renáta notes, "would create even more problems."

Five participants (Rita, Bálint, Rózsa, Mokka and Renáta) identified as both language teachers and coaches, some with a certificate in coaching, while others mentioned using coaching techniques when it is required in the teaching process. Being a trained professional, Bálint even mentioned switching into "*mental health professional mode*", and that to him, teaching the language is equally important to developing the mental health, awareness and mindfulness of the learner. What Mokka jokingly claimed to do when teaching was "*dishing out wisdom about language and other things*", nevertheless, similarly to Renáta, she emphasized that being a teacher inherently involves being a coach. As for Renáta, she cannot separate the two in her practice. When attending a training course in language coaching, her perception was that most teachers not only apply a coaching perspective or coaching tools in their teaching but being a coach forms a part of their personality as a teacher. Renáta is a trained language teacher, and in her view *language coaching* is a vague concept that is difficult to define. This is why language coaches often describe themselves as language teachers with a coaching certificate. This certificate, in her opinion, can be any coaching certificate, either in life coaching or career coaching, yet it is important that they also have a degree in teaching. Language coaches should consciously combine the two approaches (teaching and coaching) and make this clear when starting to work with an individual. Rita started out as a language teacher, and only a year after having completed her training in coaching was she confident enough to say that she is a *language coach*. Now she prefers the term "*neuro-language coach*" which, she admits, is not yet an established term in Hungary. She has been living in France for the past three years, and in her view, the perception of language coaching in Hungary is very different from what she experiences abroad. She believes that the term has a negative connotation in Hungary due to language coaching being more costly for the client than language lessons, and to the lack of knowledge or training programmes in language

coaching (except for ILCA's – International Language Coaching Association – courses, few training opportunities are available). In her view, students may have negative experiences related to coaching, as "anybody can call themselves a coach these days" (Rita) without having an accredited ICF (International Coaching Federation) certificate. In France there is a more positive attitude towards coaching. Not only because more information is available but because clients approach coaches with a specific goal when they make an appointment for a consultation, and their awareness of the coaching process leads to more focused sessions and better outcomes. Nelli – the only one who identified only as a *coach* – was hesitant to decide between language coaching and general coaching, which she claimed she had been doing for 10 years, in English.

As for Feri, when asked to decide on which term he would use to describe himself, he said "*a bit of all of the above*". He explained "*I am all of those in different times, different places and I think no one term out of these terms can accurately describe the work I do when I teach one-to-one*" because it depends on "*who I'm teaching and what I'm teaching*". He sees instruction, for example, as "*being just one aspect of teaching […] you might have to be an instructor sometimes in terms of any specific language, or specific use of the language, or how to do something in the language*". Other roles he mentioned include being "*a facilitator, a motivator, even also a resource*" depending on what students want to achieve, or "*only a speaking partner*". He also considers supervision a kind of teaching, much of which may be coaching, which is an aspect of teaching in his view. He is a bit sceptical about using *coaching* as a separate term, explaining that "*good teaching is also coaching* […]", therefore when using the term *coaching* "*you are making some*thing out of something that should already be there. So, I don't think it's a special service".

What can be concluded from the above is that the meanings of the terms listed have different definitions, interpretations and connotations to the participants. The fact that most teachers found it difficult to choose only one term shows that they regard roles as being more complex than can be described with one label. Since teachers formed different interpretations of most of the terms, a common ground needs to be established for further discussions.

4.2 Planning One-to-One Lessons and Courses

In connection with planning lessons or courses, three main topics emerged from the interviews: (1) building on student-provided input for planning the course or planning the lesson ad hoc; (2) using coursebooks and (3) how teaching adult learners is different from teaching younger ones.

4.2.1 Building on Student Input

From relying solely on student input to refusing to invite the learner to provide content, the whole spectrum has been represented by the interviewees. The majority of the interviewees (Bálint, Nelli, Rita, Mokka, Feri and Rózsa) have an outline of a plan or several topic options or activities for the lesson, but they all express a preference towards spontaneous lessons. Rita, for example, says that she is "*brutally spontaneous*", and Rózsa encourages her learners to guide the learning process, but they both enjoy the freedom provided by one-to-one teaching. Feri does not plan long term, instead, he first finds out about the student's specific expectations and caters to those "*on a week-to week basis, but it depends on who it really is and how they want to work*". Likewise working from student input, Rózsa states that "*using the students as a resource is for me a real biggie*". Bálint also enjoys working with students who provide the topic for the lesson by sending an article or video, which he then uses as the basis for the upcoming session. Similarly, Mokka asks for student input at the beginning of the lesson and either improvises a lesson based on that or continues the lesson with the material that she prepared. While Bálint has a loose plan in mind, he prefers to start out from the student's material and then build a lesson based on the language that emerges from that material. This way, students are happier to 'do their homework,' which is not so much a follow-up of the lesson, but an invitation to participate in planning the lessons and co-constructing the course. In connection with the topic, he recalls the golden rule he learned during his teacher training: "*a teacher should enter the classroom with a well-prepared plan — and be willing to abandon it if that serves the learner better*" (Bálint). Nelli, who has no formal teacher training background, believes that it is her role as a teacher to create materials, but she tries to adapt to the learner by choosing materials related to the learner's field of interest. In the interview she rejects the idea that learners should provide the content as she believes that it is part of her job as a teacher to select appropriate materials.

Tímea, has an even more teacher-centred approach and prefers to plan for lessons and longer periods, even for a year. For each lesson, she has one focus and makes sure that all four skills are practiced, as well as grammar and vocabulary. Like most teachers, she gives writing tasks for homework (Bálint, Tímea). Each of her lessons has a specific focus, followed by a dedicated segment for speaking practice. Like Rózsa, she begins by assessing the learner's current state and readiness to learn, adjusting her lesson plan accordingly based on her observations.

Overall, adaptive planning is not possible without an in-depth understanding of the learner's needs, and not only that, but also what steps lead to achieving a particular goal and an estimate of how much time that would take for a given learner in the long run. When there is external pressure and there is a specific goal (e.g., a language exam or a presentation), then long term planning may need a 'reversed order'; the teacher needs to be able to plan how best to use the given time to get closer to the given purpose. In both cases, it is a process guided by learner priorities and requires close cooperation/ collaboration between the teacher and the learner.

4.2.2 Relying on the Coursebook or Focusing on the Learner

Tímea who identifies herself as a private teacher, likes to rely on a coursebook for two reasons; first, it provides a framework, and secondly, she wants to make sure that the proportion of topics and skills is appropriate. Nonetheless, she prefers to select parts of the coursebook that feel relevant and interesting. She believes that a coursebook ensures a sense of progress and provides a kind of feedback to the students: "*You see, we have covered this page*" (Tímea). She adds that she does not like working with students who "*just want to talk*", because it would require her to do extensive preparation and create all the materials herself. She emphasizes this by stating that "*I am not a coursebook designer, I don't have such skills*" (Tímea). Virág, one of the most experienced teachers, also finds coursebooks useful, but uses them "*selectively, not page by page*". In her experience, learners like having a coursebook as they find it easier to revise materials, but she also mentions that her learners like to select additional tasks from the given coursebook if they wish to progress quicker. However, she also mentions that while coursebooks are useful to structure the learning process, she uses plenty of additional materials, because "*by the time coursebooks are published, they are usually already out-of-date*" (Virág).

The rest of the participants were against relying on coursebooks and express more student-centred views. As opposed to the above, Renáta has the experience that coursebooks available on the market are usually designed for groups or language schools. One-to-one teaching, in her view, requires more purposive planning, in her words "*I would feel awful if my hands were tied by a coursebook*" (Renáta). Rózsa mentions colleagues with private students who study in secondary schools and what these teachers do is help students keep up with the material taught at school based on a coursebook. This, in one-to-one teaching, would be "a nightmare" to her (Rózsa). Mokka also states that she does not like "*impersonal, language-school-like lessons, the coursebook-type, measured by the kilo*" because she believes listening to learners' needs is essential. The individual attention students receive in this setting is invaluable, especially since they rarely experience it anywhere else. Nelli explains that she "*teaches the student and not the material*," and pays attention to the whole person as a human being, not just as a learner. Rita does not use coursebooks at all. The reason for this is that she has clients who need to practice small talk and talking about current issues, politics or law. These topics are usually not discussed in coursebooks. She prefers identifying specific goals with the client or student and she finds it extremely important that the learner is responsible for the whole learning process.

Whether they use course books or not, most teachers mentioned a platform that they use to keep track of the materials used. They mentioned shared online folders, Skype messages that can be retraced, Messenger or collections of links in an Excel spreadsheet. As for shared folders and shared collections of links, it can either be created and be shared by the learner or the teacher for co-editing. Teachers who prioritize the development of learner autonomy tend to transfer more of this responsibility of collecting and organising materials to the learner.

4.2.3 Adult Learners

In the experience of the participants who teach adult learners, these learners often ask for homework, but never do it (Rózsa, Feri). This may go on for a year or two, without any sense of progress or improvement, still "*they're quite happy with this notion of doing something in English and that's enough for them*" (Feri). Rózsa, however, is quite flexible and never blames learners for this, instead, she prepares a set of questions, or several sets of questions to start discussions about topics related to the student's fields of interest, or even based on the context that the learner is in (e.g., a picture behind them, a new painting they have or what they did during the weekend). What learners experience as "*an initial chit-chat*" actually guides the direction of the lesson. She constantly takes notes during the lessons, based on which she can prepare either language or content for the upcoming sessions. While she plans a lot for a given class, she said she uses probably 10% of what she had planned. The plans can be used either later or may come in handy when reacting to another student's request: "*And I've got ideas. I have a load of stuff that I can, like a chocolate box, I can pick up whichever one I think is going to work*" (Rózsa). These flexible conversations can only be performed with upper-intermediate and advanced level learners; therefore, she focuses only on learners who are older than 18 and are above a B2 level. Rita also mentions that her learners practice grammar through conversations that are personally relevant to them. Specialization was highlighted by another teacher (Renáta) as a key factor in ensuring professionalism, as – despite the diversity of language learners – it allows the teacher to develop expertise, materials, and experience adapted to the needs of a specific student population.

4.2.4 Summary

Based on the results, it can be concluded that teachers with more than 15 years of experience tend to have a 'hidden agenda'. They have an idea or intuition about how the course will unfold, but they prefer not to share it explicitly with the learner. They use learner input for the content of the lesson, but they have the learner's language-related goal in mind (whether it is a skill, competence or a specific aim, such as an exam, a job interview, or a presentation that the learner is preparing for) and these teachers have a relatively clear idea of what steps need to be taken toward achieving that goal. They constantly take notes during the lessons on the learner's errors and fields of interests or experiences, which they can return to later either for ideas for future lessons or possible topics that are more relatable to the learner; that is, they use these notes as a foundation for planning future lessons or adapting the course. It would be interesting to see how this kind of expertise, this reflective and adaptive planning process could be explicitly taught to one-to-one teachers. In group teaching, such adaptability or flexibility on the part of the teacher is often described as "thinking on their feet", referring more to decisions that the teacher makes on the spot. In one-to-one teaching, when the teacher is observant

and note-taking supports reflective planning (reflection-in-action), the process is more deliberate and may have a more profound effect on how the course is run by feeding into the planning process lesson-by-lesson.

4.3 Learner/Client Involvement in the Planning Process

As described above, providing input (e.g., videos, articles or topics) for lessons is one way in which one-to-one students may contribute to their own learning process. Students can also kickstart planning the course by sharing their goals, and the ways in which they would like to improve their language skills. Their previous language learning experiences – whether positive or negative – need to be dealt with for a fresh start. The responsibility of the learner and the teacher in the construction of the learning process depends on constant negotiation, preferably moving towards learner agency (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2021) and learner autonomy (Scharle & Szabó, 2000). This notion of where the control lies and how responsibility is shared surfaced frequently during the interviews. Some of the topics that emerged from the interviews included questions such as: Should it be the learner or the teacher who collects materials, tracks lesson content, assigns or checks homework, and monitors progress? Do learners have any preconceptions about learning or preferences about how they want to be taught? Again, both extreme and more moderate opinions were represented by the interviewees.

4.3.1 Sharing Responsibility in One-to-One Teaching

According to Tímea, a lot of people think that if they go to a private teacher, they do not need to make any effort in class or between classes. Bálint finds it difficult to cooperate with learners who expect everything from him. He does not want to waste students' time or money doing things with them during the lesson that they could easily do on their own. He recommends that students prepare for lessons and self-check tasks, so that they only bring questions to class that really need his explanations or when they need help from a teacher. Even when it comes to teaching grammar, he often tells students "*I can explain to you how to use the passive structure for a hefty lesson fee, but you can also learn it at home from this little book... If they cannot, that is where my help is needed, but I think students should teach themselves as much as they can*" (Bálint). What is more in the focus of his lessons is teaching exam skills or even life skills, raising awareness of the learning process and teaching self-assessment, meaning that he regards building learner autonomy as one of the most important tasks of a language teacher.

Unfortunately, few people can really learn, and private students expect teachers to teach them to do so (Tímea). These students expect teachers to tell them what to do, to assign homework, create Quizlet sets and so on. Therefore, the language coaching course that she attended "*was a revelation*" to Tímea, as she realized that it does not have to be her "*doing all of these things*", but the learner should be involved in the process as much as

the teacher. It is common knowledge that teaching does not necessarily equal learning, and beginner one-to-one teachers need to be reminded of this as they tend to think that the more they work, the more effort they put into planning, preparation or designing materials, the higher the value of their work. The concept of facilitating the learning process is not so much in their focus, rather, they tend to assume full responsibility for the work, often leading to frustration when the student fails to progress as expected. As Tímea put it, "*there are still many learners who want a very very good teacher, because they think the better the teacher, the more they will learn*", but they are surprised when she asks them "*Are you a good learner?*". In her view, teachers do not have to be coaches, but learning about coaching processes may help them reduce their workload and improve their learner's agency. One way to develop learner autonomy, according to Tímea is to provide options, making them aware of the variety of ways that can lead to their goal, which is in line with Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory. Renáta and Rita both support the idea of keeping the learner responsible for their learning, but "*guide them as a GPS, show them possible ways to go, but they choose the direction*" (Renáta).

Adults, according to the interviewees, attend classes either to achieve a particular goal or to have conversations. In the latter case, some input from the teacher is necessary, whether it is questions or a video or text related to their fields of interest. However, for the latter, they usually have the content that they would like to express or a context that they need to be able to work in. As Rózsa says "*I'm busy taking notes and every so often I will share the notes I've taken, and we will discuss and upgrade the language. But I learn about them and their worlds. Everyone's got stories, a story to tell. [...] So, I learn about the content, and I try to give them some tips on language.*" But not all students are happy and willing to share these ideas immediately, good rapport with the learners needs to be established first, which means that a careful balance needs to be established between the teacher's professionalism and allowing the learner to feel comfortable (Bleistein & Lewis, 2015). Techniques mentioned by the interviewees (Bálint, Rózsa) aim to engage the learners, for example, Bálint says "*... you have to ask them questions or throw up ideas. And I give a lot of choice*". A specific simple example that Rózsa mentions is putting three questions in the chat and asking students to choose which one they would like to answer. Then she gives them a few minutes on their own and returns to listen to the answer prepared by the learner. The literature also highlights the value of this technique of giving students silent time to process information or to allow them to take their time to think and prepare for speaking (Wilberg, 1987). A one-to-one session can be demanding for learners as they are constantly in the focus, and they benefit from brief periods of silence (ranging from a few seconds to several minutes – which can also involve the teacher and learner silently co-editing a document to collect ideas, for example). As for teaching adults, Feri also mentioned that teaching adults is more difficult in a way, as they come with a preconception, "*a lot of baggage from their school days*" and as a result, "*sometimes they're not going to be receptive to standard methodology*". Whether their idea about what the best way for them to learn would be is right or wrong, the approach that the teacher is the

expert and knows what should be done may not work with adults, so it is a better idea to keep an open mind with them and find the methodology that will work together with the learner. Rita sees it as "*partnership between the learner and teacher or coach and coachee*".

With young learners, parents tend to be just as involved in the introductory, planning stage as the learners, sometimes even more so. Two participants expressed their disapproval of parents who push their children to attend private classes when the learners themselves do not have any motivation to do so. While some participants stated that they discuss such situations at the beginning, still they are not willing to teach such young learners. Contrary to this, Mokka indicated that this is not a problem for him, as in his view, it is part of his job as a teacher to establish good rapport with the learner and build their motivation.

4.3.2 Adapting to the Learner's Needs

It is clear from the interviews that one-to-one teachers have a wide range of approaches to the teaching context, depending on their beliefs about what teaching entails and also along individual learner differences, such as the student's goal, their field of interest or readiness for learning (e.g., Tímea: "*if the student is not in the right mindset, they will not be able to focus on the lesson*"). It's important to consider learners' awareness of learning strategies, the level of responsibility they are willing to take on, and how autonomous they are as learners. When adapting to the learner's needs, these are the major considerations, but the willingness of teachers to adapt differ greatly. Some teachers have specific expectations of their learners and prefer to work only with certain types of students, specializing based on factors like age, proficiency level, or how much learners actively contribute to the lessons (for example, by providing content). Bálint, for example, notes that it sometimes happens that he gets along with the student really well, still, that does not mean that his teaching style and what the learner needs match. In such cases he communicates it clearly to the learner and recommends a colleague who might be better suited to accommodate the learner's needs. He notes that there are "*thousands of teachers in Budapest only who are better teachers than me, but for some students my approach is the ideal one*" (Bálint).

When asked about whether or how one-to-one teaching skills could be taught, Virág, who is a teacher educator, expressed her belief in process-based, reflective learning, a holistic approach through tasks, activities and experiences. In her view, special focus should be placed on how to develop independent, autonomous learners. For example, in situations when a learner only attends a private lesson because their parents told them to do so, and they are not willing to put any effort into the process, "*an average language teacher will think that they have done something wrong*" (Virág). What can rebuild the balance is a mentoring approach, where the teacher is willing to step back and acknowledge that if "*I learn the learner and the learner learns me, we can learn together*" (Virág). This approach emphasizes the idea that the teacher needs to approach the learner with an open mind and real interest towards the learner, so that they can accept the teacher and get ready

to participate in the learning process. For example, authentic conversations based on everyday topics can arise naturally during discussions with the learner, allowing them to acquire practical vocabulary not usually found in coursebooks, such as 'fly swatter' or 'felt-tip pen.'

Active listening and a non-directive approach are fundamental components of a teacher's skills, according to Bálint, whether teaching groups or one-to-one. In his view, a teacher's degree should mean that the person has functional psychological and pedagogical knowledge that can be applied in their day-to-day practice. Knowledge, however, does not mean that teachers need to be psychologists. One of the common concerns of one-to-one teachers is how to avoid the language lesson turning into a 'therapy session'. When learners start talking about their private lives, jobs, or school, it is difficult to draw professional boundaries and maintain the focus on the language. While Bálint and Mokka are open to whatever learners share, Bálint, Tímea, and Renáta feel their teacher training did not equip them to take on the role of a psychologist – whether in group or individual settings - and they find it difficult to maintain boundaries and to avoid stepping into situations that could be emotionally complex or beyond their professional scope. They believe that dealing with issues and difficulties concerning the student's private life is to some extent necessary, but once it becomes the major focus of the lesson for the student, this should be discussed with them, and they should either separate the learning and 'healing' sessions or another professional should be involved (e.g., a psychologist, or a language coach). Nevertheless, Renáta thinks that it contributes to the efficiency of the learning process if language is just a tool to help the learner achieve their goals, which – in itself – can also be life-changing.

While teaching one-to-one learners may – in many ways – be just as work-intensive as teaching groups, one of the teachers pointed out, it is indeed easier to pinpoint what works with a given student and why but for this, the teacher needs to be observant and "*be a good listener*" (Rózsa) or "*able to properly listen*" (Norbert). Rózsa summarizes the above from a broader perspective: "*So, there's all the flexibility in the world [...] but one-to-one teaching, I think is much more about an approach. It's not about the piece of paper or the materials. It's about the individual and how to, you know, meet their needs.*"

5 Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

Regarding the terminology, interviewees were asked to select terms that best describe their roles in one-to-one contexts – including terms like *private teacher, language teacher, language coach,* or *language instructor.* The responses exemplified individual interpretations of these roles, revealing the complexity of self-identification among teachers, from conveying a sense of professionalism to totally rejecting labels. The variety of self-descriptions of the participants illustrated that the way they perceive their roles has implications for their beliefs and what they consider to be their responsibilities as

teachers. While some view themselves strictly as instructors, others incorporate elements of coaching or mentoring into their practices. On the whole, results show that those who identify as language teachers have a stricter plan in mind and those who believe that coaching is part of one-to-one teaching or identify as coaches have a more flexible approach and are more open to student input.

Planning one-to-one lessons is – in eight interviews out of the 10 – said to be shaped by student input and these participants prefer creating lesson outlines that can be adapted on the spot, based on their learner's needs, language goals and interests. Participants of this study often build lessons around materials brought by students to increase learner engagement and develop learner autonomy. Some of them emphasize the value of spontaneous teaching, which aligns more closely with students' real-world interests than rigid adherence to a coursebook. Conversely, some participants rely heavily on the structure offered by coursebooks, perceiving them as essential tools for balanced teaching in terms of skills development, but they also include extra materials. Another, perhaps more interesting outcome that emerges from the interviews is that more experienced teachers allow more freedom to learners both in terms of the process and when it comes to the selection of the materials they would like to use. This is true even for language exam preparation courses, where the least experienced teacher prefers using coursebooks designed for exam preparation while a much more experienced teacher starts with the learner's field of interest and builds it into the course in a way that important exam-related material is also covered implicitly.

Teachers emphasize how challenging it is when students arrive with preconceptions about the learning process or when it was someone else who had decided that they needed to attend the course. The role of the learner in shaping their own learning experience emerged as one of the central themes in the interviews. Some of the interviewees underscored the necessity for learners to take an active part in the planning process as well, by articulating their goals and discussing previous language learning experiences, strategies and methods that did or did not work for them. This collaborative work mode based on learner-teacher partnership gives learners a sense of agency and responsibility but can often be developed only gradually.

Even this small-scale study reveals a broad range of teaching methods employed by one-to-one teachers, pointing to the value of sharing experiences to raise awareness of the variety of approaches and to support teachers in making informed decisions. In addition, the findings underscore the need for targeted professional training programmes for one-to-one teachers, opportunities for development, and spaces for dialogue in order to provide a well-grounded professional foundation and theoretical background for the expertise needed for 'planned spontaneity'.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Survey Questions

Questionnaire survey questions relevant to the present study from a previous phase of the larger scale research study on one-to-one teaching (Jenei, in press).

(1) In what context do you teach students one-to-one?
- as a contractor / freelancer
- in a language school
- afternoon lessons or remedial classes in a primary or secondary school
- other: ....

(2) Which of these terms would you use to refer to yourself if you work in a one-to-one situation with a language learner?
- language teacher
- language instructor
- language coach
- tutor
- private teacher
- other: ....

(3) In a few words can you explain why you decided on the given term in the previous question (and not the others)? What additional meaning does carry? Or why did you not choose the other ones?

(4) Do you teach one-to-one online or face-to-face?
- only online
- only face-to-face
- both online and face-to-face

(5) What affects your decision on either teaching online or offline?

(6) What qualifications - if any - do you have for teaching English as a foreign language? Please mark all that apply.
- BA in English Studies
- CELTA
- RTAK – "Rövid ciklusú tanárképzés" (short-cycle teacher training)
- English language instructor MA (1-year programme)
- MA in English language and literature

- MA level teacher's degree, e.g. OTAK (Osztatlan Tanárképzés / Unified Teacher Training)
- MA level teacher's degree in another language + C1 level English language exam
- - PhD in a teaching-related field
- None
- Other: ....

(7) How many private students do you teach? (drop-down list: 1–20)

    1–20

(8) How many private lessons do you have a week on average? (in 45-minute lessons)
How old are the students that you teach one-to-one? You can mark more if more apply.

    7–10; 11–14; 15–17; 18–21; 22–30; 31–40; 41–50; 51–60; above 60

(9) How many years of experience do you have in teaching students in a one-to-one situation? (in years)

    1; 2; 3; 4; 5–10; 11–15; 16–20; 21–25; more than 25

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide Questions

1. Interview questions for teachers
- Why did you start teaching one-to-one?
- What qualifications do you have? Do you think that is sufficient for teaching one-to-one lessons? If you attended a teacher training programme, did it prepare you for teaching one-to-one? Do you think it would be important to be trained in this area?
- Who do you teach?
- What materials do you use? Who provides these materials?
- How do you keep track of the student's progress?
- How do you prepare for your lessons?
- How do you plan - short or long term?
- How do you engage your students?
- What do you like/dislike most about one-to-one teaching?

+ **questions for teacher educators / teacher trainers:**
- What is your opinion about the prevalence of one-to-one teaching and the lack of instruction in one-to-one teaching in tertiary education?
- How can a teacher learn about one-to-one teaching or tutoring?
- What do you think about teaching one-to-one without any qualifications in teaching? What might be some benefits or drawbacks?

2. Questions for (language) coaches
- Are you a language teacher and a coach or only a language coach? What qualifications do you have?
- Do your coaching sessions take place online or offline, or both? Which one do you prefer? Why?
- How long is a language coaching process? What does it depend on? How do you plan them (short- or long-term)?
- How do you work with clients in connection with the process of language learning?
- Do you use any coaching or teaching materials? Tell me about them.
- How do you prepare for your coaching sessions?
- How do you know if your coaching sessions are successful or not?
- How do you track your client's progress?
- Do you think a language coaching certificate and English language proficiency may be enough for teaching English (without a trained language teacher)?
- What do you think should be taught at a training programme for language teachers who would be teaching one-to-one?
- In your experience, what are language teachers' and learners' preconceptions about coaching? Have you ever found it difficult to work with a client for some reason?
- In an ideal situation, in what ways - if any - could language teachers and coaches work together?

APPENDIX C

A Framework for Discussing Teachers' Roles in One-to-One Teaching Contexts

Emerging areas professional areas of knowledge and the related teachers' roles in a one-to-one context based on the review of the literature are shown in Table 3 below (Jenei et al., 2024).

Table 3. A framework for discussing teachers' roles in one-to-one teaching contexts

Professional Areas	Required Skill, Knowledge, Competence	Main Role	Role
Course management	Establish the ideal situational context for learning	**Course manager**	Environment manager
	Planning procedures, tracking progress and managing feedback		Instructional design manager
	Content, resources, materials		Designer of materials and content
	Digital, technical competencies		Digital, technical designer
Professional knowledge	Methodological competence	**Teacher**	Facilitator
	Communicative competence		Instructor (resource, model)
	Evaluation and assessment of learning		Assessor
	Continuous professional development and openness to professional collaboration		Reflective practitioner
Awareness of social-psychological factors and skills	Self-awareness, emotional intelligence and well-being	**Supporter**	Role model as a learner
	Awareness of the psycholinguistic factors that influence learning		Observer
	Language coaching and transferring roles		Language coach
	Establish rapport, maintain motivation and keep professional boundaries		Relationship manager

Part 3

GOOD PRACTICES FOR DEALING WITH NEW CHALLENGES IN 21ST-CENTURY FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY TO TEACHING CULTURE, LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION AND INTERCULTURALITY IN BA, MA AND PHD PROGRAMMES AT EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST

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https://doi.org/10.21862/Intercultural/2025/8641/175

Abstract

Training foreign language professionals puts the responsibility on education providers to design the curricula to best suit the students' needs. This paper[1] describes the contribution of the Department of English Language Pedagogy to teaching culture, language, communication and interculturality in English major degree programmes (BA, MA and teacher training) as well as in the PhD Programme in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics at Eötvös Loránd University. While language development and the study of various aspects of English have always been part of the training, culture

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1 This study is a non-evaluative descriptive document analysis of the teaching activities of the Department of English Language Pedagogy (DELP) of the School of English and American Studies (SEAS), Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary. DELP's contribution was also examined using the website of the PhD Programme in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics (LangPed). As the paper relies on publicly accessible materials from the DELP, LangPed and SEAS websites, the names of the institutions are not withheld.

related courses and classes fostering the students' cultural understanding, awareness and intercultural competence have only been added in the past twenty years. About a quarter of the department's courses are devoted to this, and the courses display a diversity of approaches to engage the students and contribute to their cultural and intercultural growth. This study examined the short course descriptions available on the School of English and American Studies and the department websites to show the types of courses and teaching approaches used for this purpose, and identified the Department of English Language Pedagogy's course design and teaching activities as good practice.

1 Introduction

Training English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and other professionals at universities requires programmes with a very complex web of carefully designed courses in their curricula. The focus may vary from programme to programme, from university to university, from country to country. Though theory and practice are both involved, in some settings the training is based on more traditional lines and leans towards providing the students with theoretical foundations, in others more emphasis is placed on preparing them for the practical skills and knowledge required by their chosen professions. In either case, the main components typically are language development, literature, history, linguistics, and in the past three decades or so, applied linguistics, the methodology of teaching EFL, in the case of teacher training, and a variety of communication and culture related subjects. However, while the subjects linked to the former group are delivered by university departments or departmental sections created for education and research in these academic areas, subjects with cultural content are owned by many and by none. The reason for this is that the concept of culture can be and is defined and interpreted in myriad ways. Most traditional academic subjects contain elements of culture, and these elements are generally related to the canon of high culture. These courses often display the Humboldtian or scholarly approach to teaching and learning as explained by Kontra (2016). He also emphasises that the longstanding hierarchy in the prestige and therefore power of university departments reflecting the theoretical or scholarly approaches and those taking a more practice-oriented view still persists – to the advantage of the former. More recently, however, popular culture has also become an area of interest in academic inquiry and education. This also comes hand in hand with a wider acceptance of the fact that foreign language professionals need practical knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences, and therefore numerous practical aspects of culture and communication must also be core elements in the training of English major students.

In one strand of her PhD dissertation, Ildikó Lázár (2006) examined how intercultural communication could be incorporated into language teacher education and how it was taught at Hungarian English teacher training institutions. Her findings show that efforts had already been made to include intercultural competence development in some of the teacher training programmes, and a variety of compulsory and elective courses were offered either fully dedicated to or at least having an element of intercultural communication. At the same time, at some universities it was possible to graduate as an English teacher without ever attending a class in this topic area. Lázár recommended that intercultural communicative competence development should receive increased emphasis in foreign language teacher education programs. She also suggested that teacher educators should be given professional development courses to raise their awareness of the importance of the cultural dimension of foreign language acquisition with the aim to improve the training of teachers of language-and-culture.

Inspired by Lázár's (2006) dissertation, this paper describes the contribution of the Department of English Language Pedagogy (DELP) to teaching culture, language, communication and interculturality in English major degree programmes and the PhD Programme in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics (LangPed) at Eötvös Loránd University.[2] In order to do this, an overview of DELP's aims is outlined together with theoretical and empirical considerations supporting these aims; this is followed by a list and descriptions of the types of courses offered by DELP, and the description concludes with quotations from the short course descriptions in the course catalogue, to shed light on the content foci and approaches to teaching culture, interculturality and (intercultural) communication at DELP. All these data were collected in the framework of a descriptive document analysis relying on publicly accessible data from the DELP, LangPed and School of English and American Studies (SEAS) websites.

2 The Role of DELP in Language and Culture Teaching

Following a reorganisation at SEAS, DELP was founded in 2006 with colleagues from two former SEAS departments, the Department of English Applied Linguistics (DEAL) and the Centre for English Teacher Training (CETT). While DEAL took on a more pronounced focus on applied linguistics than before and is also involved in academic language development and teacher training, and continues to thrive, CETT was discontinued. It was decided that the main foci of DELP should be on language and culture teaching and teacher training, along with teaching subjects related to language pedagogy research, area and (inter) cultural studies and discourse studies at BA, MA and PhD levels as well as in the teacher

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2 It must be noted that SEAS' programmes described in this paper are not run by individual departments, but are based on contributions from several departments. This study only discusses DELP's contribution to the various programmes.

training programmes. Because several of DELP's founding members were committed to the integration of culture, interculturality and communication as a driving force in the work of the department, these features were given high priority in the department's profile, which was the first official acknowledgement of the need to systematically include these areas in the programmes of SEAS. Figure 1 shows how the DELP website delineates DELP's aims and objectives:

Figure 1. DELP's Mission Statement and Professional Profile

Mission statement
DELP's aim is to help our students become English language professionals with sound language and professional training as well as a broad minded and educated outlook on the world. We work particularly to help our students attain
- high language proficiency
- an awareness of language and culture related to language
- knowledge and understanding of English speaking cultures
- skills of intercultural communication
- skills of gathering, processing and transmitting information in a wide range of contexts
- critical thinking
- attitudes of professionalism such as responsibility, precision, self-reliance and self-development
- knowledge, skills and attitudes to become reflective teachers.

Professional profile
DELP's profile includes teaching **language development**, the **methodology of teaching English as a foreign language and cultural studies**. The department is responsible for providing courses in various programmes:
- the BA programme
- the English Teacher Training Programme (OTAK)
- the MA in English Language Instruction (ELIMA)
- the disciplinary MA in English
- the PhD in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics.
DELP also hosts the **Australian Studies Programme**.

https://delp.elte.hu/our_story

This figure clearly shows that DELP has certainly committed itself to consciously including culture, interculturality and communication in its teaching programmes. In order to understand what motivates DELP's approaches to teaching these as separate subjects or as integrated elements in subjects that would not necessarily require these elements, it is important to see what aspects of culture, interculturality and communication DELP's courses are based on.

To start out with, Spencer-Oatey's (2008) very broad definition of culture provides a flexible context for the multifaceted profile of DELP's courses. She asserts that

> Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour. (p. 3)

This definition of culture is closely related to how people understand and interpret various contexts and how they communicate in them. This, in turn, is pertinent in foreign language communication as the aim of learning a foreign language is to become a competent language user and to be able to manage intercultural encounters; in other words, to be an effective intercultural communicator or intercultural speaker. For foreign language professionals, this aim is even more obvious: in order to perform well in the various English speaking professions that English major degrees entitle their holders to pursue, SEAS graduates need to become particularly competent and proficient users of the English language and should be highly aware intercultural speakers. This term, coined by Byram (1995), is of great significance in this context as in his definition an intercultural speaker is

> someone who can operate their linguistic competence and their sociolinguistic awareness of the relationship between language and the context in which it is used, in order to manage interaction across cultural boundaries, to anticipate misunderstandings caused by differences in values, meanings and beliefs, and thirdly to cope with the affective as well as cognitive demands of engagement with otherness. (Byram, 1995, p. 25)

Intercultural speakers – particularly if they are language professionals – thus have to possess excellent language proficiency and intercultural competence. Intercultural competence – to follow Byram's (1997) views again – comprises knowledge, attitudes, skills and critical cultural awareness. He illustrates these categories by explaining that knowledge relating both to the mother tongue and the target language(s) concerns for instance the awareness of connotations, structural differences, pragmatics and sociolinguistics, while cultural knowledge – among other things – relates to practices, routines, customs and values of one's own culture and the target culture(s), as well as to awareness of differences and similarities. As attitudes, he lists openness, curiosity, willingness to suspend judgment and to relativize oneself, humour and ethnorelativism, to mention just a few. Intercultural competence also presupposes the skills of learning, discovery and interaction, interpreting and relating, interpersonal communication, and mediation. All these also contribute to developing critical cultural awareness, which is the awareness of (the possible occurrence of) cultural difference even if unapparent, and the ability to evaluate objectively and analytically cultural products and phenomena of one's own culture and that of others (Byram, 1997, pp. 50–54). Taking this train of thought further, Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoint–Gaillard and Philippou (2014) identify attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills and actions as elements of intercultural competence,

the synergy of which helps people along the way to becoming global citizens. These elements are related to foreign language use, comparing cultures, taking on open attitudes, evaluating situations critically, adapting to new environments and expectations, and most importantly to the willingness to engage in constant learning. To emphasise the fact that intercultural competence requires a particular mindset, constant awareness of cultural differences and consideration of one's own and others' perspectives as well as readiness to perform appropriately, the broader term *intercultural intellect*, incorporating all these elements, could also be used to supplement the concept of intercultural competence.

It follows from the above that the development of intercultural competence – or intercultural intellect – should be part and parcel of degree programmes in higher education wherever relevant for the students' chosen professional areas as demonstrated by Pinto (2018). She carried out research among academics in Portugal, and found that their insights supported the view that in a globalizing world it is vital for students to learn to acquire an open attitude free of prejudice and to be interculturally prepared for their professions. The same is affirmed in a study by Lázár (2011), who points out that particularly in teacher education, where the multiplying effect of the training is considerable, it is very important to raise the trainees' awareness to interculturality, and also to systematically integrate intercultural competence development as well as methods of teaching this into their courses (pp. 123–125). Willems (2002) also makes suggestions for incorporating interculturality in teacher education (pp. 16–19). Finally, in a recent study in the context of Hungarian tertiary education of English major students, Divéki (2024) underlines the importance of including the development of the students' global skills, which are closely connected to intercultural competence, to help them become competent English language professionals.

DELP is one of SEAS's five departments and provides approximately 25 percent of its courses if we calculate the number of courses, but over 35 percent if we base the calculations on the number of classes, as many DELP courses involve classes of two double periods (2x90 minutes) per week, unlike the regular courses of one double period (1x90 minutes) class per week across the School. DELP offers a wide variety of courses, many of which aim to develop the students' intercultural competence or add to their cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills. These course types are listed and described in the next section. The descriptions come from the DELP, LangPed and SEAS websites as indicated earlier but some of the texts have been shortened or streamlined – without affecting the essence of the original – to better fit the purpose.

3 DELP's Courses with Cultural Content

In what follows, DELP's courses with cultural content are listed in the different teaching programmes. The SEAS Course Catalogue (http://seas.elte.hu/seas/catalogue.pl) is a trustworthy source for the courses in the BA, MA and Teacher Training Programmes.

It is the data of the academic year 2024–2025 that were examined for this study. The PhD courses are listed on the website of the PhD Programme in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics (https://langped.elte.hu/course_outlines), from which page the courses classified under "Culture and Intercultural Communication" are discussed below.

In the autumn term of 2024, SEAS had 412 courses in the Course Catalogue, out of which 105 were offered by DELP and 28 of these had cultural content according to the course title or the course description. The numbers for the 2025 spring term were 417, 128 and 27 respectively. Three PhD courses focusing on culture or interculturality were offered in this academic year.

3.1 The BA in English Programme

DELP's share in the three-year BA in English Programme has a strong focus on developing the students' English language proficiency and introducing them to English speaking cultures. These are the courses offered in this programme:

Language practice[C3] – The first-year students' language course, lasting a whole academic year, is a general language practice class focusing on accuracy and fluency, but some cultural content is also included depending on the preferences of the instructors.

Skills-based language development[C] – These courses are offered in the second and third year of the programme, and serve as advanced level language practice classes focusing on one or several language skills, often in the academic context. Hence, discussions, debates, academic presentations or writing skills usually form the core of these courses, and the development of critical thinking figures emphatically in the course descriptions. The topics that are covered allow quite a lot of cultural, intercultural and communicational competence development, too. In some course descriptions the learning modes that are indicated (e.g., student-led discussions, debates, and reflective exercises, collaborative learning) are also conducive to fostering (intercultural) communication skills.

Content-based language development[C] – These courses are offered in the second and third year of the programme and serve as advanced level language practice classes focusing on a specific topic area, which opens up endless ways to include cultural and intercultural competence development. These courses often revolve around different aspects of English speaking cultures or take a more general topic as their organizing force. Here are some examples:
The Island of Ireland
Focus on Australia
Australian social issues at the museum
Discussing visual arts in English

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3 Courses indicated with a C in the superscript are compulsory in the programme, while courses indicated with an E are elective.

Global voices

Social media and the lingo of Generation Z and Generation Alpha

Introduction to English-speaking cultures[C] – This lecture series, taken typically in the second year of the programme, aims to familiarise the students with important concepts of English-speaking cultures. Understanding issues of identity, core values, difference, social change, and the connections of language and social issues, helps to raise awareness of interculturality and thus helps the students become better intercultural communicators. The lecture series – delivered by a team of lecturers – therefore focuses on these issues and provides important theoretical background as well as useful practical examples in the hope that the course participants will use these as stepping stones in their cultural learning. The course is also offered in the teacher training programme.

English-speaking cultures specialization lecture: English language and communication[E] – This series of talks – by a team of lecturers – about culture and cultures, aims to familiarise the audience with some background and tools for interpreting English language texts and interactions in their cultural context. The lecturers address issues such as the meanings of 'culture', how to explore national cultures, the process of cultural learning, the relationship between language and culture and various aspects of cross-cultural communication and intercultural competence. The lectures present important theoretical background to these issues and demonstrate practical uses of the themes in relation to English speaking cultures.

English-speaking cultures specialization seminars[E] – These are seminars on cultural issues related to the English speaking world. Some of the titles advertised in the 2024-2025 academic year are as follows:

Introduction to New Zealand History, Literature, Culture and Film

Communicating Across Cultures

Intercultural Communication

Exploring American culture

Australian Aborigines

Australia through documentaries

3.2 The MA in English Programme

The courses in the MA programme represent a higher academic level, which is reflected in the content and approaches used. They help the students understand the theoretical and empirical background along with the deeper cause and effect relationship of the issues discussed.

Intercultural communication studies[C] – This lecture course aims to describe the theoretical background and practical implications of different aspects of culture, language and communication. It is hoped that the participants will complete the course with

a heightened sense of cultural and intercultural awareness, as this disposition is crucial for every English language professional. Among others, the course discusses the following issues: Defining culture, Aspects and dimensions of culture, Understanding national cultures, Culture learning and acculturation, The role of culture in communication, Language and culture, Intercultural communication, Discourse analysis, Intercultural communicative competence, Research methods in cultural studies.

Discourse and culture[E] – In second/foreign language discourse production it often happens that a grammatically or lexically well-formed piece of discourse appears to be awkward. This may be due to "discourse-level" phenomena. This course intends to familiarize students with aspects of language and culture that may influence discourse production and, ultimately, the nature and success of intercultural communication. Special emphasis is placed on issues related to the creation of cohesion and coherence in text, the rhetorical organization of genres and text types, and logical structuring in different languages and cultures. The course merges theory with practice: it raises students' awareness of discourse-level phenomena through theory and also provides them with practice in discourse analysis so that they obtain the skills necessary for conducting linguistically oriented discourse-based investigations. The practical implications of discourse analysis in the field of intercultural communication, language learning/teaching, translation and translator training are also discussed. The course hopes to make participants more conscious language users who have a deeper understanding of how discourse in different languages and cultures "unfolds", and who are capable of producing communicatively and rhetorically adequate discourse.

Translation and culture[E] – This course familiarizes students with the intricate relationship between translation and culture: the roles translation plays in our globalized world, its types, the ways in which it contributes to intercultural communication and the development of science, how it may promote or hinder multilingualism and epistemological diversity in the world, etc. Based on the outcomes of research and the analysis of translations, it touches upon topics such as translatability, transfer operations, translation strategies, epistemic translation, academic translation, news translation, and translation in the EU.

Australian culture and civilization: Gender issues in Australian film[E] – This course examines how gender is seen in society and shown in films in Australia. Topic areas include: What is a woman's film?, Gender and violence, Gender and religion, Constructions of motherhood, Versions of masculinity and gender bending, Women and work, Women and sexuality, Aboriginality and gender, and Cross-cultural gender issues.

Australian history and politics[E] – This seminar discusses the most important events in Australian history and politics. Topics to be scrutinized among others are: an overview of Australian history, explorations, Aboriginal history and traditions, the birth of Sydney, convict life, the colonial experience, Ned Kelly – bush ranger, Federation, the White Australia Policy, The Bulletin, the Boer War, First World War, Gallipoli, political institutions and parties, Stolen Generations, Australia in WW2, Multiculturalism:

policies and waves, Relationship between Britain and Australia, Whitlam dismissal, Republicanism, relationship between Australia and the USA, and contemporary Australian politics.

Introduction to Australian literature and culture[E] – The aim of this course is to introduce students to the main aspects of Australian literature and its cultural (and historical) context. Set texts include short stories by Henry Lawson, Barbara Baynton, Peter Carey, Patrick White, Elizabeth Jolley and Kate Grenville.

Nationality and identity in Australian film[E] – All films selected for this course engage with the questions of nationality and identity in various ways. What is it to be Australian? Is there an Australian nation? By watching the films and reading relevant articles, we attempt to see what answers are offered to these questions.

First Nations in Canada[E] – This course focuses on the First Peoples of Canada, and explores the following areas: family and community, traditions, cultural and artistic expression and current issues. The lessons present the topic, and allow the students to further explore it through guided tasks.

Skills for intercultural communication[E] – This course aims to develop the participants' skills of intercultural communication and their English language proficiency in order for them to become better communicators, and it also helps them identify and plan the analysis of researchable issues related to intercultural communication with a view to writing their degree thesis. To this end, the course offers listening, viewing and speaking practice as well as opportunities to read research articles and essays.

Researching intercultural communication[E] – The objective of this course is (1) to review basic research methods used in cultural studies, applied linguistics research and social studies and (2) to get acquainted with the basic requirements of and practical issues concerning writing a research paper.

3.3 The Teacher Training Programmes[4]

Introduction to English-speaking cultures[C 5] – This lecture series, taken typically in the second year of the programme, aims to familiarise students with important concepts of English-speaking cultures. Understanding issues of identity, core values, difference, social change, and the connections of language and social issues helps to raise awareness of interculturality and thus helps the students become better intercultural communicators. The lecture series – delivered by a team of lecturers – therefore focuses on these issues and provides important theoretical background as well as

4   DELP contributes to the 5- and 6-year-long English teacher training programmes (abbreviated as OTAK in Hungarian), the one-year Short Cycle teacher training programme (abbreviated as RTAK in Hungarian) for those who already have a degree in English, and the one-year-long MA in English language instruction (ELIMA) programmes.

5   Three courses in the Teacher Training programmes are also offered in the BA programme. The descriptions, however, are repeated in this section instead of just being referred to the section about BA courses above, so that readers interested in the Teacher Training programmes can get a full view of culture related courses. The overlaps are indicated.

useful practical examples in the hope that the course participants will use these as stepping stones in their cultural learning. The course is also offered in the BA in English programme.

English-speaking cultures[C] – This is a host of seminars for the trainees to choose from that all deal with interesting facets of culture in English speaking cultures such as the UK, US, Australia, Canada and Ireland. The topics discussed are related to history, identity, literature, core values, practices, high culture and popular culture, sports, pastimes, stereotypes and counter-stereotypes, and the way these affect life. The courses rely on student presentations.

The methodology of teaching English as a foreign language[C] – In this two-term seminar series, one seminar is optionally dedicated to teaching culture and exploring opportunities for integrating language and culture.

Language practice[C] – The first-year OTAK students' language course, lasting a whole academic year, is a general language practice class focusing on accuracy and fluency, but some cultural content is also included depending on the preferences of the instructors. The course is also offered in the BA in English programme.

Skills-based language development[C] – These courses are offered in the second and third year of the OTAK programme, and serve as an advanced level language practice class focusing on one or several language skills, often in the academic context. Hence, discussions, debates, academic presentations or writing skills usually form the core of these courses, and the development of critical thinking figures emphatically in the course descriptions. The topics that are covered allow quite a lot of cultural, intercultural and communicational competence development, too. In some course descriptions the learning modes that are indicated (e.g., student-led discussions, debates, and reflective exercises, collaborative learning) are also conducive to fostering (intercultural) communication skills. The course is also offered in the BA in English programme.

Elective course in language pedagogy[E] – There are a large number of topic areas in which elective seminars are offered, and a few of these cover culture and communication. These are two examples:

Developing intercultural competence[C,E 6] – The main aims of this course are to raise trainees' awareness of the importance of intercultural competence in communication and to reflect on ways of developing it in EFL classes. Content areas include the components of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), obstacles in the way of successful intercultural communication, international online collaboration, course book and lesson evaluation, the methodology of learning by doing as well as cooperative learning (combined with ICT).

Teaching critical thinking in the classroom[E] – This course is about how to incorporate critical thinking into our teaching and why we would want to do this. Critical thinking is defined and participants also discuss what part it plays in ideas of 21st century education. The practical relevance of critical thinking is explored through student presentations.

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6   This course is compulsory in the ELIMA programme and elective in the OTAK programme.

3.4 The PhD Programme in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics

DELP offers three courses related to culture and intercultural communication in the PhD programme:

Language education for intercultural competence development[E] – This course aims to familiarize participants with the theoretical background and the researchable aspects of the development of intercultural competence through education. Participants discuss research results about the perceived role and current practice of developing and assessing intercultural competence, especially as regards language teaching and language teacher education.

Teaching culture through language[E] – This course aims to get participants engaged in a wide range of topics related to the function of culture in learning and teaching a foreign language. The nature of culture and cultural awareness is investigated and theories about the role of culture in language education are discussed. The area of verbal and non–verbal culture is followed by different applications, such as teacher roles and education, culture and literature through language and testing cultural learning.

Researching intercultural communication[E] – This seminar course is intended for those who have already taken at least one of our courses investigating the role of culture in language teaching or intercultural communication, and are thinking of carrying out research in this area. The course helps them identify relevant research topics and design a research project which can be incorporated in their dissertation research. Locating the research niche for the project with the help of the literature is followed by determining the appropriate research methods and processes.

4 Approaches to Teaching Culture as Reflected in the Course Descriptions

As the excerpts and summaries of the course types and content above show, DELP covers a wide range of topics aiming to increase the students' familiarity with English speaking cultures in courses related to area studies. The Department also concentrates on developing their skills and competences in language classes or elective seminars focusing on (intercultural) communication and on analysing and interpreting cultural phenomena linked to interculturality. Finally, DELP's doctoral courses seek to provide deep understanding of (inter)cultural concepts and processes and their relevance to the students, while also showing them how research can be empowering for language teaching.

Apart from this remarkable list of content areas, it is also worth noting that the approaches that DELP tutors apply in their teaching are very varied indeed. Below some excerpts from the short course descriptions illustrate the types of resources and

approaches employed. The particular courses whose descriptions are quoted are not indicated here as the aim is to show that these resource types and approaches are not specific to any one course but are generally transferable to others, too. The approaches listed indicate great diversity and promote interactivity in the classes.

Resources used:
- We use a variety of resources [to study] New Zealand history, geography, culture, literature and film.
- Australian social issues as they are presented in documentary films
- Australian literature and its cultural (and historical) context
- Films selected for this course engage with the questions of nationality and identity.
- This course is designed to provide the learner with an impression of Canada, its people and general cultural features. Focus will be on relevant events and people, literature, art, society, traditions, outside influences, core values and attitudes.
- We will explore the music of the U.K. from a variety of angles.
- controversial social and cultural issues that shape modern Britain
- evolving cultural norms that shape both national and global perceptions of Britain
- Through an examination of key topics such as race, ethnicity, gender equity, social inequality, class struggles, immigration, religion, and national identity, pre-service teachers will gain a deeper understanding of the complexities that define British culture today. By engaging with real-world issues through a rich combination of readings, TED Talks, YouTube videos, academic articles, journal articles, documentaries, and podcasts, pre-service teachers will critically analyse how these issues intersect and influence British identity.
- This course focuses on popular cultural stereotypes about the British. Centuries-old common notions about self-perception, imperial legacy, attitude to foreigners, language as well as Britishness vs. Englishness will be addressed from multiple perspectives. In addition, preoccupations with seeming trivia typically associated with the British, such as the weather, tea drinking, 'national' pastimes and the number-one unguent one can spread on one's toast, will be cast in a new light.
- The lectures address issues such as the meanings of 'culture', how to explore national cultures, the process of cultural learning, the relationship between language and culture and various aspects of cross-cultural communication and intercultural competence.

Approaches[7]:
- In this course we will be *exploring* the idea of English identity/ies and through it, the concept of national identity in general and *how we as individuals relate to it.* We will *use our own collective experience* of Englishness as well as various media artifacts old

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7   Approaches that can be adopted generally in culture related courses are shown in italics. Emphases by the author.

and new, especially contemporary film and television programmes, to investigate different facets of English identity. We will also keep an eye on current events and *examine the idea of Englishness through a number of agreed topics. Comparisons and connections will be made* with our own cultures and identities as we proceed.

- In this course we'll be looking at cultural topics involving the constituent countries of the United Kingdom and *exploring how they can be used in the classroom.*
- The main aim of this course is to *develop your knowledge* of various aspects of the culture of English-speaking countries, such as the UK, the USA and Australia. (of a lecture course)
- Using such stereotypes as a starting point, this course is intended to explore *how the British saw themselves and were seen by others* in the past, as well as *how they see themselves and are seen through the looking glass of other cultures today.* To this end, various earlier and contemporary authors' discussions of various aspects of British culture will be *reviewed, interpreted, debated and challenged* as part of the course. The outcomes of these cultural enquiries will be *exploited for language development and ELT methodology-related purposes,* too.
- This course offers an immersive and critical exploration of contemporary British society.
- It aims *to develop pre-service teachers' critical cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills.*
- ... the course *goes beyond stereotypes* ...
- Throughout the course, pre-service teachers will participate in thought-provoking *discussions, debates, and group activities that encourage diverse viewpoints.* These activities are designed not only to *improve intercultural competence* but also to *foster their critical thinking and analytical abilities.*
- Pre-service teachers will *apply these skills in practical ways* by preparing and delivering presentations, *engaging in collaborative teamwork*, and *writing analytical essays.*
- By the end of the course, pre-service teachers *will have developed a nuanced understanding of contemporary British society and sharpened their ability to critically engage with cultural and social issues.* This course is ideal for pre-service teachers aiming to enhance their teaching capabilities, cultural insight, and analytical prowess, *preparing them to navigate and address complex issues in diverse educational settings.*
- The course will *cultivate critical thinking, effective communication, and collaborative skills*, preparing participants to navigate and *reflect on the evolving digital landscape* while *improving their language skills.*
- This course *explores globally controversial issues through a comparative cultural lens, fostering critical intercultural competence* and *advanced language proficiency.*
- Students will *engage in discussions, debates, and analyses of universally contested topics* – such as racism, freedom of speech, gender equality, social inequality, immigration, etc. – *examining how cultural and social contexts shape perspectives and policies.*

- It is meant to *develop a better understanding of the factors that influence our ability to communicate effectively across cultures*, with special emphasis on the cultures of Anglo-Saxon countries.
- The main aims of this course are to *raise trainees' awareness of the importance of intercultural competence* in communication and to *reflect on ways of developing it in EFL classes.*
- [W]e'll *consider* the issue of *how to teach culture generally* and *what interesting current cultural topics connected with the UK might be suitable for classroom use.*
- *exploring opportunities for integrating language and culture*
- Along with developing basic communication skills, students will *gain an awareness of how English is used in different cultures* around the world. Through simple, everyday examples, they will *explore how cultural differences can influence language use and reflect on their own backgrounds as they learn*. The course encourages respectful and open communication with people from diverse cultural settings.
- The lectures aim to *familiarise the audience with a background and tools for interpreting English language texts and interactions in their cultural context*.
- This course will explore, in theory and practice, the nature of cross-cultural communication. It is meant to *develop a better understanding of the factors that influence our ability to communicate effectively across cultures*, with special emphasis on the cultures of Anglo-Saxon countries.

This long list of diverse approaches to teaching subjects related to culture, language, interculturality and communication shows the wide spectrum of methods that DELP tutors have designed for their classes to help develop their students' intercultural competence. These approaches aim to be formative and rely on reflective and collaborative methods to draw the students into the learning process, motivate them and build up their critical cultural awareness. The interactive and inclusive tasks and activities are there to make the students go through the experience of becoming intercultural speakers and communicators in a way that they will – hopefully – be able to consciously take up the "third place" (Kramsch, 1993) between cultures, promote their intercultural growth and mediate between cultures as proposed by Damen (1987) in their profession.

DELP has certainly developed expertise in teaching courses with cultural, intercultural and communication foci, and it offers many subjects in the area. It has to be mentioned, though, that while the long list of courses and approaches to teaching may even be overwhelming to the reader, students in the different programmes are restricted in their choices of taking these classes. In the BA programme students can graduate having taken just one lecture course in this field, though they also have the option of signing up for up to five culture-related courses. The situation is similar in the teacher training programmes, where two culture-related courses form the minimum requirement and students can register for three or four such courses at most. In the MA programme there is one compulsory course, but students may take a culture-related specialization

and, in this case, can take up to six or even ten culture-related courses. Because of the highly specialized nature of the PhD programme, only students dedicated to the topic will take courses related to culture and interculturality, and they have three courses at their disposal.

5 Conclusion

This study examined the ways in which DELP contributes to teaching culture, language, communication and interculturality in English major BA, MA and teacher training programmes as well as the PhD Programme in Language Pedagogy and English Applied Linguistics. In order to do this, DELP's aims were summarized, then a list and descriptions of the types of courses offered by DELP followed, and finally, quotations from the short course descriptions illustrated the approaches to teaching these areas at DELP. The data were collected from the DELP, LangPed and SEAS websites. They illustrate DELP's expertise in designing and delivering diverse courses that help promote the students' intercultural competence and help them develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need as foreign language professionals.

Like any study, this paper has shortcomings, too. It is a descriptive document analysis of publicly available course descriptions. Both the breadth and the depth of the study could have been increased by surveying the students' and tutors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the courses, but this would have exceeded the scope of the present inquiry. At the same time, the results confirm DELP's good practices in having created such a wide choice of culture related courses over the past twenty years. They may also be useful for further plans in course design and in aiming to find new perspectives and approaches for developing our students' intercultural intellect.

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WRITING A WELCOME MAGAZINE FOR INCOMING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A GOOD PRACTICE FOR TEACHING PROCESS WRITING IN A LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT COURSE FOR ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINEES

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https://doi.org/10.21862/Intercultural/2025/8641/193

Abstract:

The Faculty of Humanities at a Hungarian university did not have a magazine for incoming international students. A few years ago I invited the fourth-year English teacher trainees of a language development course to produce the manuscript for such a magazine to be published by the university by the following semester. The students decided to launch the project by anonymous voting and designed its structure together. They produced the texts based on the principles of recursive process writing through online cooperation and peer assessment in self-selected teams of three. Additionally, every student was asked to find an available and willing international student, to conduct an interview with them, and write it up for the magazine, also with feedback from their teams. The majority of the texts to be published were chosen by another anonymous group ballot at the end of the course. With Faculty support, 250 copies of the 52-page colour magazine were printed and distributed among the incoming international students at the start of the following semester. In this paper, I am sharing my experiences about this project as a recommended good practice.

Keywords: process writing, online cooperative writing, good practice, intercultural awareness raising, intercultural communication through interviews

1 Introduction

The number of incoming international students continuously increased over the 2010s at the Faculty of Humanities of Pázmány Péter Catholic University[1], Hungary. They were then mostly Erasmus+ students, before the introduction of the now attractive Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship. The Faculty organised their welcome and ongoing support through mentors, special programmes, and courses on various features of the Hungarian culture, among others. Still, a magazine welcoming them and providing vital information related to their stay in Hungary, given as a welcome gift upon arrival, was noticeably missing.

For some time, I had entertained the idea that texts for the university's public English language communication could be written by English majors as part of their supervised course work, instead of producing texts for the sake of practice, read only by their professors. What could be a better communicative task than writing texts that are actually useful for English language communication between the university and outside parties, for example, on the university website pages? A welcome magazine could be another well-defined task. I just needed to find a course, probably a language development course for English majors, where such a task could fit in, and a group of students who were willing to take the challenge of such a course project.

After several semesters of my offer being declined by other groups, in September 2016 I invited twelve fourth-year teacher trainees of English as a foreign language, attending my C1-level language development course held four hours per week. I asked whether they would be interested in writing such a magazine, to be published if we achieved acceptable quality. It would be part of the course, with one 45-minute class each week dedicated to writing instruction, discussions, and project organisation issues. There would also be homework tasks involving planning, text drafting, editing, and peer evaluation. Altogether four texts would be written by each student, two chosen according to their preferences, and two others allocated to cover all the topics decided upon. Four teams would be formed with three students in each, and every student would be responsible for evaluating the other two students' texts in their teams through online cooperation. Students would then rewrite their own texts following peer and teacher feedback, that is, three readers each. As they had already learnt about process writing, this would be an opportunity to try it in practice, both receiving feedback on their four texts, and giving feedback on altogether eight other texts in their team.

Eventually, we would choose the best 30-40 of the 48 texts, again through anonymous voting, for the publication. I explained this alternative course plan in detail and asked the course members to think about it in their own time, and to discuss it among themselves by the following class. Then, an anonymous vote would decide if they were ready to launch the project or would rather reject the idea.

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1 Because this text discusses the development of a public university magazine, available online (Reményi, 2017), the institution name is not anonymised.

2 The Aims of the Project

The project had several aims. The practical aim was to produce the manuscript for a publishable magazine, including vital information about the courses and services offered by the university, the various university buildings and how to commute between them, public transport, phone cards, banking services, and entertainment possibilities. However, as this was a language development course as part of the students' course list, producing the magazine was only one of the aims. More importantly, the course had the following pedagogical aims:

- to develop students' writing skills through practice in journalistic prose;
- to show and lead teacher trainees through a hands-on process writing project;
- to develop cooperation through collaborative writing and peer evaluation;
- to do cooperative writing online, via Google Docs, with real-time co-editing and commenting by the team members, thus providing practice doing online work – this was before Covid, when producing texts through online cooperation was less of a commonplace routine;
- to challenge stereotypes – it turned out during the planning phase that group members were affected by social stereotypes (see below), so one of the aims was to challenge such stereotypes first by discussing them in class, and then by asking group members to sit down with an Erasmus student for an interview and write it up for the magazine;
- to develop students' speaking skills in real-life contexts while preparing and conducting the interviews.

Process writing was conceptualised following the guidelines by Seow (2002), who emphasises the organic nature of guiding students along their journey to produce a written text, instead of the more traditional teaching technique of concentrating only on the product, i.e., the final text. Process writing includes the steps of *planning* (pre-writing), followed by *drafting – revising – editing* in a recursive way, with rewriting being done on the basis of self-evaluation, peer- and teacher feedback, and, finally, *publishing*. In this case, the latter could result in an actual publication, provided the quality of the texts met the requirements and the timeline was strictly followed. Both Seow (2002) and Hyland (2009) emphasise the recursive, interactive, and social nature of the process approach, which was to be followed in this project, with the ultimate goal to achieve the best possible text versions – referred to as "performance-oriented" by Seow (2002, p. 316). In the following sections, I will describe the details of the project according to the steps of process writing.

3 The Planning Phase

3.1 Collaborative Decision Making

In the second class, we voted anonymously to decide if the group was ready to undertake the project in the following way. First, I summarised the plan as described in the previous class, then asked the question "Would you like the group to write a magazine in this course?", distributed paper slips, and asked students to write yes or no. My policy was that, unless the vote was a unanimous 'yes', I would not proceed with the project because even one or two students could become adversarial if they were forced to participate. However, as it turned out, the group members voted unanimously to launch the project.

Therefore, the project was launched immediately. As a first step, four teams of three were formed by self-selection, to work in collaboration throughout the course. I was hoping students had already contemplated this among themselves and, indeed, they came up with their team preferences right away.

As a second step, we started brainstorming the optimal structure of the magazine. We needed to decide what sections to include, and in which order. We needed to consider what types of information incoming international students would find important for their wellbeing in Hungary. We had to decide how long the texts should be, and what the possible and preferable genres were that readers would find enjoyable. We aimed to create a magazine that readers would be ready to read from cover to cover. That also meant envisaging who the Erasmus students were, what they were like, and what they would be interested in.

This first round of brainstorming by the newly formed teams was done using a starting-from-scratch, inductive approach, as some of the students might not even have seen a university magazine for international students beforehand. After they had reported their discussion results to the rest of the group, I showed them a few printed magazines that I had collected elsewhere, to serve as a basis for another round of team brainstorming session: students were asked to consider what aspects or texts they found useful in the magazines, and whether they found anything inspirational that they had not previously considered. They were also asked if they had noticed anything negative, such as overly long texts or an excessively official or authoritative tone.

By the end of the brainstorming session, the first version of the magazine's structure was decided upon: there must be a section about their studies at the university, another one about Budapest, then one about Hungary, and there should be something about the Erasmus+ programme, as well as a welcome message at the beginning. Texts should be maximum 500 words long. Their homework was to list the working title of ten useful texts that should be included in our magazine, irrespective whether the student wished to write them or not. The list had to be sent to me a few days before the following class, and I would prepare a Google spreadsheet including the main sections we agreed on in class, incorporating all the suggestions from the homework topic lists and excluding repetitions and overlaps.

In the third class, the structure was discussed and finalised, and students were asked to volunteer to write their first two texts by writing their name on the shared online structure list next to the topics they would be happy to write about. Clashes over the most popular topics were solved with the possibility of writing alternative texts. Figure 1 shows the topic structure and the author name columns (this is the final, 14 December version; names are blurred). The plan was to distribute the remaining, less popular texts later as students' third and fourth texts. But after the second class, I decided that each student should write only one more text on one of the remaining texts, which meant that some texts remained unwritten and had to be dropped from the contents.

Figure 1. The Planned Structure and Topics with the Students Volunteering to Write Them (Student Names are Blurred); 14 December Version

I changed my mind about the topic of the fourth texts after an unexpected discussion at the end of the second class about the Erasmus students for whom we were writing the magazine. Some group members thought that Erasmus students must be inquisitive, open-minded, and confident enough if they decided to spend a semester in another country. However, others expressed unexpected negative opinions: "Those students are coming to Hungary only for the parties, the cheap drinks and entertainment." "They may not come to study or to better understand our culture." "Those students are coming to Hungary because their Erasmus application was not accepted by a more popular country." To better understand these negative stereotypes, it should be mentioned that most group members

had not had a course together with Erasmus students at all because English teacher training courses were unpopular among Erasmus students, due to them being held on a campus outside Budapest. Also, not all group members agreed with these stereotypes in the first place. Two group members were also acting as Erasmus mentors at the time, actively involved in international student support, and another group member had been on an Erasmus scholarship abroad earlier.

Honestly, I was grateful for both the positive and the negative opinions: it was wonderful to see that the participants were ready to discuss whatever they were thinking. I found it fortunate that those stereotypes surfaced in the discussion because that meant that they could be tackled: I realised that group members needed to get acquainted with Erasmus students. I turned this idea into a task by asking each student to conduct a face-to-face interview with an international student and write up the interview in 1,000 words as their fourth text, supported by online feedback from their team. I chose the interview with the concept of an intercultural encounter in mind, as a step in the students' intercultural competence development. The idea was partly inspired by Ildikó Lázár's works, including Divéki and Lázár (2024), Huber-Kriegler et al., (2003), Lázár (2020), and Lázár (2022).

Thus, altogether 48 texts were produced (including 12 interviews), with 30 to 40 of them to fit into the planned 48-page magazine. I told the course participants that I would like to delay the application for financial and organisational support from the Faculty leadership to have the magazine published in print (and also online) until I was convinced that the project was going to be worthwhile in terms of both text quality and timekeeping. I set the end of October as the deadline for that decision.

3.2 The Timeline

The first version of the timeline for the project was presented to students in the second class and further developed as we proceeded. The final version of the timeline looked like this:

- 15 September 2016: course starts.
- First part of October: first two texts are written and peer-evaluated; interviewees are found, interview dates are agreed upon.
- End of October: interviews are conducted; decision whether to apply for faculty support is made; third texts are allocated.
- Mid-November: interviews are written up; third texts are written.
- End of November: final version (version 2 or version 3) of all four texts is prepared.
- Last class in December: everybody reads all the texts, group voting on texts, title of magazine is finalised.
- Before Christmas: manuscript is submitted to second reader; photos are ready.
- Early January: manuscript and photos are submitted for graphic design; negotiations on graphic design are held; layout with text and photos is completed.
- 11 January: page-proof correction list is submitted.
- 18 January: final manuscript goes to print.

- By 10 February: copies of the magazine arrive from the printer to the international office of the university, to be distributed to arriving Erasmus students during the orientation week.

4 Drafting – Revising – Editing (Recursively)

4.1 Working on the Texts

Each participant drafted, revised, edited, and finalised three descriptive texts and the interview through online peer cooperation in three-student teams, supported by teacher evaluation. Two topics were self-chosen. Some topics were more popular than others, for example, the greeting article, "Top ten tourist sites", and "Ten things you must do before you leave" were chosen by three participants each. Clashes over the most popular topics were solved in the following way: up to three students could pick the same topic and write a text each, and the best would be voted for by the group. In fact, this is what happened in the case of one of the topics: two texts were written and one of them was chosen in December by popular vote. Alternatively, a competing party could step back early and pick another text to write – this turned out to be the case with some other topics.

Twelve of the unpopular texts were allocated at the end of October as the third text to be written by each participant. These included "Moving around between the campuses" (the explanation how to commute by public transport between the various university campuses and buildings) or "Libraries" (which libraries are available at university and also for the public). Other unpopular topics were simply dropped, including "Programmes in the spring term at the university" and "Review on a recent book in English."

As far as giving peer feedback on texts is concerned, team cooperation was supported with guidelines on what to focus on to maximise effectiveness, on the one hand, and to take personal sensitivities into account, on the other. At the beginning of the course, I suggested using holistic evaluation to group members; however, that did not produce useful comments from peers. Therefore, I developed a set of analytic guidelines, focusing on content and task achievement, text structure, coherence/cohesion and style issues, and downplaying the importance of accuracy correction. (It remained the teacher's job to work on grammatical and vocabulary accuracy, spelling, and punctuation issues.) Peer evaluators were asked not to make general comments but encouraged to be as unambiguous as possible, and asked to suggest specific ways how to modify the text at the commented point. Each peer evaluator was expected to provide at least three comments on each text, following the criteria in the guidelines.

For example, Figure 2 shows an excerpt from a version 1 text on "Two Hungarian spring traditions" with comments in the right-hand column by the other two team members ('Megjegyzés' means *Note*). Here, the other team members are providing comments and suggestions about the structure, cohesion, content and vocabulary,

some followed by a confirmation or a further question by the author (Notes 2, 3, 6, 8, 10). For example, Note 1 recommends changing the linking word *however*, while Note 7 includes a suggestion about the rearrangement of the paragraph structure and of content addition: "Here you are talking about beverages[,] maybe you can mention some dishes and then in the next paragraph you should write about the masks. Maybe they are worth their own paragraph."

Figure 2. Peer Comments on a Version 1 Text; Excerpt (Names are Blurred)

This version of the text underwent several re-writing and editing rounds, and Figure 3 shows how this text finally appeared in the published version. For example, the first version of the text – still containing mistakes – starts with the following two sentences:

> The so-called Busójárás (Boosho-ya-rush) is probably one of the most well-known carneval in Hungary due to its reputation of being flamboyant and vibrant. According to a legend, the catholic citizens with Croatian-origins of Mohács (a town in South-Hungary) scared off the invading Turkish army by wearing grotesque masks and wearing big woolly cloaks.

In contrast, the published version, while content-wise almost identical, demonstrates enhanced syntactic and lexical complexity, and is also more grammatically accurate:

Busójárás (Booshaw-yah-rush) is probably one of the most well-known carnivals in Hungary due to its flamboyance. Legend has it that the Croatian citizens of Mohács (a town in South Hungary, 200 kilometres from Budapest) scared off the invading Ottoman army by wearing grotesque masks and big woolly cloaks.

Figure 3. The Published Version of the Text in Figure 2; Excerpt

Two Hungarian spring traditions

Busójárás (The coming of the Busó)

Busójárás (Booshaw-yah-rush) is probably one of the most well-known carnivals in Hungary due to its flamboyance. Legend has it that the Croatian citizens of Mohács (a town in South Hungary, 200 kilometres from Budapest) scared off the invading Ottoman army by wearing grotesque masks and big woolly cloaks. Another story claims that the Busó wanted to chase only the winter away. But, according to some locals, the feast is an occasion to pay homage to the Battle of Mohács (1526), in which the Ottoman army inflicted a crushing defeat on the Hungarian forces. However it was, Busójárás is celebrated every year to entertain people coming from all over the country. In 2017 it will be held between 23 and 28 February.

The Mohács festivities, featuring odd wooden masks, last for six days and include folk music, dancing and parading - in other words, a lot of things that an Erasmus student should experience while in Hungary. For example, as you are getting familiar with Hungarian traditional culture, you should start the feast with some

volunteers who pass their tradition of mask carving from father to son.

Busójárás is a must see while you are here in Hungary. It is not only us who say so. Check out the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, where the tradition of Busójárás was inscribed in 2009: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/lists

the girls of the village of marriage-age and poured the content of the bucket on them in order to help them preserve their chastity.

By now, the tradition has changed a lot, but the gist of locsolkodás remained the same. On Eastern Monday (17 April in 2017), women of all age wait for sprinklers, while decorating eggs with flower motifs. When lads arrive at the house, they are requested by

In most cases, the initial texts turned out to be quite different by the time they were revised once or twice. Often it was not the second but the third version that I read carefully to prepare it for a "final" editing by the author. This was followed by the review of an independent second reader.[2] After that, the authors corrected their texts again, and finally the page-proofs still needed some minor but careful corrections by the authors and myself before going to print. (Needless to say, I still found a few typos in the published version.) All rounds of improvements and corrections were useful not only for the practical purpose of the publication but also for getting participants acquainted with the process of preparing a manuscript for publication.

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2 I am indebted to Tamás Karáth for his careful editing work.

4.2 The Interviews

The interviews turned out to be probably the most interesting part of the project. I introduced the task with the conviction that to overcome negative generalisations and stereotyped views about another group of people, the best way is to get acquainted with someone belonging to that group. Despite some initial uncertainty about how best to find a willing interviewee, the interviews became a success for each of the 12 participants. In a few cases, the relationship between interviewers and interviewees continued: some students met after the interview and continued to be friends.

To reach the international students, the Faculty's international office provided us with the email addresses of interested Erasmus students, and group members emailed them to request an interview. There was some ghosting and rejections, but finally every single group member managed to secure an appointment with an international interviewee and conducted a recorded interview during October. In the meantime, the interview questions were developed in an early October class by brainstorming, and each interviewer was free to choose alternative questions if they wished. The interviews were to be recorded with the interviewees' prior consent, with a suggested target length of 15 minutes. However, in reality, most of the interviews lasted 30 minutes or more. I drew the interviewers' attention to my previous experience: during an interview, time often flies, but producing a short written version can then be quite an effort, requiring much of the content to be sacrificed and only certain parts selected, with further reductions for stylistic reasons.

Writing up the interviews was indeed challenging for most participants. I recommended starting by not transcribing the whole text first, but taking notes with timestamps to overview the topics discussed. Then, for the second listening, students should select the most appealing parts, keeping in mind that the rest would need to be cut out. Not more than five to ten minutes of the interview could be included in the 1,000-word written version, and those parts had to be edited for clarity of expression and to avoid repetition, while ensuring that the content of the interviewee's message is carefully retained. Unfortunately, I could not include a class activity to practice this important task in journalistic prose, due to time constraints.

As most interviews were much longer than expected, the authors found it quite difficult to delete some parts. However, they managed to save the interesting parts by sharing their content with the group in a closed course blog. For example, one interviewer wrote about a discussion with her French interviewee about wanting to go on an Erasmus scholarship to Paris. Overall, the interview experiences became a central discussion point in the group, also in the course blog and during the classes, showing how meeting international students in person was changing group members' ideas into lived and nuanced experiences.

The finalised, written interviews were sent to the interviewees for possible modifications and their consent to publish the text, including their first names. Some negotiations followed between the interviewers and interviewees, and finally all texts were granted consent.

Early in the course, I had explained to the participants that not all the 36 descriptive articles and 12 interviews could be included in the magazine. In December, we would vote for the best 30 or so texts, thus sharing the responsibility for selection. What happened was that 24 texts were chosen by the participants to be published at an editorial conference at the end of the course, and I selected another nine texts to include (two texts were eventually merged). Only four full interviews could be included, but snippets from five other interviews were placed in various sections of the magazine, related to the article on the same page.

5 Publishing: the Happy Ending

In the meantime, I submitted my request to the Faculty leadership. In November, they welcomed the initiative and provided financial resources and organisational support for the graphic design and printing. The manuscript was to be prepared before Christmas, so that the work of the second reader, followed by final editing and proofreading could be scheduled before the January printing deadline. The visual material required additional attention: because of copyright issues, the group members decided not to use images downloaded from the internet but to take the photos themselves. A few hundred images were collected by the students in December, and eventually 65 were selected to be included in the magazine (with a further eight photos received from the university's collection). As I came down with the flu in early January, all that work was done by the wonderful students in the group.

Finally, *Guide-U: A Magazine for Erasmus Students at Pázmány* (Reményi, 2017) was published on 52 colourful pages, including altogether 32 articles[3] and 73 colour photos (out of which 65 were taken by the group members themselves). It came out in print in 250 copies just in time for the international student orientation week, in February. The magazine includes the following parts:

- a welcome text to the university (including a group portrait);
- two texts on the Erasmus+ programme: one about the advantages of the student mobility programme written by an Erasmus alumna group participant, and another about how Erasmus works at this university;
- vital information, including local SIM card packages, Eduroam wifi and banking;
- twelve university-related texts: the most important rules of academic life (crucial semester dates, class attendance and exams), course selection possibilities, the use of the online studies administration system Neptun, a guide to the various campuses of the university and how to commute between them, a guide to libraries at and close to the university, where to eat around the university buildings, where to have fun nearby, and a text about the student union;

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3   I am grateful for this unforgettable project to the group members and authors: Lilla Berényi, Dávid Demeter, Gergely Fekete, Richárd Fodor, Dániel Gazdik, Hanna Horváth, Boglárka Ilenczfalvi-Szász, Erika Kucséber, Eszter Majtényi, Tünde Szeles, Lujza Szopkó and Ádám Varga. (I also wrote an article myself and co-authored a few others.)

- the following section is about Budapest, including six texts on public transport, ten must-see sights, special programmes in the spring of the publication, hidden treasures of Budapest, popular parks ("Escape to the green!") and favourite hiking places around the city;
- the final section is about Hungary, with six texts: some ordinary and out-of-the-ordinary tourist destinations, some public holidays and the historic events they commemorate, two spring traditions, some basic expressions in Hungarian, the characteristics of the Hungarian cuisine, and a checklist and fill-in table to collect information about 33 Hungarian food specialities;
- four full interviews with then-present Erasmus students, two from Germany, one from Italy and one from Armenia, and snippets from five other interviews with Belgian, German, Dutch, Polish, and Armenian students, interspersed through the magazine.
- The front and back inner covers show a map of central Budapest and of the main public transport lines, respectively.

6 Conclusion

What are the lessons learnt from this project? Let me revisit the pedagogical aims listed above to evaluate the outcomes.

- One of the aims was to develop students' writing skills through practice in journalistic prose. The participants' general writing skills were certainly developed by writing and re-writing four texts, in addition to evaluating eight other texts in their teams at least twice. As most participants had not had any experience in journalistic prose, that subskill was also developed.
- Another aim was to lead the teacher trainees through an actual process writing project, hands-on. By the end of the course, they had a much clearer understanding of the nature of process writing.
- Cooperation among team members also developed through the various rounds of peer evaluation.
- As far as online cooperation is concerned, co-editing and commenting on each other's texts provided practice opportunities in Google Docs.
- Some social stereotypes about Erasmus students, held by some group members, were challenged through the interviews: sitting down face-to-face with a flesh-and-blood Erasmus student, asking them questions and then reflecting on their answers while writing up the interview, probably changed their mindset a little. The interviews were also useful to practice speaking in a real-life context.

To summarise, the Erasmus magazine project was an immense effort, and not something that could be easily reproduced in the framework of a university course. (Since then, I have

tried to offer the project to two of my language development courses, with no success.) Nevertheless, it is still commendable. It was a memorable project not only for me, but also at least for some of the participants because of the practical output of the magazine, and the various language–related developments and social and intercultural effects on the participants.

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AI-ENHANCED DISCUSSIONS ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES: A COURSE TO NURTURE GLOBALLY COMPETENT TEACHER TRAINEES

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https://doi.org/10.21862/Intercultural/2025/8641/207

Abstract

In today's globalised world, education systems must prepare students to face environmental, social, and personal challenges alike. One way to meet this demand is to develop students' global competence, i.e., the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to understand the complexity of the world around us, empathise and interact with people from various backgrounds, and act for our collective well-being and sustainable development. English language teachers have a unique opportunity to prepare their students to discuss challenging real-world problems within the classroom, while effectively developing both language and global skills. While the emergence of AI has added another layer of expectations towards our educational systems and begun to transform our pedagogical practices, it also holds great potential for nurturing globally competent students. This paper aims to present a language development course designed to develop students' global competence by engaging them in AI-enhanced discussions on controversial issues and to provide three activity suggestions for practitioners who would like to use AI in their classes to the same end.

Keywords: global competence, artificial intelligence, controversial issues, course design

1 Introduction

In today's interconnected world, expectations towards educational institutions have expanded significantly (Divéki & Lázár, 2024; OECD, 2018). Beyond traditional knowledge transmission, there should be growing emphasis on developing students' critical thinking and communication skills, emotional intelligence, digital competencies and democratic awareness to prepare them for the challenges of today's world. Complex controversial issues, such as climate change, polarisation, warfare, political extremism, and social media influence, require understanding, discussion and debate to develop effective solutions and foster democratic participation. At the same time, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) applications in education is gaining momentum and has already created new opportunities for pedagogical practices (Szabó & Szoke, 2024). Nevertheless, the emergence of AI has added another layer to the above-mentioned expectations towards educational institutions and teachers, who are now expected to integrate these new tools effectively, but without proper training.

Foreign language education, particularly English language teaching, has a unique position to address these challenges. In language classes, teachers can naturally integrate discussions of real-life issues by creating a safe learning environment where students can enhance not only their language skills but also their soft skills, such as argumentation and perspective-taking (Mercer et al., 2020). AI tools may prove particularly conducive to learning in this context by creating personalised learning opportunities and establishing the necessary conditions for safe and enjoyable skills practice (Edmett et al., 2024).

While there is growing interest in educational AI applications and ample empirical research on AI-based solutions to improve students' language skills, limited research examines how these new technologies could develop students' global competence. This paper aims to present a course in which a group of second-year students majoring in English studies and enrolled in the English teacher training programme had to engage with controversial topics weekly, using AI tools, to develop their global competence. After a review of the literature on global competence, controversial issues in ELT, and AI for global competence development, the chapter presents the course design and showcases three activities from the course.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Preparing Students for the Future: Developing Global Competence

In response to the challenges of the modern world, international education policy has been increasingly emphasising critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility (CASEL, Council of Europe, OECD, UNESCO). For

instance, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda strives to ensure a quality education for all youth that goes beyond basic literacy and numeracy: Students must acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for sustainable development, including human rights, gender equality, sustainability, non-violent communication, appreciation of cultural diversity and global citizenship (UNESCO, 2016). Similarly, UNESCO's November 2023 Recommendation emphasises education for peace, human rights, international understanding, cooperation, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship, and sustainable development. It highlights the importance of transformative education, a collaborative process that encourages critical thinking, responsible decision-making, and action toward a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world (UNESCO, 2023).

The concept of global education aligns with these very aims. According to the Global Education Network Europe (GENE), global education

> is education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at a local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future (GENE, 2022, p. 3).

Based on the 2022 European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (The Dublin Declaration), global education must be accessible to all European citizens, either through formal, non-formal or informal education. In 2018, the OECD PISA developed a comprehensive educational framework, *global competence* (GC), with the intent to measure its four interconnected dimensions. They defined GC as the "capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development" (OECD, 2018, p. 7). Based on the framework, a globally competent student can (1) examine issues of global, local, and intercultural significance, (2) understand and appreciate different perspectives, (3) engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across different cultures; and (4) take action for collective well-being and sustainability. Table 1 details the components of global competence.

Table 1. The Sub-Components of Global Competence

Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes and Values
Knowledge about environmental sustainability Knowledge of global issues Knowledge about culture and intercultural relations Knowledge about socio-economic development and interdependence Knowledge about global institutions, conflicts, and human rights	Reasoning with information Communicating effectively and respectfully Perspective-taking Conflict management and resolution Adaptability	Openness towards people from different backgrounds Respect Global mindedness Valuing human dignity and diversity

As can be seen from Table 1, global competence is a multi-dimensional construct construct integrating both cognitive, social and behavioural elements.

2.2 Controversial Issues in the EFL Classroom

Complying with current educational policy guidelines, English language teaching should place increased emphasis on global perspectives and the classroom integration of controversial topics. Dealing with controversy is a cornerstone of global competence, as the global, local and intercultural issues global citizens need to explore are often contentious and inherently require examination from multiple perspectives (OECD, 2018). Moreover, addressing such issues requires respectful dialogue and calls for informed decision-making. Hence, developing students' global competence involves engaging students with divisive issues within a protected classroom environment to prepare them for successful future encounters. There are multiple benefits of dealing with controversial issues within the confines of the EFL classroom. These topics are relevant in students' lives (Oxfam, 2018); they either directly or indirectly influence their present and future, and such interest-generating content can increase active participation and the willingness to communicate (Lightbown, 2014). Moreover, engaging with these topics provides opportunities for developing core language skills, i.e., reading comprehension, text production, spoken communication and vocabulary expansion (Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004). As established by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the aim of foreign language education is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation while overcoming prejudices (Council of Europe, 2001). Constructive controversy through classroom debates provides an appropriate framework for developing the pragmatic competence necessary for effective (cross-cultural) communication (Council of Europe, 2001). In addition, from a practical perspective, these topics frequently appear in the oral component of the higher-level Matura exam (task 2) and language proficiency exams (Educational Authority, 2024), so students must encounter them during preparation, even when such topics are absent or rarely included in coursebooks (Rácz, 2020). Finally, and

most importantly, with appropriate pedagogical tools and proper teacher preparation, the sensitive processing of controversial issues can develop students' cooperation, communication and conflict management skills (Martínez-Alba & Pentón Herrera, 2023; Starkey, 2005) and can contribute to their becoming active, democratic, global citizens.

2.3 Implementing Artificial Intelligence Tools for Developing Global Competence

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly the breakthrough of large language models (e.g., ChatGPT) in 2022-2023, followed by their widespread availability, has presented strategic challenges to the entire education sector, leading to abundant discourse about how to redefine current pedagogical practices (Edmett et al., 2024). Recently, numerous articles have addressed the challenges posed by human-computer interaction (HCI) and emphasised the importance of integrating AI-based applications into education to optimise students' AI usage (Folmeg et al., 2024). However, a study conducted in a Hungarian university context (Folmeg et al., 2024) revealed that students have limited opportunities to use AI-based platforms with instructor guidance during their classes, despite the fact that teachers could play a crucial role in developing students' AI literacy (i.e., understanding AI and making decisions about its use in meaningful and ethical ways; OECD, 2025) and critical thinking skills (Crawford et al., 2023; Eager & Brunton, 2023; Edmett et al., 2024; Fekete, 2025).

While there is currently no research specifically examining how AI tools can be used to develop students' global competence, some studies have explored their potential in fostering various components that contribute to global competence development. For instance, research has demonstrated that conversational chatbots can nurture students' interactional competence (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023), enabling them to better "frame and examine issues, analyse multiple perspectives, and apply various resources via collaboration and interactions" (p. 2). As for intercultural competence, Ma and Yang (2025) found that incorporating virtual exchanges and AI chatbot interactions significantly improved Chinese undergraduate students' cultural knowledge, openness, and communication skills, as the experience provided opportunities for practising real-life scenarios and receiving personalised feedback on cultural nuances. Similarly, Karakas' (2023) overview of AI-facilitated language exchange tools highlights their capacity to create personalised, inclusive environments where students can simultaneously develop language skills and cross-cultural awareness. Further evidence for AI's helpful nature in cultural learning comes from Mageira et al. (2022), who demonstrated the effectiveness of AI tools in facilitating learning cultural content. Furthermore, studies have shown that AI integration can enhance critical thinking skills, which are essential for global competence: Ruiz-Rojas et al. (2024) found that those university students who used generative AI tools in their classes showed significantly improved critical thinking and collaboration skills, while Guo and Lee (2023) demonstrated that students' perceptions of their critical thinking

abilities improved through the critical evaluation of ChatGPT output, particularly as they received help from their teachers. While comprehensive research on AI chatbots for global competence development remains limited, existing evidence points to their potential in developing some of the sub-skills of global competence.

2.4 Using AI to Enhance Discussions on Controversial Issues

AI tools have the potential to help students express their opinions in many different ways. AI chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini or Claude) can provide students with opportunities for meaningful interaction, personalised learning environments, individualised feedback, as well as a low-pressure environment for practice (Pesovski et al., 2024; Rebolledo Font de la Vall & González Araya, 2023). Using AI chatbots can encourage students to express themselves on complex controversial topics by providing information and facilitating the generation of arguments and counterarguments for debates, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the issues and their own stances. For instance, the customised chatbot, Socrates, is designed to "provoke thought, encourage deep questioning and guide users towards novel insights and solutions by leveraging the Socratic method" (Socrates, n.d). These tools also offer interactive, student-centred activities, such as simulated discussions, debates and role-plays (Eager & Brunton, 2023; El Shazly, 2020), which allow students to practice expressing their thoughts in a mature, nuanced and confident manner. Gen AI tools can facilitate interaction with AI-generated characters, allowing learners to examine different viewpoints and perspectives (Pataranutaporn et al., 2021; Pesovski et al., 2024). Chatbots can give feedback on students' oral and written communication (Crawford et al., 2023), helping them identify and correct logical fallacies, refine their arguments and enhance their overall communication skills. Finally, AI offers a platform for expression without fear of judgment or mistakes, creating a safe and supportive learning environment (Kim & Su, 2024), which is paramount for enabling productive discussions on controversial issues.

3 Course Design

This study presents a course for second-year university students, which aimed to develop both their overall language skills and global competence. The course design and the activities presented later come from the rebranded course, delivered for the first time in the 2024 autumn semester. Skills Development is a course offered by the Department of English Language Pedagogy for both second-year English studies majors and English teacher trainees in the undivided teacher training programme. The main aim of the course is to develop students' overall language proficiency, even though all those enrolled in the course have already passed the B2+ language exam at the end of their first year. The

course is flexible in design; it is at the instructor's discretion to decide on the topics they would like to deal with in class. The course I designed is entitled *Let's embrace controversy* and revolves around controversial issues. At the beginning of the semester, the students were shown some broad topics, such as environment, technology, sports, education, food, media, body, and relationships, and they were first asked to brainstorm controversial questions around these issues. Once they had a list of issues, they had to vote on the questions they wanted to discuss during the course. Based on the questions proposed by the group and the materials I had already designed for the course, the syllabus was created for the second lesson and uploaded to the learning management system, Canvas.

Apart from the broad language development aims, some additional aims were also formulated:
- to enable students to discuss several controversial issues with the aim of improving their language proficiency;
- to expand students' vocabulary in various topics;
- to make students more confident in discussing controversial topics in English in a mature way;
- to familiarise students with different discussion and debate types;
- to develop students' global competence (knowledge and awareness of certain global topics, perspective-taking and effective communication skills, attitudes of openness and respect towards people from different backgrounds); and
- to develop students' AI literacy.

Beyond the obvious benefits of discussing controversial issues, as presented in the literature review, the reason for engaging with these contentious issues was to show future teachers a possible way and, hopefully, a good example of incorporation. Moreover, a declared aim of the course was to develop students' AI literacy skills. Given that I was awarded a scholarship to study the use of AI for dealing with controversial issues in class[1], I was supposed to carry out a classroom research project in this course. Therefore, AI-enhanced discussions were consciously incorporated into the schedule. After getting the ethical approval of the university, the students were also asked for their consent to participate in the study, which they all gave willingly. At the beginning of the course, they filled in a questionnaire about their willingness to engage in discussions about controversial topics, their attitude towards AI and past experiences of AI use. It was interesting to see that about half of the students had very limited experience with AI, and their attitude towards AI tools was rather varied, ranging from fear and dismissal to excitement and openness. Most students had only used AI for doing their homework or looking for information (instead of a search engine), so developing their AI literacy in class seemed an appropriate choice.

The course employed a flipped classroom model, where students engage with content at home and apply it through activities in class. In these assignments, they typically received questions to ponder, authentic materials, for instance videos to watch/articles to read/ podcasts to listen to, and vocabulary activities in connection with these materials. Then, they either had to look for arguments in connection with a debate starter or research a topic. During the following class session, we started with some vocabulary revision and discussed their homework tasks before moving on to the AI-enhanced discussion activities (see three examples in the *Example Activities* section of the paper).

The students were assessed based on their in-class active participation, the two vocabulary tests they had to take, the regular homework assignments and the podcast they created in pairs. The podcast was due approximately a month before the semester ended, so they had ample time to choose a partner they felt comfortable with and a controversial topic they felt passionate about. Their task was to explore the chosen topic in depth and create a 15-minute-long podcast episode discussing it, using some of the new vocabulary items covered in class. Table 2 gives an overview of the topics discussed in the course.

Table 2. The Topics Discussed during the Course

Week	Thematic Unit	Selected Controversial Issues
1	Introduction	
2	How to discuss controversial issues	ICH: How to talk about politics when you disagree?
3	Environment	ICH: Animal rights: Is it ethical to keep animals in zoos? SCH: Whose responsibility is it to take care of the environment?
4	Sports	ICH: Who should transgender athletes compete with? SCH: Should sportspeople use their platform for political activism?
5	Technology	ICH: Who owns your data? SCH: Should AI-generated content be treated as human creative work?
6	Food	ICH: Should we all go vegan?
7	Education	ICH: Should education be free for all? SCH: Should teachers be evaluated based on their students' performance?
8	Media	ICH: Does beauty culture hurt us? SCH: How do you feel about cancel culture?
9	Society and gender	ICH: Should members of the LGBTQ+ community have the right to start a family? SCH: Gender equality

Week	Thematic Unit	Selected Controversial Issues
10	Body	ICH: Is cosmic surgery empowering or the result of societal pressure? SCH: Should abortion be legalised everywhere?
11	Relationships	ICH: Which one is better, monogamy or polygamy? SCH: Is marriage an outdated institution?
12	AI	ICH: Reacting to different viewpoints SCH: AI in education
13	Closure	

Note: ICH – instructor's choice; SCH – students' choice

Appendix A presents the course schedule in detail, including the broad thematic units, the questions chosen by the students and the instructor, the rough outline of the sessions and the AI tools used for enhancing the discussions.

4 Example Activities

In the following, three activities which the students particularly enjoyed are presented. During each of these activities, they seemed to be engaged, and they managed to sustain the conversation for a long time.

4.1 Activity 1: Art and AI: Should AI-Generated Content be Treated as Human Creative Work?

Aims:
- to provide students with hands-on experience in creating AI-generated content
- to encourage students to analyse and evaluate the artistic merits of AI-generated works
- to help students understand multiple viewpoints on controversial AI-related issues
- to develop students' ability to consider complex ethical questions surrounding AI and intellectual property rights, thereby developing their AI literacy skills

AI tool used: Padlet (AI image function) – https://padlet.com/
Materials used: controversial statements in connection with the question (could be generated with GenAI)
Time: 45 minutes
Procedures:
1. *Lead in*: students create their first AI-generated art piece

    a. First, students have to think of their (1) second favourite animal, (2) their favourite city, (3) their favourite season, (4) their favourite drink, and (5) their favourite painter.

    b. Then, they open the Padlet link on Canvas and click on the plus button to add a new post.

    c. When creating the new post, they need to look for the "AI image" function.

    d. After clicking on the AI image button, they need to fill in the prompt and add it to the image generator: *Draw a combination of [your second favourite animal] in [city] in [season] drinking [drink] in the style of [your favourite painter].* Figure 1 shows a gallery of the students' artworks.

2. Students discuss the question: Do you think your creation can be considered to be a form of art?

3. The group discusses some key vocabulary in connection with AI-generated art (e.g. *authentication, attribution, intellectual property, artistic merit, originality, machine learning*)

4. In pairs, students should formulate three good arguments for both sides of the question: *Should AI-generated content be treated as human creative work?*

Figure 1. Students' AI-Generated Artwork
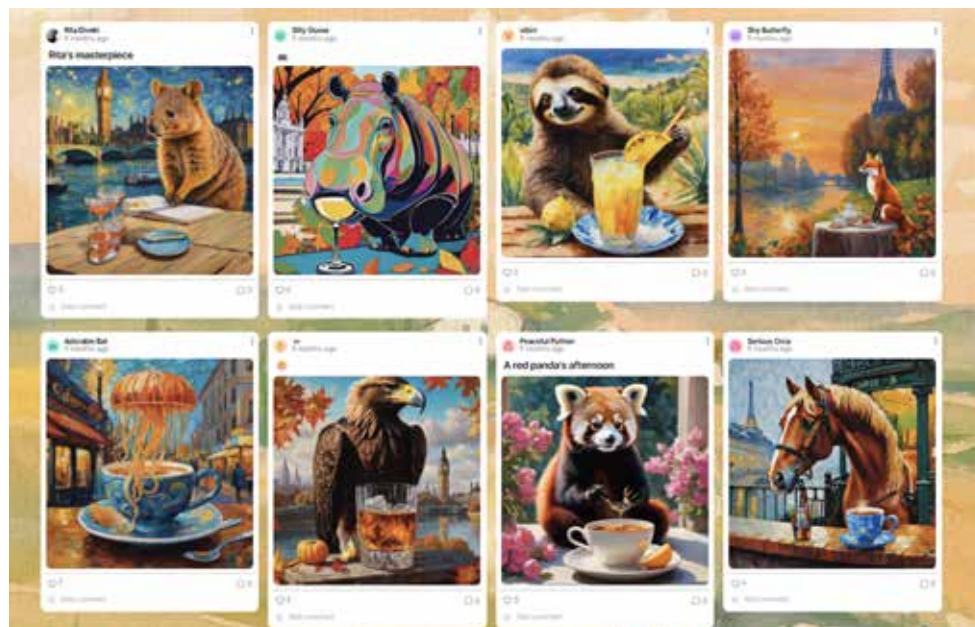
5. *Four corners activity*:
    a. The instructor labels the four corners of the room as *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*.
    b. The instructor shows the students some statements in connection with the topic, and the students have to move to one corner based on how they feel about the statement. Some example statements:
        • AI-generated paintings should be allowed in art galleries.
        • AI music should receive royalties.
        • AI should be credited as a co-composer (writer) when it helps create music.
        • Publishers should accept AI-generated manuscripts.
        • AI companies should compensate artists whose work was used to train their systems.
        • Humans who prompt AI to create art deserve artistic credit.
    c. Students discuss their views in the corners where they are standing.
6. *Reflection activity*: In pairs, students discuss the following questions:
    a. What specific experience led you to your position on these questions?
    b. What would change your mind about this issue?

4.2 Activity 2: Your Take on Cancel Culture: AI Feedback on Oral Presentation Practice

Aims:
• to encourage students to form, articulate and defend their own informed opinions on cancel culture
• to develop confidence in oral presentation through structured practice and AI-powered feedback
• to practise engaged listening and develop openness to different perspectives

AI tool used: Yoodli – https://yoodli.ai/
Materials used: green, yellow, and red post-it notes as traffic lights
Time: preparation time: 60+ minutes, in class: 20-30 minutes
Procedures:
1. *Before the lesson*:
    a. Students are assigned to watch a short video on cancel culture.
    b. They are also given an assignment on Canvas: their task is to create a short, three-minute-long speech presenting their own stance on cancel culture. They have to write up their speech (it should be structured and personal).
    c. Once they have their speech, they get AI-powered feedback on it. They have to register to yoodli.ai, record their speech, and the tool will analyse their presentation and give feedback on their tone, volume, pronunciation, demeanour, etc.

    d.   After this experiment, they have to answer some reflection questions on Canvas:
- How did you feel during the experiment?
- What were the limitations of the tool?
- Could you imagine using Yoodli to prepare for future (high-stakes) presentations?
- All in all, do you feel prepared to present your points in front of 3 other people?
- Why do you think you had to do this assignment?

2. *In class*:

    a.   *Lead–in to the topic*: Students are shown three incomplete headlines (relating to celebrities and being cancelled). In a very short time limit, they have to complete the headlines with a partner.
- *Celebrity Apologises after Old Tweets Show...*
- *Company Faces Boycott when CEO Says...*
- *Influencer Loses Followers after Video of...*

    b.   Students get into groups of four.

    c.   Everyone presents their three-minute-long monologue to each other.

    d.   While listening to each other, students need to think about which points they agree with and which points they question.

    e.   After each monologue, the listeners have to react by showing their traffic lights:
- Green: This resonates with me.
- Yellow: I need more clarification (the student should ask a question)
- Red: I see this rather differently (the student should briefly explain why)

    f.   If they have time, they should give feedback on each other's monologues or discuss emerging questions.

4.3 Activity 3: In Someone Else's Shoes: An AI-Powered Role-Play (ideal for 16 students)

Aims:
- to help students understand viewpoints different from their own through character generation and role-play
- to encourage students to explore a complex moral issue from different perspectives
- to create psychological distance through role-play, allowing students to engage with the issue without much personal investment

AI tool used: Toolsaday Character Generator – https://toolsaday.com/writing/character-generator

Materials used: short character descriptions

Time: 25-30 minutes

Procedures:
1. As part of their homework, students prepare for a debate on whether abortion should be banned by collecting arguments for both sides of the argument.
2. In class, students get into four groups based on a character description they receive. There are four main characters, two of whom are pro-life, and the other two are pro-choice. First, students with the same character work together.
3. Based on the short character descriptions, they should create their persona. For this, they have to go to the above-mentioned character generator and create their character based on the prompts. Figure 2 shows an example character.

Figure 2. A Pro–Life Character Generated by AI
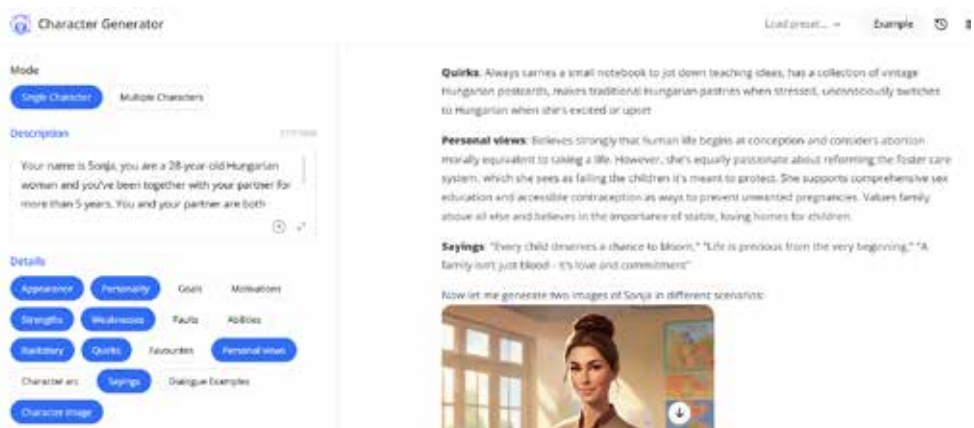
4. Once they have their character's long description, they should read it and try to identify with them as much as possible. They should ask themselves the following questions:
   • Who am I?
   • What's my place in the world?
   • What shaped my worldviews?
5. Then, in the same groups, they compare the characters they created and discuss what this person might say in a debate on abortion.
6. The students are then regrouped: one student from each previous group form the new group. Their task is to imagine that they are friends at a dinner party and the topic of abortion comes up. They need to argue from their characters' perspectives.
7. *Short reflection*: At the end of the sequence, students should discuss how well they did in the debate and whether they learnt anything new from the discussion.

5 Conclusion

This paper demonstrated how AI-enhanced discussions in the EFL class can effectively develop students' global competence while simultaneously improving their language skills. The presented course was deemed successful by most students; they learnt a lot from each other, developed their empathy, active listening, communication and critical thinking skills. Moreover, while they learnt a lot about different AI tools and their critical and ethical use, they also had the opportunity to expand their vocabulary and develop their confidence in speaking. The three activities showcased reveal that AI applications can facilitate engagement with contentious issues by providing personalised support (see Yoodli AI feedback on the monologue), scaffolding discussions (see Padlet picture generation for starting a discussion), and creating safe spaces for perspective-taking and argumentation (see Character generator for the AI-powered role play debate).

It is important to emphasise that the key to successful AI implementation is the conscious, pedagogically-driven use of technology (Fekete, 2025; Folmeg et al., 2024). Therefore, in the future, it would be important to develop university instructors' techno-pedagogical repertoire, so that they can skilfully select the right ICT tools to achieve their pedagogical aims and serve as role models for their students. Moreover, it would be most useful to create collections of best practices to help them effectively develop their students' AI literacy and global competence. Ultimately, it is hoped that the presented course and the three activities will serve as inspiration for (university) educators to embed these critical skills into their courses to meet the demands placed on 21st-century education and contribute to the creation of a better world.

Generative AI statement:
The author declares that Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript. AI was used as a writing assistant to improve the clarity of some sentences, check for errors and offer synonyms. It was not used to generate whole sentences or sections of the text.

Gen AI was also used in the creation of the activities: in Activity 1, the controversial statements in 5.b, and in Activity 2, the headlines were generated by Claude.ai.

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APPENDIX A

Detailed Course Schedule

Week	Broad Thematic Unit	Selected Controversial Issues	Session Outline	AI Tools Used
1	Introduction	–	1. Name learning activities 2. About the course 3. What are controversial issues? 4. Agreeing on the topics	–
2	How to discuss controversial issues	ICH: How to talk about politics when you disagree	1. Blob tree: How are you feeling about dealing with controversial issues? 2. Discussion based on the TED talk – *How to talk about politics when you disagree* + discussion of vocabulary 3. What constitutes a safe space? – discussion 4. Agreeing on the discussion guidelines 5. *Offensive or okay*; *Rights respecting sentence starters* – phrases for respectful communication	
3	Environment	ICH: Animal rights: Is it ethical to keep animals in zoos? SCH: Whose responsibility is it to take care of the environment?	1. Vocabulary revision 2. Discussion based on the assigned Crash Course video (*Non-human animals*)+ vocabulary 3. AI-powered fishbowl debate: Is it ethical to keep animals in zoos for conservation and education purposes? 4. Solution carousel: Students discuss different stakeholders' responsibilities in taking care of the environment	AI-powered fishbowl: preparation with ChatGPT

Week	Broad Thematic Unit	Selected Controversial Issues	Session Outline	AI Tools Used
4	Sports	ICH: Who should transgender athletes compete with? SCH: Should sportspeople use their platform for political activism?	1. Vocabulary revision – hot seat 2. Discussion based on the assigned video from The Daily Show (*Trans women in women's sport*) + vocabulary 3. Case study analysis and panel discussion based on an imaginary transgender athlete's case 4. Quick debates based on debate cards (sportspeople and political activism)	Case file created by Claude.ai, Ideogram and Canva
5	Technology	ICH: Who owns your data? SCH: Should AI-generated content be treated as human creative work?	1. Vocabulary revision: bingo 2. Discussion based on the assigned news report on data privacy (*There's virtually nothing you can do to protect your data*) + vocabulary 3. Students generate an "art piece" and then in pairs, discuss whether AI-generated content should be treated as human creative work; a four corners activity based on controversial sentences and reflection	Padlet for artwork generation; Claude.ai for controversial statements
6	Food	ICH: Should we all go vegan?	1. TEST 1 2. Watching a short documentary on the future of meat (*Meat – Explained*) + vocabulary 3. Debate: Should we all stop eating meat?	–

Week	Broad Thematic Unit	Selected Controversial Issues	Session Outline	AI Tools Used
7	Education	SCH: Should teachers be evaluated based on their students' performance? ICH: Should education be free for all?	1. Vocabulary revision 2. Discussion based on the assigned Crash Course video (*Schools and social inequality*) + vocabulary 3. Spectrum task: Should teachers be evaluated based on their students' performance? 4. Debate AI: Should education be free for all? – in pairs, debate with a person of their choice via the platform + reflection	Debateai.org
8	Media	ICH: Does beauty culture hurt us? SCH: How do you feel about cancel culture?	Before the lesson: Students create a three-minute-long monologue on cancel culture, record it and get feedback on it using Yoodli 1. Vocabulary revision 2. Discussion based on the Vox video – Does beauty culture hurt us? + vocabulary 3. Lead-in to the topic: Complete the headlines 4. Elevator-pitch stances on cancel culture – students perform their monologues to each other and give each other some feedback	Yoodli.ai
9	Society and gender	SCH: Gender equality ICH: Should members of the LGBTQ+ community have the right to start a family?	1. Vocabulary revision: Taboo 2. Discussion based on the assigned video (*Jubilee – Gender equality*) + vocabulary 3. *Walking in someone else's shoes*: AI interview simulation – students interview given stakeholders about the issue, and in new groups, share their interviewees' perspectives with each other	ChatGPT

Week	Broad Thematic Unit	Selected Controversial Issues	Session Outline	AI Tools Used
10	Body	ICH: Is cosmic surgery empowering or the result of societal pressure? SCH: Should abortion be legalised everywhere?	1. Vocabulary revision: creating a dialogue 2. Discussion based on the assigned video - *The problem with plastic surgery* + vocabulary 3. AI-powered roleplay debate: based on short character descriptions, students create a persona for themselves, they identify with their persona as much as possible and they have a debate about abortion	Toolsaday.com/ writing/ charactergenerator
11	Relationships	ICH: Which one is better, monogamy or polygamy? SCH: Is marriage an outdated institution?	1. Warmer: Fly-swatter 2. Discussion based on the assigned video: *Monogamy Explained* 3. Jubilee style debate: for each controversial statement, 6 students sit in the middle of the circle to discuss the statement	–
12	AI	SCH: AI in education ICH: Reacting to different viewpoints	1. TEST 2 2. Before the lesson: Students had to listen to a podcast episode with a flat-earther, alternating critical and empathetic listening modes as well. Discussion of experiences. 3. Students in groups choose a controversial statement about AI in education and discuss different stakeholders' perspectives.	–
13	Closure		Reflecting on the course together, grading.	

Note: ICH – instructor's choice; SCH – students' choice

GAMIFICATION-BASED ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH-AS-A-FOREIGN-LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING UNIVERSITY SEMINARS: GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE INSTRUCTOR'S POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract

This paper presents good practices from the instructor's point of view through assessment based on gamification in five English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teacher training university seminars: Skills Development, Introduction to English Language Teaching, Elective Course in Language Pedagogy: Gamification, Language Practice, and Introduction to Research in Language Pedagogy. The first part of the paper defines assessment and its categorizations according to different purposes in addition to gamification. The second part introduces the context of the study, followed by the different gamification-based point-collecting assessment systems in the five seminars one by one. The aim of the paper is to encourage colleagues to investigate how the various goals of assessment might be achieved in their contexts, and it is hoped that the description of these good practices may serve as inspiration or as a starting point for adaptation.

Keywords: assessment, feedback, gamification, EFL teacher training, good practices

1 Introduction

According to the OECD (2013), promoting assessment that improves educational practices while supporting student learning is essential to establish a high-performing education system; moreover, assessment frameworks should be the driving force of the reform agenda. Both international and local policy documents state that students' individual needs should be put at the center by providing learning support, applying differentiation as a basic principle, carrying out ongoing evaluation and analysis of educational processes, and incorporating different types of assessment (Barbarics, 2023). However, in Hungarian legislation, these ideals are not reflected in the output requirements, nor in the descriptions of exclusively summative assessment practices (Barbarics, 2023). Assessment has become synonymous with the deeply rooted one to five grading system as literature from over a century ago shows (Kemény, 1912). Thus, in practice, it is entirely up to individual instructors what goals they fulfill with their assessment practices as long as they produce the required number of grades[1].

The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting remote education worldwide highlighted the need for a paradigm shift in assessment (Barbarics, 2023). In Hungary, "most teachers identified assessment and grading as the most problematic issue during remote education" (Monostori, 2021, p. 11). As a result, recommendations from the Educational Authority urged teachers to provide interactivity, personalization, and learning support in alternative ways as well as different types of assessment to facilitate these processes instead of using traditional assessment in which the teacher is the sole source of information and the focus is on testing transmitted factual knowledge (Farkas et al., 2021). However, these recommendations came a year later than the introduction of remote education. Furthermore, these recommendations did not result in any policy changes, and in practice, most teachers continued using traditional assessment methods (Barbarics, 2023).

In conclusion, there is still a need for assessment practices that align with a wide range of goals, as detailed in the next section. Then some good practices from the instructor's point of view will be presented that have the potential to fulfill these goals.

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1 According to the official rules and regulations of assessment in Hungary, teachers should "regularly evaluate the student's performance and progress in form of grades throughout the teaching year and rate it in forms of marks at the end of the term and the teaching year" (Act CXC, 2011, Section 54, paragraph 1). As the wording of the act uses 'grade' (in Hungarian 'érdemjegy') for assessment throughout the year, while 'mark' (in Hungarian 'osztályzat') for assessment at the end of the term and the teaching year, it could refer to a distinction; however, there are no other signs of such differences. Apart from this example, grades and marks are used interchangeably in the documents, and in terms of official translations, English terminology is not consistent either (for example, in Act CCIV, 2011, 'marks' are used in English when 'érdemjegy' features in Hungarian). For the sake of simplicity, I will only use 'grades'.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Assessment in Education

This paper uses Sadler's (1989) definition of assessment that "denotes any appraisal (or judgment, or evaluation) of a student's work or performance" (p. 120). Types of assessment can be categorized in several ways. Due to the limited scope of the paper, this section includes some categorizations based on the purpose of assessment and the role of feedback in assessment.

Assessment can be summative, formative, and diagnostic. Scriven (1966) defines summative assessment as the "final evaluation of a project or a person" (p. 5), so its aim is to identify overall levels of achievement and measure students' results against them while formative assessment aims to keep track of students' progress and identify ways of helping it along (Rea-Dickins, 2000). Diagnostic assessment aims to analyze a situation to gather detailed information before making a pedagogical decision (Vidákovich, 1990). In the Hungarian context, the grading system represents summative assessment and must therefore be distinguished from the aims of formative assessment (Olechowski, 2003).

Earl (2006) categorizes the different purposes of assessment in the following way: assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning. The first two share the same goals as summative and formative assessment, as assessment *of* learning compares students' proficiency to curriculum learning outcomes, and assessment *for* learning supports students' learning processes (Earl, 2006). Assessment *as* learning provides opportunities for students to monitor and critically reflect on their own learning processes, which develops their metacognitive skills (Earl, 2006). Arató (2017) adds a fourth dimension: assessment *by* learning, which answers the question of for whom the learning happens by the structure of the teaching-learning process.

Based on findings from my interview study (Barbarics, 2023), teachers formulate several further purposes of assessment, for example, to support students' individual development (differentiation), increase intrinsic motivation, and develop complex, 21st-century skills and competences (for instance, autonomy, life-long learning, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, flexibility, responsibility, and so on). As they explain, the traditional testing-grading assessment processes cannot fulfill these purposes, so they have searched for alternative ways of assessment such as gamification-based assessment, which will be detailed in the subsequent section.

Before defining gamification, it is important to highlight the role of feedback in assessment as it is closely related to the above-mentioned purposes of assessment. Coming from a non-educational context, Ramaprasad (1983) defines feedback as the "information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way" (p. 4). Sadler (1989) applies this definition to education, identifying three conditions that must all be fulfilled simultaneously: the learner has to "(a) possess a concept of the standard (or goal, or reference level) being aimed for, (b)

compare the actual (or current) level of performance with the standard, and (c) engage in appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap" (p. 121). Thus, to determine the effectiveness of assessment, improvement must follow it, which can be achieved through feedback. Sadler (1989) also emphasizes that if the information is simply recorded, or too deeply coded, as in the form of grades, it will not lead to appropriate action.

Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) synthesized research on feedback in a higher education context. They believe that the goal of assessment should be helping "students take control of their own learning" (p. 199). To achieve that goal, they established the following seven principles, supporting each with empirical research from the literature.

Good feedback practice:
1. helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
3. delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
7. provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching. (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, p. 205)

All in all, it is important that teachers keep in mind the different purposes they would like to achieve through assessment and apply feedback and further assessment practices accordingly.

2.2 Gamification

Deterding et al. (2011) define gamification as "the use of game design elements in [a] nongame context" (p. 9). They emphasize that gamification does not involve using or designing full-fledged games for different purposes, such as education, but rather incorporating elements taken from game design to reach different goals. Some game design elements that are applied in the good practices presented in this paper are, for example, points, achievements, bonuses, status, content unlocking, levels, progress bars, easter eggs, cooperation, ownership, behavioral momentum, loss aversion, and blissful productivity.

The main criticism of gamification is that it fosters extrinsic motivation by rewarding the required behavior through points, badges, and leaderboards (Fitz-Walter, 2019). Kapp (2017) calls this structural gamification and introduces the category of content gamification, which is intended to generate intrinsic motivation. According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation stems from the fulfillment of the basic human need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Kapp (2017) believes that instructors can gamify content by incorporating game elements that foster intrinsic

motivation, such as story, challenge, avatars, and mystery, while gamifying course structure by providing recognition for attainments in the form of points, badges, trophies, and so on.

Van Roy and Zaman (2017) argue that instead of thinking about which game elements to add, teachers should focus on how gamification works. They postulate the following nine "Gamification Heuristics that account for (the interplay between) design, context and user characteristics" (van Roy & Zaman, 2017, p. 485):

#1 Avoid obligatory uses
#2 Provide a moderate amount of meaningful options
#3 Set challenging, but manageable goals
#4 Provide positive, competence-related feedback
#5 Facilitate social interaction
#6 When supporting a particular psychological need, [be] wary to not thwart the other needs
#7 Align gamification with the goal of the activity in question
#8 Create a need-supporting context
#9 Make the system flexible (van Roy & Zaman, 2017, p. 504)

In the context of Hungarian education, Fridrich (2025) investigates the discourse of gamification between 2010 and 2023 through a systematic literature review and, in connection with gamification-based assessment, assumes that most good practices are inspired by Prievara's (2015) secondary EFL teaching model. The following good practices also stem from my secondary school experiences developed from Prievara's (2015) model and investigated in my doctoral dissertation (Barbarics, 2023) supervised by Ildikó Lázár, to whom this publication is dedicated.

3 Good Practices in EFL Teacher Training

3.1 Context

The context of this paper is EFL teacher training university seminars. However, it is worth noting that similar assessment systems have been applied in secondary school contexts for various school subjects (Barbarics, 2023). As a result, the following good practices can be adapted to different contexts with a few ideas provided. Although the scope of this paper does not allow for students' perspectives to be included fully, some student-related feedback will be mentioned in connection with the courses below.

In this section, the names of the seminars, the number of students, the time frame and consequently the number of required marks, the goals of the teacher, students, course, and institution, and further circumstances such as the use of technology will be elaborated on.

The five courses for which my assessment practices are presented are the following: Skills Development, Introduction to English Language Teaching, Elective Course in Language Pedagogy: Gamification, Language Practice, and Introduction to Research in Language Pedagogy. All of them are seminars in EFL teacher training.

The number of students in each seminar is between 10 and 20. As the instructor has five classes a week (including some courses that meet twice a week), the number of students altogether varies between 50 and 70 per semester. Therefore, it is possible to manage the assessment of such a number of students. For larger cohorts, a different ratio of tasks might be a solution: containing fewer tasks that require the instructor's feedback and more self- and peer-assessment, in addition to the use of technology, for example, applying self-correcting online tests.

In a university context, it is sufficient to give one grade for a course at the end of each semester. However, in primary and secondary education, students must receive a grade every one to two months on average. For this reason, the point-collecting periods described below must be shorter with more detailed tasks and stricter deadlines, as described in detail by Barbarics (2023).

The most important factors in adapting the following assessment system are the goals. Instructors should keep in mind the goals for each task as they determine the manner of assessment. Moreover, students' goals should also be taken into account. Exact examples are elaborated on below.

Further circumstances might also influence the adaptation of the assessment. In the following examples, Canvas, an online learning management system (LMS), is used. However, it is possible to use other LMS-s, such as MS Teams, Google Classroom, Classdojo, and so on (for more on these see Barbarics, 2023). Furthermore, some teachers use simple excel sheets or analogue paper and pen formats to keep track of their students' development. All things considered, teachers are encouraged to adapt the following practices in ways that are feasible and aligned with the specific goals in their contexts.

3.2 Point-Collecting Systems in the Different Seminars

The main idea of this assessment system is that students collect points with different types of activities and, at the same time, receive various kinds of feedback. The different categorizations of the tasks and the types of feedback are detailed in the following paragraphs. The exact point values will be discussed in the sections detailing each course.

Students can collect points with compulsory and elective tasks. Although attendance is compulsory in the given seminars, students still receive points for their active participation. On the one hand, students appreciate if their attendance is not taken for granted. On the other hand, the following criticism has also been voiced: students do not find it fair that they might lose points for reasons they do not have control over (such as an illness). For this reason, it is important to emphasize the further point-collecting opportunities with which they can make up for missed attendance points.

Apart from attendance, the compulsory tasks depend on the goals of the course. When designing elective tasks, there are a number of aspects to be considered. Elective tasks can be tools for differentiated instruction catering for students' individual needs. Consequently, it is suggested to offer both oral and written tasks, tasks that can be done individually or in pairs, tasks that utilize students' creativity, or ones that are more repetitive. It is also important to provide possibilities for overachievers by setting the maximum number of points and making it possible to collect more (grade 5* in the examples below). From the instructor's perspective, one of the greatest challenges is to determine the number of points for each task, so that the grade received at the end of the semester (based on the number of points collected) is in line with the goals of the course. That is to make sure that students can only get a good grade if they achieve their learning goals. Seeking anonymous, honest feedback from the students in this regard can also help to fine-tune the system.

The other categorization of tasks is based on whether students receive a set number of points for simply completing a task regardless of quality, or whether the number of points reflect how well they perform. The former category is crucial for activities where the goal is to experience the process, with learning coming from experience, discussion, and reflection on the process, for example in a micro teaching activity. In addition, there is a combination of the two categories, for example, when students can complete a test as many times as they would like to in order to achieve the number of points they desire. In this case, the goal is again to learn from the experience, while also providing feedback on the student's level in relation to the target.

The received points act as a kind of feedback; however, additional types of feedback are also necessary. Referring to Sadler (1989), information is needed on the target, the current level, and how to close the gap between the two. These pieces of information can come from various sources: technology (e.g., online tests), peers (e.g., discussion after a presentation), the students themselves (e.g., self-reflection tasks), and the instructor. Specific examples will be detailed for each course.

In sections 3.2.1–3.2.5, I describe the assessment systems in the five courses I teach. First, I start with the course that has the fewest categories students can collect points in, and then I move on to courses with more options. Then I demonstrate each point-collecting category briefly, which are recorded as 'Assignments' in Canvas.

3.2.1 Skills Development

Skills Development is a second year (BA) course which aims to improve students' English language skills. It is timetabled once a week for 90 minutes. I prefer to focus on students' strengths and provide opportunities to develop. For these reasons, the two main components are the active participation in class (for 13 x 3 +1 = 40 points) and a presentation (for 40 points). Class participation is worth three points each week: one point for attending from the beginning to the end, one point for homework, which is watching a video due

that class, and one point for active participation, which includes several interactive and creative group tasks dealing with the topic of the video that students have had to watch for homework. In addition, one bonus point for diligence is awarded to anybody who collects the 39 points (attending all the lessons from the beginning to the end and watching all homework videos). According to university regulations, a maximum of three absences per semester is allowed.

Students receive the 40 points for the presentation regardless of how well they do. My main goal with this is to reduce the stress of public speaking as this is the most common fear students express at the beginning of the semester. For the same reason, students can choose the topic of their presentation, and I encourage them to pick something they are passionate about. After each presentation, there is a detailed three-round feedback process I learned in Ildikó Lázár's methodology course when I attended teacher training. The first step is that anybody can ask the presenter any questions about the content or the process of the presentation. I always include two questions: how the student feels after the presentation and what they found most difficult during the process. The second step is that everybody must give some kind of positive feedback. In the beginning of the semester, the group collects the criteria of a good presentation, so I encourage them to look at the elements of this list, and reflect on how well the presenter fulfilled each, supporting their feedback with exact examples (e.g., "your presentation was easy to follow because you had an outline in the beginning, and you referred back to its elements during the presentation"). The third step is brainstorming ways to develop as a presenter. In this step, students learn how to give constructive criticism, so it is important that when they find something that can be improved with regard to their peers' performance, they are advised to also suggest ideas how to do so, so that the presenter can try and apply those ideas next time and thus learn from them.

There are also two 20-point-tasks, which students can choose from: a vocabulary test and an essay. For the vocabulary test, students must collect at least five expressions from the homework videos that are new for them, and at the end of the semester, compile a test for themselves based on these linguistic expressions. There are ten videos, so all in all, there will be at least 50 new expressions they can work with. They can either create a paper-and-pen test that they solve in class, or an online quiz (for example in Quizlet) that they record themselves solving. The number of points they can gain depends on the result of the aforementioned test; however, they can do this test as many times as they want to, as the goal is to learn the new expressions. Similarly, in the beginning of the semester I give scoring criteria for the essay that we discuss together, and at the end of the semester I correct and give feedback on students' essays. As students can get a good grade without having to complete both tasks, they often choose the vocabulary test. According to them, they already write plenty of essays in other classes, therefore developing their vocabulary seems more useful. In addition, the possibility to choose from tasks is always highly appreciated although some students often decide to do both tasks.

The last category in this system of assessment is 10 bonus points. Students can receive so called "bravery" points for being the first presenter or for recording themselves and reflecting on their own presentation. In addition, if they collect more than 50 new expressions and test themselves above 90%, they receive bonus points. At the end of the semester, I always ask for feedback about the course, and I appreciate them filling in my anonymous online feedback form by giving two bonus points for sending me the screenshot of "Your response has been recorded" (this way their answers can remain anonymous).

In summary, points can be collected in the following ways:
- 40 points: three points for attending and actively participating in a class and one bonus points for attending all the classes
- 40 points for the presentation
- 20 points for the vocabulary test or
- 20 points for the essay
- 10 bonus points

Grade boundaries are:

Grade	Points
5*	from 100
5	90–99
4	80–89
3	70–79
2	60–69
Fail	under 60

3.2.2 Introduction to English Language Teaching

Introduction to English Language Teaching (ELT) is the first course that trainees have which deals with the methodology of teaching. The overall aim of the course is to provide an introductory overview of the world of ELT, especially but not exclusively in the Hungarian context, which focuses on the people involved (e.g., the successful language learner, teacher qualities, beginner teachers, language teachers), the resources and opportunities available, and the basic principles that underscore various approaches (from the grammar translation method to communicative language teaching). It also aims to prepare participants for later courses on ELT methodology. Seminars are held once a week and take 90 minutes. A maximum of three absences is allowed, as stipulated in the university regulations.

The topics of each week are given by the department, so that the foundations for further methodology courses are unified, and for this reason both the homework (such as

articles to read, videos to watch, tasks to design, or questions about the class/readings/videos to reflect on from one class to the other) and the presentations (in pairs with an interactive element or activity) are based on the topic of the lesson. All the points are awarded if students fulfill the tasks by the deadlines agreed upon. They can lose points by missing tasks or doing them later than the deadline. My main goal in this course is that students learn from the experience by immersing themselves in the materials through the interactive tasks in class, the various homework exercises, the presentation, the bonus tasks, and the reflective essay at the end. The grade boundaries I set are meant to reflect their level of immersion. They can pass the course by collecting at least 60 points with the compulsory attendance and presentation; however, the more tasks they choose to do, the better grade they receive. This level of autonomy sometimes motivates students to do way more than required. They might collect more than the maximum points for homework or bonus tasks, for example, by doing a task twice from two different points of view or reading and reflecting on additional articles on a topic.

In summary, points can be collected in the following ways:
- 40 points: three points for attending and actively participating in a class plus one bonus point for attending all the classes
- 36 points: three points for doing the homework for each class
- 20 points for a paired presentation on one of the given topics
- 10 points for a reflective essay
- 10 bonus points

Grade boundaries are:

Grade	Points
5*	from 100
5	90–99
4	80–89
3	70–79
2	60–69
Fail	under 60

3.2.3 Elective Course in Language Pedagogy: Gamification

I teach gamification as an elective course in language pedagogy. This course focuses on gamification (Deterding et al., 2011) with special attention given to the non–game context of EFL teaching for 90 minutes a week, with three absences allowed during the semester. In addition to the usual attendance points, there are several other categories, too. The homework in this course is a journal task for each class, in which students must comment on at least three things after each class, for which they receive three points if it is submitted before the next class, and two points if it is submitted later. My goal with

this activity is for students to take notes on each class (e.g., what we are learning, what they would like to try out, what their takeaways are). I do not set any formal requirements for the journal entries, as I would like students to make the journal useful for themselves. This develops students' self-reflection and metacognitive skills while it can also serve as diagnostic feedback for the instructor.

In addition, students must develop a game or gamified activity and write a lesson plan (for 20 points). They can choose whether they would like to try out one gamified activity in class or give a presentation on a topic from the syllabus (for 10 points). Several additional readings are offered, so they also have the opportunity to write article reviews (5 points for each for a maximum of four articles). They should summarize the content of the article very briefly (in a paragraph) and explain why they chose that article, what they found interesting, and what questions it raised for them. In addition to the earlier described bonus point opportunities, students' creativity often flourishes as they come up with ways to get points (such as giving their peers bonus points during their micro teaching for solving extra tasks, e.g., finding a hidden Easter egg surprise).

The grade boundaries are set so that they can pass the course by collecting at least 70 points with the compulsory attendance, lesson plan, and micro teaching (or presentation). They can achieve a top grade by writing the weekly journal as well. The article reviews serve as elective tasks if they would like to make up for missed classes, journal entries, or would like to immerse themselves more in a topic. Most students collect enough points for a grade 5.

In summary, points can be collected in the following ways:
- 40 attendance points: three points for attending and actively participating in a class plus one bonus point for attending all the classes
- 40 journal points: three points for each journal entry plus one bonus point for completing everything on time
- 20 lesson plan points
- 10 micro teaching OR presentation points
- 20 article review points
- 10 bonus points

Grade boundaries are:

Grade	Points
5*	from 110
5	100–109
4	90–99
3	80–89
2	70–79
Fail	under 70

3.2.4 Language Practice

Language Practice is a two-semester long first-year (BA) course that is intended to develop general English proficiency and aid students' preparation for the compulsory language exam to be taken at the end of their first year. It focuses on expanding vocabulary, refining knowledge of grammar, and developing speaking, reading, writing, and listening skills based on a textbook (Advanced Language Practice by Michael Vince, 2022) and additional course materials. The class meets twice a week (2x90 minutes). Hence, there are approximately 50 attendance points (two points for each lesson), which can be more (if no classes have to be cancelled) or less (if lessons are missed due to public holidays, for example). According to the regulations, a maximum of six absences is allowed.

The 40 homework points consist of two points for doing the homework for each class (ten grammar and ten vocabulary chapters from the book). Students should solve and correct all the exercises of the grammar or vocabulary topic of the lesson in the book before the lesson (they can either bring their solutions to class or upload them to Canvas), and they have an opportunity to ask questions in class. The exercises in the book are very similar to the ones they will have in their language exam.

There is a midterm (from the first five grammar and vocabulary chapters) and an endterm test (from all ten grammar and vocabulary chapters) each for 30 points. The format of the test is the same as the exercises in the book and the test items in the language exam. These tests can only be done once, and students receive points based on their test results. I always emphasize that this is an opportunity to see how well they would do at the exam, what they know, and what they should practice more.

Similarly, the 30 points awarded for the oral exam practice prepares them for the speaking part of the language exam. We simulate the exam situation and record their performance. On the one hand, students find this the most useful component of the course, but on the other hand, also the most stressful. For this reason, they receive the full 30 points for going through the experience, and they get feedback both from their peers and from me on how well they have performed. For this, we use the criteria of the oral exam, which, by then, we have practiced criterion by criterion several times during the semester. They also receive bonus bravery points if they listen to the recording and analyze their performance in an essay.

Based on their test results and diligence, they have the chance to do further grammar and vocabulary practice tasks. There is a maximum of 20-20 points allocated for each. For instance, there are extra grammar and vocabulary chapters in the book that they can complete for two points per chapter. They can give "mini grammar presentations", explaining a grammar topic/problem (for 10 points) and/or a micro teaching task, getting the whole group to practice a given grammar structure (for 10 points), online grammar or vocabulary practice (such as a Quizlet test from the new words they have collected: one point for each 10 new expressions), or creating study cards for the new expressions or

structures they would like to practice. The goal is to find ways that work for them to learn and practice grammar and vocabulary.

Students can pass the course by collecting at least 120 points with the compulsory attendance, tests, and oral exam practice categories. However, students who only aim for a passing grade usually do not perform well enough on the tests, so they need to do further practice. A top grade can be achieved by doing all the homework exercises as well. The extra grammar, vocabulary practice, and bonus point categories provide opportunities to make up for missed classes, homework, or bad test results, in addition to the above-mentioned goals of experimenting with different ways for learning grammar and vocabulary.

In summary, points can be collected in the following ways:
- 50 attendance points
- 40 homework points
- 60 points for the two tests
- 30 points for the oral exam practice
- 20 points for extra grammar practice
- 20 points for extra vocabulary practice
- 10 bonus points

Grade boundaries are:

Grade	Points
5*	from 200
5	180–199
4	160–179
3	140–159
2	120–139
Fail	under 120

3.2.5 Introduction to Research in Language Pedagogy

This course is an introduction to research in language pedagogy and the social sciences in a broader context. Its aims are to help participants design their own research and to discuss the basics of research methodology in both qualitative and quantitative traditions with many practical illustrations and hands-on activities. By the end of the course, participants are required to produce a research proposal, possibly as preparation for writing their theses or other academic publications.

The class meets once a week for 90 minutes. I have only taught this course once so far, and in the given semester, due to the unfortunate timing of public holidays, only 11 classes took place. This is one of the reasons for the 44 attendance points (four points for each class). The other reason is that I wanted to highlight the importance of active participation and to have the same number of points for this as for homework. Homework in this case consists of weekly readings about research methodology. Students should either bring

their notes to class or upload them to the 'Reading' section in Canvas before the lesson. They receive one point for reading and making notes of about five pages on the given literature before each lesson.

As the course is near the end of their teacher training, they must choose a topic from the course syllabus and teach it to their peers. Although the topics are about various aspects and fields of research methodology, which is usually difficult for students, I do not want them to give presentations but rather to use their methodological toolbox and experiences (both from teaching and learning points of view) to create an interactive micro teaching session that can help students understand a potentially difficult or abstract topic. They should also create test questions that I might incorporate in the midterm or endterm tests of the course. Students often enjoy seeing the tasks written by themselves appear in the tests.

There are several further assignment options. The most important is the research proposal mentioned above, but they can analyze a literature review, create a semi-structured interview guide, a questionnaire, or a statistical analysis of a quantitative data set (each for five points), depending on their goals and interests for their theses or other academic publications.

Students can pass the course by collecting points through compulsory participation and tests. They can also achieve a top grade by doing all homework and the micro teaching. In addition, they have the opportunity to make up for missed classes, homework, or weaker test results. They can choose assignments that are more useful for them, for example, creating the first version of an interview guide if they plan to carry out an interview study.

In summary, points can be collected in the following ways:
- 44 participation points
- 44 homework (reading) points
- 60 points for the two tests
- 20 points for micro teaching a topic
- 20 points for further assignments
- 10 bonus points

Grade boundaries are:

Grade	Points
5*	from 180
5	160–179
4	140–159
3	120–139
2	100–119
Fail	under 100

4 Conclusion

This paper presented assessment practices based on gamification in five EFL teacher training university seminars. The specific examples have been used to show how different forms of assessment can fulfil summative, formative, and diagnostic aims, as well as provide opportunities for the students for self-reflection, differentiation, motivation, 21st-century skills and competence development, as well as learning support. Literature on effective assessment in education (e.g., Sadler, 1989; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) highlights the importance of good feedback practices. Assessment based on gamification in the teacher training context, as the above practices suggest, seems to have the potential to satisfy these requirements of good feedback practices, for instance, by clearly defining standards and the ways to achieve them (Sadler, 1989), facilitating self-assessment and reflection, providing information about students' learning, promoting dialogue, boosting motivation and self-esteem, creating opportunities to improve, and informing instruction (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

Clearly, the system presented above has both advantages and disadvantages. From the instructor's point of view, the main advantage is the flexibility of the system, which can be adapted to students' individual needs, learning goals, course requirements, and the various aims of assessment. The obvious disadvantage is the additional amount of work involved compared to, for instance, administering a single end of term test or exam. However, I believe that it is possible to reach a balance whereby the desired aims of assessment can be achieved while keeping the amount of work on the instructor's part within reasonable bounds. I wholeheartedly agree with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) statement that assessment should help "students take control of their own learning" (p. 199). Striving for this aim involves more self-assessment from the students, thereby reducing the need for control from the instructor.

In view of the above, I encourage colleagues to investigate how the aims of assessment described in the theoretical background might be achieved in their own contexts, and I hope that these good practices shared can serve as inspirations or as starting points for adaptation.

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With today's technological advancements, rapid pace and constant social-cultural-economic changes induced by globalization, there is much more to communication and language education in the 21st century than ever before. Future professionals need to be prepared for meeting demands that our continuously changing technical, cultural, social, personal and environmental contexts produce day by day. This volume focuses on some of these demands in training foreign language educators and language specialists (language teachers, mentors, language mediators, communication experts, etc.) and provides guidance for the various actors of these fields based on research and teaching experiences in the Hungarian higher education context.

The book has been built around Ildikó Lázár's metaphor, appearing repeatedly in her publications, that we need to turn to our "mirrors" (to see ourselves) and to look out of the "windows" around us (to see others) to understand the world better. These approaches reflect a mindset that allows people to develop transversal attitudes, skills and knowledge, which we propose to use as "bridges" if – as foreign language teachers, trainers or other language professionals – we intend to get across to and support our students, colleagues or fellow citizens in not merely surviving, but also successfully dealing with the requirements of today's world.

The volume has three parts: Part 1 reports on conceptual and empirical research related to language and culture in the age of globalization; Part 2 focuses on language teacher education and shares research related to 21st-century needs and experiences; Part 3 turns to the good practices identified in dealing with new challenges in foreign language teacher education. The volume may be useful for language and communication students and teachers, for university programmes training language teachers, mentor teachers, language mediators, communication experts and educational policy makers as well as for researchers working in these fields.

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