



**DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PHILOLOGY  
"FAN S. NOLI" UNIVERSITY  
KORÇË, ALBANIA**



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
"MULTILINGUALISM, INNOVATION AND DIGITALIZATION  
IN THE LIGHT OF EUROPEAN EDUCATION POLICIES"**

**30-31 MAY 2024**

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*organized by*

**“FAN S. NOLI” UNIVERSITY  
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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES  
KORÇË, ALBANIA**

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## USING LITERATURE TO TEACH AND ENHANCE INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN COMMUNICATION

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### **Abstract**

*In today's global culture, human communication is one of the most important chapters in humanistic thought. At the same time, advancement in psychology revealed the fact that besides the intelligence that is measured and determined by IQ testing, there are other types of intelligence, as well. Most researchers and public speakers refer to EQ - emotional intelligence - as being sometimes even more relevant than the IQ-type of intelligence. After Howard Gardner's publication of his Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983), more and more researchers and academics started considering the importance of these innate inclinations of the mind and how they can be educated and enhanced. EQ, in fact, corresponds to Gardner's concepts of interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is the one that we need to educate in order to raise our students' ability to communicate. There are many activities to do that, but in our experience there is nothing better than teaching literature. Since very young, children who are exposed to much reading of stories become aware of other people's roles and feelings, of how to deal with certain situations involving human activity. The advantage to use literature in teaching and enhancing interpersonal intelligence is that the teaching of the most dramatic situations and feelings is done in a safe environment, and in a shorter time than the time needed to learn the same things from one's own experience. The next step is to decide what texts to choose for each age group that would help students (or our own children and youth) grow and be able to use their interpersonal intelligence in communicating with people from their own culture or from cultures from all over the world, which could help them understand how other people think and how values are different but based on that deep layer of humanity George Steiner was referring to in After Babel. This presentation will try to give at least a few ideas and hints towards all the above issues and raise awareness as to how important literature is in making sense of the world and human connections.*

**Keywords:** *multiple intelligences, inter-cultural communication, literature, adventure literature, transmitting values through literature*

The theory of multiple intelligences, formulated by Howard Gardner in 1983, has proved to be very useful in teaching. That is due to the way in which it looks at human intelligence not from the point of view of IQ, which is another type of determiner, but from the point of view of how each and every person is endowed with a certain manner of understanding the world around. Thus, some people *translate reality* in musical patterns, others can understand forms and colors, for others it is easy to verbalize thoughts, while for some a kinetic activity that unites thought with movement is the best way to get knowledge. For almost five decades, now, many teachers have tried to design their activities in such a way as to help students in their learning process, by also thinking those activities in terms of the students' natural intelligences, and also in view of their enhancing their other types of intelligence.

Our own experience with teaching by using specific activities for specific students has demonstrated that the traditional way of just considering that if a student does not understand very well is a matter of lack of intelligence, is not the best approach. On the contrary, if we try to just adapt our material to various types of intelligences and offer the opportunity for students to understand the same material in various ways, we can get to much better results.

Two of the intelligences Gardner referred to (1983) were *intrapersonal intelligence* and *interpersonal intelligence*. Intrapersonal intelligence means that the person is able to understand and formulate to him/herself their own values and ideas, to understand their own reaction, to know who they are from a young age. These are people who are steady, confident, who can identify a problem they have and also see which solution is best. People endowed with intrapersonal intelligence are those who understand what other do and say very easily. They understand other people's attitudes and messages, they can relate to other people's feelings, they are very good communicators, and also they become trustworthy. The EQ (emotional intelligence) that many speak these days, is - in our view - nothing but a combination of the two intelligences that we mentioned: knowing who you are, and being able to understand others is key to human communication and meaningful interaction.

This paper started from the idea that teaching literature - especially adventure literature - to students (of all levels) can enhance especially interpersonal intelligence, which, in time, can also enhance better communication skills, both within the same culture, and inter-culturally.

The question is, though, what *is* adventure literature? According to Encyclopaedia Britannica

Adventure is an unusual, exciting, and possibly dangerous activity, such as a trip or experience or the excitement produced by such an activity. (Cambridge Dictionary online)

So adventure has a negative connotation, as well. When it comes to adventure literature, though, most of us will reference literature that has to do with traveling, with the hero's journey, with exotic experiences, not with being reckless, but with being brave. There are quite a few types of adventure stories, like *magic adventure* - where the adventure take place in a magic realm; *Robinsonades* - in which the protagonist has to survive alone in harsh conditions; *sea adventures* - which take the protagonist to strange, unknown places, to various islands; *swashbuckler adventure* - in which heroes have to prove their courage and fighting skills; *science fiction and techno* adventures, and many others. In fact, any story that is somehow dominated by action, in which a main hero embarks on dangerous, risky and exiting actions that happen in remote, exotic or magic realms and have an extraordinary quality can be considered an adventure story. Especially if the actions are more important than characters, except the main character who gains an extraordinary stature, as well. Reading adventure stories is not only a means of entertainment, or an escapist sort of literary Endeavour, but is a means of *edutainment*. Students can get entertained while also learning language, getting knowledge, and also getting good and necessary values. The challenges that are present in adventure stories, the exciting and unexpected situations, and the strange and foreign places will inflame students' imagination and teach them invaluable lessons, without them being aware of such educational goals.

In the introduction to the Encyclopedia of Adventure Fiction, critic Don D'Amassa describes the genre as:

An adventure is an event or series of events that happens outside the course of the protagonist's ordinary life, usually accompanied by danger, often by physical action. Adventure stories almost always move quickly, and the pace of the plot is at least as important as characterization, setting and other elements of a created work. (D'Amassa, p. 7, 8)

Such description show that the appeal of adventure literature is exactly

its challenges, that the reader will try to empathize with the protagonist in dealing with all the dangerous and memorably actions, and will also try to somehow have contact with the extraordinary. All these are extremely attractive to young people, to the way they see life, and to their need to find and formulate passionate and high ideals for their lives.

Adventure can be the answer to one of the problems with which many teachers are confronted: students' lack of interest in reading. They prefer other types of activities - basically their leisure activities are revolving around their phones and computers. How can we attract students to read? One of the answers is to select the right kind of stories. One of our suggestions is adventure stories.

Consequently, there are at least a few reasons why adventure literature is the right choice for reading lists for students, as well as teachers of language:

- they are motivating students to read, due to their action-based, fast-paced, and exciting narrative
- they allow students to both learn and get entertained - the edutainment character of such stories is obvious
- they allow and encourage students to be involved aesthetically in a story, to try and empathize with the characters
- they inspire students to use their imagination related to places and times that are far away and very different from what they normally know
- they teach moral values like courage, sacrifice for others, understanding between people, identifying the problem and finding the most appropriate solutions

The mental processes that are involved in reading - imagining, predicting, identifying, personalizing, making value judgments - help students not only create the mental picture of the universe proposed by the story, but also try to imagine themselves in such situations and confronted with such adventures. They will try to predict what will happen, they will also identify with the hero in his/her quest to find the right means to defeat the villain(s) and save the day.

In order to argue as to how the enhancing of interpersonal intelligence through adventure stories is not only recommendable but extremely valuable in inter-cultural communication, we shall look at some of the values that adventure literature advances and how these are of utmost importance in understanding other cultures with their values. Or, rather, to understand that cultures as different as they may be, they still have similar values and behaviors, which we may recognize if we get familiar with their stories. Some of the most recognizable stories of all cultures are stories that might either completely fall

under the 'label' adventure narrative, or may be the product of a mixture of genres in which adventure still has an important part.

To understand a culture means to understand what a hero means for them and what an anti-hero means. Thus the hero in most Indo-European and Asian stories is the hero who is active, ready to go for action, committed, brave and self-motivated. To give some examples, we should both go back to the ancient myth of Hercules, whose prototype has thousands of traditional heroes in European fairy-tales and legends, and to the so-called heroes of the empires, that is heroes that are connected to the discovery of new territories, with the revealing of exotic places and far-off experiences, like Tarzan in classical literature or Luke Skywalker in the fiction sagas of the 20th century.

Sometimes, though, heroes are not exactly prepared for their mission to begin with, they are doubtful of their abilities, they are less than motivated, they like their life as it is and do not want to endanger what they have achieved, or sometimes they are pessimistic people, whose lives have not proven to be successful stories and thus they do not believe in success. Consequently, they are the 'victims' of a push coming from pressures of people they love, or society, or their own fear, which makes them just enter the adventure reluctantly. In time, though, they gather more strength, more will-power, they see how their role is important and that their actions are needed by people who are even less confident than they are. Such characters like Frodo Baggins, or Spiderman are well-known as heroes without a calling, but with extraordinary results.

Sometimes, though, there appear those heroes whose lives are a series of dark adventures, who fight with their demons and flaws, who try hard to be heroes and discover the good in themselves, but who, unfortunately, fail and prove their true nature in the end. These would be the tragic heroes, the ones who in the name of friendship, or love, or quest for knowledge and truth pretend to become better than they really are, but who, in fact, cannot escape their flawed character and fall under the predicament of their own deceit. Such characters, like Darth Vader, for instance, will give a lesson of how lack of true selflessness will never make a hero.

Medieval literature entertained the inclination for rogue stories, for the picaresque, for those characters that are outcasts, outlaws, displaced, pretending to be somebody they are not just to get along in life. They are counting on a society that is corrupt, and offers a good background for the amoral character, ready to pretend they are good and moral. From Tartarin to Robin Billy the Kid, from Jack Sparrow to Till Uelenspiegel, these anti-heroes make the delight of half-comic half-satirical stories but which many times seem to be very real and

very contemporary.

Some heroes - especially in war stories, or in adventure at sea - are leaders of groups who are embarked on journeys to unknown places, who need to rely on each other to survive. Sometimes, like d'Artagnan, go astray from the group, they are lost in a kind of self-discovery adventure of their own, only to find that their true meaning relies on the way they can be part of a group, that they need their companions. What would Robin Hood be without his Merry-men?

Roland, Gilgamesh, Odysseus, or Indiana Jones are loners, they are just those who like their own solitude, they do not wish to be part of any adventure, they just do their duty, as they see it. They are provoked by destiny and have to leave their kingdoms, their wilderness, their forests and enter a battle that most of the times is not their own, but which brings them in the centre of attention.

Some other heroes in adventure stories are mentors, those who teach adventurers about stories of old, who try to give them guidance and help the transformation of the 'normal' into the 'extraordinary', from the 'average' into the 'uncommon'.

All these stories, from Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* to Alexander Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*, from John Doe of R. R. Martin's saga to Simba, the king of the jungle share with the world these adventures which define civilizations. All great stories of mankind, from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* poems, to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, from the splendid medieval chivalry stories like *El Cid*, or *Les Chansons de Roland*, to the northern tragic tales like those in the *Nibelungen Lieder*, the heroic stories of King Arthur and the Nights of the Round Table, like all picaresque stories like the *Decameron*, or like *The Canterbury Tales*, they all are nothing but adventure stories, at least to a certain extent. For someone who tries to understand the way a culture has been formed, how an ethnic group or a nation behaves and why, in order to be able to communicate with members of those communities, reading their adventure stories is a very good place to start. Such stories will give the reader an understanding of what is seen as heroic in that community, of how they want to preserve certain traditions and certain values, of how they want to raise their children - because, obviously, they will want their children to keep those values alive.

But not only such very old tales of adventure are helpful to understand the behavior and the mores of a society. For the British, for instance, we can understand the extraordinary cultural gap they felt when they were confronted with new civilizations in the expansion of the empire. Whether we consider the



colonial phase of the English as something that is shameful or something that has historical meaning or not, we should admit that this expansion gave mankind some of its most extraordinary adventure stories, flared the imagination of many generations, prepared people to defend values - like they did during the two World Wars - and helped in the creating a vision on how one should confront hardships, trying circumstances, and terrifying times. Thus, if we go back to *King Solomon's Mines*, to *Treasure Island*, or to the *Jungle Book*, besides the stereotypical vision on what was considered to be 'un-civilized' or 'barbaric', there is a lot about what it means to be brave, to save other people from disaster, to dare to find out things you are afraid would shape your life in unpredictable ways.

The great adventures of the West in the American territory also brought about many extraordinary stories, some dramatic like *The Last of the Mohicans*, some more humorous, like Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, some related to how people had to fight harsh conditions in order to make a scarce living like the *House in the Prairie* stories, and others telling the story of how displacement and immigration took a toll on people who were less endowed with hero qualities, like the heroine's father in *My Antonia*.

The 20th century came with the great stories of war, conquer and defeat, as well as with a new art form - the moving pictures - which put the adventure story in another light - the light of the silver screen. Many of the adventure of people's youth were re-interpreted and started to be vividly shown in film theatres all over the world. The adventures related to old times of trial and triumph like *Spartacus*, or *Ben Hur*, to others related to the history of the American world, like *Gone With the Wind*, they all had a had a central hero (or anti-hero), with whom the audience could identify and create a vision on a certain time or on certain historical events.

Mysteries are also a great source of adventure. Started in the 19th century, with Romantic writers like Edgar Allen Poe, the adventure of human genius and his deductive powers, gave birth to one of the most prolific adventure stories in the world: the detective story. After Sherlock and Agatha Christie's heroes, there came a lot of other tropes and sub-genres: the hot-boiled detective, the spy story, the police squad, the private investigators, etc. etc. To say that the mystery story does not cross the border of adventure is to deny the true scope of such stories: giving the readers a measure of courage, intelligence, self-reliance, and creativity.

Today we have so many sub-genres of the adventure stories, some more dramatic, some romantic, some coming from the realm of science fiction, some

gothic, some even horror, but all are indebted in a way to this great tradition of the adventure story. To be able to see that tradition in its transparency helps getting to know a people and its vision on what a hero is, on how one should face adversity and risk, on which are the values that need to be preserved and what changes could be beneficial.

Teaching literature to children and young adults is crucial. Besides the well-known benefits of developing students' linguistic capacities, enriching their vocabulary, offering them a meeting with authentic language; besides giving students examples of grammar in use, coherent phrases and sentences and meaningful texts; besides the esthetic and artistic value; besides the entertainment effect of literature they appreciate; besides all of these there is the great benefit of value transmission from one generation to another, and, if they read texts belonging to other cultures, from one culture to another. This process of identifying values and good behaviors that are characteristic of a community will help them also understand that such values can be identical with those in their own culture, or, they can differ. The main aspect of good intercultural communication is to accept the idea that there is no right and wrong answer when it comes to people's traditions and values, that if we try to communicate we should not base such communication on judgment but on acceptance of various different points of view.

Literature will make students more active in the way they interact with language. If they learn a foreign language, they will have the opportunity to interact with other people in a foreign environment. Nevertheless, communication will be less effective if they do not understand the cultural references of the target text, or the foreign communicators. Literature will help students enhance their interpersonal intelligence, because after getting to live with the literary heroes and accompany them in various adventures, which imply a diversity of feeling and thought, they will be able to identify at least part of such situations in their real lives and real situations. If they are also exposed to literature coming from the foreign culture and in the foreign language they try to learn, that will give them the possibility to compare and identify such feelings and situations and see what is similar and what is different in the two cultures. Such knowledge will help them become much better communicators and get their messages across even in the foreign language.

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# ENCOURAGING LEARNERS TO SPEAK: THE USE OF SPEECH AND THEATRE EXERCISES IN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING

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## **Abstract**

*Language and communication skills trainers often encounter the problem that learners, while theoretically mastering the course contents, may appear shy and inhibited when it comes to actually practising spontaneous oral communication, particularly in a foreign language. Even university students who have to give presentations as part of their study programmes sometimes rely on prefabricated, memorised speech rather than daring to speak freely.*

*Based on the author's more than 25 years of experience as an elocutionist, rhetorics trainer and university teacher, this paper focuses on the use of speech and theatre exercises that aim to assist students by preparing and encouraging them to speak self-confidently and without much preparation, thus fostering their abilities to improvise, and strengthening their trust in their own linguistic and rhetorical competencies.*

*The methods presented here include speech exercises and tongue-twisters, which, besides their humorous effects, may enhance the students' phonetic fluency, in addition to rhetorical and debating activities, role-play scenarios and improvisation theatre exercises. The latter, in particular, are designed to free the learners' creativity and encourage them to "think outside the box", thus addressing what the Dutch historian Huizinga called the homo ludens (or, persona ludens in modernised Latin), rather than the laborious homo faber (and mulier fabra), as defined by Max Scheler and others.*

**Keywords:** *Foreign language training; rhetorics; role plays; elocution; improvisation theatre; homo ludens; sprezzatura*

## **0. Introduction**

Language and communication skills teachers often encounter the challenge that learners, while theoretically mastering the course contents, may appear shy and inhibited when it comes to actually practising spontaneous oral communication. Even in an academic context, students who have to give presentations as part of their study programmes sometimes rely on prefabricated, memorised speech rather than daring to speak freely.

Teachers and trainers may therefore well be in search of methods and exercises that aim to encourage students to speak self-confidently and without any lengthy preparation, thus fostering their abilities to improvise, and strengthening their trust in their own linguistic and rhetorical competencies. As learners are often prone to nervousness and speaking anxiety, which cannot be overcome by mere willpower, to which the vegetative nervous system does not respond, alternative approaches have to be sought and "indirect" routes taken.

Among the methods which, in practical use, have been proved to fulfil the above-mentioned requirements and will thus be presented here, speech exercises and tongue-twisters rank high, since, alongside their humorous effects, they help to enhance the students' phonetic fluency. Other possibilities include rhetorical and debating activities, role-play scenarios, the creation of films and videoclips, and improvisation theatre exercises. The latter, in particular, are designed to free the learners' creativity and encourage them to "think outside the box", thus addressing what the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, in his 1938 eponymous book, called the *homo ludens*, the "playing person" (had Huizinga lived now, he would probably have spoken of the *persona ludens*), rather than the laborious *homo faber* (and *mulier fabra*), as defined in antiquity by Appius Claudius Caecus and, more recently, by Henri Bergson, Max Scheler and Hannah Arendt.

Huizinga stated that "[n]ature could just as easily have given her children all... [the] useful functions of discharging superabundant energy, of relaxing after exertion, of training for the demands of life, of compensating for unfulfilled longings, etc., in the form of purely mechanical exercises and reactions. But no, she gave us play, with its tension, its mirth, and its fun", the latter "resist[ing] all analysis, all logical interpretation" (Huizinga, 1950, p. 3). Furthermore, he underlined that play "is in fact freedom" and that, rather than being "ordinary" or "real", it is "a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own..., [e]very child know[ing] perfectly well that he is 'only pretending', or that it was 'only for the fun'" (Huizinga, 1950, p. 8).

One is, in fact, compelled to recall, in this context, the famous words from Max Reinhardt's *Rede über den Schauspieler* (*Speech about actors*, 1928): "[Das Theater] ist der seligste Schlupfwinkel für diejenigen, die ihre Kindheit heimlich in die Tasche gesteckt und sich damit auf und davon gemacht haben, um bis an ihr Lebensende weiter zu spielen." ("[Theatre] is the most blissful retreat for those who have secretly pocketed their childhood and betaken themselves with it, in order to continue playing until the end of their life.") (Reinhardt, 1953)

As concerns the counterpart of the *homo ludens*, the *homo faber*, the term was invented by the Roman statesman Appius Claudius Caecus, who, according to Sallust, believed "fabrum esse suae quemque fortunae" ("every person to be the shaper of their own destiny") (Sallust, 1921, I.1.2, p. 1). The term *homo faber* was later used by Henri Bergson (1908, p. 151), as well as Max Frisch (1957) and Hannah Arendt (1958, p.

153), and has a particularly negative connotation in Max Scheler's 1928 essay *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (*Man's position in the universe*), where it is used to describe the human conception of Darwinist and evolutionist theories, which, according to Scheler, "lehnen... einen letzten Unterschied zwischen Mensch und Tier ab... und kennen... dann auch keinerlei metaphysisches Sein... des Menschen, d. h. kein ausgezeichnetes Verhältnis, das der Mensch als solcher zum Weltgrunde besäße" ("[which] reject... any ultimate difference between human being and animal... and are therefore ignorant of any metaphysical existence of the human being, i.e. any particular relation that the human being *per se* might have with the foundation of the world") (Scheler, 1928, ch. 5).

In language and communication skills training it would, of course, be inappropriate to refer to all the laborious and tiring, yet necessary aspects, such as theory, grammar etc., which might be viewed as relating to the *homo faber* rather than the *homo ludens* concept, as non-human or animal-like. It is, nevertheless, a tempting thought that it is precisely the artistic and playful sides of life which render us human.

The following are a few suggestions as to how teaching and learning can be made more human – and humane...

### **1. Speech exercises, rhetorical exercises**

Speech exercises can form an excellent warm-up to any language or soft skills training session. The teacher might start with breathing exercises and some loosening-up of the voice, such as shaking the head with the mouth open and the tongue in a slightly outward position, combined with "ah" or "eh" sounds. This method also allows us to easily find the individual optimal voice pitch (average speaking pitch). These could then be followed by simple voice exercises like saying "blablabla" or "ojojoj", humming, "chewing" the voice or opening the mouth and sighing on a descending glissando.

More advanced speech exercises include rhymes, limericks and tongue-twisters. The following are examples of the latter from various languages and have, in practice, proved difficult even for native speakers of the respective idioms.

*Albanian*: "Kupa me kapak, kupa pa kapak, kupa me kapak, kupa pa kapak." ("Cups with lids, cups without lids, cups with lids, cups without lids.")

*Czech*: "Třítisícetřiatřicet tři stříbrných stříkaček stříkalo přes třítisícetřiatřicet tři stříbrných střech." ("3333 silver syringes sprayed over 3333 silver roofs.")

*English*: "Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager managing an imaginary menagerie."

*French*: "Un chasseur sachant chasser ne chasse jamais sans son chien." ("A hunter who knows how to hunt never goes hunting without his or her dog.")

*German*: "Ein französischer Regisseur inszenierte ein tschechisches Stück. Ein tschechischer Regisseur inszenierte ein französisches Stück." ("A French director

produced a Czech play. A Czech director produced a French play.")

*Italian:* "Trentatre trentini trottavano a Trento, tutti trentatre trotterellando." ("Thirty-three Trentinos trotted to Trento, all thirty-three trotting.")

*Polish:* "Wyindywidualizowaliśmy się z rozentuzjasmowanego tłumu." ("We isolated ourselves from the enthusiastic crowd.")

Reciting poems or reading texts aloud are, of course, other options the trainer might choose in order to help the learners improve their elocution.

As concerns rhetorical exercises, they may be successfully applied in soft skills as well as foreign language training. Easy activities include, for example, *adlibbing* for one minute on a keyword given by the trainer (deviations from the theme are allowed!), the *associations game* (the group stands in a row or circle, the trainer or a participant addresses them in turn with single words, and the addressee has to reply spontaneously with another word) or *word-by-word storytelling* (the group stands in a circle and forms sentences or whole stories, each person, in turn, contributing just one single word at a time). The latter game can be played in a more sophisticated version, with the trainer pointing at one person, who has to start telling the story on a given topic or initial sentence, then suddenly switching to someone else, who continues, etc.

In a more specific sense of the term, rhetorical exercises can include *formulating statements* (following structures such as "Introduction – 2 or 3 arguments – conclusion" or "Argument – example – conclusion") and then *responding to objections and questions* brought up by the others, who might assume the *advocatus diaboli* ("devil's advocate") position, as well as *preparing and giving speeches, presentations* etc. Learners with higher rhetorical and/or linguistic competencies might also love to formulate spontaneous statements on topics given on cards which they draw (*impromptu speaking*), or play *PowerPoint karaoke*.

## 2. Improvisation theatre

This theatre form has a long tradition and was performed for centuries by Italian *commedia dell'arte* troups. In the author's hometown of Vienna it is known as "Stegreiftheater" and is still played at the legendary Tschaunerbühne (<https://tschauner.at>), an open-air theatre on the outskirts. Luigi Pirandello's 1929 play *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (*Tonight we improvise*) deals with the conflict between improvised acting and performing on the basis of pre-written parts (Pirandello, 1994). In recent decades, improv theatre was re-defined, inter alia, by the British-Canadian director Keith Johnstone, who stated that "[i]n a normal education everything is designed to suppress spontaneity, but I wanted to develop it" (Johnstone, 1989, p. 15). Apart from the exercises he suggested, material from other sources, such as Spolin (1986), as well as of the trainer's creation can normally be used with good results. In terms of scenery and props, only a few chairs and, possibly, a table are usually sufficient – which very much corresponds to what Peter Brook, in his eponymous book, has called the "empty space": "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks

across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged." (Brook, 1984, p. 9)

It should be noted that when theatre games are played in training sessions, some warm-up is usually required, and the exercises should gradually become more difficult, so that demanding ones are always preceded by easier ones. Out of the vast number of activities available from various sources, the following have, in the author's own workshops and training units, proved to function particularly well and with very humorous effects, bringing to light an enormous – and sometimes unexpected – amount of creativity from the learners' side.

*Introducing your neighbour:* The group stands in a circle. Everyone, in turn, introduces their neighbour with a few words and an expansive gesture. Then a second round may be added, in which the use of body language and voice is increased, or, alternatively, the trainer gives each person a different emotion in which to introduce their neighbour.

*Complaints:* Three people stand side by side. The group gives them a topic about which to complain; the trainer (or someone else) points at one of the three, who starts complaining. When the trainer raises his or her arm, the voice gets louder, and when the arm is lowered, it becomes softer. Then, suddenly, the trainer points at another of the three, who continues with the complaint. Instead of a complaint, other text types, such as love letters, commercials, speeches or songs etc., can be chosen.

*The double-headed expert:* Two people sit side by side. Together, they are an expert in a field defined by the group (the crazier, the better!), and answer questions relating to their expertise. Since the expert is double-headed, they alternate by saying single words, the result of which should form a complete sentence.

*The foreign poet (or expert, politician, etc.):* The foreign person, who is from another country or galaxy etc., speaks gibberish. An interpreter translates questions from the audience into gibberish, the foreign person answers in gibberish, and the interpreter translates this back to the audience.

*Disrupted speech:* One person improvises a speech on a given topic, with their arms hanging by their side. The gestures are made by another participant, who stands right behind the first one, with their arms placed through the latter's armpits. In an advanced version, the speaker wears a jacket in whose pockets the other person has secretly placed various objects; these are taken out during the speech and the speaker has to spontaneously react to them, and include them into what he or she is saying. Alternatively, the audience can give the speaker different emotions to use in the speech or different characters to impersonate.



*The hitchhiker:* Three chairs stand for the front seats of a lorry. On one side is the driver, who has his or her hands on the wheel the whole time; there is one person in the middle, and the third seat is taken by a hitchhiker, who gets on the vehicle and brings in an emotion, such as sadness, joy, love, patriotism, fanaticism, drunkenness, nervousness etc. etc. The other two respond with *exactly* the same emotion or mood, and the dialogue should be conducted continuously. When the trainer claps his or her hands, the driver steps out, the central person moves to the driver's seat, the former hitchhiker takes the middle position, and a new hitchhiker gets on, bringing in a new emotion. Thus, even a high number of learners can participate in the game. This activity can be extremely funny, and is hardly beaten by any other one, hence it is best placed at the end of a session.

### **3. Scenarios, role plays, "debating clubs"**

Role plays and scenarios rank among the "classic" methods of soft skills training and can also be successfully implemented in language teaching, depending on the level of competence. For some strange reason, the term "role play" sometimes has a bad connotation and should be avoided by calling the activity a "play" or a "scenario".

The topic, setting etc. can be decided spontaneously in class; the trainer may, however, also provide more complex scenarios in written form. For negotiation and conflict resolution courses held in the first decade of this century, the author prepared a conflict scenario in which a war was brewing between the fictitious states of Cacofonia and Polihimnia, in the then future of 2020. The deliberate choice of these somewhat crazy names made the play particularly attractive to the students, who joyfully volunteered to participate, saying "I want to be from Cacofonia, Polihimnia, etc."

With larger groups of learners, role plays can be organised by forming smaller teams comprising 3-4 people, who work autonomously and in parallel on given topics or scenarios. This method may even be applied in online courses, by making use of the breakout room option offered by most conferencing tools.

The trainer might also take inspiration from British and American universities' debating clubs. An easy activity is to have the students stand (or sit) in a line or circle and start on a provocative statement; person #1 argues *against* it, person #2 argues *against* person #1, i.e. *in favour* of the trainer's statement; person #3 contradicts person #2, and so forth. In an exercise called *American debate*, two teams assume opposing opinions on a controversial topic. After the teams have separately brainstormed their arguments, the first speaker from team A addresses their counterpart from team B, who is seated on an opposite chair, with a one-minute, possibly provocative, statement. Before the speaker from team B replies, for 1 minute again, the speaker from team A is replaced by another person from their team, which continues until all participants have spoken once. Then a second round may be added. In a different version of this activity, the teams get 1-minute time slots for brainstorming their replies to the other group's statements.

Furthermore, the trainer can consider staging round-table discussions, such as on TV

programmes, as well as press conferences or interviews; in the latter case, the trickier the interviewer's questions, the more instructive the learning will be. In all instances, first the task, topic and situation should be clearly outlined, then the roles assigned, after which some time is given for preparation. It is, however, not recommended that the participants "rehearse" the scene, since the final delivery would then lack spontaneity.

#### **4. Creating films and videoclips**

Modern mobile devices are usually equipped with sophisticated cameras which include a video function, making it easier than ever before for learners to produce, within comparatively little time, their own movies and videoclips. In fact, short feature films, video tutorials (or their parody) and videos in the style of YouTube, TikTok and similar platforms form an excellent alternative or addition to the rhetorical and theatrical activities listed above.

These are best prepared and shot by teams of 2 to 10 people, who themselves decide on the distribution of tasks (script, cinematography, acting etc.). Alternatively, the trainer can ask groups of learners to prepare theatrical or similar scenes, and then film their performances. Either way, the results should be played back to the plenary and are usually well received.

#### **5. The art of *sprezzatura***

There is, finally, one more aspect of language and soft skills training, and in fact of any sort of teaching, still to be discussed. Even if the trainer has, with his or her best intentions, chosen activities designed to stimulate the learners' creativity and spontaneity, the results may turn out to be insufficient if the teacher's communication style and the overall setting do not reflect the informal approach implied by the methods.

In his *Cortegiano (The Courtier)*, the Italian Renaissance author Baldassare Castiglione coined the term *sprezzatura*, defining it as a certain effortlessness and nonchalance that the courtier should demonstrate in order to achieve the virtue of *grazia*, namely to "... usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura, che nasconda l'arte e dimostri ciò che si fa e dice venir fatto senza fatica e quasi senza pensarvi... [perché] ... si può dir quella esser vera arte che non pare esser arte" ("[to] apply to every matter a certain indifference that aims to conceal its artistry and to demonstrate that whatever is done or said comes without any effort and, as it were, without even thinking about it... [since] ... it can be said that true artistry does not appear to be artistry at all") (Castiglione, 1965, p. 44-45). In a more modern sense, the term *sprezzatura* has been used in the world of fashion, where it stands for relaxed elegance, involving the (soft) breaking of dresscodes by small signs of imperfection or "sloppiness", such as open cufflinks or the mixture of textile designs. The best-known herald of *sprezzatura* was the English king Edward VIII, who, in his younger years, was criticised by his own father for wearing brown shoes with a blue navy suit, which was a no-go at the time, and who later continued to

live out his sartorial *stravaganza* during the many years of exile following his abdication in 1936 (McKee, 2013).

In its didactic context, *sprezzatura* would mean that the teacher or trainer takes an informal, relaxed, and in some respects unorthodox, approach, so as to put the students at ease. The author has had the best experiences with arranging the venue as learner-friendly as possible (e.g. by providing water, coffee etc.) and moving at least parts of a course to unusual, but pleasant, locations, where available, such as swimming pools, lakesides, parks or woods. Years ago, the participants of one of the author's seminars, who attended again one year later, said that what they remembered best were the breathing exercises in the snow! A compliment indeed...

## 6. Conclusion

Embedded in the philosophical concepts of *homo ludens* and *sprezzatura*, speech exercises, theatre games and similar activities provide excellent opportunities for learners to playfully overcome their fear of speaking, gain security in their command of foreign languages and/or to strengthen their soft skills competencies. Apart from stimulating spontaneity and creativity, these activities are as entertaining as they are instructive, making the time in class pass quickly. The learners will not notice that they have been learning at all, whereas, in reality, they have learned a lot.

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# DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' MULTILINGUAL SKILLS THROUGH A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH (WORKSHOP)

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## **Abstract**

*The present research focuses on highlighting European education policies regarding the interconnectedness of multilingualism, innovation, and digitalization, and aims to integrate these elements into foreign language classrooms in a practical way. Provided the flexibility of the corpus-based approach foreign language students can independently, under the guidance of the language instructor delve into the plethora of corpora to explore the authentic language and choose among a range of tools to boost vocabulary learning across many languages. Specifically, the present study utilizes the free online hypertext tool to disseminate excerpts from one language (L2) to another (L3) in terms of vocabulary comprehension, semantic transfer, linguistic patterns of use, and grammatical co-occurrence patterns. This tool is applied with Bachelor and Master students and was introduced among pre-service and in-service foreign language teachers. It explores, generates, and designs tasks and activities that can inform and eventually yield multilingual skills in foreign language students. This innovative approach enables foreign language students to elaborate on data by using their digital skills and by unveiling the significance of what goes beyond the corpora lines. The corpus-based approach fosters among students the skills of creativity, cooperation, adaptability, and inclusion.*

**Keywords:** *multilingual skill, L2 and L3, corpus-based approach, hypertext, vocabulary, innovation, digitalization*

## **1. Introduction**

Guided by the European educational policies the present research study brings to light the necessity that foreign language learners need to possess the 21st skills (European Commission, 2020). Deliberately, they will be able to individually and collectively reflect on the use of digital resources and pursue language learning strategies to operate skillfully, fluently, and appropriately in

any multilingual contextual situation. Given the vast range of people's mobility, it has become crucially important to know more than one foreign language. As a result, it is necessary to have ease of operational switch between the two or among three and vice versa.

McEnery and Hardey (2012) define Corpus linguistics as a discipline that evolves computer-based empirical analyses on procedures or methods for studying available collections of naturally occurring written or spoken language. The corpus-based approach can be applied to many areas of linguistics and has the potential to reorient the entire approach to the study of language/s. Its main tools such as concordancers are well-established and viewed as central to the approach.

Corpus linguistics can be defined as dealing with genuine language that is stored electronically in a set of machine-readable texts which may indulge learners in the study of language guided by a specific set of research and/or linguistic questions. The set of texts or *corpus* depending to the learners' proficiency and degree of difficulty in apprehending language data defines analysis by hand and eye alone within a reasonable timeframe.

Through the corpus-based approach in relevance to the corpus data in terms of vocabulary language learning and hereby provided the case excerpts in English and French, the student learners improve their performance in both languages in communication and vocabulary. Switching easily through the Compleat Lexical Tutor website tools (Cobb, 2000) across the targeted foreign languages contributes to eliciting students' different language learning styles at both Bachelor and Master Degrees, helping their dependency on their language proficiency to understand and operate independently, and a result motivates them to gain efficacy in their foreign language learning. The implementation of the corpus-based approach at both English language learning and teaching degrees revealed that collaborative activities and tasks were designed by student researchers under the language teacher's instruction and web-based directed guidance to further support the student learners' digital skills.

Cobb's website and its free online digitally accessible tools offer a multitude of benefits for fostering collaborative language learning. The integration of such tools into foreign language learning assists language practitioners in effectively preparing students for the collaborative nature of the modern workplace while making education more engaging, challenging, interactive, and impactful for future use in real-life situations. The appeal of the present research study echoes the elaboration on the actual multilingual website to embrace the digital revolution so that students explore independently what goes beyond the

immense authentic corpus data, and unleash the collaborative potential of the novice language classroom.

In the ever-evolving landscape of foreign language education, multilingual skills, when coupled and developed with technology, not only engage students but also prepare them for the digital demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The term multilingualism is derived from two Latin words namely "multi" which means many and "lingua" which means a language (Bussmann, 1996). This is referred to as the ability of a speaker to express himself or herself in several languages with equal and native-like proficiency. Multilingualism can also be regarded as the co-existence of several languages within a society (Lyon, 1981), which can be official or unofficial, native or foreign, and national or international. Alltree and Thornton's 2004 web-based learning research shows that students can work independently and collectively at flexible times and places and get more involved in valuing peer-produced resources in their learning (Doolan & Barker, 2004).

The present research serves as an operational guide selected among a range of tools that informs all language learners and researchers on how to use the *Hypertext* tool. The deliberately presented tool aims to empower students, language teachers, curriculum designers, and language educational experts to spark meaningful collaboration in language classrooms both virtually and physically. Moreover, through computational processing of the authentic corpus data, it assists students in building a wide range of interpersonal skills such as communication and understanding across L1-L2-L3; and it promotes leadership and teamwork skills in line with the development of their digital fluency. The website offers a range of tools that align with the educator's established language objectives and the student's capabilities in delving into the authentic sources of language/s. In addition, Thomson and Sealey's 2007 research report that the corpus-based approach and the authentic data evolve language learners to examine almost any language pattern in terms of lexical, structural, phonological, morphological, and discourse aspects of (a) language/s. Atar and Erdem's 2019 study also states that corpus-based data provide clues for language studies provided that multiple contexts may be drawn and the data is instantly analyzed by the computer. This enables students to be relevant and to apply their skills and knowledge in a real-world context. Corpus data fosters their grasp on the general understanding of the word's nature, meaning, and use in real-life data.

## 2. Methodology

Corpus Linguistics is a data-driven language approach (DDL) or methodology for researching language features where various frequency-based results are important, critical sources of information for language teaching and learning (Friginal, 2018). Specifically, the present research highlights the incorporation of a corpus-based approach to promote the EU's principles of innovation and digitalization to prepare and evolve multilingual skills in education among the most sought-after 21st-century skills attributed to people's diversity in every possible endeavor of mankind. The research self-reflective questions it addresses should be central to every in-service foreign language educator whether: 1) *the educators are effective in teaching and learning a foreign language?* 2) *their students always show interest in their lessons?*

Mobile technology, individualized instruction, and big data visualization are integral parts of Corpus Linguistics (CL), and they all contribute to how digital learners may, in fact, fully adapt and appreciate corpus-based approaches in their learning of English. It is based on the empirical analysis of actual patterns of language use in a natural context and extensively uses computers for analysis, employing both automatic and interactive techniques. The corpus-based approach relies on the combination of quantitative *vs* qualitative analytical and interpretative techniques (Biber et al., 1998).

The tools needed to implement corpora in foreign language classes might be Digital gadgets include PCs, laptops, smartphones, iPads, and the Internet. The corpus-based approach intertwining theory through authentic language excerpts merges innovations in instructional methodology and educational computing. It operates by utilizing various *online resources* that promote the inclusion of different perspectives on foreign language learning inside and outside the classroom. Relevantly, it introduces an approach differing somewhat from "traditional" pedagogical models. The authenticity of the corpus data and the feasibility provided in the *Compleat Lextutor* website (Cobb, 2000) consists of its essential constituents: *text, scope, and activity/task*. It directs under-instruction learners to a Data-Driven Learning foreign language learning approach (Johns, 1991). Therefore, the genuine native language is displayed on the web as data so, that language learners under the guidance of language instructors play the role of independent researchers to conduct linguistic analysis. The plethora of corpus data in terms of genres, style, text typology, and field of research majoring vocabulary learning across language/s:



- ✓ provides authentic input to serve as evidence to answer the language learner's questions and relies on the learner's intelligence to find the linguistic/language answers,
- ✓ specifically equips students with meaningful examples in both precise excerpts of use or even the targeted word viewed in larger source text to explore and critically examine the use of functional words and phrases in correct contexts in diverse languages and contexts,
- ✓ assists student learners with additional grammar and vocabulary issues (word's meaning/s, word's patterns, and language use).
- ✓ aims to bridge the gap in attaining understanding and progress between the students' actual language ability and the expected ability in foreign language learning.

Given the digital website tools that display as games or puzzles, the corpus-based approach helps foreign language learners gain conscious and purposeful control of the language learning process. The website gives the ability to generate corpus-based tasks/activities thus enabling students to be the genuine designers of a variety of foreign language classroom activities. Moreover, the website integrates language learning skills from L2 to L3 that each individual possesses into his language repertoire to assist the language intended for learning. Cobb's innovative and eventually up-to-date website importantly promotes the perfection of different languages in multilingualism. Languages help and interact with each other, through the use of digital tools, offering:

- a) diverse contextual learning models,
- b) procession of the differences between languages, based on linguistic typology,
- c) knowledge in one language (L1) facility of the acquisition and understanding of new information in the other language/s (L2, L3...).

Additionally, the learner's multilingual repertoire becomes dynamic because the languages are interconnected and interact with each other (as we will see from the following figures making evident the corpus-based approach and the words' profile through the current practices of the English and French languages).



Figure 1. Compleat Lexical Tutor interface (Cobb, 2000)

### 3. Operational interconnectedness of the variables: multilingualism, digitalization, and innovation

*Multilingualism* constantly changes and appears at different moments of an individual's life. Given the time challenges and necessity to overcome difficulties in apprehending others, this human endeavor is related to language learning throughout life. Implementing multilingualism in programs, curricula, and lessons improves students' results and increases academic achievement. Students possess different levels of language competence in different languages in their language repertoires.

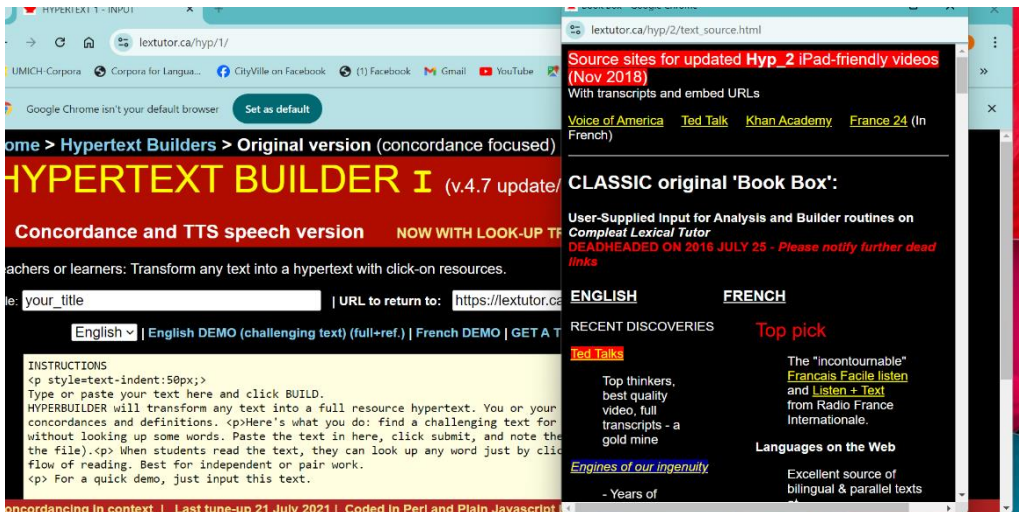
As Kroll and Dussias' 2017 study (cited in Çyfeke & Xega, 2024) reports that '*Being Multilingual*'

- ✓ activates prior knowledge
- ✓ improves communication
- ✓ fosters creativity
- ✓ constructs knowledge
- ✓ shows understanding
- ✓ promotes metalinguistic awareness
- ✓ develops language resources
- ✓ creates a positive sociocultural attitude
- ✓ and motivates the student to learn more.

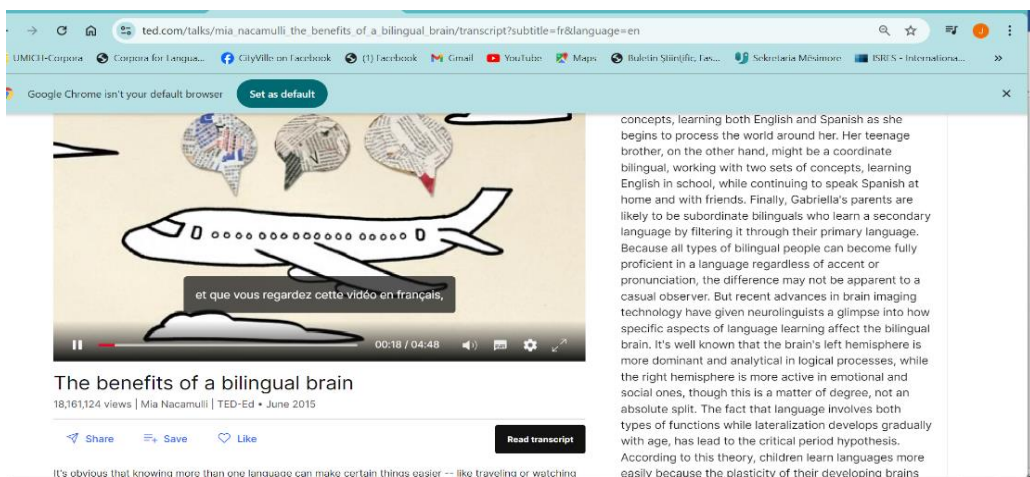
Whereas, the American journalist Flora Luis quotes: *'Learning another language is not only learning different words or things but learning another way to think about things'*.

The more languages the learners know the higher they will critically and analytically think, and consequently, their self-confidence and self-esteem will be increased. Multilingual thinking skills and the ability to communicate in more than one language help learners in multitasking. Language concepts are seen from different perspectives and cultures making evident the differences and similarities between languages. Multilingualism helps to transfer linguistic knowledge from one language to another as learners spot social patterns more easily than monolingual people (Green, 2018). Moreover, as it will be seen from the use of the *Hypertext I* tool from the Lextutor website, the actual knowledge in one language (L1) facilitates the understanding in the other language (L2) even resulting in moderate proficiency to further advance by transferring the knowledge from an L2 to an L3. To raise the learners' interest and motivation to learn languages the tool provides online instruction and research besides the educator's instructions. It serves as a guide on how to operate with any kind of excerpt that they might need/like to examine for vocabulary analysis, text comprehension, linguistic transfer from one language to another, viewing differences and/or similarities in semantic transfer, co-occurrence patterns, morphological word variations, syntactic transfer... etc (Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

**Figure 2. The operational interface of 'Hypertext' tool across English and French excerpts**



As seen from the tool's interface the website offers the opportunity to transfer knowledge, texts taken from excerpts initially from English to French given that the website is deliberately designed for bilingual learners in Canada. It allows users to manipulate data in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills by switching easily in both languages. Having a goal, or any linguistic question in their mind they select or insert in the search box, both the targeted excerpt from the internet if they are willing to analyze actuality ones, with a mere focus on difficult or unknown words either in semantic meaning/s, word/s collocation, word/s patterns or syntactic structure (Figures 3 & 4). The Compleat Lextutor website (Cobb, 2000) and its wide range of multilingual tools as well as self-assessment tools require the students to reflect upon their contributions, and performance, fostering a sense of personal responsibility and ownership in managing their learning. It also promotes inclusive decision-making processes and takes into account the diverse perspectives and ideas of the group. The language educator support prevails over the students while navigating the corpus data, by providing the latter with the resources, addressing linguistic questions, or directing them to the challenging tools maintaining an open line to classroom communication. The site's intrinsic motivation enables the students to use peer evaluation against the tasks/activities they independently have designed, providing insight into the group dynamic from their unique standpoint.



**Figure 3. Online excerpt interface across foreign languages**

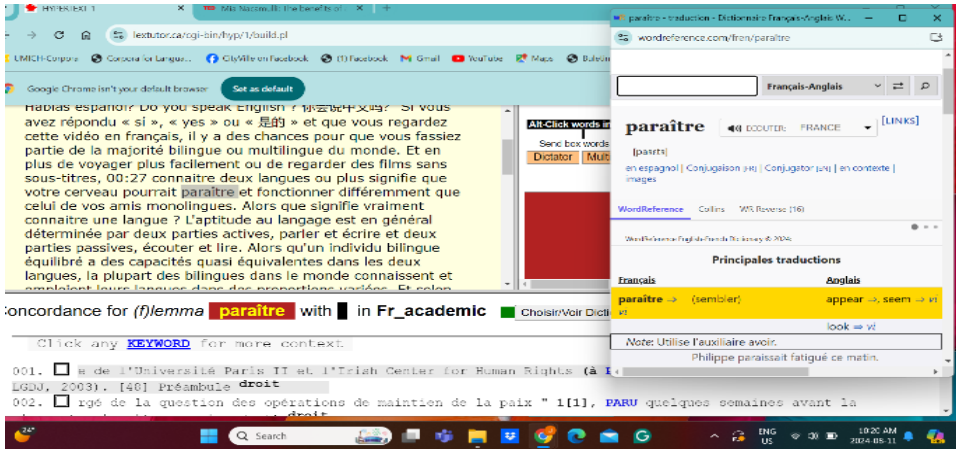


Figure 4. Hypertext excerpt analysis in French

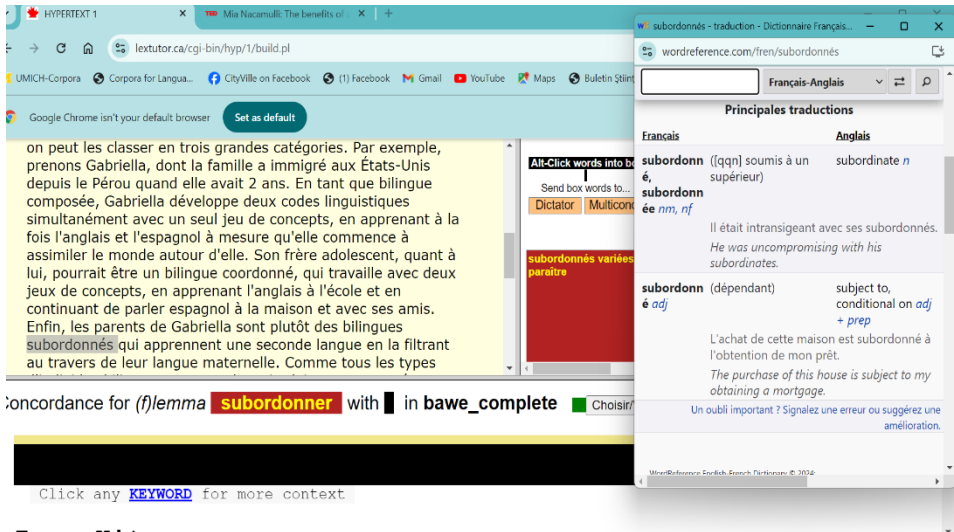


Figure 5. Hypertext excerpt analysis in English



Figure 6. Vocabulary reinforcement in English



Figure 7. Vocabulary reinforcement in French

According to DigiCompEdu (The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators), the application of digital tools across different pedagogical areas provides valuable guidance to foreign language educators to foster digital competence among a list of other 22 competencies where students are enabled to learn, reflect, plan, monitor, and reflect on their learning. The 21st-century skills equip student learners with a sense of inclusion in a diverse digital community where every student feels represented and heard.

Notably, from the above French vs English switch text interface, the implication of digital tools *Hypertext* in line with *Concordance* from the Compleat Lexical Tutor software report the valuable insights the students gain while exploring and delving the authentic data in it. They witness and practice the 'multilingual' word/s profile acquisition by combining technological equipment such as computer laboratories with corpus-based data and online resources at any time having no space restrictions. Student learners require critical skills to note the parallel differences in the semantic transfer across the targeted languages, word morphological changes, and grammatical co-occurrences in addition to the syntactic changes that are attributed to them from the shift from L2 to L3. Moreover, the corpus-based approach results as a 'harmonizer' that improves L2 to L3 text comprehension. Given its availability and wide range of use from numerous teachers, researchers, and students, research and classroom implications report that this interconnectedness of knowledge, linguistic authenticity of language output, and novelty of digital collection leads them to

a long-term global acquisition of foreign languages. Stimulating group work by raising consciousness in crafting collaborative problem-solving and understanding, affects student inclusion in dealing in our case (Figures 4, 5, 6, 7) with queries in both English and French, increasing their motivation and involvement to gain ownership of the overall foreign language learning process and reducing the lack of interest and increasing the desire they initially had against one of them.

#### **4. Foreign language perspectives in the light of European education policies**

Overwhelmingly, *The Guide of the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe: From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education* (Beacco, 2005) describes the processes and the conceptual tools needed for the analysis of educational contexts concerning languages. The author strongly recommends the organization of language learning and teaching according to the principles of the Council of Europe. He further states that multilingualism has been identified in several *Recommendations* of the Council of Europe as the principle and the aim of language education policies, that must be valued at the individual level and should be accepted collectively by educational institutions. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) concerns the form of the curricula and the syllabi for language teaching. The framework displays explicit referential levels for helping language teachers identify degrees of language competence and additionally provides the basis for differentiated language learning and teaching so that learners find opportunities for learning more languages in schools and that would certainly yield lifelong learning. The recognition of the intrinsic value of multilingualism allows the learners to become aware of and describe their language repertoire.

Provided that EU policy is designed to support education inter/nationally and address common challenges it assists learners to develop skills in multilingual learning, elaborating knowledge across languages. It leads the interested parties in crafting competencies to attain fluency in multilingual discourse to make it easier to study and work everywhere in Europe and consequently bring novelties to each respective nation. According to the EU policy (2020), the development of skills has come as a necessity of the time changes considered as crucial challenges to demand citizens possess critical thinking skills, digital competence, creativity, multilingual literacy, cooperation vs diversity in line with the ability to work as part of a team ensuring social fairness and inclusion. Allocating the EU Skill Agenda (2020) will open up new horizons to sustainable

competitiveness in education, training for improvement, and lifelong learning for everybody. Moreover, access to attractive, innovative, and inclusive language learning programs, websites, tools, and approaches makes skills obsolete and supports learning throughout life. In relevance to the above-mentioned EU guidelines and education policies, the present study's corpus-based approach indeed upskills learners to elaborate at first understanding and communication in a multilingual context. It gives them the opportunity for a good start in mapping each individual's skills, delivering targeted knowledge under the language educator's instruction, and empowering and rewarding the learner to up-and-reskill multilingualism as a sought-after skill among them. In support of the implementation of digital and innovative tools in foreign language learning and teaching, Cobb's contemporary website indeed empowers learners, teachers, and researchers to build, develop, and boost skills by utilizing such innovative digital tools and in conclusion making foreign language learning pathways more flexible and accessible. The interested may google the plethora of corpus-based research and gain adequacy of classroom application on video tutorials uploaded from worldwide teachers, numerous applicative case studies, and live sequences from demanding foreign language teachers eager to share the easiness and amusement of such amalgamation of knowledge-research- technological advance in education. Constituents of interconnection and interaction of different languages that require the interweaving of knowledge report to be the wealth of the individual that strongly demands attention and acceptance alongside European counterparts. To conclude, the corpus-based multilingual study clarifies the answers to the self-reflective questions every language teacher should address. It ascertains that teaching and learning will result in a more effective process and that guiding comparative language analysis would alert the students' interest and increase their motivation to learn foreign languages with the same density.

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[https://commission.europa.eu/education/policy-educational-issues\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/education/policy-educational-issues_en)

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1146>

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education>

## EFFECTIVE LEARNING: OVERCOMING TECHNOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY

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**Abstract:** Educational technology has the potential to revolutionize traditional teaching practices by providing expanded opportunities for personalized learning and student engagement. However, the rapid adoption of EdTech in classrooms requires a careful balance between technological advancement and psychological considerations. This paper examines how educational technology can enhance teaching practices by taking into account the psychological implications for students and educators. To provide insights into the effective integration of EdTech and its impact on teaching and learning outcomes, the document explores the intersection of technology and psychology in education. In the adoption of EdTech, it is important to achieve a balance between technological advancement and psychological considerations. An interdisciplinary approach is used to investigate how EdTech affects the psychology of teachers and students. Based on relevant academic journals, reports, and publications, a comprehensive review of the literature on the psychological impact of EdTech in educational settings was conducted. The findings reveal that EdTech, when integrated effectively, can enhance education but also highlight the need to consider psychological factors, such as digital well-being and teacher-student interactions. It also emphasizes the importance of taking into account psychological factors, such as digital well-being and the quality of teacher-student interactions when implementing EdTech. The paper recommends the development of guidelines and professional development programs to equip educators with the skills to use EdTech effectively, prioritizing the psychological well-being of students and promoting supportive educational environments.

**Keywords:** educational technology, psychological, integration, teacher-student, skills

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid developments in big data technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) have had a profound impact on various aspects of human society, including the economy, politics, science, and education. Digital tools, platforms, applications, and interpersonal communication have generated vast amounts of data, often referred to as "big data," across different contexts. Big data technologies aim to harness the power of extensive data in real-time or otherwise (Daniel, 2019). In the 21st century, the landscape of education is undergoing a profound transformation, primarily catalyzed by the rapid integration of technology in the classroom. This shift, often referred to as Educational Technology (EdTech), has the potential to revolutionize traditional educational practices, ushering in a new era of personalized learning, increased engagement, and improved educational outcomes. The proliferation of the internet has democratized information and knowledge. Students and educators can access a plethora of educational content, research materials, and online courses, empowering self-directed learning. Internet access has also facilitated communication and collaboration among students and educators worldwide. However, the continuous integration of technology into education requires a delicate balance, one that considers not only technological advancements but also the intricate realm of human psychology (Alam, 2021). As the role of technology in education expands, it becomes increasingly clear that educators, students, and policymakers must address a fundamental question: how can technology be effectively leveraged to enhance teaching and learning while nurturing the psychological well-being of those engaged in the educational process? Over the past decades, technology has become an integral part of education at all levels, from K-12 to higher education. This growth is characterized by the widespread adoption of digital tools, including computers, tablets, and smartphones, as well as internet connectivity. These technologies have transformed traditional classrooms into dynamic learning environments, enabling access to vast amounts of information and resources (Barrot, 2021).

In the following sections, we will delve into specific aspects of EdTech integration, including its effects on the psychological well-being of educators and students. Furthermore, we will discuss the importance of equipping educators with the necessary skills and support through professional development programs, with a strong emphasis on prioritizing the psychological well-being of learners and fostering supportive educational environments. In a world where technology continues to reshape our daily lives, understanding how EdTech can be harnessed to enhance education while preserving the

psychological well-being of those involved is of paramount importance. This paper lays the foundation for a comprehensive exploration of these critical considerations, aiming to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on the integration of educational technology in the modern classroom.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the psychological implications of Educational Technology (EdTech) for both educators and students. A comprehensive review of the existing literature on the psychological impact of EdTech in educational settings was conducted. This encompassed a thorough examination of relevant academic journals, reports, and publications discussing the intersection of technology and psychology in education. In general, a literature review has two key elements. Firstly, it must concisely summarize the findings or claims that have emerged from prior research efforts on a topic. Secondly, a literature review should arrive at a conclusion regarding the accuracy and completeness of that knowledge; it should present your informed judgments on what is right, what is wrong, what is inconclusive, and what is missing in the existing literature. Unlike some other ways of surveying a body of literature, such as an annotated bibliography, a literature review is a synthesis (Knopf, 2006). For this reason, it is important not to simply compile a summary list of what each individual work says but instead to focus on the entirety of the body of work as a whole.

## **3. MODERN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

The 21st century is often seen as a technological era, where technology has become an integral part of our lives. It is considered the cornerstone of economic growth. In today's world, an economy lacking technology would never thrive. This is because technology makes our tasks significantly easier and less time-consuming. The impact of technology can be felt in every industry, including education. According to recent findings about how current students choose to use technology and how technology affects their learning, it has been discovered that the use of technology and new device tools promotes learning and student engagement (Zaripova, 2021). When technology is utilized, students find it more attractive and filled with exciting possibilities. The transfer of knowledge becomes much simpler, adaptable, and efficient. This means that our minds now prefer to function more quickly when supported by contemporary technology in every aspect of life, including education. The reliance and dependency on such

innovation, which simply makes life an easy and peaceful journey, is entirely inevitable nowadays in schools, universities, and colleges (Gruzdeva et al., 2020). One of the most notable advancements in educational technology is the rise of distance learning. Online learning platforms, video conferences, and virtual classes have made it possible for students to access quality education from anywhere in the world. This has expanded educational opportunities, transcended geographical barriers, and made lifelong learning more accessible. Over the past decade, the importance of the Internet has grown significantly. Its significance in education cannot be overstated. Despite the risks of misinformation and other negative aspects, the internet is a boon for students. The internet is now ubiquitous in nearly every aspect of our lives, from televisions to gaming consoles and our phones. The Internet offers students extraordinary convenience; they can access various types of assistance, lessons, and other supporting materials that can be used to develop and enhance their academic learning. Compared to words, visual images have always had a stronger appeal. Another excellent application of technology is the use of projectors and images to aid in learning. The use of technology such as projectors in schools and colleges can enhance engagement and interest while also improving motivation. Students prefer attractive graphics and content that encourage them to think rather than just read text. When it comes to technology, the learning process becomes even more efficient (Meena, 2020).

Regarding digital technology and education, the penetration of digital media in the education sector has increased. This penetration has brought 24-hour contact with students and various forums available for different tasks and assistance. As the power of digital technology grows, there will be more applications to assist children in their development and learning. Online diplomas are becoming quite common. People want to pursue online courses for education and certification. The best colleges offer fantastic online programs that utilize various tools and the internet. This is a concept that will gain traction as more people support and become aware of it. Online diplomas worldwide are more famous among working students looking for flexible study programs (Boton & Gregory, 2015). Technology plays four roles in education: it is integrated into the curriculum, serves as a delivery system for instruction, assists in guidance, and enhances the overall learning process. Education has evolved from being passive and reactive to being participatory and proactive as a result of technological advances. Education is crucial in both corporate and academic environments. Education or training is used in the former to help workers do things differently than they did before. In the latter, education is focused on stimulating curiosity in students'

minds. In any situation, the use of technology can improve students' understanding and retention of topics (Ratheeswari, 2018). I. Jung discusses the major problem instructors face in modern culture as a result of the rapid spread of information. Modern technologies require instructors to learn how to use these devices in their classrooms. As a result, these new technologies increase the demand for training for instructors. According to Gressard and Loyd (1985), teachers' attitudes toward computers are a critical aspect of the effective use of ICT in education. They stated that instructors do not always have positive views of computers, and these negative attitudes may contribute to the failure of computer-based programs. One of the most significant barriers to effective technology integration is unequal access to technology and reliable internet connectivity. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have access to the necessary devices or high-speed internet, creating a digital divide that exacerbates educational inequalities. The implementation of technology in education can be costly. Schools and institutions may struggle to allocate funds for the purchase and maintenance of devices, software, and infrastructure. This financial burden can limit the adoption of technology in resource-constrained settings (Kormos & Wisdom, 2021).

#### **4. IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has a profound impact across various fields, including education. It influences all aspects of education, from teaching and learning to assessment and evaluation, ultimately enhancing educational efficiency. It aids in literacy campaigns, extends the scope of education, and makes research and intellectual communication more accessible. The effects and promises of ICT in education are diverse (Tikam, 2013). It yields favorable outcomes for all education stakeholders. The increasing integration of technology in education has sparked a corresponding increase in educational technology research. Scholars, educators, and institutions are increasingly recognizing the need to study the impact of technology on teaching and learning. This research encompasses a wide range of topics, including pedagogical approaches, the effectiveness of digital tools, the development of online courses, and the psychological aspects of technology use in education (Adeyemo, 2010). Das (2019) argued that ICT has a significant impact on education regarding knowledge acquisition and assimilation for both instructors and students, promoting:

- **Active Learning:** ICT tools aid in data analysis and exam performance tracking, promoting student engagement by allowing them to choose what and how they want to study at their own pace, tackling real-world challenges more effectively.
- **Collaborative Learning:** ICT fosters interaction and collaboration among learners and educators, regardless of their location. It also enables students to work with individuals from diverse cultures and in groups, enhancing their conversational skills and global awareness.
- **Integrated Learning:** ICT encourages an integrated approach to teaching and learning, bridging the artificial boundary between theory and practice compared to the traditional classroom, which often focuses on a single field. ICT places the learner at the center of the learning process, providing constructive feedback through various interactive aspects.

These features of ICT enrich the educational landscape and enable students to explore and learn through innovative teaching and learning methods based on constructivist learning theories, focusing on understanding rather than rote memorization (Chen & Tsai, 2021).

## **5. THE INTERACTION OF TECHNOLOGY AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN EDUCATION**

As mentioned in the preceding sections, the integration of technology in education has revolutionized the way students learn and engage with academic content. It particularly explores the role of various technological tools in enhancing memory, attention, and problem-solving abilities. The use of multimedia presentations, interactive software, and virtual reality has proven to make learning more engaging and effective.

### *Enhancing Memory*

One of the key aspects of cognitive psychology is understanding how memory functions and how information is stored and retrieved. Technology provides several innovative tools and techniques that aid in improving memory during the learning process. Multimedia presentations, for instance, offer students visual and auditory stimuli that can reinforce presented information. By simultaneously engaging multiple senses, students are more likely to retain and remember information effectively (Winn, 2013). Furthermore, interactive software applications designed to enhance memory skills have gained popularity in educational settings. These applications often employ gamification techniques to make the learning process enjoyable and engaging. Through the



use of interactive games, quizzes, and challenges, learners can actively participate in the learning process, strengthening their memory skills (Spencer, 2017).

### *Improving Attention*

Maintaining students' attention is crucial for effective learning. Technology offers a plethora of tools that can capture and sustain students' attention during the educational process. The use of multimedia elements such as videos, animations, and graphics can stimulate the visual and auditory senses, making the learning experience more appealing. These captivating elements help prevent student disengagement and enhance their focus on the subject matter. Moreover, interactive programs and virtual reality applications have the ability to create immersive learning environments that captivate students' attention and maintain their engagement. Virtual reality, in particular, allows students to explore and interact with virtual worlds that simulate real-life scenarios. By experiencing these simulated environments, students are more likely to remain engaged and absorb information effectively (Ferri, Grifoni & Guzzo, 2020).

### *Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills*

Problem-solving is a fundamental cognitive process that plays a crucial role in education. Technology offers a wide range of tools and resources that can enhance students' problem-solving abilities. Interactive software applications, for example, often include puzzles, quizzes, and logic-based challenges that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Through these interactive activities, students can develop and refine their problem-solving skills in an engaging and interactive manner (Chan & Zary, 2019). The interaction between technology and cognitive psychology has opened new possibilities in education. By incorporating various technological tools, educators can enhance cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. Multimedia presentations, interactive software, and virtual reality have proven to be effective in making learning more engaging and effective. As technology continues to evolve, its impact on cognitive psychology in education is likely to expand, offering students more opportunities for meaningful and comprehensive learning experiences (Glassman & Burbidge, 2014).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, technology holds tremendous potential in education, but it needs to be balanced with psychology for effective teaching and learning. As explored in this study, technology offers numerous benefits in terms of accessibility, engagement, and personalized learning. However, it is crucial to consider the

psychological aspects of education to ensure that technology is used in a way that enhances learning and student development.

By understanding the psychological principles that support effective teaching, educators can use technology to create meaningful learning experiences. This includes taking into account factors such as motivation, attention, and cognitive load. By integrating technological tools that align with these principles, educators can increase student engagement, facilitate knowledge retention, and promote critical thinking skills. Furthermore, the effective use of technology in education requires a thoughtful approach to assessment and feedback. Educators must ensure that technology is used to provide timely and constructive feedback to students, encouraging their growth and development. Moreover, technology can be used to track student progress and identify areas where additional support is needed, enabling personalized guidance and interventions. However, it is essential to strike a balance between technology and traditional teaching methods. While technology offers many advantages, it is not a substitute for human interaction and the social-emotional aspects of learning. Educators should ensure that technology is used as a complement to face-to-face learning, fostering collaboration, communication, and interpersonal skills.

In conclusion, the integration of technology in education holds great promise, but it must be accompanied by an understanding of the psychological principles that promote effective teaching. By achieving a balance between technology and psychology, educators can harness the potential of technology to create engaging, personalized, and impactful learning experiences for students.

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*Dhurata Lamçja*

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## FOSTERING MULTILINGUALISM AND INNOVATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA - OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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### **Abstract**

*In the post-modern era, marked by rapid technological development, the intersection of multilingualism, innovation and digitalization, presents both an opportunity and a challenge while creating global education policies. This paper explores the relationship among these key factors, focusing on the role of artificial intelligence in fostering multilingualism and innovation within the European context. Since the proliferation of digital technologies has changed the landscape of communication, the learning processes underwent serious upgrade on a global level in direction of quality improvement. Multilingualism, as a fundamental aspect of Europe’s diversity, has a significant role in establishing digital relations and knowledge dissemination. Drawing on the interdisciplinary approach from linguistics, education and information technology this paper examines how European education policies can improve the potential of multilingualism and digitalization to foster innovation in teaching and learning. It also emphasizes the importance of promoting digital literacy and language proficiency as key competences for active participation in the digital age. Apart from this, the paper offers some insight into the most relevant education policies and initiatives established on global European level and compares them to similar strategic acts brought on more regional level. By highlighting emerging trends, challenges and opportunities it offers insights for policymakers, educators and researchers trying to navigate the complexities of the digital era while promoting language diversity and high quality education.*

**Key words:** *multilingualism, innovation, digitalization, education/regional policy, quality education.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper analyzes relevant education policies and initiatives aimed at leveraging digitalization for multilingual education and innovation, while also

addressing potential changes and ethical considerations. In the most general sense, leveraging AI for multilingual education and innovation refers to application of AI technologies in enhancing the language learning and teaching practices, as well as to fostering innovation and advancement within the education sector particularly in multilingual context.

In its basic sense, multilingualism is defined as the coexistence and use of multiple languages within individuals, communities or societies. This definition encompasses different dimensions of language use and proficiency, as well as the social, cultural and cognitive aspects of multilingualism. Having this into consideration, some of the most important strategic pillars of the digital development of the educational process which make the greatest use of the intersection of linguistics, education and information technology, established on global European level, are: The European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan, European Language Label (ELL), European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and European Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition.

As opposed to these global strategies, for the purpose of our research, we would dive deeper into the policies and strategies related to digitalization and innovation in education involving AI application in a more regional Macedonian context: National Education Development Strategy, National Strategy for Interculturalism and social cohesion and the National ICT Strategy.

## **RESEARCH AIM AND METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this paper is to produce arguments in favor of the hypothesis that the most important education policies and initiatives aimed at applying AI for multilingual education and innovation brought on the global European level should also be applied more regionally. In order to support this hypothesis a methodology incorporating a qualitative approach would be appropriate.

This research paper is mainly based on a comparative analysis of the existing education policies and initiatives at the global European level related to AI for multilingual education and innovation. It also involves the identification of commonalities and differences among these policies regarding their objectives, strategies and outcomes. The analysis ends by emphasizing the effectiveness of these policies and suggesting strategies for harmonizing global and regional efforts to maximize the impact of AI while addressing the unique needs and circumstances of different regions.

The attempt to verify the above-mentioned hypothesis is based on qualitative analysis of the key European and Macedonian strategies for fostering

multilingualism and digitalization. Along the path other more specific and narrow beliefs, elaborated in the conclusion have been also proven right.

### **European initiatives for enhancing education, language learning and development of digital skills**

In an increasingly interconnected world, the European Union has recognized the pivotal role of education, language learning and digital skills development in fostering economic growth, social cohesion and individual empowerment. Across the continent, a series of strategic initiatives have been launched to enhance educational systems, promote multilingualism and equip the citizens with the digital competences necessary to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the purpose of our research we will analyze only four main initiatives, out of many, based on different concepts stemming out of linguistics, education theory and information technology.

#### **European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan**

European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan's (DEAP) purpose is to improve digital competences for all citizens, improve digital infrastructure and access to digital resources in education and promote the use of digital technology for teaching and learning purposes. It represents a call for greater cooperation at European level on digital education by presenting different opportunities for the education and training community, policy makers, academia and researchers on national, EU and international level. It is based on several concepts deriving from the area of education policy, digital technologies and innovation and formed by digital frameworks, which define the knowledge, skills and attitudes that individuals need to effectively use digital technologies in various contexts. According to Ferrari, 2013 and Carretero et al., 2017 the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp) and the DigCompOrg frameworks for organizations are particularly important in shaping the DEAP's approach to promoting digital skills and literacy. The DEAP is grounded in theories of innovation, which highlight the role of technology in driving educational change and improvement. Concepts such as disruptive innovation (Christensen et al., 2019) and technological pedagogical content knowledge (Mishra and Koehler, 2006) provide theoretical frameworks for understanding how digital technologies can enhance teaching learning and educational outcomes. Theories and methodologies of policy evaluation (Weiss, 1998; Patton, 2010) provide theoretical foundation for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of digital education policies and programs.

The DEAP emphasizes the importance of multilingualism and supports initiatives that promote digital literacy and language learning through innovative tools and resources. The Plan outlines specific objectives such as improving digital infrastructure in schools, fostering the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning and promoting the development of digital competences among students and teachers. It includes initiatives related to supporting the development of digital resources and tools, promoting digital teacher training and professional development and fostering cooperation between education stakeholders to share best practices. The DEAP is implemented through a combination of EU funding programs, policy coordination with member states and collaboration with stakeholders in the education sector.

It sets out two strategic priorities and fourteen actions to support them. The first priority is *fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem*. Six actions are predicted in order to achieve this priority:

- Action 1: Structured dialogue with member states on digital education skills
- Action 2: Council recommendation on the key enabling factors for education and training
- Action 3: European Digital Education Content Framework
- Action 4: Connectivity and digital equipment for education and training
- Action 5: Digital transformation plans for education and training institutions
- Action 6: Ethical guidelines on the use of AI and data in teaching and learning for educators.



Source: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>



The second priority of DEAP is *enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation*. The main actions supporting this priority are:

- Action 7: Common guidelines for teachers and educators to foster digital literacy and tackle disinformation through education and training
- Action 8: Updating the European Digital Competence Framework to include Ai and date-related skills
- Action 9: European Digital Skills Certificate
- Action 10: Council recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training
- Action 11: Cross-national collection of data and an EU-level target on student digital skills
- Action 12: Digital Opportunity Traineeship
- Action 13: Women's participation in STEM
- European Digital Education Hub

### **European Language Label (ELL)**

The European Language Label (ELL) is also based on several theoretical frameworks related to language education, multilingualism and European integration. Mainly, it is informed by theories of language learning and acquisition that explore how individuals acquire and develop proficiency in multiple languages. Theories such as the communicative approach and the sociocultural theory of language development (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasize the importance of communication and social interaction in language learning. The ELL is placed within the broader context of European language policy, which aims to promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity across Europe. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages brought by the Council of Europe in 2001, is a key theoretical concept which underpins the ELL, providing a common basis for assessing language proficiency and supporting language learning and teaching practices.



Source: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/297a33c8-a1f3-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

The ELL is an award encouraging the development of new techniques in the field of language learning and teaching as well as the enhancement of intellectual awareness across Europe. The label is awarded annually or biannually to the most innovative language learning projects in member states. It focuses specifically on promoting language learning and multilingualism across Europe and aims to recognize and reward innovative language learning initiatives and projects. Thus, the Label encourages language learning and teaching innovation, promotes linguistic diversity and intercultural understanding and raises awareness about the importance of language learning for personal, social and professional development. It includes initiatives such as awarding the Label to innovative language learning projects, organizing events and conferences to showcase best practices and providing resources and support for language educators. It is implemented through a network of national agencies and organizations responsible for promoting language learning and multilingualism in their countries. These agencies coordinate the selection and recognition of language learning projects eligible for the European Language Label.

### **European Framework for Key Competencies for Lifelong learning (Key Competencies Framework)**

There is also a theoretical background of the European Framework for Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning related to education, skills development and lifelong learning. It is situated within the broader context of education for the

knowledge society which emphasizes the importance of equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to thrive in a rapidly changing globalized world. Theories of knowledge society and learning society by Drucker, 1993 and Field, 2006 provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the shift towards lifelong learning and the acquisition of key competences beyond traditional academic knowledge. It also acknowledges the importance of social and emotional competences in promoting well-being, resilience and interpersonal relationships. Theoretical frameworks such as emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning (CASEL, 2020) provide a theoretical basis for understanding the role of social and emotional competences in personal and social development.

The Key Competencies Framework focuses on defining a set of key competencies necessary for individuals to succeed in a knowledge-based society and to support lifelong learning. The framework provides a holistic approach to education and skills development, emphasizing the importance of transversal competencies that are applicable across different domains and contexts. Member states are encouraged to integrate the Key Competencies Framework into their education and training systems, curricula and assessment practices to ensure that learners acquire the necessary competencies for personal fulfillment, active citizenship and employability. This act focuses on eight key competencies: literary competence, multilingual competence, mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering, digital competence, personal, social and learning to learn competence, citizenship competence, entrepreneurship competence and cultural awareness and expression competence. Having this in mind, the framework aims to have a broad impact on education and training systems, fostering the development of well-rounded individuals capable of adapting to a rapidly changing world.

### **European Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition (Digital Skills Coalition)**

The next initiative, which is a subject of our analysis, European Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition is built on recognition of the importance of digital skills and competences for individuals, businesses and societies in the digital age. It also responds to the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital transformation in the labor market. Theoretical frameworks such as skill-based technological change (Autor et al., 2003) and digital divide theories (Van Dijk, 2006) provide insights into the impact of digital technologies on employment patterns, skills requirements and inequalities in access to digital opportunities. By drawing on these theoretical frameworks and concepts, the European Digital

Skills and Jobs Coalition aims to mobilize stakeholders, resources and expertise to address the digital skills gap and promote digital inclusion, employability and economic growth across Europe.

Its main objective is to boost digital skills development and literacy, enhance digital inclusion and increase the number of digitally skilled professional to support Europe's digital transformation and competitiveness. The coalition primarily focuses on digital skills related to information and communication technologies (ICT) (basic and advanced ICT skills, coding, cybersecurity and digital entrepreneurship). It brings together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including governments, industry, academia, and civil society to collaborate on initiatives and actions to address the digital skills gap.

### **Macedonian initiatives for enhancing education, language learning and development of digital skills**

The theory behind Macedonian initiatives for enhancing education, language learning and development of digital skills is rooted in several education and developmental frameworks such as: Constructivists learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Connectivism Learning theory (Siemens, 2008), Multiliteracies theory (Cazden et al., 1996), Lifelong learning, Inclusive education and Blended learning models. These frameworks emphasize modern pedagogical approaches, the integration of technology and the importance of multilingualism and digital literacy in preparing individuals for the globalized work.

**Macedonian National Education Development Strategy (2021-2025)** outlines the country's long-term vision and objectives for improving its education system. This strategy serves as a comprehensive roadmap to modernize and enhance education at all levels and to integrate new technologies and teaching methodologies. Its first objective is to ensure that all children and youth, regardless of their socio-economic background have access to quality education and to promote an inclusive educational environment that supports students with diverse needs. Its second goal is to update and modernize the curricula to reflect contemporary knowledge, skills and competencies and to increase focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education to prepare students for future careers in these fields. It should also provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their teaching skills and adapt to new educational technologies as well as ensure that teachers meet high professional standards. The strategy promotes learning of multiple languages to enhance communication skills and cultural awareness and strengthening foreign language education, particularly English to improve

global competencies. At the same time, it emphasizes integration of information and communication technology into teaching and learning process and development of e-learning platforms to facilitate digital education and blended learning models.

**National Strategy for interculturalism and social cohesion (2024-2026)** is designed to foster unity and mutual respect among the diverse ethnic, cultural and religious communities in the country. Its main objective is to increase awareness and appreciation of different cultures and traditions in Macedonia and foster mutual understanding and respect among various ethnic and cultural groups. Its key components are education and awareness for modernizing the curriculum and develop community-based programs that encourage interaction and cooperation between different cultural groups supporting cultural diversity. An important element of this strategy are media and communication policies as well as the government agencies and non-government organizations involved in the process of its implementation and sustainability.

**Macedonian National ICT Strategy (2023-2027)** is designed to advance the country's digital infrastructure, enhance the digital skills of its population and promote the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) across various sectors. One of its major objective is the digital transformation by upgrading and expanding the digital infrastructure to ensure high-speed internet access and reliable connectivity nationwide, as well as promotion of ICT in public services, education, healthcare and business sectors. It should also help in enhancing digital literacy and ICT skills across the population, with a focus on education and workforce development and providing ongoing training and professional development opportunities in ICT-related fields. Its key components are infrastructure development (broadband development, smart cities, etc), e-government services (digital public services and citizen engagement), education and training (ICT in education and digital skills programs), research and innovation, cybersecurity, regulatory environment etc. In this sense, the expected outcomes are: enhanced connectivity, efficient public services, skilled workforce, innovation and growth and a secure digital environment.

### **Opportunities and challenges - Conclusions**

By reviewing the Macedonian different key documents one can conclude that all of them fully correspond to the European initiatives for enhancing education, language learning and development of digital skills. The difference is the scope that is covered by each of the documents and the overlapping. That is:

- Macedonian National Education Development Strategy (2021-2025) in its core content incorporates the aim for improving its education system by integrating new technologies and teaching methodologies, whereas the DEAP is based on several concepts deriving from the area of education policy, digital technologies and innovation and formed by digital frameworks. In the same direction, but specifically for language learning stands for the Macedonian Strategy and ELL, since both strategic documents promote learning of multiple languages to enhance communication skills and cultural awareness and strengthening foreign language education, particularly English, by promoting the development of innovative approaches and materials, establishing cooperation among language teachers and institutions and raising awareness about the benefits of language learning. Furthermore, the Education Development Strategy (2021-2025) strives for ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their teaching skills and adapt to new educational technologies as well as ensure that teachers meet high professional standards and promotes learning of multiple languages to enhance communication skills and cultural awareness, that corresponds to the Key Competences Framework, which underlines the importance of equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to thrive in a rapidly changing globalized world.

- Macedonian National ICT Strategy (2023-2027) that aims to enhance digital literacy and ICT skills across the population, with a focus on education and workforce development goes in line with the Digital Skills Coalition, which focuses specifically on addressing the digital skills gap in Europe and promoting digital literacy, skills and competencies among citizens and workers; aims to increase the number of Europeans with digital skills, improve employability and job prospects, support digital entrepreneurship and innovation and foster inclusive growth and social cohesion in the digital era.

- Social cohesion is in the focus of the Macedonian National Strategy for interculturalism and social cohesion (2024-2026) which key components are education and awareness for modernizing the curriculum and develop community-based programs that encourage interaction and cooperation between different cultural groups supporting cultural diversity.

From the above, it is evident that Macedonian strategic documents are comparable with the European ones, that is very important considering the fact that North Macedonia is an aspiring country for a full membership of the European Union. This creates opportunities for further development of the multilingualism processes and placing innovative approaches in the digital era in the country, following the best EU strategies.

What is questionable or challenging is the actual realization of the plans and activities, i.e. the operationalization of the agreed strategies. The Education Development Strategy (2021-2025) entered the fourth year, with only a year and a half of its duration. But, in reality the execution is on poor level, apart from the inclusivity: still many primary and secondary schools are not well equipped with ICT technologies, a great part of the learning materials are missing, some of the learning materials that are published in electronic form do not comply with the requirements for their interactivity purposes, during the COVID period many actions were undertaken without systematic approach, but rather in chaotic manner, driven by the momentum and the then-needs, situation that continues to exist even years after. All of these highly affects the multilingualism, innovation and digitalization processes in North Macedonia, that have to keep up the pace with the challenges created by the rapid technological development. This is the reason more that the country, in its strategies, has to focus on the role of artificial intelligence in fostering multilingualism and innovation within the European context. The opportunity comes in a form of the other two strategic documents the Macedonian National ICT Strategy (2023-2027) and the Macedonian National Strategy for interculturalism and social cohesion (2024-2026), that are on their very beginnings.

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European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan  
<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>



# TRANSLATION AS A TOOL FOR MULTILINGUALISM AND INNOVATION IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*This paper investigates the role of translation in promoting multilingualism, digitalisation and innovation in European education. It discusses the ways in which translation facilitates communication, helps language learning, supports inclusive education and promotes multilingual competences. The paper underlines the synergy between translation, digitalization and innovation, and how this synergy is transforming education, facilitating access to it and making it more effective. It provides an analysis of European education policy and translation practices, to discover how translation can contribute to the achievement of European education goals. It also presents various studies that confirm the positive effect of translation on education. The paper advocates recognition of translation as a valuable tool in European education, playing an essential role in promoting multilingualism and encouraging innovation. The paper concludes with recommendations for further research in the field of translation in European education.*

**Key words:** multilingualism, translation, promotion, digital technology, educational environment.

## **Introduction**

In the dynamic landscape of European education, translation is increasingly being valued as a tool that fosters multilingualism and innovation. The ability to communicate in more than one language characterizes European identity. Multilingualism, facilitates communication between different language communities, promotes cultural understanding and mutual respect. While in the field of education, it opens new pathways to learn, broadens students' horizons and prepares them for a globalized world (King, 2018)."

Innovation in education, another hallowed feature of the global era, involves introducing new ideas, methods or even products to improve learning. In the field of language, an innovative perspective is assessed the inclusion of translation in curricula. In this way, it enriches the learning experience and equips students with essential skills such as critical thinking, intercultural competence and problem solving.

Exploring translation as a tool to promote multilingualism and innovation

in European education is important, as it offers valuable insight into the potential it has in transforming language education, but also for maintaining social cohesion, cultural diversity and lifelong learning in the European area (Saville, et.al., 2016).

This article addresses this very phenomenon, exploring the multidimensional ways through which translation offers its own contribution to educational practices and policies in Europe. It aims to argue that "The use of translation as a tool in European education promotes multilingualism and encourages innovation in education". This suggests that translation, as a process related to language and communication, may play an important role in promoting multilingualism and innovation in education. Through analysis of European education policies and studying translation practices in the context of education, the article aims to explore the ways in which translation can contribute to the achievement of European education goals for multilingualism and innovation.

In this article, we discuss policies in European education and the role of translation there, the context of European education, the challenges of multilingualism, as well as the role of translation in promoting multilingualism. Also, important studies and findings have been summarized on the use of translation in European education and its impact on multilingualism and innovation are assessed. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings and recommendations for further action and research in the field of translation in European education.

### **European education policies and the role of translation**

In European education, the promotion of multilingualism and innovation is a priority in many national and regional policies, with the primary aim of creating inclusive and effective educational systems in diverse language environments. Within these policies, translation plays a central role in facilitating communication, supporting language learning and promoting cultural understanding between teachers and students. Special attention is paid to the evaluation of multilingualism as an asset contributing to social cohesion and economic growth (Yves, et. al., 2023). E.g., Finland, implements a multilingual educational model that promotes the use of many languages in schools. Its education policies care for preserving students' mother tongue skills, also promote learning additional languages (Paulsrud, et. al., 2020).

Translation helps these policies with teaching materials (texts, evaluation

tools, etc.) and curricula easily accessible to students from different language backgrounds, meeting the needs and facilitating communication of students who speak different languages. It also helps to exchange ideas and best practices among all stakeholders including teachers, researchers and policymakers in these multilingual communities (European Union, 2023). Innovative tools in education, such as online resources and digital learning platforms, offering equal access to educational opportunities, bring out the importance of translation more than ever. Translation technologies, such as language learning applications or machine translation, help break down language barriers, as well as help students adapt to the ever-changing environment (Saar, 2022).

EU policies consider the role of translation in multilingualism very important. Various directors have invested in promoting multilingualism and language learning, through publications of translation volumes, conferences or other annual events (Europe Translation Forums and Seminars), *projects* (European Master in Translation *EMT*, Creative Europe) and funding and funding for translation initiatives, such as the machine translation system MT@EC (Saville, et. al., 2016).

Education policies in Europe also pay attention to the role that translation plays in promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding. By translating literary works, textbooks and cultural artifacts, educational systems, students encounter different perspectives and traditions, orienting them towards appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity (Yves, et. al., 2023). In short, European education policies recognise the value of multilingualism and innovation and emphasize the essential role of translation in achieving these goals. Promoting multilingual education in Europe, harnessing translation technologies and promoting intercultural exchange pave the way for inclusive and dynamic educational systems that lead students to a diverse and interconnected world (Yves, et. al., 2023).

### **The context of European education and the challenges of multilingualism**

Europe, this continent rich in history and culture, is home to a variety of languages. Linguistic diversity is a hallmark of it. 24 official languages are spoken within the European Union (EU), each representing a unique cultural heritage, while about 60 other languages are spoken in regions or in separate groups. This diversity, forms personal identities, but also plays a pivotal role in education, social cohesion and cultural exchange (Saville, et. al., 2016).

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union also explicitly

recognises linguistic diversity, and, in its Article 22, it stresses the importance of respecting the rights of minorities, including cultural and linguistic diversity (European, Commission, n.d.). The provisions of the Charter stress the importance of inclusive education, which adapts regional and minority languages, by guaranteeing the linguistic rights of individuals belonging to linguistic minorities. These rights are closely linked to the personal and collective identity of individuals. Linguistic diversity is an asset and not an obstacle to education, as multilingualism enriches the learning environment, fosters cultural understanding, and promotes cognitive flexibility (Green, 2003).

Language competences are at the heart of the construction of the European Education Area, and the EU has long promoted language learning across Europe through many activities. *European Day of Languages* (26 September), EU educational and cultural programmes such as *Erasmus+* or *Creative Europe* projects, which actively support language learning projects, are initiatives aimed at raising awareness of linguistic diversity and language learning, through various events and activities (Saville, et. al., 2016).

Education plays an important role in preserving and promoting linguistic identities. Hungary, Finland and Sweden are examples of countries that promote education in their national languages and preserve minority languages. Hungary, with languages such as Hungarian, German, Romaine and Slovakia, makes efforts to promote Hungarian-language education, while preserving minority languages (Kaplan, et.al, 2005). Finland recognizes Finnish and Swedish as official languages, and bilingual education policies provide the teaching of both languages. While Sweden recognises five official minority languages and aims to support them, while preserving Swedish as the primary language of instruction. However, researchers suggest that it is important to balance language promotion with the need for a common language (Kaplan, et.al, 2005).

Language diversity offers great opportunities for schools, which can use the diverse language background of students, to create dynamic learning environments. Translation and translanguaging are two pedagogical approaches that can be used to improve learning. Translation allows students to rely on many languages, while translanguaging encourages students to make full use of their linguistic repertoire. These approaches encourage free communication and exchange of ideas and promote the development of their languages (Green, 2003). Despite the possibilities, multilingualism in education also poses challenges, such as; lack of teachers able to teach in different languages, reluctance of governments or local authorities to support multilingual education, competition of international languages against indigenous languages,

in particular English; as well as the costs of learning a global language to many parents and students (Varthana, 2023), (UNESCO, 2023).

Addressing these challenges highlights the imperative of several steps, such as: drafting educational policies that promote learning in indigenous language since early childhood (Giannini, 2024); close partnership between schools and local communities, and recruitment and training of members of these communities as teachers (UNESCO, 2023); Implement culturally responsible learning strategies, i.e. in line with the cultural background of students (Lane, 2022); or even use digital technology and translation applications in education, for the greater and more efficient approach they offer to learning. All of these would enable the use of the benefits of multilingualism in education, along with increasing academic performance, as well as creating "positive" identities related to indigenous student cultures (Parveen, et. al., 2022).

### **The role of translation in promoting multilingualism in European education**

In the dynamic environment of European education, multilingualism forms a linguistic mosaic in which students and teachers engage with a multitude of languages, each with its own unique cultural nuances and historical significance. Among this linguistic diversity, translation appears powerfully as a bridge for its users that fosters understanding and promotes the beauty of diversity (World Translation Center, 2023)." In this complex context, multilingualism has become an essential component for European education, while translation is the means that promotes it, through several ways: increase communication, as translation fills in language gaps and enables effective communication across language boundaries, for students and teachers (Institute for the Future of Education, 2019); supporting inclusive education, as the translated materials include students from different language backgrounds, ensuring that no one is left behind (Unlimited Languages, 2023); facilitating language learning, as translated texts can provide valuable learning resources, helping students in the acquisition of new languages (Pym, et. al, 2013); promotion of multilingual competences, as translation practices improve students' language skills, such as vocabulary, grammar and syntax; enriching curricula, as translated literature, scientific and historical texts expand educational matter (Sahebi, 2019); supporting minority languages, integrating them into educational contexts (Languages Unlimited, 2023).

In addition, the use of translation also brings benefits in improving

teaching, communication and personal development of students, as this linguistic wealth challenges education with the need to equip students of different language backgrounds with the necessary information. In this context, translation transcends the mission of word replacement, to serve with many possibilities: facilitating understanding, as during the encounter with complex texts or with unknown lexicons, translation helps students better understand the content and encourages their engagement (Sahebi, 2019); promotion of bilingualism, as the assessment of the students' native languages, confirms their identity and creates inclusive learning environments, presenting linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a barrier (Sahebi, 2019); the inclusion of modern technology, which offers a plethora of translation applications, which have proven their value in improving student interactions in the mother tongues, but also in supporting teachers for more effective communication and in support of bilingualism (Lake, et. al., 20019) Saving time, because having translated materials in advance, teachers can focus on teaching rather than classroom translations, ensuring students understand the course materials immediately.

Along with these opportunities, translation also offers challenges such as: maintaining quality, because while technology helps translation, their quality remains essential; Balance in language usage, as establishing the right balance engages students actively in both languages.

Concluding here, we would say that evaluating translation as an educational ally improves students' learning experiences, helps them navigate language complexities, appreciate cultural diversity, but also communicate.

### **Translation, digitalism, innovation and their synergy**

Rapid technological development is increasingly intertwining translation, digitalization and innovation, redefining their traditional boundaries and transforming our understanding of communication.

The role of translation in this synergy is essential, as it enables a wide audience of teachers and students, across Europe, to find and share educational materials in its 24 official languages. The EU invests around 20 million euros a year in research programs to overcome language barriers through information and communication technologies (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). In *the EU Digital Education Action Plan*, the first priority is "fostering the development of a high-performance digital education ecosystem", in which translation plays a central role, as it enables students and teachers in different Member States to participate in the transformation of digital education (European Commission, 2020). In addition, translation enables cooperation

between educational institutions of different member states, bringing innovative approaches or solutions to education, such as p.sh., mixed educational learning (combining traditional classroom methods with digital learning) (European Commission, 2020).

Digital technologies have revolutionized translation through advanced translation tools and platforms, increasing productivity and facilitating access to foreign languages. Language technology now offers about 700 options, which can be used as needed (Phrase, 2024). Machine translation, translation memory and multilingual document management simplify work practices, improve translation quality, and also enable content localization for different users (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). Translation apps *Reverso Context* and *Google* have significantly improved the performance of intern translators. Researchers confirm fewer lexical, cohesive, and text-type errors by students who use *Reverso Context* than by students who do not use it. *Microsoft Translator* and *Speak and Translate*, also, have been verified to facilitate children's interaction in native languages and expand teacher learning strategies (Lake, et. al., 20019). Educational applications (AR) enable real-time translation of content, facilitating the process of learning new languages or translation technicians, while Virtual Reality (VR) platforms reconstruct a virtual environment according to real-life situations (Training Express, 2024).

The EU is aiming to provide online content to everyone, regardless of their language and country of living, supporting research and innovation, and funding other digital programs and tools in translation. *The Action Plan for Digital Education*, of the European Education Area, outlines several activities for improving digital education and training (European Commission, 2020). *ETranslation*, an advanced neural machine translation service was introduced in November 2017 (European Commission, 2023). *Europeana*, a digital library with over 62 million cultural heritage materials, offers access to users from different countries. With English as the primary language, it implements a multilingual information retrieval system (MLIR), with the aim of improving multilingual experiences (Marrero, et. al., 2022).

Each of these technologies and platforms has its own advantages and can be more productive depending on special needs and educational environment. This underlines that in selecting the most effective technology or platform, the subjects such as languages translated, available resources, student level and specific learning objectives should be taken into consideration. But also, like any technology, they also have their limitations or potential for misunderstandings, p.sh. in terms of context, cultural nuances, idiomatic

expressions.

In all, these platforms and services encourage the digital transformation of education in Europe, facilitating access to learning and making it more effective, fostering innovation and developing new teaching and learning methods and practices, and promoting cooperation among member countries' educational institutions. In conclusion, collaboration between translation, digitalisation and innovation orients European education towards a dynamic perspective of global connectivity and cultural exchange.

### **Important studies and results**

In the complex environment of European education, translation emerges as a tool that has the potential to combine linguistic diversity, cultural understanding and cognitive development. This ability of translation and increased interest in it has encouraged various scholars to investigate the multidimensional role of translation in promoting multilingualism, in shaping pedagogical practices, as well as innovative thinking.

Pym study, Anthony et. al, "*Translation and language learning. The role of translation in the teaching of languages in the European Union. A study*" examines the contribution of spoken and written translation to the teaching of foreign and second languages (L2) at various educational levels. The authors see translation as a communicative activity that can help in learning a second language (L2) and confirm numerous instances of use of translation in classrooms, in combination with different learning approaches, even without being part of official curricula (Pym, et. al, 2013). The research found no consistent evidence on the impact of bilingual social contexts on translation use in L2 classes, nor evidence swirling the correlation between reducing classroom translation and increased performance in other language skills. But it did provide evidence that countries with high L2 tests often use translation in the classroom (Pym, et. al, 2013). The authors draw attention to the existence of divergent concepts of meaning of the term "translation", not only in research, but also among teachers. Despite these findings, the authors confirm the marginal status that translation still possesses in language learning (Pym, et. al, 2013). The study advocates recognition of the multi-biased role of translation in European education, promoting linguistic diversity, innovation and preparing students for a globalized world.

Eser's study, Oktay, et. al., 2017, "*Learners' Perceptions of Translation in English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) at University Level*", explores students' views on the use of translation in undergraduate courses, English. This



is quality research, based on an interview, that aims to examine how students link translation to the development of knowledge about the subject. According to him, most students used translation as a tool to understand the subject and learn new vocabulary (Eser, et. al., 2017). The interview revealed student knowledge gaps and misunderstandings about the possibilities of using translation, as well as the implications of actively incorporating translation into the learning and research process (Eser, et. al., 2017). The authors suggest integrating translation into educational curricula, as a large proportion of students use it to address their lack of competence (Eser, et. al., 2017). The study contributes to understanding the role of translation in education, also, provides insights into effective strategies for teaching in bilingual classrooms.

Sara Laviosa's book, 2014, *Translation and Language Education. Pedagogic Approaches Explored*" proposes a translation-based pedagogy, presenting different perspectives, methodologies and case studies on the inclusion of translation in teaching practices and language learning. He explores the use of translation as a pedagogical tool, its potential benefits, challenges and implementation of practices in education education (Laviosa, 2014). The book also discusses theoretical approaches, empirical evidence and pedagogical suggestions that incur the use of translation as a means of evaluation, and a teaching assistant, the possibility of its introduction into school curricula, as well as its impact on language skills, translation competence and use of technology (Laviosa, 2014). It offers a holistic pedagogy that interweaves ecological and holistic perspectives to revitalize classroom translation in a multilingual context. In general, the book provides a comprehensive examination of the pedagogical aspects of translation in language education and contributes to discussion on the inclusion of translation in teaching and language learning contexts.

Finally, these studies underscore the importance of translation in education, specifically in a multilingual context, but also underline the need for further steps, such as: data extraction from students perspective both socially and cognitively, to understand their response to specific translation tasks; develop new methods of training and evaluation of students; exploring different translation concepts; measuring the effect of translation on the development of skills or encouraging innovative teaching methods (Pym, et. al, 2013). So, as Europe continues to diversify, the contribution of translation to education is becoming even more essential.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The role of translation in European education is multi-sided, promoting multilingualism, fostering innovation and facilitating communication. Despite the challenges, incorporating translation into curricula, enriching the learning experience, equipping students with essential skills and preparing them for a globalized world. The synergy between translation, digitalization and innovation is transforming education, facilitating access and increasing effectiveness. Various studies confirm the positive impact of translation on education, insisting on its recognition and further research. Finally, translation is an invaluable tool in European education, playing an important role in promoting multilingualism and encouraging innovation.

To maximize the potential of translation in transforming language education, preserving cultural diversity, social cohesion and lifelong learning, we recommend:

- encouraging the use of many languages in educational environments with the aim of promoting understanding and preparing students for a globalized world;
- to include translation in the curriculum, to equip students with essential skills (critical thinking, problem solving and intercultural competence), and to enrich the learning experience;
- use of digital technologies to increase access to foreign languages and increase productivity;
- encouraging synergy between translation, innovation and digitalization, facilitating access and effectiveness;
- supporting further research, to understand the impact of translation on European education and explore ways of overcoming emerging challenges;
- implement policies that support minority and regional languages, to guarantee the linguistic rights of linguistic minority individuals;
- use translation to promote dialogue and intercultural understanding, paving the way for comprehensive educational systems that prepare skilled students for a diverse and interconnected world;
- addressing the challenges of multilingualism, such as the lack of teachers able to teach in several different languages, reluctance of governments or local authorities to support multilingual education; Competition of international languages to local ones, as well as the costs of learning a global language.

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# THE INCORPORATION OF DIGITAL INNOVATIONS IN ESL/EFL CLASSES

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## **Abstract**

*“The first step in teaching students to innovate is making sure that educators have opportunities to be innovators themselves.” - Suzie Boss. Educators of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are paying increasing consideration as to how they can incorporate digital innovations into their learning process.*

*The integration of digital innovations into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes is the main focus of this study. This study intends to offer insights into how digital innovations might be used to increase English language proficiency of the students attending ESL/EFL classes.*

*This study uses a mixed-methods methodology, coordinating qualitative and quantitative research methods. The data is collected by observations and interviews with Albanian ESL/EFL students and educators.*

*According to the research, digital innovations can improve ESL/EFL education in Albania by giving students access to real language resources, enabling dynamic learning environments, and raising student interest. To optimize the advantages of digital integration, though, obstacles including restricted access to technology, insufficient training for educators, and problems with the digital divide need to be resolved.*

*In conclusion, by addressing the different challenges, the best practices, educators and policymakers can work together to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment for ESL/EFL students in Albania and beyond.*

**Key words:** *ESL/EFL Classes, Innovation, Implications of Digital Technology, English Language Proficiency, Effective Integration Strategies.*

## I. Introduction

*Education is our passport for the future, and tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.* - Malcolm X Education is a fundamental aspect in the development of a society. If the youth of the society is educated, the future is born. Teachers give the power of education to today's youth, giving them the opportunity for a better future. The priority of every teacher is to prepare their students for life and to try to make their students as successful as possible in different areas of life. To achieve this, teachers try to use a variety of methods to achieve the best results. Some of the teachers think that the traditional method of teaching is more productive and has more results. While the rest think that the modern method is the future of teaching and the best way to educate students to be ready to face life. One of the biggest discussions that is sparking a lot of feedback is the use of technology in teaching.

Nowadays many efforts are being made to improve the quality of education and many innovations in education are being considered to achieve better results in teaching. Modern teaching methods are student-centered and attach great importance to student autonomy. Modern teaching method classes are characterized by discussion and are described as noisy classes where the interaction between students is valued more than discipline or silence. Discussions are ongoing because they consider all the implications that the inclusion of modern methods in education can have.

The discussion about the use of modern methods in education is ongoing because many think it is a good solution to make a difference in the teaching system. This change for many factors is thought to be more productive than the traditional way of teaching. There are some of the positive effects that the use of modern teaching methods has:

- One of the positive effects that the inclusion of the modern method in teaching can have, is the improvement of the learning process. Teachers face the need to cover a range of subjects using different methods so that students are able to understand and master the content in order to fulfill the English Language Proficiency. Modern technological developments and the Implications of Digital Technology such as digital cameras, projectors, computers, Power Point presentations, visual aids, have become excellent resources for teachers to help students easily understand a concept. It is easier for a person to learn and understand something visually and easier to memorize that knowledge.

- A very important positive impact of the inclusion of the modern method in teaching is the motivation of the students. The students are more motivated to attend the lesson as different activities will be used to explain it. Moving away from the traditional way of teaching and including videos, various games make it possible for the student to be more motivated to attend the lesson.
- A very important impact that the use of modern method in teaching has had is the development of critical thinking in children. This is a very important factor as the development of the critical thinking of the students has a lot of value. A student should develop their own thoughts by being able to do an analysis on a given topic. The development of the critical thinking also makes possible the training for the person in the moment that they will be brought to life as they will have more acquired knowledge of how to act in a given situation.

## **II. Methodology**

### *2.1 Participants*

For this study, I conducted a comprehensive needs assessment targeted 20 English teachers and 70 English language students to determine their most significant needs and difficulties in the context of ESL/EFL this allowed me to integrate converging technology innovations depending on needs assessment of the participants.

### *2.2 Instruments*

In this study, the questionnaire was employed as the main data collection technique which was composed of four yes/no questions. These questions were formulated so as to elicit the participants' opinions on the efficiency of the current approaches to teaching ESL/EFL classroom.

The questions specifically asked whether participants believed that modern methods make students more active and practical, increase students' imagination, distract students, and whether they consider these methods to be effective overall. The simplicity of the yes/no format allowed for straightforward data collection and analysis, ensuring clear insights into participant perspectives.

### *2.3 Procedure*

The study involved the distribution of the questionnaire to 20 English teachers and 70 English language students. Before giving out the questionnaires to the



participants they were first informed of the research intent, goal and objectives and also that their answers would remain anonymous. It was conducted both face to face as well as via e-mail to ensure the convenience of the participants. After collecting the data, they were then synthesized and used for ‘making comparisons’ as well as assessing the success of modern teaching approaches in class.

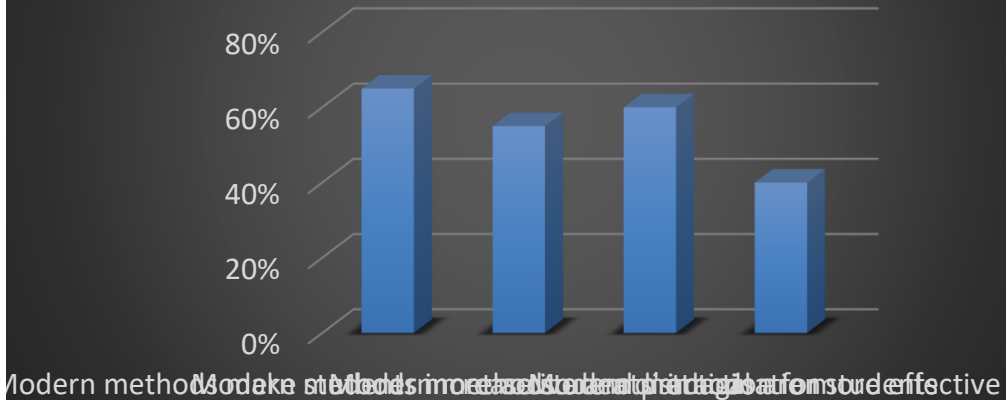
### **III. Results**

The results of this research are informative as they show the sentimental views of teachers and students toward the contemporary approaches in ESL/EFL learning environments. The results are derived from the responses made to a structured questionnaire, addressing certain concerns relating to contemporary teaching approaches, their degree of capturing participants’ interest, stimulating creativity, other potential sources of distraction, and instructional utility. With the subject beliefs of the teachers and students compared and contrasted, this work presents an idea of the similarities and differences that the two held towards the use of technology in learning language. The subsequent sections present a number of conclusions drawn from the study to be carried out as follows:

The responses from the 20 English teachers revealed mixed perspectives on the use of modern methods in the ESL/EFL classroom. When asked whether modern methods make students more active and practical, 65% of the teachers responded "yes," indicating a positive view of the impact of technology in fostering student engagement. Additionally, 55% of the teachers agreed that modern methods increase students' imagination, suggesting that technology can stimulate creative thinking among learners.

However, the responses also highlighted some concerns. A significant 60% of teachers viewed modern methods as a distraction for students, indicating apprehension about the potential for digital tools to divert attention from learning objectives. Finally, only 40% of the teachers considered modern methods to be effective overall, reflecting a degree of skepticism about the practical benefits of integrating these methods into the classroom.

# Modern Teaching Methods in Albania

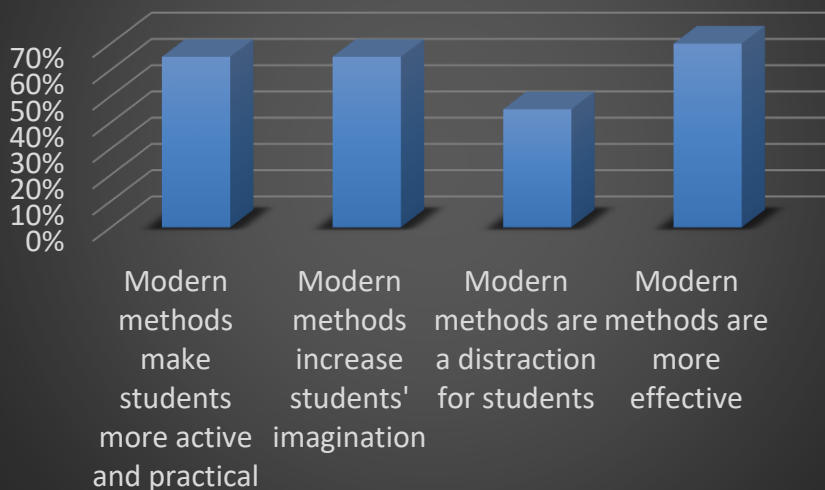


*Table 3.1 Modern Teaching in Albania, The teachers Results*

The results from the 70 English language students showed generally positive attitudes toward the use of modern methods in the classroom. A substantial 65% of the students believed that modern methods make them more active and practical, highlighting the perceived benefits of technology in increasing participation and hands-on learning experiences. Also, 66% of students in the survey noted that the use of modern methods in their learning improved their imagination, thus proving that such technologies promote creativity in language learning.

On the other hand, only 45 percent agreed with the statement that modern methods are a distraction meaning that 45% percent of the students feel that technology distracts them in class. When asked about the general effectiveness of the use of modern methods, 70% of the students were positive that these are effective, therefore making them in support of the inclusion of the said methods as part of their learning process.

## Modern Teaching Methods in Albania



*Table 3.2 Modern Teaching in Albania, The Students Results*

Therefore, the findings provide a deeper insight into using the modern methods in ESL and EFL learning context. Despite its prospects to increase engagement and creativity, both teachers and students consciously assess fragilities of these methods and the risk of distraction is evident, at least, among teachers. The positions are dissimilar, which points to the fact that although students are more optimistic about the advantages of the new approaches as compared with educators. These results emphasize the importance of the moderation when using technology as an aid in language teaching, so that all advantages could be gained with no or least possible negative consequences.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

It reveals not only the advantages but also the issues connected with the implementation of new technologies into ESL/EFL class. Although the majority of students gave a positive attitude stressing that these methods enable them to become active, practical and imaginary learners, the perception of the teachers was more encouraging. While the teachers noted the advantages of the modern methods with regards to learners' interaction and creativity some of them also

noted possible distractions and some even doubted the efficiencies of the new methods.

This difference in perception can be attributed to the fact that students are more open to the use of technology with regards to integration than the teachers and might need more convincing as well as the application of technology showing them the direct benefits that come with these tools. It has also emphasized on the necessity of the proper approach toward the modern techniques' usage, which should be based on the organism rather than the disturbance of traditional learning processes. But, for embracing the full value of such technologies, there is always the need for PD and a better understanding of how technology can support the instructional agenda. More related work can also be done to investigate how the successful aspects of the methods can be downs and ups to cater for the expectations of the teachers and students to the highest level.

#### *4.1 Recommendations*

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effective integration of modern methods in ESL/EFL classrooms:

*Teacher Training and Professional Development:* Based on apprehensive perceptions depicted by teachers the latter should be empowered with continuous professional development. We should target on explaining the effectiveness of innovative instructional techniques, providing participants with actual practice in the use of technologies and giving them an idea of possible drawbacks, e.g., distractions and management issues.

*Balanced Use of Technology:* Which means that both educators and institutions should strive towards a mid-point in integration of technology. That is why modern techniques should be used together with traditional ones in order not to neglect essentials while avoiding to overestimate the devices impact in the learning process.

*Customization of Methods:* When studying approaches to teaching, the author notes that students seem to like the 'new' methods – particularly when it comes to imagination and activities – and so the approach they recommend teachers to adopt is the one that involves application of these 'new' tools to the needs of a particular classroom. Instructional method and choice of software has to be aligned with various learning styles and learning abilities in order to deliver the best results.

*Addressing Distractions:* Based on the notion that the methods can prove to be distracting, it is suggested that the instructors must provide rules and other regulations of using the modern methods in teaching. This may include embedding technology in a manner that does not interrupt students' learning tasks and in the process, is achievement oriented.

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# THE IMPORTANCE AND THE CHALLENGES OF MULTILINGUALISM IN ALBANIA PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*One of the most important elements that demonstrate national, cultural, and social identity is language. Through it, we are able to recognize ourselves on the world stage as a distinct ethnicity and to communicate with our fellow citizens wherever we are. In addition to the undeniable importance that the mother tongue holds, the era of globalization has presented us with another phenomenon, which is multilingualism.*

*Multilingualism has now become a principle that serves an even greater ideal advocated by the European Union, namely the unity of nations. Many opportunities that multilingualism offers to those who master one or more of the twenty-four official languages of the EU are also attached to this ideal.*

*In this paper, we will familiarize ourselves with the countless opportunities that multilingualism offers to the individual culture of each of us, but also exploring another aspect of the coin that is increasingly prominent in the last decade in Albania. Is multilingualism jeopardizing the teaching of the Albanian language in pre-university education? Are adolescents, and not only, inclined towards foreign languages, neglecting their mother tongue? What is the reason for this approach and what measures need to be taken to establish balance?*

*In the era of change, which confronts us with diverse situations, we are facing a consequence named emigration, which for our small country is the cause of several linguistic outcomes with a significant impact on Albanian language speakers. This paper will present some of the main reasons of the situation that is present in albanian pre-university education.*

**Keywords:** *multilingualism, opportunities, Albanian language, impact, pre-university education.*

## **1. Introduction**

Multilingualism has now become a principle that serves an even greater ideal advocated by the European Union, namely the unity of nations. Many opportunities that multilingualism offers to those who master one or more of the twenty-four official languages of the EU are also attached to this ideal.

Multilingualism offers countless opportunities to the individual culture of each of us, but we will explore another aspect of the coin that is increasingly prominent in the last decade in Albania. Is multilingualism jeopardizing the teaching of the Albanian language in pre-university education? Are adolescents, and not only, inclined towards foreign languages, neglecting their mother tongue? What is the reason for this approach and what measures need to be taken to establish balance?

## **2. What is multilingualism?**

Multilingualism is explained in the Oxford dictionary as: the state or condition of being multilingual, or the policy of promoting this; the ability to speak many languages; the use of many languages. As such, multilingualism will be included in the capacity of language skills that a person possesses throughout their life.

Multilingualism demonstrates the linguistic diversity and language skills of different groups. Multilingualism is closely linked to the nervous system and its intellectual functioning. The human brain undergoes changes during its growth. Our interactions in life also determine their impacts on our brain. The process of having multilingual skills will be defined as an interaction process that has positive consequences on our brain, scientifically proven consequences.

The positive impact of multilingualism is seen in several aspects, among which we can mention the individual, social, cultural, and economic aspects. Language is influenced by many biological and cultural factors of daily life. To master a language, children must (a) understand others' intentions to learn words, phrases, and concepts of their language, and (b) distinguish the structures and patterns in which people use these words and phrases according to the grammar of the language (Woolfolk, 2010, p. 53).

When discussing multilingualism, we see it as a skill that starts with bilingualism. We will first observe the advantages that bilingualism offers to speakers of two languages and then to multilingualism. Bilingual children, who learn two languages simultaneously, have a smaller vocabulary in each language, at least in the childhood stage, but the extent of this difference depends on the bilingual child's exposure to each language individually (Pearson, Fernandez, Leweder, Oller, 1997). However, children who learn or speak two languages have benefits. The high degree of use of both languages is directly linked to higher cognitive abilities, in areas such as concept formation, creativity, theory of mind, cognitive flexibility, and the understanding that written words are symbols of language (Bialystok, Majumder & Martin, 2003).

We understand in this way that learning two languages in early childhood and more of them during growth is necessary for mental development.

In a review of institutions offering foreign language courses, we find that among the languages most preferred for mastering by adolescents and adults in Albania are: English, German, Italian, French, and Spanish. Of course, the number of speakers varies, and we deal with speakers more inclined to learn English and German than other languages, based on several factors that we will discuss further.

In this linguistic panorama, researchers observe some advantages that multilingualism offers to speakers of the Albanian language, but also some challenges that need to be analyzed and overcome. To better understand multilingual situations, we need to be informed about the term multilingualism and its processes.

### **3. Challenges in a multilingual era.**

Multilingualism includes two notions: contemporary multilingualism and historical multilingualism. By ‘contemporary’ times we refer principally to the period starting at the end of World War Two (post-modern or globalization era). Multilingualism has existed from the earliest stages of human development. Long before the times referred to in the story of the Tower of Babel, myriad languages were already in use, encountering each other and competing with each other wherever cultures intersected. Multilingualism has developed where it is no longer just one of the characteristics of human society; it has become an inherent and, arguably, in many ways, the most salient property of post-modern human society as a whole and of large numbers specific communities, whatever their size (Singleton, Fishman, Aronin, Laoire, 2013, p.3).

Joshua A. Fishman in the abstract for the article “The new linguistic order” states:

*“The globalization phenomenon that we are currently seeing has led to major linguistic changes on a worldwide scale. English has become the leading international language, in economic and political spheres, and is becoming the language of high society and of the young. At the same time, however, regional languages are also making considerable headway, thanks to new social interaction and economic backing from their governments.”*

*(Fishman 1998, abstract)*



English has now so thoroughly penetrated the non-Anglophone world. Rising economies everywhere are already well used to English, and to its lingua-franca value, both within and between countries (Edwards, 2023, p. 15). In Albania, English and languages in general are given a special importance. This importance is seen in the fact that proficiency in a foreign language is a mandatory condition for obtaining a master's degree. This also presents an obstacle in the work that needs to be done for the correct preservation and cultivation of the mother tongue. Obstacle seems like a big word, but we should not limit ourselves only to the cultivation of foreign languages by discarding the national identity. At the end of a master's degree, it would be useful to also test the linguistic skills of the student in the Albanian language, regardless of the diploma they have defended.

Language is the main tool of communication, which allows speakers to identify themselves internationally and display their cultural potential. Language is the most important element, which allows us to receive the first information about the people we are connecting with. In the cultivation of the Albanian language, care has always been taken to clean it from borrowings and new entries of foreign words. Globalization and the development of technology have indeed greatly complicated this work.

The production of new devices, the introduction of various social networks have made it somewhat impossible to translate every novelty we face day by day. Communication has expanded, interconnection surpasses land, air, and sea borders, encompassing the Earth with the aura of the message. The speed and high demand for information are tarnishing accurate, "intellectually" consumable, and linguistically correct information. In this storm of digitization, learning one or more foreign languages has become easier. But what is the impact of the foreign language on the learning of the Albanian language by pre-university students?

Foreign language learning has the potential to affect the state of mother tongue knowledge and skills. This effect is dependent upon several variables, such as language proficiency, motivation, and the way of exposure to the target language (Kecskes, Papp, 2000, p. 54). Most of the entertaining videos that children "consume" on the internet are in English. At a very delicate age for their formation, the child, before becoming familiar with the Albanian language, becomes familiar with a foreign language, which goes against the further preservation of the Albanian language. The naming of objects and colors begins in English before the child learns them in Albanian. The child does not feel Albanian as their mother tongue. They do not feel this linguistic code as theirs

because they have not fully mastered the linguistic foundation. Problems and consequences appear when the child goes to school and is required to read and write in this language. The child's concentration in subjects in Albanian decreases, and continuous parental supervision is required for the child to balance the use of languages in their daily life.

The use of social networks, sending text messages on social networks, comments on posted photos and videos, have expanded the use of foreign languages and Albanian but are gradually eroding its words. We face impatience, speed in giving and receiving information. This impatience is reflected in writing phrases that fail both in spelling, punctuation, and logic. Leaving logic aside. We focus on the first two. The problem of writing the final vowel "ë" has always existed among students, but now it has become more frequent. A significant impact has certainly been exerted by the high frequency of writing messages with linguistically incorrect words. We shorten the time, we shorten the language as in words: është (is), vetë (self), vajzë (girl), djalë (boy), thikë (knife), sytë (eyes). Examples taken from the written work of AMU (lower secondary education) students. The beginning of the sentence with a lowercase letter. Pre-university education system students possess the foreign language more accurately than the native Albanian language.

Emigration is another cause of multilingualism. The poor economic situation, the lack of hopes for a secure financial future in Albania, has made a good part of the population turn to emigration. 7.5% of the country's population has emigrated in the last 10 years (INSTAT, 2022). Most Albanian emigrants are heading towards Germany. Emigration has included young age groups, newly graduated students, high school students who see more opportunities abroad. These emigrants are the family members of adolescents, relatives, neighbors, friends, their friends; they are an example seen by them as the future. Our society is overwhelmed by massive pessimism about the country's situation in the social aspect. School students see the future far away, growing not with love for the country, but with the desire to leave it as soon as possible. Such a situation affects the patriotism of Albanian citizens and the deep appreciation that the people should have for the Albanian language, resulting in the opposite. This change is reflected in the approach of the youth, their love and knowledge of the mother tongue, and the approach of our fellow citizens who, after emigration, find it difficult to use the Albanian language properly. For many young people today, the Albanian language is no longer seen as a dignified first impression with an employer, because, in their minds, the employer is foreign. To express their emotions, they no longer need the standard language approved in 1972; the

fragmented language of social networks suffices. Interest in the language falls into the abyss of disinterest. This disinterest affects the youth, society, and educational institutions. Educational institutions are no longer viewed as catapults towards intellectual growth and a life full of opportunities. The Albanian language is in a very difficult position because society itself is in a challenging moment. This is the main reason why the German language is now more favored for study than other languages, due to the opportunities it offers for the future.

#### **4. Opportunities that multilingualism offers us**

We've listed some of the issues, but multilingualism is a very positive phenomenon overall. In addition to the development of cognitive skills mentioned at the beginning of this study, we present other areas where multilingualism plays an important role.

The journey of becoming multilingual begins with bilingualism. A bilingual child, after mastering two languages, finds it easier to learn additional languages. The more fluently a person speaks one language, the easier it is to learn many other languages. "Foreign language study may provide a vehicle for arriving at an ultimate goal of all education, rendering the learner more capable of coping creatively with the environment. The intensive and resultant foreign language learning may help mother tongue education to a significant extent by activating passive knowledge and making the use of it more conscious" (Kecskes, Papp, 2000, p. 54).

Mastering a foreign language opens up the horizon for understanding the culture it represents, its traditions, customs, and history. Those who master several foreign languages also master the cultures as speakers of those languages. Multilingualism increases social awareness and mutual understanding among speaker groups. Multilingual students become familiar with diversity earlier, enhancing their self-esteem and helping them better understand their position in society. Roger Bacon, the Doctor Mirabilis of the thirteenth century, correlated multilingualism with wisdom (Edwards, 2023, p. 30).

Multilingual speakers create personal and professional opportunities. Globalization has increased the employment opportunities for people worldwide in companies operating internationally. These jobs are made possible only if one or more foreign languages are mastered. English is considered the basic language that all students should master by the end of higher education, but other languages are also being prioritized. Consequently, speakers become

multilingual, and employment opportunities in these companies increase. Employees with high linguistic and intercultural competencies, enabled by multilingualism, are a fundamental resource that helps businesses grow in the global market.

## **5. Conclusions**

Multilingualism is an essential asset for each of us in creating a personal and professional profile. Foreign languages are a portal to different cultures and histories. Linguistically, multilingualism cannot be seen as separate from the mother tongue. The connection between foreign languages and the mother tongue is very close, and it is realized through the speaker's linguistic abilities. The challenges we presented in this study were mostly related to the impact of multilingualism on the acquisition and correct articulation of the mother tongue in Albania. Children continue to develop their mother tongue skills until adolescence, including more complex grammatical structures that enhance communicative abilities. This process lasts at least until the age of 12. Children who start school at the age of 6-7 begin to acquire linguistic skills that they improve until the 6th or 7th grade. This is an ideal situation where the child is not influenced by foreign languages. We must understand how much this process slows down when the child is subjected to the process of learning two or more languages simultaneously.

The lack of a sense of patriotism and national belonging, along with the extensive use of social networks, are causes that result in a decrease in "intellectual" speakers of the Albanian language. By "intellectual," we mean those speakers who articulate the Albanian language correctly according to spelling norms. Emigration is a wound that requires the total involvement of state institutions to prevent it, through financial, social, and other analyses. However, if we cannot prevent emigration, we must prevent the devaluation of the Albanian language by speakers who remain in Albania for as long as they stay in the country. The Ministry of Education should propose laws for the protection of the Albanian language, laws drafted in collaboration with experts, academics, researchers, and Albanian language teachers. This way, it will be possible to preserve a pure and not hybrid language. We note that the negative consequences of multilingualism are essentially more consequences of mismanagement of social processes occurring in society.

Multilingualism is a phenomenon and an interpersonal skill that can be considered an investment for the future. Besides cognitive, social, and cultural

development, multilingualism offers professional development, the "fruits" of which students will "reap" in the future when they enter the job market.

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# PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS: TEACHING OF IDIOMS THROUGH THE USE OF AI IMAGERY

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**Abstract:** *In view of persistent global developments, language, and culture are the bridges of interconnectedness, and as such they cannot be regarded as units independent of one another. Language represents the foundation of culture, and culture manifests itself through the use of language. This manifestation is strikingly observable in the case of idiomatic expressions, which carry hints and hues of cultural connotations. Taking this into consideration, this paper aims to conduct a contrastive analysis juxtaposing English and Albanian idioms to highlight similarities and differences in the perception of the world that these two different cultures have. In addition to this, the paper also aims to divert from the traditional approach of teaching idioms through explicit explanation and adopt a comprehensive approach of combining verbal and non-verbal cues; the latter referring to the use of AI-generated imagery to enhance idiom acquisition and fostering curiosity surrounding the idioms' origins. The study was conducted in the High School "Elite" of Tirana, Albania. The sample included two classes of second-year students, who underwent a written test to examine their level of proficiency. The obtained results turned out in favor of the AI approach, thus emphasizing the importance of the use of imagery in teaching idioms.*

**Key words:** *English, Albanian, idioms, culture, AI imagery*

## 1. Introduction

“Thirty years ago, the term globalization was relatively unknown, but today it seems to be on the tip of everyone’s tongue. Globalization refers to the fact that we all increasingly live in one world, so that individuals, groups and nations become ever more interdependent” (Giddens, 2009). Indeed, due to economic and technological factors, the world is becoming increasingly smaller – what we refer to today as a global village.

In the context where the world that we inhabit is becoming a “melting pot” where distinctions between borders and people are weakening and fading away, two important concepts emerge -multilingualism and multiculturalism, which are inextricably related.

Multilingualism is defined as “the capacity of individuals to use more than one language in social communication whatever their command of those languages”

(Beacco, 2005). As reality attests multilingualism is becoming the norm and the number of multilingual as opposed to monolingual speakers is increasing rapidly.

Similarly, multiculturalism, as a natural consequence of multilingualism refers to the presence and co-existence of various cultures within a certain spatial area (Alakrash et. al, 2022). In this light, the preservation of cultural diversity is fundamental, but it also poses a challenge, specifically because some languages and cultures are held in high regard as opposed to others.

In the light of maintaining cultural harmony – trying to uphold individual distinctions while simultaneously promoting unity – language seems a means to an end. Indeed, language cannot be seen as separate from culture. Kramsch (2000) states that “language embodies cultural reality” and that “language symbolizes cultural reality”. Therefore, because there is no clear-cut dichotomy between language and culture, the question that emerges is how language mirrors culture.

This feature would certainly be most attributable to idioms, which Fraser (1970) defines as “constituents or series of constituents for which the semantic interpretation is not a compositional function of the formatives of which they are composed”, meaning that an idiom is not the sum of the parts that make it up. In this sense, idioms enrich the language making it more colorful.

In addition to their semantic and stylistic values, idioms play a crucial role in depicting people’s national culture. Idioms present the lens through which people view the world. This is especially true for untranslatable idioms, which do not have clear equivalents in other languages. Even in cases where we can speak of partial equivalence, the choice of words in idioms is arbitrary and subject to social and historical factors, which is why an idiom is bound to change in the course of its usage (Dobrovol’skij&Pirainen, 2010).

Ping (2018) goes as far as to say that idiomatic expressions are imbued with psychological features characteristic of the people of a particular nation as in the case of the widely used idiom *piece of cake*, which we use to refer to something that is achieved with little to no effort. Tracing back its origins we would be surprised to learn that the term originated from the cakewalk, a dance competition in which Black enslaved people gave a performance mimicking and mocking the over-refined dance practices of the White plantation owners. The winner of this competition was rewarded with a cake. Similarly, its equivalent in Albanian *bukë e djathë* refers to something that can be easily done, as simple as having access to basic food such as bread and cheese. However, one who is not well acquainted with the Albanian history background gains an entirely new

perspective when he learns that throughout history Albanians have been a poor people and sometimes bread and cheese was all the food that they could afford. In this respect, both these idiomatic expressions conceal interesting historical facts. It is for this reason that Dobrovolskij & Piirainen (2005) claim that idioms contain cultural as well as historical knowledge.

Idioms represent cultural competence, an important component of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Consequently, it is important to determine methods and ways through which idiomatic expressions can be best taught to new learners of English.

## **2. The Use of AI Imagery as a Means to Teach Idioms**

As opposed to the explicit method of teaching idioms, which comprises a general explanation of their semantic meaning, the implicit method leaves room to experiment with different modes of teaching. The effects of imagery on idiom acquisition, for example, prove to be a favorable alternative as opposed to rote teaching and memorization. Indeed, mental imagery is fundamental to teaching and learning idioms, since idioms provoke vivid images in the speaker's and listener's brain.

In his Dual Coding Theory, Paivio (1986) claims that "Human cognition is unique in that it has become specialized for dealing simultaneously with language and with nonverbal objects and events." Therefore, Paivio states that new linguistic information is processed through different channels, which would result in non-verbal cues significantly enhancing the comprehension and retention of new idiomatic expressions in long-term memory. Mental imagery in this sense is the link between abstract perception and concrete visualization; as Gallese & Lakoff (2005) state "some of the same parts of the brain used in seeing are used in visual imagination (producing a mental visualization of something which is not physically present or occurring at the moment of speaking".

In his study, Boers (2008) presents that comprehension scores related to idiom retention increased because of the association of verbal cues with pictures. Consequently, the control group displayed better memorization of the idiomatic expressions as well as a higher disposition to hypothesize about the factors that may have motivated said idioms.

Similarly, Moreno & Mayer (2007) propose that language learners benefit more from a mixed approach of combining words with images as opposed to simply presenting verbal cues.

Advocating for the 'multimedia effect', this paper aims to explore the way that



artificial intelligence-generated images can help Albanian students of English improve the acquisition of English idioms while juxtaposing them with their respective equivalents in Albanian to promote cultural differences in the way we as a people perceive the world. The next section presents the methodology applied in this study.

### **3. Methodology**

The study makes use of qualitative and quantitative methodology implementing the use of structured interviews and written tests.

#### **3.1. Sample**

The study was conducted in “Elite” High School, a private school located in Tirana, Albania. The sample consisted of two classes of second-year students – 46 participants in total. The classes are taught by the same teacher following the same curriculum and they are expected to have acquired a B1 level of English.

#### **3.2. Instrument**

The study’s data was collected through two distinct instruments: a structured interview and a written test. The purpose of the structured interview was to determine the attitude of the students who were taught idioms with the help of AI-generated images. Five one-to-one interviews were conducted. The purpose of the written test was to determine which class had achieved the highest scores in idiom acquisition: the first class, which had been taught through the traditional approach or the second class, the teaching of which was conducted through AI imagery.

#### **3.3. Procedure**

The study employs a comparative approach of two different teaching hours. The first class was taught through the traditional approach – the students were presented with an explicit explanation of the idioms that they had to acquire. The second class was taught through an alternative approach that employed the use of AI-generated imagery as its main teaching realia. This teaching session took place in the computer laboratory. The students were sat in pairs in front of a computer. Using Canva the students were asked to type a specific idiom in English and comment on the picture they received on their screens. After the students’ feedback, I shared my screen on their computer – the screen contained a picture which corresponded to the Albanian equivalent of said idiom. Based on this second picture the students had to guess the corresponding idiom in

Albanian. The pictures attached below are AI-generated images of the idiom “come hell or high water”. Image 3.3.1 was generated in the students’ computer when they typed the idiom on their screens, whereas image 3.3.2 is a visual representation of the Albanian equivalent “*qielli dhe toka të bëhen bashkë*”, which appeared on the students’ computers through screen share. After receiving this second picture, three students were able to brainstorm the meaning with no further clues apart from the images on their screens.



Image 3.3.1



Image 3.3.2

After the classes with both the groups came to an end a structured interview containing 10 questions was administered through a period of approximately two hours. The interview was conducted in English. 5 students from the second class were randomly selected to participate in this one-on-one interview. After the students consented their answers were recorded and their responses were transcribed. The purpose of the interview was to provide an insight on the attitude that the students of the second group had with regard to learning idioms through the use of AI-generated imagery.

Finally, a written test was administered to both groups to determine which group would achieve the highest scores. The test contained a selection of matching, fill in the gaps and translation exercises.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The interview’s results

The results obtained from the structured interview indicate that there is a generally positive perception concerning the use of AI imagery as a tool to learn idiomatic expressions.

It was the imagery and the striking colors [...] that stuck with me. It's like my brain translates the image into Albanian. (Student 3, interview)  
Learning the story behind the idiom was interesting. Some of them I already knew the meaning to. (Student 4, interview)

However, there are cases where students were skeptical whether the use of AI imagery was a foolproof method to learn idioms.

At other times it was harder to infer the meaning from the specific image (Student 3, interview)

In fact, when asked, the students provided some of the idioms that they found difficult to understand even with the help of imagery. Some of them included:

To do somebody in the eye (3 students)

To be down and out (2 students)

To drop a brick (4 students)

To be in the doldrums (5 students)

To get down to brass tacks (5 students)

When they were asked about the reasons underlying their choices they mentioned the following:

These idioms contain prepositions, which are hard to [illustrate] through concrete images. (Student 1, interview)

*Doldrums* is a word [...] and I had never encountered it before, so it was difficult for me to understand the idiom's meaning due to this core word (Student 5, interview)

To me, to be able to understand the meaning of an idiom, the image has to have a connection with the meaning. For example, the AI image of the idiom *to get blood out of the stone* led me to find the Albanian equivalent *të nxjerrësh dhjam nga pleshti*[because] the image represented something which seemed exaggerated. Apart from this, I could draw a parallel line between the two. I can't say the same for *drop a brick*. To me, there is no cultural clue in Albanian to indicate that dropping a brick is to say something embarrassing. (Student 3, interview)

Evidently, when it comes to imagery there are numerous means through which idiomatic expressions can be illustrated e.g. pictures, images, photographs, etc. Therefore, when asked to make a comparison between AI imagery and the aforementioned options the interviewed students opted for AI images for one of the following reasons:

I think that paintings, images, photos need time to be produced and selected to fit the meaning of the idiom. AI is much faster and practical.

(Student 2, interview)

After I had typed the words of the idiom on my computer, a unique image was displayed on my screen. That image felt [personalized]. It was much more engaging as opposed to having the teacher guide us through images in the coursebook. (Student 1, interview)

#### 4.2 The written test's results

The written test consisted of 3 exercises: a fill-in-the-gaps exercise, a matching exercise, and a translation exercise. The fill-in-the-gaps exercise and the matching exercise contained 10 and 20 statements respectively. The translation exercise contained 10 idiomatic expressions to be translated from English to Albanian. Both classes – a total of 46 students – underwent this test. The answers were reviewed and the collected data was used to identify which class had achieved the highest score in idiom acquisition. Through data analysis the average of the traditional and the AI class was calculated and the results are presented and compared using the following charts.

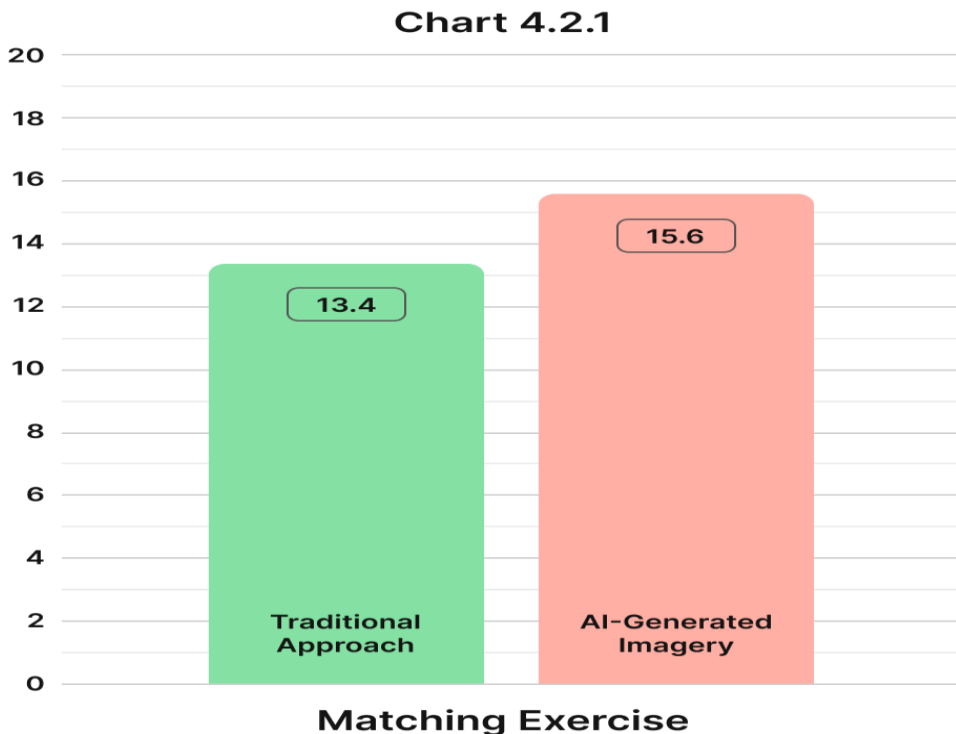


Chart 4.2.1 displays the results of the matching exercise. The class taught through the traditional method scored an average of 13.4 compared to the class taught through the AI approach, which scored an average of 15.6. The results indicate that the AI class scored considerably better and found it easier to identify and match the English idiom with its Albanian equivalent. This indicates that mental imagery plays a considerably important role and facilitates memorization. As Student 3 states in the interview “It’s like my brain translates the image into Albanian.”

**Chart 4.2.2**

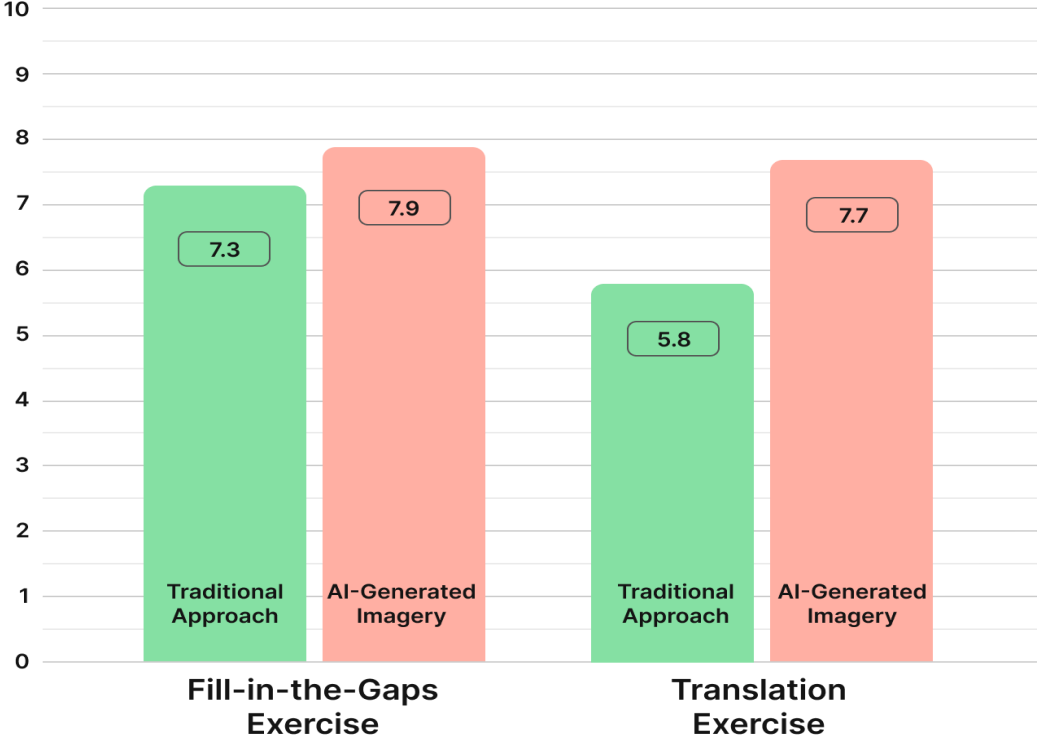


Chart 4.2.2 displays the results of the fill-in-the-gaps and the translation exercise. The class taught through the traditional method scored an average of a 7.3 compared to the class taught through the AI approach, which scored an average of 7.9. In the case of the fill-in-the-gaps exercise the results do not vary considerably. The scores from both classes demonstrated that both teaching

methods proved helpful in facilitating students' comprehension through the use of context.

However, there is a considerable difference in the results of the translation exercise. The class taught through the traditional method scored an average of 5.8 compared to the class taught through the AI approach, which scored an average of 7.7. It is evident that there is a considerable difference between the two scores. As opposed to the matching and fill-in-the-gaps exercise which provided the students with the possible answers, a translation exercise offers no such help; the student either is or is not acquainted with the correct translation. In this case the students taught through the AI approach fared better than those taught through the traditional approach. When asked what helped these students remember the correct translations the responses were as below:

"It is easier to recall how an image made you feel [...] and then create a story for this image in your mind. Even if this story is not relatable to my culture, the contrast helps me remember it".

## 5. Conclusions

Although the study succeeded in implementing an all-encompassing approach of qualitative and quantitative data, it contains certain limitations.

Firstly, the sample size could have been considerably bigger, especially in the case of the interview, in which only 5 out of 46 students participated.

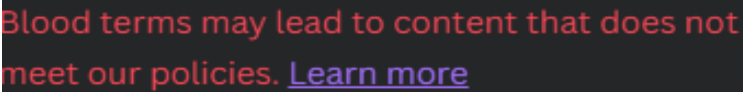
Secondly, students nowadays are naturally inclined toward technology, viewing it as a solution to all their problems and a more appealing alternative. Therefore, some of the interview's answers may be biased.

Finally, it is important to take into consideration that the study was conducted in a private school, which has the necessary funds and facilities to make the AI-teaching approach possible (personalized computers, technology laboratory, AI apps, etc). Therefore, it may yet take time to find this teaching approach implemented in public schools as well.

Before implementing this teaching approach future research is needed to determine its advantages and possible disadvantages. Teachers are a valuable source of information in this respect; interviewing them would provide interesting insights into the usefulness of technology in the classroom and its correlation with student acquisition.

Additionally, it is fundamental to consider the ethical aspects of the students' use of technology. For example, one of the students decided to look up the idiom "*to have blood on your hands*" on Canva. Naturally, students are not expected to be exposed to graphic imagery and this case raises concerns related to the

unsupervised use of AI imagery. Fortunately, Canva, as image 5.1 indicates, does not provide illustrations of graphic content. This fact plays a crucial role in considering the correct AI search engine choice when it comes to teaching young students.



Blood terms may lead to content that does not meet our policies. [Learn more](#)

Image 5.1

In conclusion, the results demonstrated that there is a significantly higher correlation between the use of AI imagery and higher scores in idiom acquisition in Albanian students. The study affirms the fact that mental imagery is a crucial factor in enhancing memorization and acquisition. However, it is important to note that this study does not, in any way, promote AI imagery as the sole alternative to English idiom acquisition. It implies, however, that AI – when used judiciously – can be an important ally in English Language Teaching.

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# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A BENEFIT OR THREAT FOR TRANSLATORS: A CASE STUDY OF GOOGLE TRANSLATE

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## **Abstract**

*Artificial intelligence is widely used in different fields and professions and has therefore impacted and changed them. There is also a tremendous impact on the translation profession. It is believed that artificial intelligence technology will replace human translators. This article will shed light about the impact of translation technology on professionals and it aims to show that artificial intelligence is a benefit or help to human translators rather than a threat or challenge. The aim is to give an analysis of how artificial intelligence in neural machine translation, using Google Translate has impacted translators and the process of translation and how this impact has changed the role of translators. This paper will first address translation technology in the theoretical part, describing and introducing AI, computer-aided translations tools and machine translation, followed by analyses of the connection between AI and the translation profession along with studying the new future role of translator and post-editing. Then the research is introduced on the quality of Google Translate. The research part consists of research design, the questionnaire and BLEU score which it is a machine-powered evaluation system for assessing the similarity of machine-translated texts in comparison with human translations. After the presentation of the collected data, there is the analysis. The participants' elaborations and observations of Google Translate output and human translations are analyzed in technical and literary texts and it is assessed the quality of human and Google Translations and finally pointed out the pros and cons of AI translation versus human translation.*

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence, translation technology, human translators, neural machine translation, Google Translate, post-editing, BLEU score*

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, the world is paying attention to the boom of Artificial Intelligence. Technological advances have led to changes in translation as a means of interlingual communication. AI is breaking down language barriers and it is making multilingualism a realistic and achievable goal worldwide. AI translation tools contribute to cross-language understanding and allowing people to bridge communication gaps more effectively.

AI has been used in different fields and professions causing a great impact on

them. Zheng and Zhu (2020:1) state 'Artificial intelligence has a profound impact on the professional translation industry.' AI is believed to be a threat to the translation profession because the impact is immense. The question is if the function of translators will disappear in the future and the human translators will be replaced by technology. There is a prediction that translators will be post-editors.

This article aims to describe the impact of AI on translators and how they adapt with technological advances but they will not be replaced by AI technology. We will see that AI is not a threat to human translators but a benefit for them because it helps them to be faster and more resourceful in the process of translating. Herbig (2019:01) suggests "Human and artificial intelligence need to be integrated in an efficient way to leverage the advantages of both for the translation task'.

This paper will first address translation technology, machine translation and computer-aided translation. Then it will be discussed the impact of AI on the translation profession and most importantly the future role of translators that of post-editing. Then the research is introduced with methodology, data display and analysis. The research involves grading and comparing human and machine translations of technical and literary texts by participants but also their quality is assessed and compared by Bleu score, too.

## **1.Literature review**

**1.1 Translation technology** has been part of this profession for over 70 years. Scheibengraf (2021:1) states "In the 1950s the Georgetown university and IBM the world's very first machine translation system was introduced. The approach was rule-based and lexicographical which means that it relied on pre-programmed rules and dictionaries. It was a revolution although the system was slow and unreliable. Today translation technology is part of the work of professional translators for different types of texts. It is impossible to avoid technology while translating.

Nowadays translation technology includes many computer tools that help the translators. These tools are word processors, spelling, style, grammar checkers, terminology tools and translation memory. (O' Brein, 2020:2). Translation technology has a lot of options and settings and translators can adjust them according to their specific needs. The translator can decide what features should be used. Even though translation technology has improved, it is not fully reliable and translators must give the final touch in order to be of high quality.

Globalization and the market caused the growing use and impact of

technology in translation. When the world is better connected, there is a higher demand for translations because many languages collaborate on world-wide level. There is a great need for translations in a very short period of time, so it is no surprise that technology has such a major impact.

**Machine translation** was introduced 70 years ago and it is fully automated translation without human input. At the beginning machine translation could only provide word-to-word translation and it was revolutionary. Since then, machine translation has improved a lot the quality. Machine translation is considered very useful to non-professional translation because it can produce good translation in non-professional context when a translation is for an individual and used for information purposes.

Nitzke (2019: 3) explains: “While some mistakes like spelling and typing errors hardly ever occur in MT translation output, some mistakes, e.g. syntactical or lexical ones would almost never occur in human translation. There are disadvantages and advantages of this tool and the user can adjust the setting in order in order for the output to be adequate as much as possible. However, it is up to the user to decide how to use the machine translation and when to use it. Peng (2018:2) explains: Machine translation is ideal when you've got a large amount of content that requires fast translation and when you need the general meaning.

**Computer-aided translation** is a computer-driven tool and assistant to the human translator. The first computer-aided translation tool was introduced around four decades ago. Whereas the past decade witnessed neural machine translation. NMT methods replace statistical machine translation. Neural networks only needed a fraction of the memory and whole sentences could be modelled. Google Neural Machine translation was launched in 2016.

Zheng and Zhu (2020:2) explain “Computer-aided Translation (CAT) is a new language translation tool with translator as the center, machine translation and computer translation as auxiliary”. Computer-aided translation technology and tools are still described as being of great help and a benefit to the human translator. The authors explain that this technology is low cost and high efficiency and so computer-aided translation technology has become the main technology for cross language communication in everyday life, work, scientific research and other fields.

Kornacki (2018:103,104) explains: “No longer is it meant to replace human translators, instead it is to support their knowledge and skills in producing high quality translations”. The aim of this technology is to support the knowledge and work of human translators than being a threat for the human translator.

Herbig (2019:1) suggests “The combination of AI and human intelligence leads to faster translation of higher quality” which results with a higher productivity rate but only when the combination is successful. This means that the human translator is much needed even though the technology is developing.

## **1.2 Google Translate**

Google translate is the most advanced AI translation technology and it is a multilingual neural machine translation service developed by Google to translate texts, documents and websites. It offers a website interface, a mobile app and an API.

Google translate can translate multiple forms of text and media, which includes text, speech and images. Its functions include written words translation, website translation, document translation, speech translation, mobile app translation, image translation, handwritten translation, bilingual conversation translation and transcription.

Google translate can translate written and handwritten words, text, webpages, a document uploaded, a mobile app and a spoken language. One of my favorite functions is the image translation which it identifies text in a picture taken by the users and translates text on the screen instantly by images. For most of its features, Google translate provides the pronunciation, dictionary and listening to translation.

## **1.3 The impact of AI on the role of translators**

Translation has been present since the very beginning of history and language and later it became a profession. The role of translators, unprofessional and professional one, has been ever since crucial. Woodsworth (2012: 3) states “Archaeologists have uncovered Sumerian-Eblaite vocabularies inscribed in clay tablets that are 4,500 years old. These bilingual lists attest the existence of translation even in the remotest history”. The act of translating has been important during human history and has brought great contribution to history which people can access it today. Hence it is difficult and strange to think that translating was needed for 4500 years and in the near future in a few decades, it will be replaced by AI.

Tomasello (2019:110) describes that: “In such a view where translators are more likely to creatively engage in MT systems, it is inevitable that they have to develop new skills, as their role is being completely revolutionized” The role will change and not replaced and translators have to adjust. The author describes: “The notion of the job of translators being fully replaced by machines

is considerably less plausible than the emergence of translators as “translational cyborgs” meaning that there will be a stronger interaction and combination of translators and technology because the need is mutual. It is difficult for the translator to complete tasks without using any type of technology and vice versa. Even AI technology will not give quality translations without the cooperation with human translators.

Kirov and Malamin (2022:1) described artificial intelligence will be mainly used in routine translations belonging to the same type. They (2022:8) describe: “According to respondents, AI mostly affect technical, document, and legal translations (translations with the highest degree of routine work), while it will have the least effect on screenplays and works of fiction in translation, as well as simultaneous and consecutive interpretation, where creativity is at its highest. Considering this, AI would have to reach a very high level of creativity to compete with human translators. Doherty (2016:11) explains that the product of translation has changed and the range of content. Initial translations were technical, political, religious or literary texts. Then the variety of content increased in commercial, marketing, business, product description, support documentation, scientific research, medical documentations. Some areas have developed and there is need to translate digital content such as websites, computer software, technical documents, video games and subtitles. Some tasks and products of initial translators may have vanished, the gap was filled with results of change and adaptation from human society.

#### **1.4 Post -editing**

With technology impacting the translation profession, one can predict that AI will threaten to replace translators. If machine translation brings translation quality to a very high quality, translators would not be needed or they would take the role of post editor and just work on the output rather than translate from scratch. Herbig (2019:1) defines post -editing: 'The process of using a pre-translated text as a basis and improving it to the final translation is called post-editing'. This means a combination of artificial and human intelligence. AI brings draft translations of high quality very quickly; human intelligence ensures the semantical and cultural background. Hence post-editing requires both human and machine. The difference is that human translators are able to translate without AI, while machine translation output needs the human translator to achieve that quality. The question is whether translations that are faster done with AI achieve the same quality as plain human translation. It is important to estimate the situation before deciding which option to use. The human translator

can be faster with different technology tools and it is important to know that the quality does not decrease because of using tools. The decision also depends on the type and target audience which are essential when translating and deciding how the process of translating should be done.

Nitzke and Hansa-Schirra (2021:3) explain that the better the neural machine translation becomes, it is more difficult to spot the errors. As a result of this, there is again more work for the translator. If translating from scratch is slightly longer, but all the required elements for the target audience and client are met, it is more effective and practical to do the translation from scratch rather than post-editing. The authors (2021:27) explain: “This makes, on the one hand the post-editing process even more demanding and leads to more cognitive effort for the post-editor. Hence, post-editors need a lot of training and knowledge for the error types to be able to correct the text.

Post-editing is acceptable for technical texts which require low creativity or when a translation is needed for only informative purposes and there is no need for linguistic professionalism. Post-edited text might not be adequate for the purposes of a specific client or target audience. This means that we should use a combination of post-editing and translating rather than just post-edit. The role of translators appears to be more important than post-editing in professional translation, so it is unlikely that the role of translators will be completely replaced but it is needed a combination of those two roles.

## **2 Methodology**

This research aims to show the impact of AI on translation and translators and how machine translation influenced human translation. The aim of this paper is to show that human translators are needed. Technology and human in translation profession work very well together and that the main producer of translation is the human translator. The human translator can benefit a great deal of from machine translation if he knows how to use it in an adequate way. The main objectives are to evaluate the quality of Google Translate output, to compare the official human translation to Google Translate machine translation by the participants and by the BLEU score and to identify the pros and cons of Google translate in technical and literary texts.

**2.1 The methods** used in this research are quantitative and qualitative. The questionnaire and Bleu score is used for quantitative data and the descriptions, comments and analysis of participants of both translations are used for qualitative data.

## 2.2 The questionnaire

Five participants took part in this research. They have different linguistics background, skills and knowledge. Two of them are English language/translation students. The other three participants are professional translators. One of these three participants is a professor of translation., the other two are professional and licensed translators. All participants are native Albanian speakers.

The five participants were asked to read eight texts. Of these eight texts, four are human translations and other four are Google Translate output. Both translations are of the same two source texts. The participants had to guess which four out of these eight texts are human translations. Secondly, they had to explain their answer considering the choice of words, style, grammar, syntax, impression and the other observations. Then the participants had to evaluate the Google Translate output in comparison with the human translation, similar to the BLEU score. The participants graded Google translate from 10 to 100 considering the similarity of the output with the human translation referring to quality, syntax, style, grammar etc.

The texts have been translated from English to Albanian and from Albanian to English. The texts are technical and literary because they require different approaches. Technical texts require low creativity and terminology while literary texts require a high level of creativity and adaption. The source texts in English and Albanian of the technical translations have been taken from my usual translation work. For the English-Albanian text pair I chose a document from New York Civil Registry office and Albanian to English translation is the certificate of judicial status. The literary source text in English has been taken from 'The old man and the sea by Ernest Hemingway, translated to Albanian by Vedat Kokona and the Albanian literary text has been taken from 'Chronicle in stone" by Ismail Kadare translated into English by Arshi Pipa. The official human translation of the technical texts in Albanian is marked with the number 1 and the accompanied GT output with the number 2. The official human translation of the technical text in English is marked with number 3 and GT with the number 4. The source text is marked with 0. The official human translation of literary text in Albanian is marked with 5 and GT with the number 6 and the official human translation of literary text in English is marked with number 7 and GT with number 8. So, the official human translation and Google translation is listed with the original text on the left of the table, the human translation in the middle and GT on the right.

### 3.Data analysis

Table 1 , The participants' marking of the texts as human or machine translation

	Language Albanian-English, Human/Google Translation	Translation number	Number of the participants marking the text as human translation	Number of the participants marking the text as Google translation
Technical text	Human ENG-ALB	Text 1	3	2
	Google ENG-ALB	Text 2	1	4
	Human ALB-ENG	Text 3	3	2
	Google ALB-ENG	Text 4	1	4
Literary	Human ENG-ALB	Text 5	4	1
	Google ENG-ALB	Text 6	1	4
	Human ALB-ENG	Text 7	3	2
	Google ALB-ENG	Text 8	2	3

As shown in table 1, Two participants believe that human translation is GT output. This is because that machine translation language feels more humanlike and the GT in this text pair ENG-ALB is more adequate. The translation of this language pair is of good quality since it was difficult to distinguish from the human translation. In the text 4, the word “*unconvicted*” for “*has no criminal record*” is semantically and grammatically incorrect and this is the reason that they found easily that it is GT or the translation of the word “*confirmation*” for “*certificate*”. All participants detected some mistakes whether grammatical, semantical and syntactical. The literary human text in Albanian and English was easy to identify because the quality of Google translate output is poor. It is difficult for machine translation to achieve a high quality because literary



translation requires a high level of creativity and adaptations.

Table 2. The participants' evaluation overview of Google Translate output

Participant	Text 2 Technical Eng-Alb	Text 4 Technical Alb-Eng	Text 6 Literary Eng-Alb	Text 8 Literary Alb- Eng	Each participants' Overall score of all texts
Language student	80	60	60	20	55
Professional translator	70	50	50	30	50
Language student	70	70	40	50	57.5
Professional translator	80	60	30	40	52.5
Professor of translation	60	50	30	20	40
Overall score for each text	72	58	42	32	

As shown in Table 2, the language student and the professional translator scored text 2 with 80 and other participants scored 70 while the professor scored 60 of Google translate output of the technical text English to Albanian translation. This means that this text pair of GT works well since it has an average of 72 of all the participants. The lowest score for the participants is the translation of Albanian into English of literary text. Google translate is so poor in creativity, semantics and grammar. It is difficult for machine translation to consider the contextual and cultural aspect.

### 3.1 BLEU score

For the BLEU score, the website <http://www.letsmt.eu/Bleu.aspx> is used. Brownlee (2017) explains “BLEU OR bilingual evaluation understudy is a score for comparing a candidate translation of text to one or more reference translations and it is a metric for evaluating a generated sentences to a reference sentences. The BLEU Score evaluates translation and the quality of machine translations in comparison to the chosen human translation as a reference.

Vashee (2021:1) explains: “Bleu does not even try to measure translation quality but rather focuses on string similarity. The system measures the quality of translation by analyzing the correspondence between a machine output and a human translation. It is clear that the machine evaluation differs from the human evaluation. The machine uses algorithms and references for evaluating while human uses linguistic skills.

Table 3 Comparison of the BLEU score and the participants' scores of the text pairs-evaluation of Google Translate output.

Text Pair	BLEU Score	Participants' average scores
Technical text pair A English-Albanian	40.2/100	72/100
Technical text pair B Albanian-English	84.07/100	58/100
Literary text pair A English-Albanian	7.77/100	32/100
Literary text pair B Albanian-English	18.32/100	42/100

Although the BLEU score and participants' evaluation differ, it does not mean that one is more correct than the other. A score of 58 and 40 out of 100 is considered acceptable translation while 7.77 and 18.32 out of 100 mean that the basics are understandable but there are significant errors and the quality is poor. As shown in table 3, the evaluation of BLEU score and the evaluation done by the five participants are not compatible. BLEU score evaluates the quality of machine translation by comparing it to human reference while the manual evaluation shows a higher score because humans have more references available or knowledge. Humans are able to evaluate both human and machine translations while the BLEU score is designed to evaluate only machine translations.

## Conclusion

Translation is over 4000 years old and has during all this time grown and has had great influence on creating history. The importance of translators has never faded. Nowadays the significance of this profession does not seem to weaken although the impact of AI is immense. Different translation technologies such as computer-aided translation tools and machine translations were created as simulating human intelligence and abilities. Those technologies were not

created to represent a threat to the translation profession but rather to be an additional help or benefit to the human translator. It is clear that technology has affected this profession and that translators are involved with translation technology every day but the main producer of translation is the human and not the machine.

The study found that Google machine translation technology can be of great use when it comes to technical texts. Such texts will be post-edited by professional translators because the output represent a good base for post-editing. If the time for post-editing is longer then translating from scratch is suggested, with technological help.

The research showed that participants of different backgrounds and language levels could distinguish between human translation and a machine translation. Although the participants could recognize machine translation in technical texts, they still found the texts useful and informative in both languages whereas the Google translations of literary text in Albanian and English received a lower score. Participants described the presence of many errors in syntax, semantics and grammar. They think and believe that machine translation is acceptable but not without human intervention.

Technology in translation profession should not be perceived as a threat to the human translators but rather a benefit, help or a welcomed change. There is no fear because human translators are able to create translations of good quality even without technology but machine translation is not able to create translations of the same quality without humans. Human translators are using technology a lot because of the social and economic environment. They use machine translation because it enables them to translate faster and, in this way, they can keep up with other translators, the market and the duration for delivering the final product. With the phenomenon of globalization, technology has an immense impact on every aspect of modern life. The translation profession needs to follow up on new requirements to serve to people.

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# EDUCATING STUDENTS IN CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL IMAGES: UTILIZING THE DIG METHOD FOR VISUAL LITERACY ENHANCEMENT

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## **Abstract**

*In today's digital age, the ability to critically analyze digital images is an essential skill for students navigating an increasingly visual world. This paper explores an innovative approach to enhancing visual literacy through the implementation of the DIG (Digital Image Guide) method. The DIG method provides a structured framework for students to deconstruct and analyze digital images, encompassing elements such as composition, context, and visual rhetoric. By integrating this method into educational curricula across various disciplines, professors can empower students to develop a deeper understanding of the messages conveyed through digital imagery. Another aim of this study is to delve into the theoretical underpinnings of the DIG method, drawing from research in visual literacy, media studies, and educational psychology. Additionally, it discusses practical strategies for implementing the DIG method in classroom instruction, including hands-on activities, multimedia resources, and collaborative projects. Furthermore, it examines the potential impact of incorporating the DIG method on students' critical thinking skills, media literacy, and ability to engage with digital media responsibly. Through this approach, professors can equip students with the necessary tools to navigate the complex landscape of digital media with discernment, creativity, and cultural awareness.*

**Key words:** *visual literacy, digital images, critical analysis, education, DIG method.*

## **Introduction**

The integration of digital technologies in education has become increasingly essential, particularly in enhancing students' critical analysis skills regarding digital images. The DIG method, which stands for Describe, Interpret, and Generate, serves as a framework for fostering visual literacy among students. This method encourages learners to engage deeply with digital images,

promoting critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for navigating the complex visual landscape of the digital age. The importance of visual literacy is underscored by the rapid proliferation of digital media, which necessitates a more nuanced understanding of how images can convey meaning, influence perceptions, and shape narratives. Research indicates that the effective use of digital resources can significantly enhance students' critical thinking abilities. For instance, studies have shown that students who engage with interactive digital modules exhibit improved critical thinking skills, as these resources stimulate curiosity and encourage inquiry (Syahfitri, 2024). This aligns with the findings of , who emphasize that teaching materials designed to include critical thinking indicators can familiarize students with analytical processes (Mahmudah et al., 2023). By incorporating the DIG method into the curriculum, educators can leverage digital technologies to create a more dynamic learning environment that fosters critical analysis of visual content. Moreover, the role of educators in facilitating this process cannot be overstated. Teachers' competence in utilizing digital resources is crucial for instilling historical thinking and critical analysis skills in students (Vijayakumar & Ahmad, 2023). The positive relationship between teachers' attitudes towards digital tools and the development of critical thinking skills highlights the need for professional development in digital pedagogy (Stemberger & Konrad, 2021). As educators become more adept at integrating digital technologies into their teaching practices, they can better guide students in critically engaging with digital images, thus enhancing their visual literacy.

The development of digital teaching materials that incorporate local wisdom and context-specific content has also been shown to improve students' critical thinking skills (Badiah, 2024). Such materials not only make learning more relevant but also encourage students to analyze images within their cultural and social contexts. This approach is particularly effective in promoting critical thinking, as it allows students to draw connections between their experiences and the content they are studying. By utilizing the DIG method alongside culturally relevant materials, educators can create a more inclusive and engaging learning experience that resonates with students.

In addition to the content of digital materials, the pedagogical strategies employed in teaching critical analysis of digital images are vital. For example, the use of problem-based learning and collaborative projects can enhance students' engagement and motivation, leading to deeper critical analysis (Nurdin, 2023). The incorporation of online discussion forums has also been shown to facilitate higher-order thinking and analysis skills among students, as

they are encouraged to articulate their thoughts and engage with diverse perspectives (Krish, 2021). These strategies align well with the DIG method, as they promote active learning and critical engagement with visual content.

Furthermore, the emphasis on developing digital literacy alongside critical thinking skills is essential in today's educational landscape. The interconnectedness of these competencies means that fostering one can significantly enhance the other (Manggopa, 2023). Educators must adopt a holistic approach that integrates digital literacy into the curriculum while simultaneously promoting critical analysis of digital images. This can be achieved through the careful selection of digital tools and resources that encourage exploration and inquiry, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive understanding of visual media.

The challenges faced by educators in teaching critical thinking through digital means are noteworthy. Many teachers report a lack of experience and training in effectively integrating critical thinking into their lessons (Mugisha et al., 2021). This gap highlights the need for targeted professional development programs that equip educators with the necessary skills and strategies to teach critical analysis of digital images effectively. By addressing these challenges, educators can create a more supportive environment for students to develop their critical thinking skills. Moreover, the role of assessment in fostering critical thinking cannot be overlooked.

Traditional assessment methods often prioritize rote memorization over critical analysis, which can hinder students' ability to engage meaningfully with digital images (Cheshire et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to develop assessment strategies that evaluate students' critical thinking skills and their ability to analyze visual content. This could involve the use of rubrics that focus on students' analytical processes and their capacity to articulate their interpretations of digital images. In conclusion, educating students in critical analysis of digital images through the DIG method presents a valuable opportunity to enhance visual literacy and critical thinking skills. By integrating digital technologies, culturally relevant materials, and effective pedagogical strategies, educators can create a rich learning environment that encourages students to engage critically with the visual media they encounter. The ongoing professional development of teachers, alongside the implementation of innovative assessment methods, will further support this endeavor, ensuring that students are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the digital age.

The Importance of *visual literacy* encompasses the ability to interpret, analyze, and create visual messages. As digital images proliferate across social media,

news outlets, and educational platforms, the need for students to develop visual literacy skills is paramount. Research indicates that visual literacy is not merely about understanding images but involves a deeper engagement with the context, purpose, and implications of visual content (Syahfitri, 2024). In this regard, the DIG method serves as a framework that encourages students to critically engage with images by guiding them through a systematic process of description, interpretation, and generation.

### 1. The DIG Method

The DIG method consists of the following steps of critical reading of digital images (Manarin, Carey, Rathburn, & Ryland, 2015) cited by Dana Statton Thompson University Libraries, Murray State University, Murray, KY, USA:

The steps of critical reading of digital images	
<b>Analyzing</b>	<b>Review and describe the image.</b> <i>Who, what, when and where do you see represented in the image?</i>
	<b>Review the text.</b> <i>What textual information is provided (caption, date and/or headline)?</i>
	<b>React to the image.</b> <i>How does the image make you feel?</i>
<b>Interpreting</b>	<b>Determine the source</b> (creator, publisher and/or website) of the image. <i>Who created the image? Who owns and/or published the image?</i>
	<b>Determine the message of the image.</b> <i>What is the message? Who is the intended audience?</i>
	<b>Search for other online sources that further contextualize the image.</b> <i>How does context (social, cultural, historical and/or political) inform the image?</i>
<b>Evaluating</b>	<b>Think back to the first reaction to the image.</b> <i>How might your reaction impact how you view the image?</i>
	<b>Refer back to the other websites that have published the image.</b> <i>Has the image been misrepresented or manipulated?</i>
	<b>Assess the reliability and accuracy of the image.</b> <i>Is the image reliable and accurate? Why or why not?</i>
<b>Comprehending</b>	<i>What judgments can you make about the image based on your evaluations above and the available information?</i>
	<i>Do any of your biases or point of views impact how you view the image? If so, how?</i>



<i>What is the purpose of this image (to inform, to instruct, to sell, to entertain, to enjoy, and/or to persuade)? Why do you think so?</i>
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### **1.1 Pedagogical strategies for implementing the DIG Method**

To effectively implement the DIG method, educators can employ various pedagogical strategies that promote active learning and critical engagement. One effective approach is project-based learning, where students work collaboratively on projects that require them to analyze and create digital images. This method encourages teamwork and fosters a deeper understanding of visual literacy as students share insights and critique each other's work (Mahmudah et al., 2023). Additionally, integrating technology into the classroom can enhance the learning experience.

For instance, using digital tools such as image editing software or online platforms for collaborative projects allows students to experiment with visual content creation. This hands-on approach not only makes learning more engaging but also helps students develop technical skills that are essential in the digital age (Vijayakumar & Ahmad, 2023). Furthermore, incorporating discussions and debates around controversial images can stimulate critical thinking. By analyzing images that evoke strong reactions, students can practice articulating their thoughts and defending their interpretations. This not only enhances their analytical skills but also prepares them for navigating the complexities of visual media in real-world contexts (Štemberger & Konrad, 2021).

### **1.2 The Role of educators in fostering critical analysis**

Educators play a crucial role in fostering critical analysis skills among students. Professional development programs that focus on digital pedagogy can equip teachers with the necessary skills to effectively implement the DIG method in their classrooms. Research indicates that teachers who are confident in their use of digital tools are more likely to engage students in critical thinking activities (Badiah, 2024). Therefore, ongoing training and support for educators are essential to ensure that they can guide students in developing their visual literacy skills. Moreover, creating a supportive classroom environment that encourages open dialogue and exploration is vital. Educators should foster a culture of inquiry where students feel comfortable sharing their interpretations and challenging each other's perspectives. This collaborative atmosphere not only enhances critical thinking but also promotes empathy and understanding among

students (Nurdin, 2023).

## **2. Visual literacy in educational practice**

In light of the digital transformation in education, the daily use of visuals has become increasingly important. With digital technologies now essential for managing educational processes, visual elements are as significant in learning as they are in everyday communication and entertainment. Lackovic (2020) argues that limiting the role of images to mass thinking and media manipulation is overly simplistic, which has led to the undervaluing of visuals in education. Kedra and Zakeviciute (2019) suggest that visual-based teaching methods empower learners by offering new opportunities for sharing knowledge. However, effective visual education requires teachers who are both skilled and visually literate. Blummer (2016) highlighted various visual literacy initiatives implemented in academic institutions, showcasing best practices in promoting visual literacy. These efforts include developing workshops and digital tools, creating tutorials on visual literacy, discussing the ethics of digital photography, and offering resources that teach visual design principles and provide opportunities to practice visual analysis. Students were also introduced to a standardized visual literacy vocabulary and encouraged to create visual arguments using media such as film, television, and photography. Although these initiatives emphasize the importance of visual literacy in higher education, the main conclusion is that they lack a unified instructional approach.

### **2.1 How we can develop visual competencies**

To develop visual competencies, especially in an educational setting, a structured approach is necessary. Here are several strategies for fostering visual literacy and competencies:

1. ***Integrate visuals into the curriculum:*** Incorporating images, infographics, videos, and other visual materials into lessons helps students engage with and interpret visual content. Assignments that focus on analyzing visual elements like composition and symbolism encourage deeper visual understanding.
2. ***Develop visual vocabulary:*** Introducing students to visual design concepts such as contrast, balance, and scale helps them build a strong visual vocabulary, enabling them to critique and discuss visuals more effectively. Additionally, creating visual arguments through media like photography and graphic design allows students to communicate ideas visually.

3. ***Foster critical thinking about visuals:*** Teaching students to critically analyze visuals in media, including their meanings and biases, encourages them to question how visuals influence opinions. Discussions on the ethical use of visual content also highlight important topics such as copyright and truthful representation.
4. ***Hands-on practice and creation:*** Providing opportunities for students to use digital tools and software like Photoshop or Canva allows them to create their own visual content, reinforcing design principles through practice. Assigning visual projects like infographics and multimedia presentations further develops their visual skills.
5. ***Workshops and tutorials:*** Visual literacy workshops and tutorials can introduce students to the basics of visual design and digital media creation. Collaborative projects, where students critique and create visuals together, foster peer learning and diverse perspectives.
6. ***Incorporate technology and social media:*** Educators can leverage social media platforms to teach students how to critically engage with curated visual content. Integrating technologies like augmented and virtual reality can also offer immersive visual experiences that enhance spatial and visual understanding.
7. ***Encourage reflective practice:*** Encouraging students to keep visual journals and create portfolios allows them to reflect on and track their growth in visual literacy. These reflective practices help them continuously improve their visual skills (Ertmer, P. A., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. T. 2010)

### **3. Possibilities and potential applications in different fields of study**

Teaching students how to critically analyze images opens the door to more profound discussions within lessons or modules. By anchoring a lesson with visuals, educators emphasize the fact that modern communication is increasingly visual, especially in the age of digital technologies and social media. Just as we apply critical thinking to text, it's essential to apply the same analytical approach to visual media.

Using the DIG method, students learn not only to critically engage with images but also to explore them on a deeper level. This is crucial for helping students understand the significant role that images play in today's communication landscape. In an era where students are constantly inundated with information,

both inside and outside the classroom, they need effective tools to process and make sense of it.

Incorporating visuals such as photos, and infographics, and encouraging students to create their own visual content strengthens their visual literacy. This enhanced literacy enables them to process information more effectively, think critically, collaborate with others, develop their creativity, and express themselves with clarity and confidence.

## Conclusion

The DIG method offers a valuable framework for enhancing students' critical analysis of digital images, thereby promoting visual literacy in the digital age. By guiding students through the processes of description, interpretation, and generation, educators can empower them to engage thoughtfully with the visual content they encounter. Implementing effective pedagogical strategies and providing ongoing support for educators are essential steps in fostering a generation of critically aware individuals capable of navigating the complexities of visual media. As digital images continue to shape our understanding of the world, the importance of equipping students with the skills to analyze and interpret these images cannot be overstated.

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# THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT IN SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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## ***Abstract***

*Acquiring a second language following the first presents a formidable challenge, with language instruction playing a pivotal role in facilitating this journey. Teachers must possess a comprehensive understanding of the diverse stages students undergo during language learning, allowing them to adapt assessments accordingly. Effective assessment is essential for gauging student progress and evaluating the success of instructional strategies. This article explores the complexities involved in assessing second and foreign language learners, emphasizing the critical role of evaluation in language teaching. It underscores the necessity for teachers to be familiar with the developmental stages of learners and the importance of tailoring assessments to each phase. The discussion highlights the increasing integration of peer and self-assessment alongside traditional teacher-led evaluation methods. The literature review sheds light on the assessment of second/foreign language teachers, reinforcing the ongoing need for thorough evaluations to optimize language learning outcomes*

***Keywords:*** *Assessment; Testing; Evaluation; Foreign Language Teaching*

## **Introduction**

In second and foreign language education, assessment is a vital component that significantly affects both teaching efficacy and student achievement (Brown, 1990). An effectively designed assessment process not only measures what students have learned but also provides critical feedback to refine instructional practices (Harmer, 2015). Evaluation is part of an ongoing cycle, ensuring alignment between teaching methods, learning materials, and objectives to enhance language learning outcomes (Sarıçoban, 2012).

A deep understanding of the stages of language acquisition is crucial for teachers, as it enables them to create assessments tailored to each phase of the learning journey (Brown, 1990). This personalized approach enhances the educational experience by addressing individual learner needs (Sarıçoban & Hasdemir, 2012). Furthermore, effective assessment transcends traditional

testing methods, incorporating formative and summative evaluations, as well as peer and self- assessments, to provide a holistic view of student progress (Harmer, 2015).

These diverse assessment forms offer a broader perspective on student learning while empowering learners to actively engage in their development (Brown, 1990). By integrating various assessment types into the teaching process, educators can foster a dynamic and responsive learning environment that supports ongoing growth (Sarıçoban & Hasdemir, 2012). This comprehensive approach to assessment is vital for the continued success of language teaching programs.

## Literature Review

### **1.1 Definition of Evaluation**

"Evaluation" refers to the determination of the value of a subject. When the value of an item is uncertain, specialists are often consulted to assess its quality. In educational contexts, evaluation assesses the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods. Brown (2001) describes a test as a procedure designed to elicit performance from students to measure their fulfillment of predetermined criteria. This indicates that the purpose of a test is to quantify and provide precise data regarding a test taker's language proficiency. Different tests aim to evaluate learners' proficiency across various skills and fields.

### **1.2 Definition of Assessment**

Let's start by understanding what assessment entails and why it's so vital. Assessment isn't just about tests and grades; it's a comprehensive process that informs teaching and learning. By assessing students' progress, educators can tailor their teaching methods, ultimately optimizing learning outcomes for all. Assessment, however, encompasses a broader concept than mere testing. It is an ongoing process that involves observing, recording information, testing, scoring, and interpreting results to make informed decisions about learners' progress. Frank (2012) defines

assessment as the process of identifying learners' needs, tracking their progress, and evaluating instructional effectiveness. Skinner (2017) elaborates that assessment is any structured method of obtaining information from tests and other sources in order to draw conclusions about individuals, objects, or programs. Assessment serves as a continuous process that supports teachers in making informed decisions about teaching and learning while identifying areas for future improvement. It helps to recognize any gaps in the learning process,



focusing on the final product of learning. Teachers utilize assessment data to make objective judgments about learners' achievements, informing future instructional decisions. Evaluation, in contrast, primarily focuses on scores to make reasonable conclusions regarding the quality of the educational process. According to Messick (1989), assessment and evaluation involve creating and employing appropriate methods to gather data about learning, converting that data into statistics relevant to learning stages, and interpreting indicators to make informed judgments and necessary actions. Assessment can be classified as either formal or informal, with the distinction lying in the evaluation method. Informal assessment refers to unplanned evaluative feedback aimed at enhancing performance without recording grades or making formal judgments about a learner's competency. In contrast, formal assessment involves systematic processes for evaluating student performance or comparing individual performances. These evaluations can be formative or summative. Formative evaluations are integral to the learning process, identifying areas for improvement by assessing the validity of employed methodologies and strategies. Summative evaluations, however, summarize students' final scores for a course or semester. Harmer (2015) notes that formative assessment aims to improve curriculum, while summative assessment evaluates overall curriculum results. The Assessment for Improvement (AFI), a UK-based organization promoting test development for educational purposes, outlines several principles for effective assessment so-called Assessment for Educational Purposes (AFEP). Some of the principles for effective assessments are:

- Efficient planning of instruction and learning.
- Attention to students' learning processes.
- Acknowledgment of the emotional component of evaluation and proceeding with tact.
- Recognition of the importance of student motivation, as data presentation and exam administration can impact attitudes toward learning.
- Encouragement of understanding objectives and standards.
- Consultation with students regarding evaluation criteria to ensure comprehension.
- Assistance for students in understanding how to improve.
- Encouragement of self-evaluation among students.
- Recognition of the full spectrum of students' achievements.

### **1.3 Clarifying the distinction between assessment and evaluation.**

While these terms are often used interchangeably, they serve distinct purposes. As outlined by Brown (1990), assessments not only gauge learning but also establish expectations for students. Let's explore how these functions shape effective teaching practices. Assessment is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information about students' learning and performance. Its primary goal of assessment is to improve student learning by providing ongoing feedback that can be used to enhance the teaching process and help students identify their strengths and areas for improvement. Assessment methods can be achieved through quizzes, observations, class activities, assignments, peer reviews, self-assessments, and informal questioning and it focuses on individual student progress, understanding, and skill development.

Evaluation on the other hand is the process of making judgments about the value or worth of a student's performance or educational program.

The primary goal of evaluation is to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of instructional programs, methodologies, and educational outcomes. It often involves making decisions about grades, placement, advancement, and certification. It can be used through final exams, standardized tests, end-of-term projects, performance reviews, and program reviews and it focuses on overall achievement, effectiveness of instruction, and program outcomes.

### **1.4 How to Integrate Assessment and Evaluation into Teaching**

Effective teaching involves the integration of both assessment and evaluation. By using assessments, teachers can gather detailed information about student learning and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. Evaluations, on the other hand, help in making final judgments about student performance and program success, ensuring that educational goals are met. As outlined by Brown (1990), assessments not only gauge learning but also establish expectations for students. Some functions that shape Effective Assessment Strategies to Enhance Second Language Teaching are:

**Diagnostic Assessment's** purpose is to identify students' current proficiency levels and learning needs. Methods that we can use with Diagnostic Assessments are Placement tests, initial interviews, and surveys. Through the Diagnostic Approach, we design instruction to meet individual students' needs right from the beginning.

**Formative Assessments'** purpose is to monitor student progress and inform ongoing instruction. You can use Quizzes, in-class activities, oral presentations, and peer reviews and provide immediate feedback to students, and adjust teaching strategies as needed.

**Summative Assessments'** purpose is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional period. You can use final exams, end-of-unit tests, and major projects to measure overall achievement and the effectiveness of the students and the program.

**Peer Assessments'** purpose is to foster collaborative learning and self-awareness among students. Methods to use through peer assessment are peer reviews of written work, group presentations, and collaborative projects to enhance critical thinking, provide diverse feedback, and build communication skills.

**Self-Assessments'** purpose is to encourage students to reflect on their learning and progress. Students can use methods such as learning journals, self-evaluation checklists, and goal-setting activities to promote learner autonomy, self-regulation, and motivation.

**The portfolio assessments'** purpose is to showcase students' ongoing development and achievements by collecting their written assignments, audio recordings, and project work to provide a comprehensive view of student progress and highlight strengths and areas for improvement.

**Performance-Based Assessments'** purpose is to evaluate students' ability to use the language in real-life situations. They can use this approach through role-plays, simulations, and real-world tasks such as interviews or presentations to assess practical language skills and prepare students for authentic language use.

**Technology-Enhanced Assessments'** purpose is to integrate digital tools to facilitate and diversify assessment methods. This approach can be enhanced through online quizzes, language learning apps, and virtual simulations to provide interactive and engaging assessments, accommodate different learning styles, and offer immediate feedback.

## **1.5 Principles of Assessment**

Assessment plays a fundamental role in language teaching. Without proper assessment, drawing accurate conclusions about students' competence and determining whether they are ready to progress or require further instruction is impossible. Buck (2001) states that the primary goal of language testing is to create learning opportunities for both examiners and students. A test must be reliable, valid, and fair, providing valuable educational opportunities. An

effective exam enables educators to draw relevant conclusions about a test-taker's proficiency in language communication. Generally, tests should possess four essential characteristics: practicality, reliability, validity, and fairness. These factors determine whether a test is effective enough to inform educational decisions.

### **1.5.1 Practicality**

Coombe (2018, p. 34) defines practicality as the resources available to language assessment creators and developers throughout the processes of producing, presenting, scoring, and utilizing their tests. These resources include time allocated for assessment activities, as well as human, material, and financial resources. According to Brown (2001, p. 386), the practicality of a test is influenced by whether it is designed with norms or criteria in mind. Norm-referenced tests (NRT) compare performance outcomes among a broad group of students, while criterion-referenced tests (CRT) evaluate students' performance against specific criteria they are familiar with and have practiced.

### **1.5.2 Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of test results. A reliable test should yield the same outcomes under identical circumstances. Test designers can improve reliability by ensuring that test-takers comprehend the instructions, minimizing viable responses, and establishing consistent testing conditions for all test-takers. Reliability is demonstrated when a particular test is administered to the same test-taker multiple times, yielding consistent results. Scorer reliability refers to the consistency of test scores. Brown (1991) notes that scorer dependability can be enhanced by carefully designing an analytical scoring system.

### **1.5.3 Validity**

Validity refers to the accuracy and significance of the conclusions drawn from a test. For a test to be valid, it must accurately reflect the test taker's competence in the domain it aims to measure. There are three types of validity:

- *Content validity* ensures that the items or tasks tested represent the knowledge or ability area claimed by the test. In formal classroom settings, these items should align with the curriculum.
- *Construct validity* measures the degree to which a test accurately assesses what it claims to measure, ensuring that the test-taker's score correlates with another assessment of the same knowledge aspect.

□ *Face validity* refers to the subjective perception of validity, reliability, and fairness of a test among individuals, reflecting how candidates view it as an effective measurement of their ability.

## 1.6 Fairness

Although fairness lacks a precise technical definition, in a diverse community, it assumes that all test-takers receive equal treatment during examinations. This concept of fairness encompasses equal opportunities for learning, ensuring learners have the same quality and quantity of instruction in the material being examined. Fairness also relates to equal treatment throughout the examination process, eliminating all forms of inequality and favoritism. Finally, fairness pertains to test outcomes, where scores reflect each test-taker's performance based solely on their abilities.

## 1.7 Types of Tests

Teachers and English language learners typically encounter five primary types of tests, each with distinct goals determined by the results:

### □ **Placement Assessments**

These tests determine a student's understanding level, guiding educational institutions in selecting appropriate courses.

### □ **Competency Assessments**

Commonly used to evaluate applicants' performance and ability before significant public examinations.

### □ **Performance Assessments**

Measure students' progress concerning the course material or curriculum studied.

### □ **Diagnostic Assessments**

A diagnostic assessment aids in identifying a student's strengths, weaknesses, and difficulties, benefiting both teachers and students (Coombe, 2018, p. 17).

### □ **Ability Assessments**

These aim to measure a student's potential to successfully acquire a foreign language (Brown, 2001).

## 3. Discussion

Language teachers often favor traditional assessment types due to their perceived practicality and ease of preparation. Traditional assessment techniques include various item types, such as true/false, correcting underlined words, multiple-choice, matching, and cloze passages. Despite their widespread use, paper-and-pencil tests may not effectively measure students' competence.

Furthermore, traditional assessment systems can pose fairness issues, as they often rely on rigid testing frameworks that may not accurately reflect diverse students' abilities. Students with different learning styles or backgrounds may not perform well under these standardized conditions, leading to inequitable evaluations of their skills. Conversely, alternative assessment methods can provide a more accurate representation of students' abilities. These methods include portfolios, projects, and performances that reflect students' skills in real-world contexts. For instance, portfolios allow students to demonstrate their proficiency over time, showcasing various work samples that illustrate their learning progress. Performance assessments, such as oral presentations, enable teachers to evaluate students' abilities in more dynamic ways, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of their language skills. Additionally, the incorporation of self-assessment and peer assessment fosters learner autonomy and active engagement in the learning process. By encouraging students to reflect on their learning and provide feedback to peers, teachers create a collaborative learning environment where students take ownership of their language development. This approach not only enhances assessment quality but also promotes critical thinking and metacognitive skills, essential for lifelong learning.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In conclusion, effective assessment plays a vital role in second and foreign language education, offering critical insights into student progress and guiding instructional practices to improve learning outcomes. By recognizing the various stages of language acquisition and employing diverse assessment methods, educators can foster an inclusive environment that addresses the unique needs of all learners. Ongoing evaluation and refinement of these strategies ensure that language instruction remains adaptable and effective, paving the way for student success in their language journeys. Moreover, this study has underscored the importance of vocabulary choice in digital news media, particularly in comparing traditional and social media platforms. The findings indicate that vocabulary significantly impacts the coherence of news narratives and shapes audience perception and engagement. As news consumption continues to evolve, it becomes increasingly vital for journalists and media organizations to grasp the subtleties of vocabulary use to maintain credibility and relevance. The necessity for media literacy among consumers also emerged as a key theme. An informed audience is better equipped to navigate the complexities of contemporary news, allowing them to critically

assess the content they encounter. By enhancing awareness of how vocabulary influences coherence, educators, policymakers, and media professionals can help cultivate a more discerning public. The implications of this research extend beyond academic discussions. In an era marked by the prevalence of misinformation, the thoughtful application of language serves as a crucial mechanism for ensuring clarity and truthfulness in reporting. Future research could delve into the intricate relationship between vocabulary choice and audience response across diverse demographics and cultural contexts, further enriching our understanding of effective communication in the digital landscape. As we move forward, it remains essential to explore the impact of vocabulary on coherence in digital media. By adopting a comprehensive approach to language use, we can improve the quality of shared information and nurture a more informed society, ultimately contributing to healthier democratic discourse.

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# TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN LOW SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## **Abstract**

*The real world provides a multitude of contexts. The classroom is much more limited in that respect. TBL (Task-Based Language) teaching is an approach that can be used creatively with different types of curricula and for different purposes.*

*In order to investigate the application and benefits of this approach in teaching, an analysis of the curriculum for grade VIII was performed, as well as the representation of teaching through tasks in them. A comparative analysis was performed between a control and an experimental group, in which 58 students were included - 29 in the experimental group and 29 in the control group. The field research lasted for three weeks, during which period the students had three English lessons per week. In the experimental group, TBL tasks appropriate to their knowledge were used, all in order to better understand the grammatical parts, as well as the vocabulary that they repeated and studied during that period.*

*At the beginning of the research, a test was announced to two groups with which they would repeat the material studied in the fifth module (units 9 and 10). The test was given to both groups at the end of the research. After the end of the research period, the experimental group showed better results.*

*This paper is intended to make it easier for teachers to apply task-based language teaching to make their teaching more effective and make learning more fun for their students.*

**Keywords:** *Teaching through tasks, cognitive methods, TBL, ESL, motivation.*

## **1. Introduction**

Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we move through the world, and how we treat other people. If we are right in believing that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is the result of what we imagine. Because communication is based on the same conceptual system that we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of what that system looks like.



Why choose task-based learning as a language teaching approach? We should ask ourselves that question, because if we as language teachers do not know which method we are teaching or if we do not think about the teaching methodology in relation to different types of students, different levels of language knowledge, different materials, also the different learning processes of each individual student, it is as we do not teach. At TBL:

- Activities involving real communication are essential for language learning. The focus is on the process rather than the product.
- Activities in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks through which language learning is encouraged. Students learn the language through communicative and purposeful interaction while being involved in activities and tasks.
- When the language makes sense for the student, it encourages the learning process.
- TBL is language learning by doing.
- The activities and tasks of the task-based curriculum are divided according to complexity of the task, the language required to complete the task and the level of support available. (Feez, 1998, p.17)

TBL deals with the student, not with the activity of the teacher, and it is up to the teacher to produce and provide various tasks that will give the student the opportunity to experiment spontaneously, individually and in real situations with the use of the English language. *TBL is language learning by doing.*

## **2 . Models of learning the foreign language by learning through tasks**

One of the newest methods is the method of learning through tasks, which emerged from communicative approaches of learning foreign languages. A characteristic of these curricula is that they reject linguistic elements (such as word, structure, concept or function) as units of analysis, and instead use specific task concepts (Jack Richards, 1985, p.88). So, this learning method consists of tasks that give students the opportunity to use the language they are studying, which enables the development of their language skills. Richard and Rodgers (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) consider that the task-based learning method is

based more on learning theories than on language theories and that it incorporates the principles of communicative approaches, but also it has certain additional principles about the nature of language. and the nature of language learning. A “task” is primarily an activity or goal carried out through the use of language, such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, making a telephone conversation, writing a letter or reading a set of instructions, or assembling a toy. A task is an activity in which a person engages in order to achieve a goal and which requires the use of language. (Branden, 2006, p.4).

What is meant by “learning through tasks”? There are as many different definitions as there are many different views of the term “task”. Nunan (Nunan, 1989, p. 6) defines a task as an activity that allows students to understand, manipulate, produce or interact with the target language while their attention is mainly focused on meaning, not on form. For Willis (Willis, 1996, p.23), tasks are activities in which the target language is used for communicative purposes in order to reach a certain result. Ellis (Ellis, 2003) points out that no consensus has been reached on what constitutes a "task", and that different definitions refer to different dimensions of tasks. There are also different classifications of tasks such as: real-world tasks/pedagogical tasks, focused/unfocused tasks, open/closed tasks, reciprocal/non-reciprocal tasks, convergent/divergent tasks, etc. The number of types of tasks seems infinite, so the biggest challenge with this method is their selection and classification. Based on research in this area, Ellis proposes a general framework for classifying tasks that contains the following criteria: input (exposed language), conditions, processes and results. Skehan (Skehan, 1998, p.268-286), on the other hand, proposes a framework for selecting and arranging tasks according to factors that influence task difficulty, opportunities for meaning-focused discussions, selective effects of tasks, and more.

Although numerous researches have been done regarding the role of tasks in language acquisition, there is still little empirical evidence that learning through tasks is superior to other teaching methodologies. Bearing in mind that this is a relatively new approach, it is understandable why there are still no courses completely based on this method. At this point, we can only see examples of "task-assisted learning" (Ellis, 2003) in most textbooks and classrooms around the world.

## 4. Research methodology

The research itself includes the following parts:

- Collection and analysis of curricula for the eighth grade;
- Collection and analysis of the teaching materials for the eighth grade;
- Comparative analysis of an experimental and a control group, one of which was subjected to the use of TBL in a certain period for the research.

All of them are expected to answer the following questions:

- How can TBL be used most effectively?
- Will the students taught with TBL get higher results than the students who used the classical approach in all the areas that will be examined?

### 3.1 Activities and methods outlined in the 8th grade curriculum

Activities:

- Bringing the real world into the classroom through:
  1. visual representation of the matter using posters, maps, parts of magazines used to describe activities;
  2. using words from the texts of famous songs, to describe interests.
- An open type of activities that corresponds and enables students to respond in several ways depending on their abilities:
  - rubric- *do at least...*;
  - additional activity: *if you have time, try this*;
  - providing additional exercises ( *extensions* ) for students who finished the activities earlier than the rest.
- Exercises for associations (*association games*) .
- Mind map (spidergram), crossword, gallows.
- Identifying words and expressions in context. Application of those expressions in a sentence with verb and adjective/noun collocations.
- Naming after visual representations (flash cards, poster, illustrations, web pages and magazine clippings).
- Speaking games:
  - *Guessing game* (description of a famous person or profession in order to guess the person/profession);

- *Chain game* (creating and continuing sentences with the final writing of the sentence on the board).

- Compilation of a short story based on given pictures/key words/expressions/ phrases/ collocations/verbs.

- Exercises using pantomime.

- Exercises for developing critical thinking:

- *Fact or opinion* (distinguishing facts from opinions according to given statements);

- *Good or bad behavior?* (differentiating good from bad behavior according to given statements / illustrations);

- *What do you think?* (expressing an opinion on a given topic).

- Dramatic improvisation.

- Singing and creating songs with given vocabulary and grammar.

- Analysis and discussion after a short video.

**Approaches and methods listed in the curriculum for 8<sup>th</sup> grade:**

Demonstrative Approach, Interactive Approach, Lexical Approach, Communicative Approach, **Task-based Approach**, Content-based Language Teaching, Natural Approach, Structural Approach, Audio-Lingual Approach, Audio-Visual Approach, Direct Method, Silent Way, Suggestopedia, TPR, Eclectic approach, Community Language Learning, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Situational Language Teaching and Whole-Word Approach).

### 3.2. Teaching materials

Teaching materials play an important role in TBA because it depends on a sufficient amount of appropriate classroom tasks, some of which may require considerable time, ingenuity and resources to develop. The materials that can be used for teaching and learning in TBL are limited only by the imagination of the task designer, in our case the teacher. Many contemporary language teaching texts refer in their credentials to 'task focus' or 'task-based activities', although most of the tasks that appear in such books are familiar classroom activities for teachers using cooperative learning or language learning through cooperation, teaching language through communication or activities in small groups. Hence, many "task-based" materials may actually refer to the approach only occasionally.

Proponents of TBL favor the use of authentic materials whenever possible. Popular media obviously provide a wealth of such material as:

- Newspapers (Students study a newspaper, determine the rubrics and suggest three new rubrics that could be found in it.

- Students prepare a job advertisement using examples from the classifieds page.
- Students prepare a weekend leisure plan using pages from the fun rubric and the weather forecast)
- Television (eg. Students take notes during the weather forecast and prepare a map with weather symbols showing what the weather will be like in the next period.
- Watching advertisements, students identify and list the "ad" words and then try to construct an advertisement following the order of the ad words.
- After watching a show from an unknown series, students list the characters and their possible connections to other characters in the episode, etc.)
- Internet
- Technology etc.

### **3.3. Data collection, comparative analysis and interpretation of experimental and control group results**

58 students were included in this research - 29 in the experimental group and 29 in the control group. Starting from the fact that the number of students per class is very small, for more reliable data, two classes participated in both groups. In the experimental group (VIII -1 and VIII -4, i.e. 16+13 students in total 29) and in the control group (VIII -2 and VIII -3, i.e. 15+14 students in total 29). All students (from all four classes, i.e. both groups) participated in the research. The respondents are aged between 13 and 15 years. The field research lasted for three weeks, during which period the students had three English lessons per week.

The groups were exposed to different treatment during the research period, ie. the 3 weeks. In the experimental group, TBLL appropriate to their knowledge was used, all in order to better understand the grammatical parts, as well as the vocabulary that they repeated and studied during that period.

At the beginning of the research, a test was announced to all four classes (that is, to both groups) with which they would repeat the material studied in the fifth module (teaching units 9 and 10). The test will be given to both groups at the end of the research.

TBL was introduced for two reasons: firstly to motivate the students and make language learning more enjoyable and secondly to make the students apply the things they have learned in communication.

The textbook was the same for both groups. It is Messages 3, Student's book, by Diana Goodey, Noel Goodey and Miles Craven. In the period planned for research, the grammatical content and vocabulary from the eighth grade, from the planned whole, were reviewed. In the control group, it was taught with a communicative method, based exclusively on the activities in the textbook. In the control group, no additional TBL, nor any other activities other than those in the textbook, were introduced. Grammar was explained through tables or examples from the textbook, the rule was written as a formula on the board, and then the students were asked to write sentences according to them. At the end, the teacher wrote the answers on the board, so that the students would check the spelling. While the students worked on their examples, the teacher helped them if needed. The answers were read aloud one by one. Using pre-prepared pictures or using those from the textbook, the students wrote down their own sentences, using the rule, and these were read. Texts with which students can easily identify and which they can use in everyday speech were considered. Through the same texts, grammar was considered, as well as exercises on how much the students understood the text. The Macedonian language was used as rarely as possible, in order for the students to listen and use the English language exclusively. Vocabulary was first introduced through pictures, questions, drawings, then the examples in the textbook were reviewed, followed by listening and repetition exercises. Finally, the words were used in exercises with gaps or questions about them. In the skills section, students had to listen to the text, as well as fill in and answer certain questions. They were read aloud.

Unlike the control group, in the experimental group, in addition to the activities from the textbook, additional TBL activities were introduced, which included puzzle tasks, information gap tasks, problem-solving tasks, memory games, decision-making tasks, exchange of opinions, etc. In the experimental group, students were active and participated in class activities. The teacher was their guide and sometimes just their friend. The textbook was the same as in the control group. But the teaching was not only based on the exercises in it. Additional activities were introduced. The grammar that was studied was practiced through them.

Most of the students were not in the mood to speak at first, so the teacher introduced warm-up activities to make them feel more comfortable and relaxed. Great attention was paid to achieving a safe and free atmosphere.

There were also withdrawn students who believed that they would not be able to communicate in English. However, the research itself was aimed at increasing communicative competence, primarily through mutual cooperation between students. The teacher used warm-up activities and at the beginning she participated in the activities herself, all in order to relax and help them. That way she could keep track of what was going on and control the class and the tension. Performing small roles also gave her a chance to encourage and support her students as they worked.

After getting used to this approach, the students started to get used to speaking in pairs, in their groups or in front of the whole class. The main emphasis was placed on the application of speaking skills and using the English language in communication. Students felt free and relaxed to speak in the assigned activity. TBL activities were also used to practice the new material at the end of the lesson, after the material had been handed over.

TBL activities were applied starting from the easiest to the more complex, in order to motivate the students to apply these techniques.

The techniques related to the grammar part, as well as speaking, were practiced at different times so that the student would not be bored.

At the end of the research itself, the students from the experimental group were convinced that speaking a foreign language is not as difficult as they thought. They were also not forced to speak without mistakes. Sometimes the students, looking at each other, unknowingly corrected each other's mistakes. They felt no pressure as they learned and practiced English in an atmosphere full of fun and enjoyment.

After the end of the research period, both groups were given a control test. The test consisted of 20 multiple choice questions (a, b, c or d) from which the students had to circle one correct one. The experimental group was expected to show significant improvements as a result of the application of TBL, while a slight improvement in results was expected for the control group.

The students were given 30 minutes for the test. Regarding their attitude towards learning, both groups had difficulties in applying what they learned, as well as difficulties in speaking before the start of the research. After the end of the research period, a control test was conducted with both groups (4 classes).

Results obtained from the test showed that the experimental group had 17 points on average, while in the control group 12 questions were answered correctly. This analysis of the data showed us that the experimental group, in which it was taught using TBL, proved to be more successful than the control group. Greater improvement was seen in the experimental group. So that the question: "Will

the students taught with TBL get higher results than the students who used a classical approach in all the areas that will be examined?”, I would answer in the affirmative, and also conclude that TBL helped the students in learning grammar, vocabulary, as well as in increasing their communication skills.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In almost every classroom, the study of the English language is planned with great energy, imagination and love, in order for the students to feel how a whole new world opens before them, a world in which they speak and in which they speak another language.

The results of this research showed that TBL has a positive impact on learning a foreign language. Through TBL, students experienced "real situations" in the classroom itself. It was also observed that even later, after the end of the research period, the students of the experimental group were more willing to participate in class activities and were more free to make mistakes. They were full of confidence and showed respect for themselves and other classmates. The activities used in class had to be creative. At first, the students did not want to participate in the activities. But the monotony of the class was broken. When students realized that the activities were effective as well as enjoyable and that they were learning while participating, they became more involved.

With the comparative analysis of the two groups, it was seen that the application of TBL is the reason for the higher results of the experimental group.

English teachers should be aware of the benefits and significance of TBL and should try to use it in their classrooms to make their teaching more effective and help their students use English to communicate.

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## OVERCOMING BARRIERS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: AN ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC, CONTENT, AND RELATIONAL CHALLENGES

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### **Abstract**

*This study delves into the multifaceted realm of intercultural communication, elucidating the predominant challenges encountered across linguistic competence, content interpretation, relational dynamics, nonverbal cues, and critical incidents. Through comprehensive analysis, it highlights how linguistic barriers, including differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, can significantly obstruct mutual understanding. Additionally, the research illuminates the complexities of content-level issues, where identical phrases or words may harbor diverse connotations or culturally specific meanings across various cultures, leading to potential misunderstandings.*

*The investigation further explores relational issues, identifying how divergent cultural expectations and norms regarding politeness and respect can strain intercultural interactions. Nonverbal communication, encompassing gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and paralinguistic features like tone and volume, is scrutinized for its critical role and varied interpretation across cultural contexts. Specific gestures, the degree and nature of eye contact, and paralinguistic cues are shown to possess distinct meanings in different cultures, often carrying as much weight as verbal communication. Critical incidents, defined as specific events that pose challenges in intercultural communication—such as conversation structure, greetings, forms of address, and the framing of requests—are examined for their potential to disrupt communication. The study employs a qualitative methodology, integrating case studies and theoretical analysis to provide a comprehensive overview of the obstacles to effective intercultural communication.*

**Keywords:** *Intercultural Communication, Linguistic Competence, Nonverbal Communication, Cultural Differences, Critical Incidents, Content Interpretation, Relational Dynamics*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication refers to the exchange of information between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. It concerns the ways in which people with diverse cultural identities, values, beliefs, and behaviors communicate and interact with each other. Intercultural communication can include both verbal and non-verbal elements and occurs in a variety of contexts, from personal encounters to business, academic, and media interactions. The key to effective intercultural communication lies in understanding and acknowledging cultural differences as well as in the ability to adapt one's own communication styles accordingly to avoid misunderstandings and build positive relationships. This often requires a conscious effort to develop cultural sensitivity and empathy, overcome barriers, and find common levels of understanding. (Thomas, 2003, p.21)

### **1.2. Intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence is a key skill in today's world. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds meet, regardless of the setting or reason, the situation often imposes far greater demands on the involved parties than interactions within the same culture. With the increase in internationalization and globalization, there's a growing awareness of the frequent issues arising in intercultural interactions. However, it's not always clear what the root causes of these difficulties are, let alone how they can be overcome. Xenophobia represents an extreme consequence of lacking intercultural competence. Failed international business deals, communication problems in multicultural classrooms, and frustration during study abroad programs are among the diverse potential outcomes of intercultural misunderstandings. (Kotthoff et al., 2009, p.13) Contact with other cultures provides experiences that can significantly shape one's self-concept and overall competence in action. This enrichment underscores the importance of developing intercultural competence, not just for navigating the complexities of global interactions but also for personal growth and understanding.

From the globally operating executive to students in academia, virtually everyone in today's increasingly connected and multicultural world needs the ability to effectively communicate and interact with members of different cultures. (Auernheimer, 2002, p.32) As societies become more diverse, the capacity to understand, respect, and leverage cultural differences becomes critical for fostering mutual respect, collaboration, and innovation. Intercultural

competence encompasses an understanding of cultural norms, values, and practices, and the skills to adapt one's behavior accordingly. This competence is essential for resolving conflicts, building inclusive communities, and creating spaces where diverse perspectives are valued and contribute to collective progress. In essence, developing intercultural competence is about equipping oneself for success in a globalized world, where interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds are not just common but a valuable aspect of personal and professional growth. (Venetiku & Gjuzi. 2010, p.76)

### **1.3.Sub-competencies of intercultural competence**

Intercultural competence essentially comprises three sub-competencies that interact closely with each other and are complex in themselves. The three dynamically interplaying sub-competencies of intercultural competence are (1) *cognitive competence*, (2) *affective competence* and (3) *pragmatic-communicative competence*. (Thomas & Kinast, 2010, p. 56) Sub-competencies of intercultural competence involve a range of skills and attributes that enable individuals to communicate and interact effectively across cultural differences. These competencies can be broadly categorized into several key areas: (Auernheimer, 2002, p.16)

*Cognitive Competence*: Involves understanding the cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices of different cultures, including historical and social contexts that shape individual and collective behaviors. It also encompasses awareness of one's own cultural biases and perspectives.

*Affective Competence*: Relates to the emotional intelligence required to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds. It includes empathy, openness, sensitivity, and the ability to manage one's emotions and reactions in intercultural situations.

*Pragmatic-communicative* sub-competence refers to a set of skills and abilities within the broader framework of intercultural competence that enable individuals to effectively communicate and interact in cross-cultural situations. This sub-competence is crucial for navigating the complexities of intercultural interactions, allowing for more meaningful and productive communication by bridging cultural divides through tailored communication strategies. (Knapp, 2002, p.34)

### **1.4.Problems of Intercultural Communication**

This section addresses various problems that can occur in intercultural communication, which can be divided into different levels, including linguistic

competence, content level, relational level, nonverbal communication, and critical incidents:

*Problems at the level of linguistic competence, Problems at the content level, Problems at the relational level, Problems at the level of nonverbal communication, Gestures and facial expressions, Eye contact, Paralinguistic signals, Critical incidents, Conversation organization, Greetings, Forms of address.*

*Problems at the level of linguistic competence:* Linguistic barriers are common obstacles in intercultural communication. Differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar can lead to misunderstandings.

*Problems at the content level:* This relates to the meaning and interpretation of words and sentences. In different cultures, the same words can have different connotations or culturally specific meanings.

*Problems at the relational level:* Relationships between people from different cultures can be influenced by different expectations and norms. For example, differing ideas of politeness and respect can lead to conflicts or confusion.

*Problems at the level of nonverbal communication:* Nonverbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and paralinguistic signals such as tone of voice and volume. These nonverbal signals can be interpreted differently in different cultures and are often as important as verbal communication.

*Gestures and facial expressions:* Various gestures and facial expressions can have different meanings in different cultures. A thumbs up may indicate agreement in one culture, while it may be considered rude in another.

*Eye contact:* Eye contact can vary from culture to culture. In some cultures, direct eye contact is seen as a sign of confidence, while in others, it is considered disrespectful.

*Paralinguistic signals:* These include tone of voice, emphasis, and volume. They can greatly affect the meaning of a statement and must be considered in intercultural situations.

*Critical incidents:* Critical incidents are specific situations or events that can occur in intercultural communication and lead to problems. These can relate to conversation organization, greetings, forms of address, requests, and commands. For example, the way a greeting is performed can vary greatly between cultures, and if not followed appropriately, it can lead to discomfort.

The term "critical incident" is used in the field of intercultural communication research to describe conversational situations in which problems frequently arise due to the significant divergence in scripts (expected patterns of behavior and

communication) across different cultures.

From the myriad of critical incidents, the following four are selected for detailed examination: *Conversation organization*, *Greetings* and *Forms of address*.

## **2. Conversation Organization**

In the realm of intercultural communication, conversation organization refers to the structured or unstructured manner in which dialogues are initiated, maintained, and concluded across different cultures. This critical incident highlights the varying expectations and norms regarding turn-taking, topics of discussion, the pace of conversation, and the degree of formality or informality expected. Understanding the nuances of conversation organization can prevent misunderstandings and facilitate smoother interactions. It requires being mindful of cues that indicate when it's appropriate to speak, listen, or change the subject, and adapting one's communication style to align with the cultural context of the interaction. This awareness and adaptability are crucial for effective intercultural communication, ensuring that all parties feel heard, respected, and engaged in the conversation.

Germans and other Northern Europeans generally perceive speaking simultaneously as a rude interruption; however, in France and Spain, speaking at the same time signals an interest in the speaker's remarks (see Lüsebrink, 2005, p. 52). A similar attitude is found in South America (see Barrios, 2006, p. 280). As a result, the lack of interruptions, which might be considered polite by a Northern European, could be interpreted as a lack of interest by a Spaniard, French, or South American: "From a French perspective, a conversation without interruptions, whether in a personal setting or in mediated communication (talk shows, interviews, political and cultural discussion programs), is seen as lacking in tension and emotionality." (Lüsebrink, 2005, p. 52) In contrast to the German tendency to tolerate only brief overlaps in conversation, with a clear understanding of who holds the floor (Bouchara, 2002, p. 113), overlapping in conversation signifies a different set of cultural values and communication styles in other regions.

Including the Albanian cultural context, communication practices reflect an interesting blend of Mediterranean warmth and Balkan directness, where overlapping during conversation can also be a sign of engagement and interest. Similar to the dynamics observed in Southern Europe, Albanians might find energetic and simultaneous contributions to a discussion as indicative of a lively and engaged conversation rather than disrespectful. This approach suggests a more flexible interpretation of conversational rules, where the flow of dialogue

and the expression of interest and solidarity might take precedence over strict turn-taking. In environments where multiple cultures intersect, recognizing these differences becomes crucial to fostering effective and respectful communication.

### **3. Greetings**

Greetings are highly culture-dependent rituals and are among the most noticeable aspects of verbal and nonverbal communication due to their frequent use. Understanding the greeting rituals of a culture provides a valuable starting point for acquiring foreign cultural patterns of nonverbal communication and developing intercultural competence. Mastering at least the greeting rituals of a culture signifies respect for that culture, enhances the chances of making a good first impression, and helps avoid violating cultural norms in brief interactions. Upon initiating a dialogue with a greeting, the focus is not on the exchange of factual information but rather on the relationship aspect; the greeting defines, redefines, or confirms the relationship between the interactants. An inappropriate greeting can jeopardize the success of intercultural communication from the outset by causing discomfort. Greeting rituals typically encompass both verbal and nonverbal communication components, whose sequence and combination are culturally prescribed. For instance, in Asian cultures, not only the bow but also the gaze, which should always be lowered, is significant. (Hofstede, 2017, p.18)

While all cultures have specific rules for greetings, there is considerable variation in the complexity and rigidity of these rituals. In the Albanian cultural context, greeting rituals emphasize warmth and community, reflecting Mediterranean and Balkan influences. Greetings may involve a combination of verbal pleasantries and physical gestures, such as handshakes or kisses on the cheek, depending on the level of intimacy between the individuals. Respect for elders and those of higher social status is important, and greetings often reflect these hierarchies. The complexity and formality of greetings in Albania, as in many cultures, serve not just as a polite formality but as a critical component of social interaction and relationship building. (Kotthoff & Spencer-Oatey, 2009, p.51) In addition to the aspects already mentioned, such as handshakes and kisses on the cheek, there are further peculiarities:

*Extended Greeting Dialogues:* Compared to many Western European cultures, verbal greetings in Albania can be more detailed. It's common to inquire about the well-being of the family and close acquaintances, highlighting the interest and care for the conversational partner and their social connections.



*Physical Proximity:* Albanians tend to allow less personal space during greetings and conversation than is customary in some other cultures. This shows familiarity and warmth and is not meant as an intrusion into personal space.

*Naming:* It is usual to address people by their first names, followed by appropriate titles or greeting formulas if a relationship of respect exists. Direct addressing signifies openness and accessibility.

*Hospitality:* Greeting a guest in Albania often goes beyond the usual extent and typically includes an invitation into the home and the offering of food and drink. This type of greeting emphasizes hospitality and the importance of the guest to the host.

*Farewell Rituals:* Similar to greetings, farewell rituals in Albania are often extensive, expressing the hope for a soon reunion. These rituals strengthen the bond and the desire for a continuing relationship.

These examples illustrate how deeply rooted and diverse greeting rituals are in the Albanian cultural space and how they contribute to fostering respect and appreciation within the community. The nonverbal signals used in greeting rituals vary significantly across cultures. However, it's generally observed that nonverbal components play a crucial role in greetings, often becoming a frequent source of misunderstandings in intercultural communication. Tactile behavior, such as touching, and proxemics, the physical distance during the greeting, are central: the range varies from cheek kisses and hugs to handshakes and bows, meaning the physical distance between individuals during greetings can significantly differ. In countries like the USA and Germany, a handshake is a common greeting gesture perceived as polite. However, in other cultures, handshakes may be completely unusual and even seen as a violation of desired physical distance. Even within cultures where handshakes are a standard greeting, additional social factors like gender may influence whether a handshake is deemed appropriate or not. For example, in many Arab countries, men generally do not shake hands with women to avoid any physical contact. The execution of the handshake also varies by culture in terms of intensity and duration. In the USA and particularly in Germany, a firmer and longer handshake is common, especially among acquaintances and at official occasions, which could be perceived as intrusive in countries like France. In Arab countries, the handshake is less firm than in the USA or Germany, with too firm or too limp handshakes potentially eliciting negative reactions. Other cultures offer additional variants of handshakes that reflect social determinants. For example, in Kenya, greeting someone of higher status involves a unique handshake where the person of lower status grasps their own right forearm with

the left hand during the shake. (Ferraro, 2017, p.10)

Japan traditionally does not use handshakes as a greeting gesture, but Japanese businesspeople might use them when interacting with Western counterparts, maintaining a larger distance than typical in the West and often accompanying the handshake with a bow, the traditional Japanese greeting. The formality level of a handshake varies, with its appropriateness depending on the context and social factors, including gender. While cheek kissing is a common greeting in cultures like France among opposite-gender relatives and friends, its acceptance significantly depends on gender, and its usage varies geographically. In the Middle East, cheek kissing is common among male friends. In Germany, there has been a noticeable shift towards cheek kissing among women in recent years, influenced by contact with cultures where this greeting is common, illustrating how intercultural interactions can change communication patterns within a culture.

In the Albanian context, just as there are culture-specific rules or preferences for transitioning from a relationship-oriented greeting sequence to the actual subject of conversation, from greeting to substance, there are also particular nuances. A phrase explicitly marking the transition to the topic of discussion, such as "I would like to discuss something with you" or "I have a question for you," is more commonly found in German communication than, for example, with British interlocutors. This tendency towards explicit transitions might contribute to the perception of Germans as overly explicit in communication. Such explicit transitions might mislead when interacting with Brits, as these formulations are used less frequently by them and are mostly limited to transitioning to a problem or difficult situation.

A study by Elin Fredsted (2005: 163) based on interactions at German and Danish tourist information centers found that, in such contexts, components significant for the relationship aspect tend to play a larger role in German conversations compared to Danish ones. Both cultures show an orientation towards the substantive message, but this is even more pronounced in the Danish context than in the German one. This illustrates that while Albanians might not utilize explicit markers for transitioning to the main topic as commonly as Germans, the flow from greeting to discussion reflects a blend of maintaining relational warmth and moving towards substantive communication, characteristic of Albanian conversational patterns.

#### **4. Forms of address**

Forms of address vary significantly across cultures and play a crucial role in

defining the relationship between interlocutors, as the choice of an appropriate form of address from the perspective of the conversational partner is crucial. This variation includes the use of personal pronouns (formal or informal equivalents in the respective language) and the use of names and titles. The challenge in intercultural communication is compounded by the fact that conventions regarding forms of address can vary widely within a culture, influenced significantly by factors such as age and social class, as well as regional differences within a country. For speakers from a culture where the form of address is strongly determined by hierarchies, using a first name may suggest a level of hierarchy-free interaction that doesn't exist in reality. For instance, in the USA, addressing someone by their first name is common and does not indicate the absence of hierarchies. Hierarchical differences may not necessarily be reflected in the form of address but can be expressed in other ways. Addressing a superior by their first name, as is not uncommon in the USA, should not be interpreted as an invitation to a very casual or personal communication style.

Metacommunication is a particularly useful strategy for addressing differences in conventions for forms of address. When there is a clear difference in hierarchy and/or age between the conversational partners, ideally, the person of higher hierarchical status or older age should initiate a discussion about forms of address, as they are usually the ones to determine the appropriate form of address for the situation.

When in a foreign culture, interactions often involve making requests, especially for guidance in unfamiliar surroundings, such as asking for directions to the train station or hotel. This is especially common for tourists who frequently need to make requests during fleeting encounters with strangers, while shopping, traveling, dining, etc.

Cultures typically offer a range of ways to articulate a request, aiming for the same goal—fulfillment by the conversational partner—but potentially carrying different implications for the relationship between the interlocutors. Perceptions of politeness in request formulations vary significantly across cultures, and the forms considered polite or appropriate in one culture cannot be directly inferred from linguistic possibilities. In other words, a direct translation of a request considered polite in one language to another does not guarantee it will be perceived as polite in the target language. It might even be seen as rude or not recognized as a request at all, possibly provoking negative reactions and leading to the request being denied. Rules of politeness in formulating requests can cause intercultural misunderstandings in two main ways: requests intended as

polite may be perceived as rude by the recipient. Additionally, if the cultural norms dictate that a request be made very indirectly, there's a risk that for communicators from a culture that favors directness, the request becomes a 'lost message.' The differing politeness norms between Japanese and Germans, for example, can easily lead to communication problems. A request made by a Japanese person might be so indirectly expressed that it's not recognized as a request by a German (lost message), and conversely, a request made directly by a German might be perceived by a Japanese person as a disregard for politeness norms and an insult (imagined message).

In the Albanian cultural context, the manner of making requests and asking for favors reflects a blend of direct communication and the importance of interpersonal relationships. Similar to many cultures that value both clarity and respect, Albanians employ a variety of strategies to navigate these interactions gracefully.

*Use of indirect requests for familiar relationships:* In informal settings among friends or family, Albanians may use more indirect forms of requests to show politeness and respect for autonomy. For example, instead of directly asking someone to pass the salt at the dinner table, an Albanian might say something akin to "Could you do me a favor?" or "Would it be too much trouble to ask for the salt?" This softens the request and frames it as a favor rather than a demand.

*Emphasis on polite forms in formal settings:* In more formal contexts or when interacting with elders, Albanians are likely to use respectful titles and more formal language to make requests. For example, asking for directions might be prefaced with "Excuse me" or "I'm sorry to bother you," followed by the use of titles such as "Mr." or "Mrs." (Zoti or Zonja in Albanian) to show respect.

*Direct requests among close friends and younger people:* Among close friends or younger individuals who share a more casual relationship, requests can be more direct, reflecting a level of intimacy and mutual understanding. For example, "Can you lend me your book?" or "Let's go out tonight?" are considered perfectly acceptable and convey a sense of closeness.

*Offering reciprocity when making requests:* It's common in Albanian culture to offer something in return when making a request, as a way to maintain balance in the relationship. For instance, if asking for a favor, an Albanian might add, "Let me know how I can return the favor" or "I owe you one." This not only softens the request but also reinforces the mutual support within the relationship.

*Avoidance of making requests that might impose:* Albanians are mindful of not making requests that could be seen as imposing or putting the other person in an uncomfortable position. If there's any doubt that a request might be too much to

ask, it's often prefaced with disclaimers or apologies, such as "Only if it's not too much trouble" or "I understand if you can't."

These examples illustrate how the Albanian approach to making requests and asking for favors balances directness with respect for the recipient's autonomy and the overall relationship. Understanding these nuances is crucial for effective intercultural communication within the Albanian context.

## **7. Conclusions**

The study on overcoming barriers in intercultural communication provides critical insights into the complex dynamics that define interactions across cultural boundaries. It underscores the multifaceted nature of communication barriers that span linguistic, content, relational, and nonverbal domains, as well as critical incidents that can disrupt the flow of communication. The analysis reveals that effective intercultural communication is not merely about overcoming language differences but also involves a deep understanding and interpretation of content, the relational context, nonverbal cues, and the ability to navigate critical incidents with cultural sensitivity.

Key conclusions drawn from the research highlight the essential need for increased cultural awareness and adaptability. Understanding the nuances of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and the cultural connotations of phrases or words is fundamental to enhancing linguistic competence. Similarly, recognizing and respecting the diverse meanings attributed to nonverbal cues across cultures can significantly improve the quality of interaction and reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation.

The study also points to the importance of acknowledging and adapting to different cultural expectations regarding politeness, respect, and the structure of conversations. Such relational dynamics are crucial for building trust and mutual respect in intercultural contexts. Moreover, the ability to identify and appropriately respond to critical incidents is vital for maintaining effective communication and avoiding potential conflicts.

Ultimately, this research emphasizes that the key to successful intercultural communication lies in the willingness and ability of individuals to engage with cultural differences constructively. It calls for a proactive approach to developing intercultural competencies, including empathy, flexibility, and the ongoing pursuit of cultural knowledge. By fostering an environment of open-mindedness and respect for cultural diversity, individuals and organizations can bridge cultural divides, leading to more meaningful, effective, and enriching interactions across the globe.

The findings of this study contribute to a broader understanding of the complexities involved in intercultural communication and offer valuable strategies for individuals and organizations seeking to enhance their intercultural communication skills. As the world continues to become more interconnected, the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries will remain an indispensable skill in fostering global cooperation and understanding.

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# THE INTEGRAL ROLE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION LEARNING

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the essential role of cultural competence in the process of English language learning and communication skills. Grounded in the understanding that language is deeply intertwined with culture, it explores how cultural awareness enhances proficiency in English and facilitates effective cross-cultural communication. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks from linguistics, intercultural communication, and education, as well as empirical research findings, this paper examines the multifaceted dimensions of cultural competence within the context of English language and communication education. It elucidates how cultural sensitivity and understanding enrich language learners' ability to comprehend, produce, and effectively use English in diverse cultural contexts, fostering authentic and meaningful interactions.*

*Furthermore, the paper discusses pedagogical strategies, curriculum design principles, and assessment approaches aimed at integrating cultural competence into English language and communication learning environments.*

*By emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between cultural awareness and language proficiency, this paper advocates for a comprehensive approach to language education that prioritizes the development of cultural competence alongside linguistic skills, preparing students to navigate the complexities of today's globalized world.*

**Keywords:** *cultural competence, English language learning, communication skills, intercultural communication, language acquisition, cross-cultural understanding.*

## **I. Introduction**

In an increasingly globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries has become a crucial skill. English, as a dominant international language, plays a significant role in facilitating these cross-cultural interactions. However, mastering English extends beyond the mere acquisition of grammar and vocabulary; it involves understanding and navigating diverse cultural contexts. The concept of cultural competence—understood as the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds—has thus become integral to English and communication learning.

Historically, language education focused primarily on linguistic accuracy, emphasizing grammatical rules and vocabulary memorization. Traditional methods, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, provided a structured approach to language learning but often overlooked the cultural dimensions of communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). It was not until the mid-20th century, with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), that the focus began shifting towards functional language use and real-world communication (Littlewood, 2004). Despite these advancements, cultural competence was still not a central concern, and learners often struggled to apply their language skills in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Recent educational frameworks have recognized the need for integrating cultural competence into language learning. Modern pedagogical approaches, including Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), emphasize the importance of cultural understanding in developing effective communication skills (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003). These methods aim to provide learners with contextually relevant experiences, thereby preparing them to engage more effectively in global interactions. The rise of digital communication technologies further underscores the need for cultural competence, as online interactions introduce new challenges and opportunities for intercultural communication (Beatty, 2013).

This paper explores the integral role of cultural competence in English and communication learning, tracing its historical development and current pedagogical practices. By examining the evolution of language education from early methodologies to contemporary approaches, this study aims to highlight the critical importance of cultural competence in fostering effective and meaningful communication in a diverse and interconnected world.

### **Research questions**

This article will be guided by the following questions:

- I. Does cultural background improve the quality of learning a new language?
- II. Does the cultural background affect the perception of the foreign language by the students?
- III. Should aspects or topics that talk about cultural changes be included in the curriculum?



## **II. Understanding Cultural Competence in Language Learning**

The role of cultural competence in English and communication learning has evolved significantly over time, reflecting changes in educational theories, pedagogical practices, and global interactions. This historical development can be understood through three key phases: early language education practices, the emergence of communicative approaches, and the contemporary integration of cultural competence.

### **III. Early Language Education Practices**

Historically, language education focused primarily on the technical aspects of language, such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Early 20th-century methods, including the Grammar-Translation Method, emphasized rote learning and translation exercises, often neglecting the cultural contexts in which language is used (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This approach was largely structured around the mastery of linguistic rules rather than the practical application of language in diverse social settings.

The lack of focus on the cultural context in early language education reflected broader educational trends that prioritized formal accuracy over communicative effectiveness. As a result, learners were often ill-prepared to navigate real-world intercultural interactions and understand the sociolinguistic nuances of language use.

### **IV. Emergence of Communicative Approaches**

The mid-20th century marked a significant shift in language education with the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This approach emphasized functional language use and the ability to communicate effectively in various contexts, moving beyond mere grammatical proficiency (Littlewood, 2004). CLT aimed to improve learners' communicative competence by focusing on practical language use rather than isolated language forms.

However, despite the advancements brought by CLT, cultural competence was not a primary focus. The integration of cultural elements into language teaching was still relatively limited, and pedagogical practices often failed to address the complexities of intercultural communication. Theoretical contributions from scholars such as Edward Said and Dell Hymes began to highlight the importance of cultural understanding in effective communication, setting the stage for a more comprehensive approach to language education (Said, 1978; Hymes, 1972).

## **V. Contemporary Integration of Cultural Competence**

In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of cultural competence in language education. This shift reflects broader societal changes toward multiculturalism and global interconnectedness. Contemporary pedagogical approaches emphasize not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural communication skills, empathy, and global awareness (Byram, 1997).

Modern frameworks such as Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) incorporate cultural elements into language learning, providing learners with contextually rich and relevant experiences (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003). Additionally, the advent of digital communication technologies has expanded the scope of intercultural interactions, necessitating new strategies for integrating cultural competence into language curricula (Beatty, 2013). As a result, current practices in English and communication learning are increasingly focused on preparing learners to engage effectively in a diverse and interconnected world.

## **VI. Methodology**

A questionnaire was given to a group of students to get information about how Albanian students' cultural backgrounds impact their ability to learn and teach English. Given that English has primarily been studied through textbooks and most of them have British cultural content, the purpose of the questionnaire is to find out whether or not this cultural approach has improved their English; and whether or not British culture has affected their English learning process, and whether or not they are comfortable with this type of learning.

It is worth mentioning the fact that during the last few years, thanks to the cooperation and twinning that the University of Tirana has with other universities, students from foreign nations are often present in the auditoriums. As an external lecturer of the English language at the University of Tirana, the author provided the questionnaires to the students individually, who completed them during an English lesson. However, it is worth mentioning that they are university students whose curricula is merely focused on second language learning for specific studies.

1. How much value do students place on cultural education?
2. What methods (activities) do they think are best for teaching culture?

3. What aspects or subjects differ most from their culture?
  4. Do you think that second language texts are suitable to gain a cultural background?
  5. Do you think that culture learning should be included in the curricula of second language learning or just in a separate course?
- Upon the student's completion of the surveys, a discussion took place.

## VII. Analysis

Questions	Answers
1. How much value do students place on cultural education?	<b>95%</b>
2. What methods (activities) do they think are best for teaching culture?	<b>90% multimedia</b>
3. What aspects or subjects relate most to their culture?	<b>Lifestyle and School Program</b>
4. Do you think that second language texts are suitable to gain a cultural background?	<b>70 %</b>
5. Do you think that culture learning should be included in the curricula of second language learning or just in a separate course?	<b>90 %</b>

After gathering the data from the questionnaire from the student's answers, it resulted that most of them consider culture a very important aspect when learning a new language. From thirty (30) students, 95 % answered "very much" and all of them were positive when asked about including cultural aspects in the process of learning a new language. 90% answered that IT and multimedia is one of the best methods that teacher can use to practice and develop their student's cultural background while 70% said that they find second language textbooks suitable to gain a cultural background.

When they discussed their answers during their English class, they specified the idea that most of the textbooks that they have been studying English, from elementary to university, had examples of cultural aspects from British and

American culture. Most of them said that there are cultural aspects such as 'lifestyle and school program' that they find quite different from their native culture.

However, when asked whether they think that culture learning should be included in the curricula of second language learning or just in a separate course, 90% answered that they preferred to include cultural aspects in their school's curricula.

It is worth noting that the questionnaire was completed by students who develop foreign language lessons (English) for specific purposes and have not been developing language and literature lessons. By this, we mean the fact that the texts used during the lessons had 'on average' cultural aspects oriented to specific topics.

## **Conclusion**

Teaching English to students who are culturally competent has a big impact on second language acquisition and benefits teachers in many ways. By adding cultural elements to language instruction, educators create a more inviting and active learning environment. This approach not only increases language proficiency but also fosters cross-cultural awareness, preparing students for success in our globalized culture.

Students who get lessons from culturally competent teachers are equipped with the knowledge and abilities to perform well in a range of cultural settings. Their motivation, interest, and overall performance in learning a language are all impacted. By embracing different cultural backgrounds and adjusting educational techniques according to different styles of learning, educators may create a multicultural and welcoming learning environment that values individuality and fosters global citizenship. This comprehensive method of teaching languages makes it possible to provide more efficient and fulfilling language learning experiences.

It is also very important to emphasize the fact that cultural background while teaching and learning a second language helps student memorize and develop skills that will help them to embody that foreign language as it was their native one. Learning a foreign language is not just a matter of vocabulary. The main goal and the biggest achievement is to develop the ability to think in that language and conceptualize it according to the cultural aspects that that language represents.

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## GAMIFICATION AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*The integration of gamification principles with cultural competence development in language education signifies a transformative shift in pedagogy, aiming to address the diverse needs of learners in a globally interconnected world. This paper explores the theoretical foundations, practical implications, and potential benefits of integrating gamification and cultural competence development within language education settings. Gamification, rooted in game design principles, enhances engagement and motivation by infusing elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and narratives into language learning activities. On the other hand, cultural competence development emphasizes understanding, appreciating, and navigating cultural differences with sensitivity and respect. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, a quiz-based gamification strategy was deployed within a language learning environment involving 10 university students, all focusing on International English. Participants engaged with the quiz, meticulously crafted to intertwine cultural context with language proficiency assessment. By intertwining gamification and cultural competence development, educators can create immersive and effective learning experiences that cultivate linguistic proficiency, empathy, and intercultural communication skills. The results found that the quiz implementation was engaging and effective in promoting linguistic proficiency and cultural sensitivity among the participants. Feedback from the students highlighted increased motivation, enthusiasm, and a deeper understanding of cultural nuances embedded within language learning activities. Ultimately, the integration of gamification and cultural competence development offers promising avenues for enhancing engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in language education, while preparing learners to thrive in our diverse and interconnected global society.*

*Keywords: gamification; cultural competence; education; innovative methods; pedagogy*

## **Introduction**

Language education is evolving rapidly to address the needs of diverse learners in a globally connected world. Among the emerging trends, gamification—a method incorporating game elements into non-game contexts—is proving to be highly effective in enhancing student engagement and motivation. When combined with the teaching of cultural competence, gamification offers a practical, hands-on approach that not only improves language skills but also deepens learners' understanding of different cultures. This is crucial in today's multicultural world, where mastering a language involves more than just vocabulary and grammar; it also requires the ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions effectively. In this research, we focus on how gamification can help learners build both linguistic proficiency and cultural sensitivity by immersing them in interactive scenarios reflective of real-world experiences. By integrating game mechanics like points, levels, and distinctions into lessons, educators can create a dynamic learning environment that promotes both linguistic and cultural competence. This approach aligns with our belief that language education should equip learners with the skills to communicate across cultural boundaries, making them more adaptable and empathetic global citizens.

## **Gamification in Language Education**

Gamification refers to the integration of game-design elements and mechanics into non-game contexts, such as education, to enhance engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Deterding et al., 2011; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). In language education, gamification represents a transformative approach that leverages game design principles to enhance engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes among learners (Hamari et al., 2014). By incorporating elements such as points, distinctions, leaderboards, levels, and narratives into language learning activities, educators create dynamic and immersive experiences that captivate learners' attention and foster a sense of achievement (Sailer et al., 2017). Gamification encourages active participation and interaction, as learners eagerly pursue goals, track progress, and compete with peers in a supportive learning environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gee, 2003). Moreover, immediate feedback mechanisms in gamified language learning

platforms allow learners to assess their performance, identify areas for improvement, and iterate upon their language skills in real time, which I have observed to be highly effective in maintaining student motivation and engagement.

This gamified approach enhances learners' intrinsic motivation and promotes autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as they take ownership of their learning journey and collaborate with peers in achieving shared goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Overall, gamification in language education represents a paradigm shift in instructional design, offering innovative solutions to engage learners, promote effective language acquisition, and cultivate lifelong learning habits (Landers, 2014; Kapp, 2012). My research and teaching experiences have shown that when students are actively involved in gamified learning activities, they enjoy the process more, retain information better, and are more eager to participate in future learning activities.

### **Elements of Gamification**

Analyzing the elements of gamification provides insight into how game design principles are utilized to enhance engagement and motivation in various contexts, including education. Here's a breakdown of key elements:

- **Points:** Points serve as a basic form of reward and feedback. They signify progress and accomplishment, motivating learners to strive for higher scores and achievements (Domínguez et al., 2013; Kapp, 2012).
- **Distinctions/Achievements:** Distinctions are virtual rewards given to learners upon completing specific tasks or reaching milestones. They provide tangible recognition of accomplishments and encourage learners to explore different aspects of the learning environment (Hamari et al., 2014).
- **Leaderboards:** Leaderboards display learners' progress and rankings in comparison to their peers. They introduce an element of competition, fostering a sense of challenge and incentivizing learners to improve their performance (Sailer et al., 2017).
- **Levels:** Levels represent stages of progression within the gamified system. As learners advance through levels, they face increasingly challenging tasks or content, maintaining their engagement and providing a sense of achievement (Kapp, 2012; Deterding et al., 2011).



- **Narratives/Storytelling:** Incorporating narratives or storytelling elements contextualizes the learning experience, immersing learners in a fictional or thematic framework. This enhances engagement by providing a compelling storyline and characters that learners can relate to (Gee, 2003).
- **Immediate Feedback:** Immediate feedback provides learners with real-time information on their performance, allowing them to adjust their strategies and behaviors accordingly. It reinforces learning and helps learners understand their strengths and weaknesses (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
- **Challenges/Quests:** Challenges or quests present learners with specific tasks or objectives to complete. They provide clear goals and direction, motivating learners to actively participate and overcome obstacles to progress (Werbach & Hunter, 2012).
- **Social Interaction/Community:** Incorporating social features such as collaboration, competition, or peer support creates a sense of community within the gamified environment. Learners can interact with peers, share experiences, and learn from each other, fostering a collaborative learning culture (Sailer et al., 2017).
- **Rewards/Incentives:** Rewards, such as virtual goods or privileges, serve as incentives to motivate learners to engage in desired behaviors or activities. They can include unlocking new content, earning virtual currency, or gaining access to exclusive features (Kapp, 2012; Domínguez et al., 2013).

### **Theoretical Foundations of Cultural Competence and Gamification**

At its core, gamification draws upon principles of motivation, engagement, and reward systems derived from game design. It capitalizes on intrinsic human desires for achievement, progress, and social interaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Werbach & Hunter, 2012). Conversely, cultural competence development emphasizes acquiring intercultural communication skills, empathy, and awareness of diverse cultural norms and values (Deardorff, 2006; Byram, 1997). By intertwining these concepts, educators can create immersive learning experiences that not only enhance language proficiency but also cultivate learners' ability to navigate cultural complexities. This aligns with my belief that education should foster cognitive development and emotional and social growth, preparing students for real-world challenges.

Cultural competence is the ability to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, demonstrating awareness, sensitivity, and respect

for cultural differences (Kramsch, 1993). In language education, cultural competence goes beyond linguistic proficiency to encompass intercultural communication skills and cross-cultural understanding (Byram, 1997). The integration of gamification and cultural competence development capitalizes on the synergies between these domains to create immersive, effective, and culturally relevant learning experiences (Deardorff, 2006). By embedding cultural content, scenarios, and challenges within gamified language learning activities, educators can promote not only linguistic proficiency but also intercultural understanding and sensitivity (Kapp, 2012). Games can be designed to incorporate authentic cultural elements, narratives, and scenarios, thereby providing learners with opportunities to explore and navigate diverse cultural contexts.

For instance, language quests or cultural simulations can immerse learners in virtual environments where they interact with culturally diverse characters and solve culture-specific challenges. Gamified activities can offer opportunities for learners to receive feedback on their cultural interactions and reflect on their cultural competence development. Incorporating reflection prompts, debriefing sessions, or peer discussions within gamified learning environments encourage learners to critically evaluate their cultural assumptions, biases, and communication strategies (Kramsch, 1993; Deardorff, 2006).

Gamification can facilitate virtual intercultural exchanges, allowing learners to engage in authentic communicative tasks with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Through collaborative problem-solving, negotiation, and decision-making activities embedded within gamified language learning platforms, learners can practice and refine their intercultural communication skills in a supportive and immersive environment (Byram, 1997; Sailer et al., 2017). I have observed this to be particularly effective in helping students not only learn a new language but also develop a deeper appreciation and respect for different cultures.

### **Implementing Gamification to Foster Cultural Competence**

Incorporating gamification into language education can significantly enhance the development of cultural competence by providing learners with interactive, immersive, and culturally rich learning experiences. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is through the design of language games and simulations that reflect real-world cultural scenarios and challenges. By engaging learners in tasks that require them to navigate different cultural contexts, educators can create opportunities for learners to practice and refine their intercultural

communication skills in a safe and supportive environment (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006).

For example, a gamified language learning activity could involve a virtual exchange program where learners are tasked with completing various missions that require them to interact with characters from diverse cultural backgrounds. These missions could include activities such as negotiating with a business partner from another country, understanding and responding to cultural customs during a virtual dinner, or solving a cross-cultural misunderstanding. Through these tasks, learners not only practice language skills but also develop a deeper understanding of cultural norms, values, and communication styles (Kramsch, 1993; Gee, 2003).

In my experience, students are more engaged and motivated when they see the relevance of what they are learning to real-world situations. When they understand that mastering a language is not just about grammar and vocabulary but also about being able to interact effectively in a multicultural world, they are more likely to invest effort into their studies. Gamification provides the perfect platform for this kind of learning because it allows for the creation of scenarios that mirror real-life challenges and require the application of both language and cultural competence.

### **Case Studies and Research Findings**

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of gamification in promoting cultural competence in language education. For instance, a study by Sykes and Reinhardt (2012) examined the use of digital games in foreign language education and found that gamified activities provided learners with meaningful opportunities to engage in intercultural communication, negotiate meaning, and reflect on cultural differences. The study highlighted that learners who participated in gamified language learning activities showed significant improvements in both language proficiency and cultural awareness, compared to those who followed traditional language instruction methods.

Similarly, a study by Peterson (2016) explored the impact of gamified language learning environments on learners' intercultural communication skills. The findings revealed that learners who engaged in gamified tasks involving cross-cultural interactions demonstrated greater intercultural sensitivity, empathy, and adaptability. The study concluded that gamification when designed with a focus on cultural competence, could effectively bridge the gap between language learning and intercultural understanding.

These findings align with my observations in the classroom, where students who

participate in gamified language learning activities tend to show greater interest and enthusiasm for learning about other cultures. They become more open to exploring cultural differences and are more willing to step outside their comfort zones to interact with people from different backgrounds. This kind of learning environment fosters language proficiency and the development of essential life skills such as empathy, adaptability, and cultural sensitivity.

## **Methodology**

The methodology for this research involved a mixed-methods approach to examine the impact of a gamified quiz game on the development of cultural competence in a language learning environment. The study was conducted with students learning International English, a subject rich in both linguistic content and cultural implications. The quiz game was designed to simulate real-world cultural scenarios, challenging students to apply their language skills while navigating cultural nuances. The data collection involved two key phases:

1. **Pre-Quiz Game Survey:** Students were asked questions to assess their initial understanding of cultural competence. Sample questions included:
  - "How comfortable are you communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds?"
  - "What do you know about the cultural diversity in English-speaking countries?"
2. **Post-Quiz Game Survey:** After participating in the quiz game, students completed a second survey to gauge the effectiveness of the activity. Questions focused on learning outcomes, engagement, and reflection, such as:
  - "Did the quiz game help you understand cultural differences in English-speaking countries?"
  - "How motivated did you feel to learn more after participating in the quiz?"
  - "Did the quiz game challenge your existing cultural biases or stereotypes?"

Additionally, classroom observations were made to assess student engagement and interaction during the quiz game. Qualitative feedback was gathered through open-ended questions where students reflected on their learning experience. Data from the surveys and observations were analyzed using descriptive

statistics to identify patterns in student engagement and learning outcomes. The qualitative feedback was coded to reveal insights into students' perceptions of the quiz game and its impact on their cultural competence.

## **Results and Interpretation of Results**

Following the methodology outlined, the results of this study provide a detailed analysis of the quiz game's effectiveness in enhancing students' cultural competence and language learning. The data was collected through pre- and post-quiz surveys, classroom observations, and qualitative feedback.

### **1. Pre-Quiz Survey Results**

Before participating in the quiz game, students were asked to evaluate their comfort level and prior knowledge related to intercultural communication and cultural diversity in English-speaking countries.

- **Comfort in Communicating Across Cultures:**
  - **60%** of students reported feeling "somewhat comfortable" interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.
  - **30%** indicated they were "very comfortable."
  - **10%** felt "uncomfortable" communicating in multicultural contexts.
- **Understanding of Cultural Diversity in English-Speaking Countries:**
  - **50%** of students claimed they had "basic knowledge" of cultural diversity in English-speaking countries.
  - **40%** reported having "moderate knowledge."
  - **10%** admitted to having "very little understanding" of cultural diversity.

These initial responses indicated that while the majority of students had some awareness of cultural differences, there was room for significant improvement in both their comfort and understanding of intercultural communication.

### **2. Post-Quiz Game Survey Results**

After participating in the gamified quiz, students reflected on their learning

experience. The post-quiz game survey showed improvements in both engagement and cultural awareness.

- **Effectiveness of the Quiz Game in Improving Cultural Awareness:**
  - **75%** of students responded that the quiz game helped them "significantly" understand cultural differences in English-speaking countries.
  - **20%** indicated that it was "somewhat helpful."
  - **5%** did not perceive any noticeable improvement.

This suggests that the majority of students found the quiz game to be highly effective in enhancing their understanding of cultural differences.

- **Engagement with the Quiz Game:**
  - **100%** of respondents found the quiz game engaging, indicating that it successfully captured their interest and maintained their attention.
- **Reinforcement of Concepts Learned:**
  - **80%** of students felt that the quiz game helped reinforce the concepts learned.
  - **20%** answered "maybe," suggesting that while the game was generally effective, there could be areas for improvement.
- **Effect of Competition on Motivation to Learn:**
  - **60%** felt that the competitive aspect of the quiz game motivated them to learn more.
  - **40%** answered "maybe," indicating varied responses regarding the motivational impact of competition.
- **Reflection on Performance and Preparation for Future Gamified Materials:**
  - **70%** felt more prepared to engage with gamified materials in the future after reflecting on their performance.
  - **30%** answered "maybe," highlighting that while many students felt ready, some had reservations.
- **Knowledge Gain about Cultural Stereotypes or Biases:**
  - **70%** of respondents reported gaining more knowledge about cultural stereotypes or biases associated with International English.

- **30%** did not perceive a gain in this area, suggesting that while the quiz was beneficial, further refinement may be needed to enhance understanding in this aspect.

### **Challenges and Considerations**

While the integration of gamification and cultural competence development in language education offers numerous benefits, it also presents several challenges that educators must carefully consider. One of the primary challenges is ensuring that the gamified activities are culturally sensitive and inclusive. It is essential to avoid stereotypes or cultural misrepresentations that could reinforce biases or perpetuate misconceptions about different cultures (Kramsch, 1993). Educators must take great care in designing gamified content that accurately reflects the diversity and complexity of cultural experiences while fostering mutual respect and understanding among learners.

Another challenge lies in the accessibility of gamified language learning platforms. Not all learners may have equal access to digital devices, high-speed internet, or the technological skills required to navigate gamified environments. This digital divide can create disparities in learning outcomes, particularly for learners from underprivileged backgrounds (Hamari et al., 2014). To address this issue, educators should consider providing alternative means of engagement for learners who may face technological barriers, such as offering offline versions of gamified activities or incorporating low-tech game-based learning strategies.

Despite these challenges, I believe that the potential benefits of integrating gamification and cultural competence development in language education far outweigh the drawbacks. With careful planning, thoughtful design, and a commitment to inclusivity, educators can create gamified learning experiences that not only enhance language proficiency but also empower learners to become culturally competent global citizens.

### **Future Directions & Recommendations**

As technology continues to evolve, the integration of gamification and cultural competence development in language education is poised for further innovation. Augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence offer promising avenues to create immersive and adaptive learning experiences. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaborations between language educators, game designers, and cultural experts can enrich pedagogical approaches and broaden the scope of cultural content integration. The integration of gamification and cultural

competence development manifests in diverse educational contexts, ranging from classroom activities to online platforms. Language instructors leverage gamified elements such as points, badges, leaderboards, and storytelling to transform mundane language exercises into engaging quests. For instance, learners might embark on virtual journeys through culturally rich landscapes, where they encounter language challenges intertwined with cultural nuances. Collaborative tasks, role-playing scenarios, and simulation games immerse learners in authentic cultural contexts, fostering experiential learning and empathy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the integration of gamification and cultural competence development in language education represents a forward-thinking approach to addressing the complexities of language learning in a globalized world. By leveraging game design principles to create engaging, immersive, and culturally rich learning experiences, educators can effectively promote both linguistic proficiency and intercultural understanding. This approach aligns with my belief that education should be holistic, equipping learners with the skills they need to navigate the linguistic and cultural challenges of the 21st century.

The use of gamification in language education offers a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between language learning and cultural competence development. By creating gamified environments that reflect real-world cultural scenarios, educators can provide learners with meaningful opportunities to practice intercultural communication, develop cultural sensitivity, and gain a deeper understanding of diverse cultural perspectives. As the field of language education continues to evolve, I am convinced that gamification, when thoughtfully applied, will play a crucial role in preparing learners to become effective communicators and culturally competent individuals in an increasingly interconnected world.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While this study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of gamification in promoting cultural competence, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, consisting only of students in one class, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the quiz game format may not equally engage all learning styles, particularly for students who are less comfortable with competitive or timed activities. Additionally, the study was conducted over a short period, and a longer-term



analysis could yield more comprehensive data on the retention of cultural knowledge and its practical application. Lastly, access to technology was a limitation, as not all students had equal proficiency with digital tools, which may have impacted their engagement with the gamified content. Future research should address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample, offering alternative formats for different learning preferences, and extending the duration of the study to assess long-term impacts.

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## **“THE EPIC OF THE WARRIORS” AT UNESCO: THE NEED FOR THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF ALBANIAN CULTURE**

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### **Abstract**

*This article discusses the significance of registering The Epic of the Warriors with UNESCO, emphasizing its exceptional cultural and historical value. The Epic of the Warriors is a cycle of legendary songs accompanied by a single-string lute, conveying a profound message of human resilience in the pursuit of freedom, justice, and dignity. Additionally, it provides insight into the customs and traditions of the era it depicts.*

*Through the use of various techniques, the bards have not only memorized tens of thousands of verses but also enriched these songs with variations and new artistic elements. Registering The Epic of the Warriors with UNESCO facilitates the international recognition of this cultural and historical heritage, ensuring its ongoing protection and promotion for future generations.*

*The article aims to assist institutions involved in preparing the dossier and application for the registration of The Epic of the Warriors as part of the world cultural heritage treasury in UNESCO. For years, this request has been rejected due to both Albania and Kosovo submitting their dossiers simultaneously. Therefore, given that this cultural and historical treasure belongs to all Albanians, and considering that Kosovo is not yet a UNESCO member state, Albania should submit the dossier independently.*

*This would represent a significant step not only in safeguarding and promoting one of the most valuable treasures of Albanian culture but also in contributing to the enrichment of global cultural and historical heritage.*

**Keywords:** *The Epic of the Warriors, UNESCO, Cultural Heritage, Bards, Accursed Mountains, Albanian Culture, Historical Preservation.*

## 1. Introduction

Many of us grew up with the cycle of songs from *The Epic of the Warriors*. This cycle has played a significant role in our upbringing, leaving us with vivid memories of the two heroes, Muji and Halili, the events surrounding them, and the rich depictions of the natural environment and the way of life in which they lived. Dedicated to preserving both the material and spiritual cultural heritage of Albania, this paper focuses on one of the major works of Albanian literature and culture: the Epic of Muji and Halili.

*The Epic of the Warriors* stands as a remarkable monument of linguistic culture and an invaluable piece of heritage, offering profound insights into historical processes. Two closely related aspects distinguish this epic: on one hand, the themes interwoven with mythological elements and the mindset of bygone centuries; on the other, a language that remains accessible and understandable to today's younger generations. This reflects the linguistic refinement the epic has undergone, which is why it has been rightly hailed as a "golden monument of our poetic language."

Many scholars, both Albanian and foreign, have strongly supported the view that the Albanian Epic is "a truly magnificent work of popular creators, astounding and leaving one speechless with its beauty." As a form of popular artistic expression, the Epic is an ancient genre that, through its content, echoes the distant past. At the same time, it remains a living tradition, passed down through generations. The *Songs of the Warriors*, or the Albanian folk epic of the North, are like precious minerals unearthed from the depths of the land and the most remote mountainous regions.

As Qemal Haxhihasani aptly noted: "Just as the Homeric epics have deepened our understanding of Greek antiquity and the *Song of the Nibelungs* has illuminated the German and French Middle Ages, so too do the monumental *Rhapsodies of the Warriors* provide insight into our country's medieval history, standing proudly alongside the greatest epic creations of other cultures."

For this reason, we must once again emphasize the extraordinary importance of this Epic. Although many individual scholars have urged the Ministry to advocate for its registration as World Heritage with UNESCO, the matter remains unresolved. This paper will also examine the reasons why the Epic has not yet been registered and underscore the need for state institutions to persist in having it recognized as a Masterpiece of World Intangible Heritage.

*The Epic of the Warriors* is a rich and vibrant part of Albanian cultural heritage, embodying the spirit of heroism, adventure, and tradition. Muji and Halili are iconic figures whose exploits have captivated generations. By focusing on this

epic, we have the opportunity to delve into the essence of Albanian literature and culture, celebrating its richness and diversity.

In this paper, we will briefly examine the content of *The Epic of Muji and Halili*, its extraordinary historical and cultural significance, and why it is a unique part of Albanian heritage, distinct from that of other Balkan nations. We will also explore the importance of registering this epic with UNESCO as part of the spiritual cultural heritage of Albania and Kosovo.

Additionally, this paper will highlight the need for the recognition and inheritance of *The Epic of the Warriors* among younger generations, emphasizing the importance of its promotion and the role of institutions and media in raising awareness about its value. Our goal is to contribute to the preservation and promotion of this precious cultural heritage, fostering a deeper appreciation for the role of *The Epic of the Warriors* in Albanian culture and history.

## **2. Objectives**

The primary objective of this paper is to emphasize the urgent need to raise awareness among young people in Albania about the existence and importance of this significant cultural heritage. Alongside increased investment from state institutions, such an awareness campaign could have a profound impact on the preservation of these traditions. This paper underscores the unique historical and linguistic significance of *The Epic of the Warriors*, while also promoting the development of tourism and ensuring the younger generation remains actively engaged with it.

The introduction of targeted strategies by state institutions working in these fields would facilitate advancements in research and uncover new data, which could be crucial in registering this Masterpiece on the UNESCO list. Expediting the registration process, even if initiated solely by Kosovo, would counter Serbia's claims that the epic is part of its cultural heritage. Furthermore, the discovery of new data would strengthen media and social network promotion, increasing interest among a wide range of demographic groups, including both local and international tourists, and encouraging visits to the region.

Once the dossier for *The Epic of the Warriors* is successfully registered on the World Heritage List, this cultural treasure will be restored to its rightful place and recognized by both younger generations and the international community. Albania's ancient history and rich culture will finally receive the recognition they deserve, while the increasing number of tourists and visitors will deepen their appreciation for the country's heritage.

### 3. Overview

*The Epic of the Warriors* is a cycle of legendary songs, accompanied by the lute that centers around two heroic brothers, Muji and Halili. This epic has been performed in various regions, including Malësia e Madhe, Rranzat, Postribë, Shllak, Dukagjin, Nikaj Mërtur, Krasniqe, and Gash. It is also well-known in Kosovo, particularly in the Dukagjin Plain, in cities such as Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Rahovec, Deçan, Istog, and Suhareka.

Among the most renowned songs in the cycle are *Martesa e Mujit* (**The Marriage of Muji**), *Fuqia e Mujit* (**The Power of Muji**), *Orët e Mujit* (**The Fates of Muji**), *Vaji i Ajkunës* (**The Lament of Ajkuna**), *Martesa e Halilit* (**The Marriage of Halili**), and *Orët e Bjeshkës* (**The Fates of the Mountain**). Many scholars have noted similarities between these epic songs and Homeric poems, situating them within the broader context of world epic literature. This is why, after numerous appeals from scholars, it was determined that *The Epic of the Warriors* should receive the recognition it deserves and be included in the dossier for consideration by UNESCO.



Fig.1.1. Depiction of Muji and Halili from ‘*The Epic of the Warriors*’

*The Epic of the Warriors* is a series of epic songs that recount the stories of legendary Albanian heroes, Muji and Halili. These songs are a significant cultural and artistic treasure, preserving essential elements of Albanian tradition and national identity. Through them, values such as bravery, loyalty, and justice are conveyed, offering a glimpse into the life and culture of ancient Albanians. The descriptions of nature and the environment in these songs are vivid and

detailed, bringing the mountainous landscapes of Albania and the lifestyle of its people to life. These depictions not only evoke a strong sense of place and time but also emphasize the deep connection between the people and their natural surroundings.

This epic stands out for its high artistic value and represents a vital part of Albanian national spiritual heritage. Like castles, churches, mosques, and bridges, *The Epic of the Warriors* has been legally declared a cultural monument, underscoring its importance as part of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Albanian nation.

Since 2006, under the Law on Cultural Heritage, both material and spiritual culture have been given equal importance in Albania. However, for nearly four years, this recognition existed only on paper.

### **List of Spiritual Cultural Heritage:**

1. **Albanian Folk Iso-Polyphony** – A typology of Albanian national spiritual heritage, declared a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO on November 25, 2005.
2. **The Epic of the Warriors** – Represented in both the Geg and Tosk dialects, this is a key element of Albanian oral folklore.
3. **Homophonic Folk Music of Central Albania** – Includes regions such as Tirana, Elbasan, Kavaja, Durrës, Kruja, and Berat.
4. **Shkodër Urban Melodies** – A significant form of cultural expression from the city of Shkodër.
5. **Mastery of Crafting Folk Musical Instruments** – Encompasses the making of traditional instruments such as frame drums, tambourines, and others.
6. **Dropullite Girls’ Dance** – A traditional dance form from the Dropulli region.

The *Songs of the Warriors*, collected by Franciscan priests over a span of approximately forty years, feature contributions from prominent figures such as Father Shtjefën Gjeçovi, Father Vinçens Prenushi, Father Bernardin Palaj, and Donat Kurti. These songs represent an invaluable treasure of Albanian spiritual heritage, often compared to an Iliad of the Illyrian tribes, and form a fundamental part of Albanian identity and history. Through their efforts, the Franciscans gathered over 342 songs, totaling more than eight thousand verses. Interestingly, four of the five singers mentioned in this collection were Albanian:

Sali Uglani (Salih Ugljanin), Xhemal Zogiq (Djermal Zogić), Sulejman Makiq (Sulejman Makić), and Ali Fulani (Alija Fjuljanin). These singers, from the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, were capable of performing the same songs in both Bosnian (Serbo-Croatian) and Albanian.

These parallels, along with the presence of Slavic terms in Albanian songs, highlight the rich exchange between Albanian oral heritage and neighboring cultures over centuries. This heritage reflects a complex blending of pre-Slavic and Slavic influences, illustrating the depth and diversity of the Albanian epic tradition.

**4. Questionnaire**

**Table 4-1: Questionnaire on the Awareness of ‘The Epic of the Warriors’ by Different Age Groups and Interest in Visiting Related Sites**

This questionnaire aims to assess awareness levels across different age groups regarding *The Epic of the Warriors* and to explore how many individuals are interested in visiting locations associated with it. The key questions are designed to better understand the factors that could encourage increased visitation to these areas.

It is particularly interesting to observe how today’s youth perceives this aspect of Albanian spiritual culture. Most have only heard about it second-hand, without fully grasping its content or significance. Their responses are often shaped more by emotional perceptions than by factual knowledge.

Questions	Options	Reasons for Inclusion in the Questionnaire
Have you ever heard of <i>The Epic of the Warriors</i> ?	a. Yes b. No	To assess the awareness levels of individuals from different age groups regarding this cultural heritage.
What do you think might be the reason for the lack of information about it?	a. Lack of Promotion b. Lack of Interest c. Both	To assess the likelihood of effectively engaging interviewees in factors that could encourage increased visitation to these areas.

<p>What could make visiting this site more appealing?</p>	<p>a. Improved Infrastructure  b. Proximity to the Capital City  c. Historical Significance of the Site  d. Better Promotion</p>	
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**Table 4-1**

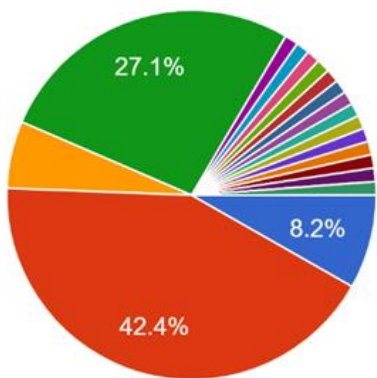
Online networks, media, the growing emphasis on cultural heritage due to the increasing number of tourists in recent years, and the inclusion of cultural heritage in some curricula have created more opportunities for both young and older age groups to become familiar with this aspect of Albania’s cultural treasures. According to Graph 3.1, there is a noticeable difference in the responses between interviewees who were completely unaware of this important heritage and those who had only vaguely heard of it.

In a questionnaire conducted with dozens of young people aged 18-35, questions were included to assess their knowledge and appreciation of Albania’s historical and cultural heritage, particularly *The Epic of the Warriors*. The results showed that over 70% of respondents had heard of the Epic but had never read it. Only a few were well-informed about its content, while the majority were uncertain in their responses.

**Question:**

“Are you familiar with the Epic of the Warriors? To what extent is your knowledge of it?”





- **42.4%:** “I have only recently become aware of it.”
- **27.1%:** “I would like to have more knowledge about it.”
- **8.2%:** “I am unfamiliar with it.”

**Other responses (with smaller percentages):**

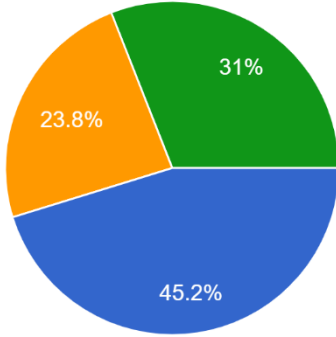
- “What is its relevance to me?”
- “Detailed understanding required.”
- “I have heard of Muaji, Halili, Zanat.”
- “I have read about it.”
- “I have heard of it.”

**Graph. 3.1**

Regarding the values of *The Epic*, 45% of respondents acknowledged its significance as a key part of Albanian national identity. Meanwhile, 31% believed that it needed greater promotion through media and social networks, while the remaining 24% had no information about it at all.

**Question:**

“What significance does the Epic of the Warriors hold in national cultural heritage?”



- **45.2%:** “It represents significant values.”
- **31.0%:** “Increased promotion is necessary.”
- **23.8%:** “I am not familiar with it.”

**Other responses:**

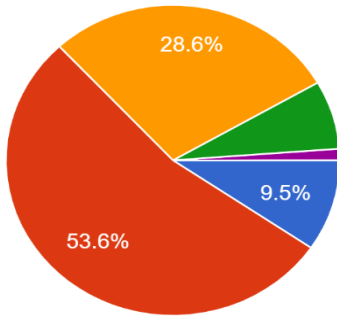
- “No value.”
- “Option 5”

**Graph. 3.2**

In response to another question about registering *The Epic* with UNESCO, after being informed that Kosovo cannot register sites on the World Heritage List due to its non-membership in UNESCO, 54% of respondents felt that registration as part of Albanian heritage was very important. They suggested that, once Kosovo becomes a full member, the dossier could be expanded to include Kosovo. Only 9.5% of respondents indicated that they were not interested in this issue at all.

### Question:

“Given that Kosovo is not yet a member of UNESCO, is it important for it to be listed as part of the Albanian cultural heritage within the World Heritage framework?”



- **53.6%:** “Registering it with UNESCO as part of Albanian heritage holds exceptional value.”
- **28.6%:** “It may be of interest.”
- **9.5%:** “I have no interest in this matter.”

#### Other responses:

- “It would not result in any change to the Albanian context.”
- “Option 5”

### Graph. 3.3

These results highlight a significant awareness of the importance of *The Epic of the Warriors* and the need for increased promotion and information about it, particularly among young people. When asked to provide suggestions on this issue, 45% of young respondents stated that *The Epic of the Warriors* should be recognized not only as National Heritage but also as World Heritage, emphasizing that its content is a valuable contribution to world history. Meanwhile, 30% acknowledged the erosion of values in key aspects of Albanian history and culture and called for urgent action by relevant institutions and the media to ensure that this cultural treasure is recognized and appreciated by future generations.

### 5. The status of the dossier for ‘the Epic of the Warriors’ submission to Unesco

The preparation of the dossier for the inclusion of *The Epic of the Warriors* in UNESCO began in 2009. Initially, this effort involved an inter-institutional commission collaborating between Tirana and Pristina. However, it was later deemed problematic due to Kosovo’s status as a non-member of UNESCO.

At a UNESCO meeting where the dossier was presented as part of the cultural heritage of both Albania and Kosovo, Kosovo's lack of recognition as an independent state served as a pretext to postpone the decision. Furthermore, Serbia claimed that this creation was part of its national heritage.

Disappointment intensified when UNESCO registered the Serbian epic singing with the lute as world heritage, leading many Albanians to view this as an act of "theft" or injustice. They felt that their indigenous tradition had been appropriated by their neighbors. This tradition involves epic songs about the deeds of the heroic warriors, sung to the accompaniment of the lute, a unique and symbolic instrument in Albanian culture.

In response to this situation and the decade-long efforts by Kosovo and Albania to create a joint dossier for the recognition of *The Songs of the Warriors*, a decision was made to restart the preparation process. This new initiative aims to protect and promote this important cultural heritage by uniting the efforts of both Albanian states to secure international recognition and appreciation for the epic songs and the tradition of the lute.

The dossier preparation involves gathering historical materials, documenting cultural practices, and engaging with the communities that sustain this tradition. It requires close collaboration between cultural experts, musicologists, and local communities to ensure a comprehensive and compelling submission to UNESCO.

Some speculated reasons for the rejection of the request to register '*The Epic of the Warriors*' include:

1. Despite efforts from individual scholars, it's possible that a comprehensive and well-supported application was not submitted by state institutions. UNESCO's registration process requires a formal proposal supported by extensive research, documentation, and government advocacy, which may not have been fully achieved.
2. *The Epic of the Warriors*, while highly significant in Albanian culture, may lack widespread international recognition. Increased promotion and investment in global awareness are essential. Securing international acknowledgment would not only spotlight the cultural heritage of Albania and Kosovo but also help preserve this important oral tradition. UNESCO often prioritizes cultural elements that have garnered more global attention or understanding.

3. The UNESCO World Heritage registration process is lengthy, with many competing applications from around the world, which can result in delays or *The Epic* not being prioritized. UNESCO reviews numerous applications during its annual sessions, making the process time-consuming.
4. Documenting an epic like *The Epic of the Warriors* requires significant resources to collect, preserve, and present the material in a way that meets UNESCO's standards. This includes recordings, transcriptions, translations, and cultural analyses, which may not have been fully developed or submitted.
5. There may have been a lack of sustained effort or focus from relevant state institutions in advocating for the epic's recognition. Without consistent follow-up, the application may have stalled. Neglect by responsible institutions, particularly after the initial rejection, along with the failure to complete the dossier with elements highlighting its Albanian origins and cultural significance, and the joint submission with Kosovo, could have further contributed to its delay.

## **Conclusion**

The Albanian language, across all the compact territories of Albanian lands in the Balkans, stands apart from other Balkan languages due to its linguistic richness, particularly in the realm of greetings and well-wishes. These expressions follow a strict “protocol” based on place, time, and the individuals involved in the communication. The Albanian language is distinguished by its abundance of beautiful greetings and well-wishes, deeply rooted in a lexical-semantic core that reflects the nobility and high qualities of the Albanian spirit. If this dossier is accepted, it would mark a significant victory for Albanian cultural heritage, recognizing and preserving an essential part of national identity and ensuring that the epic songs of the Warriors remain a vibrant component of Albanian culture for future generations.

One of the most distinguishing features of these epic songs is their poetic style. As a form of oral poetry, they are marked by careful word choice and the arrangement of words to meet the demands of rhythm, rhyme, and verse structure. While spoken language varies significantly between regions—such as the Northwestern and Northeastern dialects—these dialectal differences are less

pronounced in the epic poetry. Instead, a more refined and unified linguistic form emerges, highlighting common elements across regions.

The core of *The Epic of the Warriors*, recounting the heroic deeds of legendary figures, dates back to ancient times, with roots extending not just across centuries but millennia. This ancient tradition reflects the shared cultural and historical heritage of the Albanian people, embodying a common linguistic and cultural thread despite regional variations.

The proposal to include *The Epic of the Warriors* in UNESCO's list of world cultural heritage represents a strong commitment to preserving and disseminating Albanian spiritual heritage. This step will contribute to a greater international recognition of Albania's cultural richness and ensure its protection for future generations.

The significance of these songs and the need for their recognition and protection by UNESCO are immense, as they represent not only national heritage but also a treasure of world culture. Therefore, preparing the dossier for UNESCO and fostering cooperation between Kosovo and Albania are crucial steps in safeguarding and promoting this valuable heritage.

The inclusion of *The Epic of the Warriors* in UNESCO's list of world cultural heritage would be a significant step in preserving and promoting Albanian cultural heritage. This recognition would ensure that the epic songs of the Warriors, an integral part of Albanian national identity, remain alive and preserved for future generations.

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## CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA OF INTERPRETING TYPES

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### **Abstract**

*Interpreting as a translational activity in which a first and final rendition in another language is produced based on a one-time presentation of an utterance in a source language (Pöchhacker, 2022, p.11) is an expression par excellence of the existence of different language-speaking communities communicating among each other.*

*In the light of recognizing the plurality of languages in a given communicative setting, as well as the recognition of the multilingualism of regions, interpreting can be considered furthermore as a vital instrument of democratization of social participation. It is a powerful vehicle enabling bilingual and nowadays even more often multilingual communication of people, states and organizations. As such, the Directorate-General for Interpretation (DG-SCIC) of the European Commission states among others its responsibility in putting into practice the Commission's multilingualism strategy.*

*In this broader context, this paper aims to present the state-of-the-art classification of interpreting types taking into account such criteria as modes, modality of languages, settings, directionality, directness, technology, the performing agents, the professional status and the constellation of interaction.*

*Despite the relevance of such categorization for research purposes within the interpreting studies, it is a sound basis resulting helpful in organizing or revising interpreting curricula, as well as serving as a consultation and an orientation vehicle for organizations and institutions in need of providing interpreting in bilingual or multilingual communication events.*

**Key words:** *Interpreting studies, modes, settings, multilingualism, criteria*

### **Introduction**

Interpreting is an expression *par excellence* of the existence of different language-speaking communities communicating among each other. Interpreting implies the use of at least two different languages by at least two counterparts engaged in a communicative event mediated by the interpreter(s).

The recognition of the plurality of languages in a given communicative setting, as well as the recognition of multilingualism of regions, of both inter-social and intra-social settings, implies in the case of non-bilingual /non-multilingual individuals, the use of interpreting as a means to ensure communication. This



said interpreting can be considered furthermore as a vital instrument of democratization of social participation. It is a powerful vehicle enabling bilingual and nowadays even more often multilingual communication of people, states and organizations.

Taking into account above said, this paper concentrates on giving a state of the art overview of the classification criteria of interpreting types.

Therefore, is necessary to first refer to the definition of interpreting, as the features of it are fundamental in identifying the classification criteria.

According to Pöchhacker “Interpreting is defined as a translational activity in which **a first and final rendition** in another language is produced on the basis of **a one-time presentation** of an utterance in a source language” (Pöchhacker, 2022, p. 11).

The underlying criteria of such a definition rely on Otto Kade’s definition (Kade, 1968, p. 35) foregrounding the following characteristics:

- The source-language text is presented only once, as such it cannot be replayed or reviewed.
- The target-language text is produced under time pressure, with little chance of being revised or corrected.

### **General remarks on the multiplicity of interpreting types**

The reach diversity of human communication is reflected in the diversity of interpreting types. As an illustration of such a statement might be mentioned that *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting* (Pöchhacker, 2015) includes 31 types of interpreting.

Many factors as the involved parties as well as the relationship(s) among them, the scope and function of interaction, the communication settings and constellations, technology etc. account for both, common ground characteristics and differences of interpreting types.

These altogether are to be considered in fulfilling the very fundamental function of interpreting (despite the type), which is to ensure communication in interpreter-mediated events.

According to Pöchhacker (2017), in the course of Interpreting Studies, the notions regarding interpreting types suffered from a handful of symptoms such as:

- conceptual heterogeneity,
- discrepancy of classification by different authors or scholars,

- the lack of strict distinction between interpreting modes and settings, in which interpreting is used.

Taking into account the above mentioned, Pöchhacker (2015, 2022) introduces nine classification criteria of interpreting types.

While the theoretical approach in identifying and formulating the classification criteria nourishes from the vast forms of interpreting, it also accommodates all known more traditional interpreting types, as well as offers a framework for doing so with new emerging types.<sup>1</sup>

### *Classification criteria in relation to interpreting types*

Criterion 1: Modality of languages

The **modality of languages** accounts to distinguish the *interpreting from and into spoken language(s)* from *the interpreting from and into signed language(s)*.

Later interpreting type is recognized in Albania based on the Law Nr. 82/2021 “On the Official Translation and the status of the professional translator”.

Taking into consideration, that the legal recognition of Albanian signed language interpreting is relatively new, the exchange among the more established community of spoken language interpreters and signed language interpreters could be of benefit in terms of more enhanced training regarding the role of the interpreter, as well as the quality requirements of interpreting.

Criterion 2: Modes of interpreting

The need to classify interpreting types according the modes of delivery arose only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the technological development making the simultaneous interpreting possible. The **mode** criterion allows to distinguish between *consecutive interpreting* and *simultaneous interpreting*, including two special types of later: *whispered interpreting* (*whispering*) and **sight interpreting** (known even as *sight translation*).

The defining aspect of this criterion is the temporal relation between the source-language text and the target-language text. In the consecutive mode, the target-language text is delivered after the source-language text, whilst in the simultaneous mode the target-language text is delivered as the source-language text is being delivered.

The practical relevance of such distinction is of great importance for many of the parties involved in the interpreter-mediated communicative event.

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<sup>1</sup> See in this paper: machine interpreting or simultaneous consecutive.

The client as the commissioning party of interpreting services, when deciding in which mode interpreting will be delivered, has to take into consideration several aspects such as the setting and the situational constellation of interaction. In intra-social settings, consecutive interpreting is mostly used, whilst in events such as conferences, with a more ritualized character simultaneous interpreting is the typical interpreting type.

In addition, the decision regarding the mode of interpreting has a direct impact on the costs of events, as simultaneous interpreting requires the use of technical equipment (booth), as well as commissioning at least two interpreters per language combination/booth.

In the Albanian context, it might be occasionally advisable for clients to consult interpreters when deciding on the interpreting mode, especially when clients are not commissioning interpreting services on a regular basis and therefore might lack the awareness of the factors involved.

The users, especially the speaker(s), ideally shall be aware of the interpreting mode, in order to integrate in their delivery, the needed pauses for the rendering of interpreting in the consecutive mode.

### Criterion 3: Directness

The **directness** accounts for a further type of interpreting, *relay interpreting* (*relais*). In cases when language(s) is/are involved, into and/or from which no direct interpreting into another language is possible due to the lack of interpreter(s) with the required language combination or other circumstances, a third language is involved, serving as a relay language. In such case the interpreting for the target audience (for example speakers of Albanian language) of the source speaker (for example speaking in Norwegian) is not delivered directly from Norwegian into Albanian to the Albanian-speaking target audience, but indirectly through a third language (for example English). The target language text in English serves as a source language text for the target language text in Albanian.

From a practical point of view, this criterion is also important, as it implies that simultaneous interpreting has to be used. The use of consecutive interpreting would be too time-consuming.

Furthermore, this criterion is of great importance when putting together interpreter teams. Clients should bear in mind the recommendations of the AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters), in order to avoid the systematic use of relay interpreting (AIIC, 2023, p. 4).

To illustrate the above-mentioned, an example shall be shortly described. On the

occasion of the state visit of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel in Tirana, in 2015 an economic forum was organized by DIHA, the German Chamber of Commerce in Albania. The forum attended by German and Albanian Entrepreneurs, as well as representatives of the diplomatic court was addressed by the Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

The working languages of the event were Albanian, German, and English with three booths (German-Albanian/Albanian-German; English-Albanian/Albanian-English; German-English/English-German). Given the importance of the occasion, the organizer decided to avoid the use of relay interpreting for the address of Chancellor Merkel, which would have resulted in rendering the German original speech in Albanian, and the Albanian target speech serving as a source speech for the rendering into English (German-Albanian, Albanian-English, Albanian being the relay language). The original speech of Chancellor Merkel delivered in German was simultaneously interpreted in Albanian (German-Albanian booth) and in English (German-English booth). For this purpose, the interpreters of the German-English booth were commissioned in Germany, as no professional interpreters with this language combination were available in the local Albanian market.

#### Criterion 4: Directionality

The very act of interpreting *per se* is always performed in one direction in a given time frame, but in the context of a communicative event, the **directionality** poses a further criterion, which in the broader sense is used to distinguish between *unilateral* and *bilateral interpreting*. In the narrowest sense this criterion is used to classify the interpreting from the A-language<sup>2</sup> into the B-language known as *retour Interpreting*. This criterion is of most relevance, when putting together interpreter teams, as the western tradition seeks to avoid retour interpreting. This might result as very difficult when it comes to “small” languages such is the case of Albanian.

Following example shall serve as an illustration. In December 2022 took place a state visit of the German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier in

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<sup>2</sup> According to the AIIC working languages are defined as following:

A-language: The interpreter's native language (or another language strictly equivalent to a native language), into which the interpreter works from all her or his other languages, and as a general rule, in both modes of interpretation, simultaneous and consecutive.

B-language: the language other than the interpreter's native language, of which she or he has a perfect command and into which she or he works from one or more of her or his other languages)

[https://aiic.org/document/10231/CACL\\_Regulations\\_2022\\_E&F\\_final.pdf\\_\(23.05.2024\)](https://aiic.org/document/10231/CACL_Regulations_2022_E&F_final.pdf_(23.05.2024))

Albania. On this occasion, the German Federal President Steinmeier and the Albanian President Begaj held a joint press conference. The protocol procedures require that one interpreter serves as interpreter of the address of the German head of state and another as interpreter of the Albanian head of state. Both interpreters at the event have Albanian as their A-language, meaning that the interpreter rendering into German the address of President Begaj was working into her B-language.

That is the case in most interpreted events when Albanian is one of the working languages. For Albanian interpreters having Albanian as their A-language, this implies that they are almost regularly working into their B-language. Therefore, interpreting in the B-language is a crucial and integral part of the interpreters' education, as reflected in the academic curricula of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana<sup>3</sup>.

#### Criterion 5: Setting (social context of interaction)

Historically speaking interpreting has been used whenever different cultural and linguistic communities entered into contact with each other. Nowadays, even more often than in the past, interpreting is used in bilingual or multilingual communities. In this context, the **criterion of setting (or the social context of interaction)** is used to differentiate between *inter-social interpreting* and *intra-social interpreting*, which is community-based.

The main characteristic of the former one is the equal or comparable status of the individuals involved in the communication process, such as politicians, diplomats, scientists, businessmen etc., acting mainly not as individuals, but as representatives of states, institutions or organizations.

In the case of intra-social interpreting, one of the communication parties acts as an individual speaking on his behalf. Under the term of *community interpreting* (known even as *public services interpreting*, (Tipton, 2020, p. 80) other distinctions are made taking into consideration the institutional interaction context:

- *legal interpreting* (in police or asylum institution) is to be distinguished from
- *courtroom interpreting*;
- *healthcare interpreting*;
- *educational interpreting*;

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<sup>3</sup> Programet e studimit: <https://fgjh.edu.al/master-i-shkencave-ne-perkthim-teknik-letrar-dhe-interpretim/> accessed: 18.11.2024

- *media interpreting.*

It is important to stress out the in some case the boundaries among inter-social and intra-social interpreting are fluid. For example, the case of courtroom interpreting in the international crime tribunals is clearly to be classified as inter-social.

Media interpreting can also be positioned in the inter-social – intra-social continuum (Pöchhacker, 2022), since it usually aims to make accessible contents from the international sphere speakers to a social-cultural community.

Criterion 6: Situational constellation of interaction

When taking into consideration the **situational constellation of interaction** (Pöchhacker, 2022, p. 16) one can distinguish between *conference interpreting* and *dialogue interpreting*.

This criterion relies on the monological or dialogic nature of interaction. In the first case, the format of the interaction of one to many-has a more ritualized character, such as in conference settings. In the case of dialogue interpreting interpersonal face-to-face communication is the typical form. This type is also known as *liaison interpreting*, and it is worth mentioning that in many cases the notions of “dialogue interpreting” and “community interpreting” are used as synonyms (Merlini 2015, p. 102; Merlini, 2020, p. 147). Merlini states that “nowadays prevails the approach to consider dialogue interpreting as an overarching term covering non-conference interpreting activities” (Merlini, 2020, p. 147).

Criterion 7: Professional status

In given circumstances interpreting is not performed by professional interpreters, but by bilingual (or multilingual) individuals such as might be the case of children from migration backgrounds mediating the communication between their parents and teachers, or doctors and other institutional representatives. In light of the professional status of interpreters, but even due to the enhanced interest among researchers for the non-professional interpreting the **criterion of professionalism** is used to distinguish between *professional* and *non-professional interpreting* (known even as *natural interpreting*).

Criterion 8: Technology

Technology has given birth to new types of interpreting, such as the case of the birth of simultaneous interpreting in the mid-’20s of the XX century. As such the use of **technology** makes for another criterion to distinguish between

*consecutive and simultaneous interpreting*, and in the case of later one to distinguish some special forms such as:

- *whispering* (with no use of technology)
- *bidule interpreting* (mobile interpreting system)

Due to the technological developments hybrid forms of interpreting such as *simultaneous consecutive* are applied by using a portable recording and playback device. For the target audience the rendition into the target language is consecutive, that is to say after the source-language utterance, but the actual interpreting process for the interpreter is done simultaneously with the recorded speech.

The next type of interpreting does not take into account the mode of interpreting, but the spatial aspect of interpreting. In most cases interpreting take place *in situ*, the interaction parties as well as the interpreter(s) are at same time, in the same place. Technology makes the *remote interpreting* or *distance interpreting* possible, whereby the interpreter(s) can be in different place from one or, both, or even many interacting parties. Historically speaking the remote interpreting includes such types as *telephone interpreting* and *videoconference interpreting*.

With regard to technology Fantinuoli (2018, p.5) speaks of the technological turn of the interpreting profession referring to the *machine interpreting* (referred also as *automatic interpreting*) defining it as the “the technology that allows the translation of spoken texts from one language to another by means of a computer program”.

#### Criterion 9: Performing agents

Machine interpreting calls for a further distinction criterion of the **performing agents** to distinguish between *human* and *machine interpreting*.

Hitherto the use of machine interpreting is still limited in some “specific domains and ... to a narrow range of highly standardized natural language input” (Jekat, 2015, p.242). Due to technological limitations in speech recognition, as well as due to features of spoken language such as the speaker attitude (Fantinuoli, 2018, p.6) or the para verbal and nonverbal aspects (Jekat, 2015, p.239) machine interpreting has not yet achieved the required quality, but technological changes do have the potential to shape the next big technological turn after the birth of simultaneous interpreting.

## Conclusions

The classification of interpreting types takes into account such criteria as *modes, modality of languages, settings, directionality, directness, technology, the performing agents, the professional status, and the constellation of interaction*. The theoretical framework underlying the formulated classification criteria accommodates equally more traditional interpreting types, as well as new emerging types due to technological changes, such as machine interpreting, or simultaneous consecutive.

Despite the relevance of such categorization for research purposes within the interpreting studies, it is a sound basis resulting in helpful in organizing or revising interpreting curricula, which are mainly focused on conference interpreting. Careful observation and analysis of the market demand regarding other interpreting types such as legal interpreting etc. can serve as grounds for the revision of existing curricula.

On the other hand, the classification of interpreting types can serve as a consultation and an orientation vehicle for organizations and institutions in need of providing interpreting in bilingual or multilingual communication events.

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## INVESTIGATING THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF ESP STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

*The last decades of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century were marked as an epoch with increased contact between people of different cultures and globalized exchange in all spheres of life. The opening of borders, expansion of international relations, intensifying process of globalization, modern means of communication, and the wide use of the Internet help to bring people together, and make the world a nearly unified community, highlighting interaction and mutual influence of different cultures. This nevertheless requires mastering a new skill widely known as intercultural communicative competence, which will allow individuals to communicate effectively and efficiently with different people. This study aimed to investigate the level of intercultural communicative competence of ESP learners, students at the undergraduate, master's, and PhD levels from St. Kliment Ohridski University-Bitola. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through an adapted version of the Intercultural Communicative Competence Self Rating Scale (ICCSRS), based on Byram's intercultural competence model. The results reveal that participants demonstrate confidence in some aspects of intercultural knowledge but lack knowledge in historical, political, and taboo-related senses. They also show a positive intercultural attitude, exhibit a level of intercultural awareness characterized by the ability to observe and recognize cultural differences, and present a mixed level of confidence and challenges in various aspects of intercultural communicative skills.*

**Keywords:** *Intercultural communicative competence, ESP, Intercultural awareness, knowledge, attitude, and communication skills.*

### **Introduction**

The end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century resulted in the specific phenomena in the development of interactions between people from diverse cultures, which is an obvious result of globalization and technology development. This period marked unprecedented shifts in human connectivity, underpinned by the rapid expansion of technology and global integration

(Castells, 1996). Chen (2012) claims that globalization affected the interconnected world that brought up the opening of borders, internationalized relations, and the rapid spreading of information through modern means of communication such as the Internet. Giddens (1999) highlights that globalization restructured social, economic, and cultural interactions, leading to an era where cross-cultural relations became a cornerstone of professional and personal life. This phenomenon also caused the arousing of global exchange and cultural interaction, which transformed humans' lives to switch and become a connected global community where the cultural boundaries are constantly changing in a rather positive manner. Yet, this novelty imposes the need to develop a specific skill set known as intercultural communicative competence (ICC), in addition to linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge. Deardorff (2006) emphasizes the significance of identifying and assessing intercultural competence as the primary goal of educational internationalization efforts, emphasizing communication skills as a primary aspect in diverse cultural contexts. Scholars such as Hofstede (2001) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) argue that understanding cultural dimensions and value orientations is fundamental to fostering effective intercultural communication, further reinforcing the necessity of ICC in contemporary global interactions. ICC includes not only the ability to understand and effectively communicate in various cultural contexts but also the ability to adapt one's communication style. As Fantini (2009) suggests, ICC extends beyond basic cultural awareness, requiring the development of empathy, flexibility, and the ability to bridge cultural differences in meaningful ways.

Byram (1997) provides perceptions in terms of teaching and assessment of intercultural communicative competence, offering practical strategies for integrating ICC into language education curricula. Similarly, Basturkmen (2006) explores various approaches and strategies in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), including the integration of intercultural communication skills into ESP programs to meet the needs of learners in specialized professional or academic contexts. These strategies align with Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) principles of ESP, which emphasize the importance of tailoring language instruction to meet specific communicative needs, including cultural adaptation. Within the field of ESP education, ICC plays a vital role in preparing learners for specialized professional or academic contexts where intercultural communication is prevalent. According to Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018), the integration of authentic, culturally diverse materials into language learning can enhance students' ICC by exposing them to real-world intercultural scenarios.

In today's globalized world, individuals with high levels of ICC are adept at recognizing and bridging cultural differences, resolving conflicts, and building meaningful connections with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) stress that ICC development involves cultivating both cultural sensitivity and the ability to navigate cultural complexities effectively, which is crucial in diverse professional settings. Educational institutions, businesses, and organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of incorporating intercultural communication skills into their curricula and training initiatives to prepare individuals for the challenges and opportunities of a modern interconnected world. The integration of ICC into ESP education enhances learners' readiness for the realities of globalized professional or academic environments, equipping them with the skills and competencies needed to communicate effectively and ethically across cultures. As noted by Canagarajah (2005), intercultural awareness and communication strategies are essential for language learners to succeed in multilingual, multicultural environments. Therefore, ICC is an essential component of ESP education, ensuring that learners are prepared to succeed in their specialized fields in an increasingly interrelated world. The primary goal of this study is to assess the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) among ESP learners at St. Kliment Ohridski University-Bitola. This involves evaluating their proficiency in handling intercultural interactions and determining their readiness for effective communication in diverse cultural settings. Additionally, the study aims to investigate the specific intercultural scopes of ICC. This analysis includes a thorough understanding of the learners' intercultural knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and skills, which are crucial for effective intercultural communication. To facilitate this assessment, the author used an adapted version of the Intercultural Communicative Competence Self Rating Scale (ICCSRS), based on Byram's intercultural competence model, which is a tool that provides a comprehensive evaluation of the various aspects of ICC among ESP learners. As Fantini and Tirmizi (2006) suggest, such self-assessment tools are valuable for fostering learner reflection and identifying areas for improvement in ICC development.

### **Intercultural Communicative Competence and English for Specific Purposes**

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in ESP education is more than linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness; it encompasses the development of attitudes, values, and behaviors conducive to effective intercultural

communication. By incorporating ICC into ESP curricula, educators can provide learners with opportunities to engage in authentic intercultural interactions, develop cultural sensitivity, and adapt their communication strategies to meet the needs of diverse cultural contexts. This approach is supported by Lussier et al. (2007), who emphasize the need for experiential learning methods in developing intercultural skills, particularly in specialized language programs. The connection between intercultural communicative competence (ICC) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lies in the connection between language learning and specialized communication needs within specific professional or academic contexts. Basturkmen (2006) emphasizes the importance of addressing learners' specific communicative needs within professional contexts, which aligns with the goals of ESP. ESP often focuses on teaching English within specific professional or academic fields, such as business, medicine, engineering, or tourism. In these contexts, understanding the cultural norms, communication styles, and expectations of the target profession or academic discipline is crucial for effective communication. Holmes, Fay, and Andrews (1997) discuss strategies for effective cross-cultural communication in a professional environment, highlighting the significance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in achieving communicative success. Many ESP learners engage in cross-cultural communication as part of their professional or academic accomplishments. For example, business professionals may interact with clients, colleagues, or partners from diverse cultural backgrounds, while medical professionals may treat patients from various cultural contexts. McKay (2002) offers perspectives on teaching English in diverse cultural contexts, emphasizing the need for intercultural communicative competence to better cope with the complex concerns in terms of global communication. As highlighted by Kondo-Brown and Brown (2000), effective intercultural communication skills are essential for success in globalized professional fields such as business, diplomacy, and academia. Research by Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) adds that motivation and cultural empathy are key to fostering strong ICC among language learners. ESP learners who possess strong ICC are better equipped to understand and manage with the cultural differences of their field, interact with each party or individual from diverse cultural backgrounds, and succeed in multicultural environments. ESP emphasizes the practical use of English in real-world professional or academic surroundings. Swales (1990) discusses genre analysis in academic and professional communication, illustrating how ESP learners can benefit from understanding the cultural expectations and conventions of specific discourse communities. Belcher (2009)

explores various theoretical frameworks and practical applications of ESP, including the integration of intercultural communication skills to enhance learners' communicative competence in specialized fields. Additionally, the integration of ICC into ESP education aligns with broader efforts to internationalize higher education and prepare students for global citizenship. As noted by Kramsch (1993), language learning is inherently intertwined with culture, and proficiency in a second language involves not only linguistic competence but also cultural competence. Hence, the integration of ICC into ESP programs enhances learners' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately within their specialized professional or academic contexts. By equipping learners with the cultural knowledge, intercultural communication skills, and strategies necessary for successful communication in diverse cultural environments, ESP programs contribute to the development of well-rounded, globally competent professionals and scholars.

## **Methodology**

For this study, a quantitative research design was employed to investigate the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of 37 higher education participants. Quantitative methods allow for the collection of numerical data, allowing for statistical analysis, to identify patterns and relationships.

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were 37 students enrolled in the Faculty of Biotechnical Sciences at St. Kliment Ohridski University-Bitola, North Macedonia. They represented various academic levels, including undergraduate (first cycle), master's (second cycle), and doctoral (third cycle) students. The inclusion criteria for participants were currently enrolled in any of the study programs at the Faculty of Biotechnical Sciences.

## **Instrument**

The instrument used to measure intercultural communicative competence was *the Intercultural Communicative Competence Self Rating Scale* (ICCSRS), adapted from Zhong et al. (2013) and based on Byram's intercultural competence model developed in 1997. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and consisted of 37 questions divided into seven sections: Intercultural knowledge (Questions 1-11); Intercultural attitudes (Questions 12-15); Intercultural awareness (Questions 16-17); Intercultural skills (Questions 18-22); Sociolinguistic competence (Questions 23-27); Discourse competence (Questions 28-30); Strategic competence (Questions 31-37). Participants were

invited to complete the questionnaire online using Google Forms. They were provided with instructions and informed consent information before proceeding to answer the questions. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The questionnaire took approximately 15 min to complete.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the completed questionnaires were exported from Google Forms and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses. Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would only be used for research purposes. No identifying information was collected to ensure anonymity.

### Limitations

While the study aimed to explore perceptions and experiences in cross-cultural communication, it's important to acknowledge certain limitations. Specifically, the author excluded questions related to sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence from the analysis. These segments of communication, though crucial, were not within the scope of this study. Consequently, the findings provide insights primarily into cultural knowledge, understanding of norms, and communication behaviors in cross-cultural interactions.

### Results

The results presented in Charts 1, 2, 3, and 4 provide information about the responses given per question according to the Likert Scale, expressed as 'Strongly Agree/Agree,' 'Neutral,' and 'Disagree/Strongly Disagree' responses. A comprehensive summary of the responses is available at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ikM5U4C2maO1MzlsODRnGD6EW9FZE9d/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ikM5U4C2maO1MzlsODRnGD6EW9FZE9d/view?usp=drive_link)

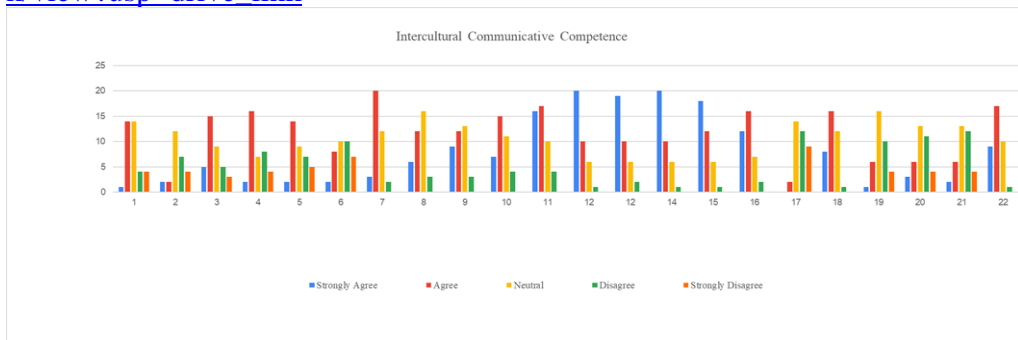


Chart no.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence chart expressed per question and Lickert scale

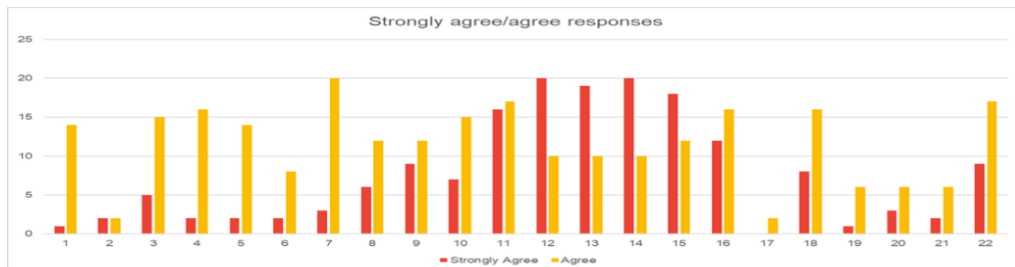


Chart 2: Questions answered with strongly agree and agree

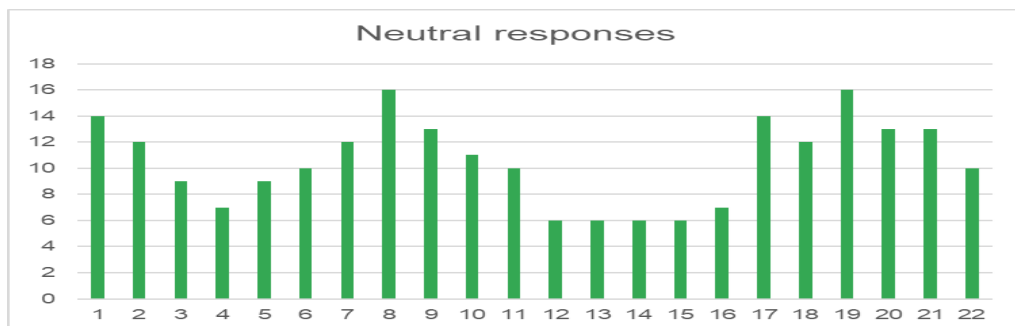


Chart 3: Neutral responses expressed per question

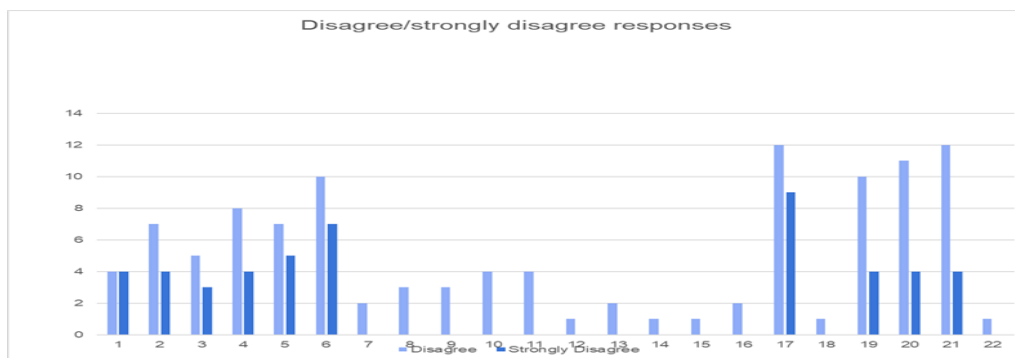


Chart 4: Questions answered with disagree and agree

The results reveal varying levels of **intercultural knowledge** among the



respondents. In terms of lifestyle awareness, the majority seem to have some understanding of the lifestyle in other cultures, with 29 out of 37 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this. However, regarding historical knowledge, a significant portion, 19 respondents, lack familiarity with historical events and figures from other cultures. A similar trend is observed in literature awareness, where 20 out of 37 respondents acknowledge their lack of knowledge about the literature and important writers of other cultures. The same pattern continues with political understanding, as 18 respondents agree or strongly agree that they lack knowledge about the politics of other cultures. Understanding taboos also appears to be an area of deficiency, with 19 respondents indicating a lack of understanding of cultural taboos. The responses regarding non-verbal communication are mixed, with about half of the respondents indicating they do not understand non-verbal cues in other cultures. In a more positive perspective the majority of respondents, 23 out of 37, feel confident in their understanding of the customs and habits of other cultures. Awareness of current events is moderate, with 18 respondents indicating they understand important current events and hot topics in other cultures. Similarly, most respondents, 21 out of 37, seem to have some understanding of appropriate body distance in intercultural settings. Understanding the time concept of other cultures is another area where respondents feel relatively confident, with 22 out of 37 indicating they understand this aspect. Geographical knowledge proves to be a strong feature with a significant majority of 33 respondents feeling confident about their understanding of the geography of other cultures. Therefore, while the respondents **generally feel confident about their knowledge of customs, habits, and geography, they recognize deficiencies in their understanding of historical, literary, political, and taboo-related aspects of other cultures.** This highlights areas where further development and education could enhance their intercultural communicative competence. In terms of **intercultural attitudes**, the survey results highlight a generally positive attitude towards intercultural communication among the respondents. A strong interest in the lifestyle and values of different countries is evident, with 30 out of 37 respondents expressing enthusiasm for understanding and appreciating cultural diversity. When it comes to active communication, a substantial majority, 29 out of 37 respondents, show a strong preference for engaging actively with people from different cultures. This demonstrates their openness and proactive approach to intercultural interactions. The ability to respond positively to communication initiatives from people of different cultures is also high, with 30 out of 37 respondents indicating they can respond receptively. This reflects an

inclusive and welcoming attitude towards intercultural encounters. Likewise, respect for diverse perspectives is notably strong among the respondents. A significant majority, 30 out of 37, express a willingness to respect viewpoints different from their own, demonstrating tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. Overall, the survey results suggest that the respondents **generally possess positive attitudes towards intercultural communication**. They show an eagerness to learn about and engage with different cultures, coupled with a willingness to respect and accommodate diverse perspectives. These attitudes are crucial for fostering effective communication and building harmonious relationships across cultures. Further on survey results reveal a **significant level of intercultural awareness** among the respondents. A substantial majority, 28 out of 37 respondents, indicate that they are proficient at observing cultural differences during interactions with people from different cultures. This suggests that they possess a sensitivity to cultural distinctions, which is crucial for facilitating effective intercultural communication. Additionally, the acceptance of different values is apparent, as 21 out of 37 respondents disagree with the notion that they don't understand or accept certain values of other cultures. This highlights a willingness to acknowledge and accept cultural differences, even when they may not be fully comprehended or agreed upon. Such an attitude fosters openness and respect towards diverse cultural perspectives. In general, the survey results suggest that the respondents generally **exhibit an exemplary level of intercultural awareness**. They demonstrate the ability to observe and recognize cultural differences, along with a willingness to accept and respect diverse cultural values. These qualities are essential for promoting mutual understanding and harmony in intercultural interactions. Finally, the survey results on **intercultural skills** reveal a complex picture of the respondents' abilities and challenges in this area. A significant majority, 24 out of 37 respondents, feel comfortable and confident in their ability to establish positive relationships with people from different cultures, indicating a high level of intercultural adaptability and interpersonal skills. When it comes to handling conflicts arising from cultural differences, the responses are more varied. While 17 out of 37 respondents find it difficult to cope with such conflicts, a slightly larger group, 19 out of 37, feel more adept at handling with these situations. This mixed level of confidence suggests that while some respondents are skilled at managing intercultural conflicts, others find it more challenging. In terms of communication flexibility, 20 out of 37 respondents find it difficult to adjust their communication behavior according to the cultural background of the parties involved. This indicates that many respondents

perceive challenges in adapting their communication style to accommodate diverse cultural contexts, highlighting a potential area for improvement in their intercultural communication skills. Regarding the handling of misunderstandings in intercultural communication, responses are relatively evenly distributed. There is no clear majority indicating either agreement or disagreement with the statement about actively explaining misunderstandings. This suggests that respondents have varied approaches to addressing misunderstandings, with some feeling more inclined to proactively clarify issues, while others may be less inclined to do so. Further on, a strong majority of respondents, 26 out of 37, feel confident in their ability to deal with various social situations and relationships when communicating with people from different cultures. This reflects a relatively high level of competence in managing social interactions across cultural boundaries, which is a key aspect of intercultural competence. In conclusion, the survey results suggest that while **many respondents feel comfortable in establishing positive relationships and managing social situations across cultures**, there are notable challenges in handling conflicts and adapting communication behaviors to diverse cultural contexts. **This mixed level of confidence in various aspects of intercultural skills points to areas where further development and training could be beneficial.**

### **Interpretation of the findings**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of ESP learners at the Faculty of Biotechnical Sciences- St. Kliment Ohridski University Bitola. Overall, participants demonstrated a **moderate level of ICC**, with strengths and areas for improvement across various dimensions. The strengths demonstrated through the survey are openness and curiosity, adaptability, and reflective awareness, however, the areas for improvement are the knowledge gaps, non-verbal communication, and the lack of language awareness. Developing ESP curricula should incorporate intercultural communication skills improvement to prepare learners for the demands of globalized professions. This may include integrating cultural content, language learning activities, and real-world communication tasks into the curriculum. Providing more opportunities for cultural immersion experiences, such as study abroad programs or virtual exchange initiatives, can enhance learners' intercultural competence by exposing them to diverse cultural perspectives and communication practices. Also encouraging learners to engage in reflective practice and self-assessment can raise greater awareness of their

own cultural biases and communication behaviors, enabling them to adapt more effectively in **intercultural interactions**.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of ESP learners at the Faculty of Biotechnical Sciences- St. Kliment Ohridski University- Bitola, N. Macedonia. While participants- students of first, second, and third cycle majoring in Food and Dietetics, Food Quality and Safety, Food Technology and Agro-economy demonstrated strengths in areas such as openness, curiosity, and adaptability, there are also opportunities for improvement, particularly in addressing knowledge gaps and enhancing non-verbal communication and language awareness. This study provides valuable insights into the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of ESP learners at the Faculty of Biotechnical Sciences – St. Kliment Ohridski University, Bitola, N. Macedonia. While participants—students from first, second, and third cycles majoring in Food and Dietetics, Food Quality and Safety, Food Technology, and Agro-economy—demonstrated strengths in areas such as openness, curiosity, and adaptability, there are also opportunities for improvement, particularly in addressing knowledge gaps and enhancing non-verbal communication and language awareness. The findings reveal that although respondents show a commendable level of awareness and positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, significant challenges remain in certain knowledge and skill areas. For instance, deficiencies in historical, literary, political, and taboo-related knowledge highlight a need to integrate more comprehensive cultural content into ESP curricula. Likewise, the mixed responses regarding non-verbal communication and the challenges of adapting communication behavior underscore the importance of targeted training in these areas to enhance learners' intercultural interaction skills. To address these challenges, incorporating intercultural communication skills development into ESP curricula is essential. This could include designing learning activities that focus on specific ICC dimensions, such as non-verbal communication cues, conflict resolution strategies, and cultural knowledge enhancement. Real-world tasks, such as role-plays, case studies, and simulated intercultural interactions, can provide practical training to prepare students for the complexities of globalized professional and academic settings. In addition to curricular adjustments, providing opportunities for cultural immersion experiences can further develop students' ICC. Study-abroad programs, virtual exchange initiatives, and collaborations with international students or professionals can expose learners to diverse cultural perspectives,

fostering deeper understanding and adaptability. Encouraging reflective practice and self-assessment can also be instrumental in raising learners' awareness of their own cultural biases and communication habits, equipping them to engage more effectively in intercultural contexts. Furthermore, educators should consider expanded use of technology and digital tools to enhance intercultural learning opportunities. Virtual reality experiences, online cultural exchange platforms, and other modern projects can simulate real-world intercultural interactions, offering students practical, low-risk environments for developing their ICC. These approaches align with the growing need for technological integration in education to meet the demands of modern globalized professions. Ultimately, fostering a balance between cultural knowledge, skill development, and attitudinal growth is essential. By addressing the identified gaps and capitalizing on existing strengths, educators can help students build the comprehensive intercultural communicative competence required to succeed in diverse, multicultural environments. This study emphasizes the critical role of ICC in ESP education and highlights actionable strategies for bridging the gaps, thereby contributing to the broader goals of preparing learners for effective participation in a globalized world.

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## ESTHETIC ELEMENTS IN ELIOT'S 'THE WASTE LAND'

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### **Abstract**

*T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" is widely recognized as a groundbreaking piece of poetry acclaimed for its form, extensive references, and deep exploration of the disillusionment and deterioration experienced in Europe after World War I. The main goals of this study are to: Explore the narrative structure of the poem. In this thesis, we delve into the interplay of voices, allusions, and symbolism that add depth to its narrative threads. Take a look, at the literary references, in "The Waste Land" to understand how Eliot uses intertextuality to comment on the cultural and intellectual climate of his time. The analysis explores the stylistic decisions made by Eliot including changes, in language word choice and rhythm. It aims to understand how these decisions enhance the poem's imagery, atmosphere and emotional tone. This study places "The Waste Land" in the context of modernist literature examining how the poem mirrors and evaluates the concerns, confusions and changes of the 1900s. Consider the *Quest for Redemption*: The thesis also probes the concluding section of the poem, "What the Thunder Said," to discern how Eliot introduces a redemptive theme and whether it offers hope amid the pervasive desolation. By rigorously analyzing these aspects, this thesis seeks to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of "The Waste Land," enriching scholarly discourse surrounding Eliot's magnum opus. Furthermore, it underscores the poem's enduring relevance in grappling with issues of cultural disintegration, identity, and the search for meaning in the modern world.*

*Ultimately, this research contends that "The Waste Land" remains a timeless masterpiece that continues to challenge readers and scholars alike, inviting fresh interpretations and inquiries into the intricate web of its thematic and stylistic elements.*

**Keywords:** *Poetry, Symbolism, Allusions, Stylistic Elements, Modernist Literature.*

## ***Introduction***

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri, and died on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1964. He was the youngest of seven children raised as a Unitarian. He studied at Harvard University where he was recognized as a brilliant student and where he began work on his poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, one of his best-known works. After graduating, he continued his studies in Germany, France and at Oxford University (Eliot, 1964). However, most consider “The Waste Land” to be his masterpiece.

“The Waste Land” caused a sensation when it was published in 1922. It is today the most widely translated and studied English language poem of the twentieth century. Eliot's close friend and colleague, Ezra Pound, significantly revised the poem, suggesting major cuts and compressions. Thanks to Pound's heavy editing, “The Waste Land” defined Modernist poetry and became possibly the most influential poem of the century.

“The Waste Land” laments the ruin of modern culture and seeks redemption in the cultural past. Eliot focused on the sterility of modern culture and its lack of tradition and ritual, all this being written in five parts.

It begins with a section entitled “The Burial of the Dead”. In it, the narrator - perhaps a representation of Eliot himself - describes the seasons. Spring brings “memory and desire”, and so the narrator's memory drifts back to times in Munich, to childhood sled rides, and to a possible romance with a “hyacinth girl”. The memories only go so far, however. The narrator is now surrounded by a desolate land full of “stony rubbish” (Eliot, 1945).

He remembers a fortune-teller named Madame Sosostris who said he was “the drowned Phoenician Sailor” and that he should “fear death by water”. Next, he finds himself on London Bridge, surrounded by a crowd of people. He spots a friend of his from wartime and calls out to him (Kermode, 1998).

The next section, “A Game of Chess”, transports the reader abruptly from the streets of London to a gilded drawing room, in which sits a rich, jewel-bedecked lady who complains about her nerves and wonders what to do. The poem drifts again, this time to a pub at closing time in which two Cockney women gossip. Within a few stanzas, we have moved from the upper crust of society to London's low-life (Leech, 1969).



“The Fire Sermon” opens with an image of a river. The narrator sits on the banks and muses on the deplorable state of the world. As Tiresias, he sees a young “carbuncular” man hop into bed with a lonely female typist, only to aggressively make love to her and then leave without hesitation. The poem returns to the river, where maidens sing a song of lament, one of them crying over her loss of innocence to a similarly lustful man (Levin, 1965).

“Death by Water”, the fourth section of the poem, describes a dead Phoenician lying in the water - perhaps the same drowned sailor of whom Madame Sosostris spoke.

“What the Thunder Said” shifts locales from the sea to rocks and mountains. The narrator cries for rain, and it finally comes. The thunder that accompanies it ushers in the three-pronged dictum sprung from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: “Datta, dayadhvam, damyata”: to give, to sympathize, to control. With these commandments, the benediction is possible, despite the collapse of civilization that is under way - “London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down” (Faber, 1974).

In the following section, this paper will give an outline of the major aesthetic elements and values of this magnificent poem.

## STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

For the title of his poem, Eliot chose the central symbol of a devastated land. The title evokes all the associations of a barren landscape blighted by drought and famine, leading on to wide-scale human starvation, misery and death. For the most part, Eliot relates the wasteland symbol of the title to the “Unreal City” such as London, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna or Jerusalem (all centers of human civilization destroyed in past or recent human history).

### **Lexical features**

Our first impression is the unusual opening of the poem with a description of the nature of the cruelty committed by April which mixes memory and desire.

*April is the cruellest month, breeding*

*Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.*

These lines exhibit a semantic juxtaposition, because in normal circumstances **breeding** is a hallmark of life, **memory** is associated with the past and **desire** with the future. The association of the past with the present without the interference of the present is an attribute of April.

**Nouns:** There is a high frequency of nouns in this passage. There are abstract nouns such as (Memory-desire-life-sunlight-April-winter-summer), concrete nouns such as (lilacs-land-roots-rain- earth-snow- shower-coffee). Nouns such as (hour-April - winter- summer) have a periodical progression from a season (winter), to a month (April), to a short period of time (an hour); this supports the theme of declining in the passage. The nouns of real objects and places confirm the physical existence of “the waste land”.

**Adjectives:** We have adjectives that bring visual imagery such as (dull-dried) and we also have an attributive adjective which is (little) and other adjectives such as (dead-cruellest-forgetful). These adjectives refer to the dull atmosphere of the lifelessness in “the waste land”. Many adjectives have “D” such as (dead-dull-dried) they refer to declining, connoting DEATH.

**Verbs:** Verbs are far more frequent in this passage. We have verbs of speech acts such as (talked). We have static verbs such as (kept-surprised-verb to be, is). Most of the verbs are dynamic either indicating movement such as (coming-stopped-went) or indicating an action such as (breeding-mixing-covering-feeding). These verbs convey the theme of this poem which is the damaged psyche of humanity.

Grammatical features

**Sentence length:** The progression of sentence in words through these 11 lines is (5-6-4-5-5-5-5-6-8-7-7). The lengths of lines are close to each other as the writer describes the features indicating the waste land.

**Sentence structure:** T.S. Eliot uses declarative sentences. The unusual opening of the poem through a simple sentence with “-ing” participle clauses paves the

ground for an unusual thematic progression. Linguistically, these opening lines gain much of their strength from the inevitability created by the participle termination “-ing”. The simple past tense used as narrative technique, doesn’t present an extra ordinary event of the past. Sentences (1-6) except (4) are all quite different, having a certain similarity of structure terminating in “-ing”.

The simple sentence of subject (s) verb (v) complement (c) pattern points out the nature of cruelty being committed by April through the “-ing” participles, presenting a catalogue, Secondly, it mixes memory and desire and lastly it stirs “dull roots” with “spring rain”.

**Prepositions:** The passage has a large number of prepositions. We have prepositions of place and direction such as (in-into-out), and we have other propositions such as (of-with-over-on-for), for example (*into the Hofgarten, out of the dead land, with a shower, etc.*). T.S. Eliot uses these prepositions in order to be able to describe these memories of the land and the events of “the waste land”.

### **Figures of speech**

T.S. Eliot uses a figurative language to convey his message through **metaphors** in sentences such as (*April is the cruelest month, Winter kept us warm, Summer surprised us...*). These metaphors support the condition exhibited about the nature of the land and the memories of the past.

There is an **allusion** in the first line in the passage (*April is the cruellest month*) to the opening lines of Chaucer’s “Canterbury Tales” in (*Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote*), through this allusion, the conditions of the land in the time of April are clarified.

T.S. Eliot invokes sensory details through the using of **Imagery**. The first image we receive from the text is the description of the land using words that are perceived by our mind’s eyes such as (*Lilacs-roots-rain-snow-tubers*). A second image is the memories of the past through which also Eliot uses visual imagery supported by words such as (*rain-sunlight-coffee-colonnade*).

For the phonological pattern, Eliot uses a **repetition of sound** represented by

alliteration and consonance in words such as (**Lilacs-land / roots-rain / winter-warm / forgetful-feeding / little-life / summer-surprised**), (**dead-land / went-sunlight**). This repetition of sounds aids in shaping the mood of the lines.

### **Cohesion and context**

In the beginning lines, the sentences are slightly linked together. However, the text contains conjunctions that relate and connect the sentences together such as (and) in (*And went / And drank*). Eliot uses pronouns in the text. We have reference to the speaker through the use of pronouns such as (*we-us*). The diction is simple. We have many simple words such as (*month-land-rain-life-coffee-hour*).

The figurative Techniques in “The Waste Land”

“The Waste Land” is a very important literary work of T.S. Eliot’s. It consists of modern aspects of English literature. The poem is divided into five parts. He feels that the figurative technique shows the hidden meaning which is hidden by the literary techniques.

This poem is about the life and (re)birth, actually the title of the poem itself suggest that nobody is there, living things are not available there, that is why he has dared to select the title of the poem. Hidden meanings are collected together by using the various techniques.

Eliot wants to speak more throughout the writings but he did not know the capability of the readers, how they will understand the meaning of his poem. He knows that poem is the criticism of life, having two sides of the same coin, he tries to think positively and negatively with the help of the poems.

Bring the sailor home from the sea

The typist home at tea-time (T.W.L: 18)

The above two lines are of the same stanza of “The Waste Land” by T.S. Eliot. The first line of the stanza brings the connotative meaning, at the same time reader becomes confused about the fact how these lines take the meaning of the home which is represented by the sea. Someone would understand it the word to word, that is the techniques which are being followed by the Eliot in his all

types of the literary work. Probably, every line of the poem gives more meanings, the meaning is already hidden up by the literary language. The readers try to discover the hidden meaning from the line. The poem is being analyzed by Eliot with the help of the figurative techniques. It is the skill of the applying of these techniques which are very important for his literary work.

In the above two lines, two persons are living in the same home, a typist and a sailor, the home is not the same but has hidden meaning for both person and their living place. This is how we understand that the sea and the earth, as living spaces, have different meanings.

The figurative language and literary devices are bound together by rules of the poems. It consists of various figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, metonymies, alliterations, puns etc. There are some techniques regarding the using of the images in the poems. The poet can concentrate on the methods of the using of the colorful images, which are colored by the mind of the poet and poetess.

Probably, Eliot gives a contrastive meaning to his work or some stanzas. Minor issues are brought by T.S. Eliot with the use of figurative techniques. It is applicable to every literary work and it is provisional meaning for the readers. There is no value for human life, death is permanent, and nobody escapes from death. The poems also bring the current images of the world. There is the mountain but the rocks have no water. Having no water the rocks are hungry, not alive, and this refers to the fact that this world needs water in order to revive. It can be considered as an allegory of the value of spiritual values represented by the water, and the contemporary world needs great spiritual values so that it remains alive and positive.

Probably, the poem also brings historical references throughout literary devices, the two lines above are focusing on historical places like Athens, which shows the ancient places, in those days these places were considered as authentic for the history. The various names of the persons are also brought together for making the influence in the allusion system from the poem.

## Poetic Techniques in *The Wasteland*

Eliot is generally considered the most influential and he remains the most controversial. Critics and other students of literature have written extensively to resolve controversial opinions and to unravel the complexities embodied in his poetry. The most important device is the objective correlative, which Eliot himself defines: "The only way of expressing an emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a chain of events which shall be the formula for that particular emotion; such that when the external facts are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." (Antony David Moody, 1994). In other words, the poet does not come right out and moralize, or tell the reader how to feel or think; he uses a set of images, situations or characters to do the job.

Another of Eliot's techniques is the use of quotations from or allusions to other authors. He does this in "The Waste Land" and to support this contrast of past and present. He gives us a quotation, an allusion, or a whole scene from the past and follows it with a scene from the vulgar present, a pub scene for instance. The allusions thus retain their original meaning but they are enriched with new meanings by their context within the poem. He also vulgarizes the leaning of a passage or a person, or some other detail from the past. Da Vinci's painting of the Virgin, for instance, becomes *bella donna*, a poison, and also the lady of situations in Madame Sosostriis, who is herself a vulgarization of religion.

## CONCLUSION

The Waste Land is a 434 lines modernist poem by T. S. Eliot published in 1922. It considered to be one of the most important poems of the 20th century. Despite what is seen by some as the poem's obscurity – its shifts between satire and prophecy, its abrupt and unannounced changes of speaker, location and time, its elegiac but intimidating summoning up of a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures – the poem has nonetheless become a familiar touchstone of modern literature.

There are many references to death, decay, and dead things in this poem. The women are the main characters, and they describe nature and their past

memories. One thing each of these women have in common is their sadness. In conclusion, everything in this poem is sad and dead. The people miss things that have passed or ended. They are also indifferent to what happens to them. The images and seasons are dark, cruel, and desolate. All this is brought by many literary figures of speech, specific grammar structures, great vocabulary, which make the poem one of a kind, and establish Eliot as one of the greatest poets of all times.

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# MEETING THE DEMANDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET: PERSPECTIVES FROM ALBANIAN UNIVERSITIES AND GRADUATES ON SPECIALIZED STUDY PROGRAMS

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## **Abstract**

*In Albania, the alignment between university study programs and the demands of the labor market stands as a crucial factor in shaping the country’s economic development and fostering graduate employability. This article analyzes the intricate dynamics between specialized university study programs, the evolving needs of the labor market, and the perspectives of both Albanian universities and graduates.*

*Through a comprehensive analysis, this study explores the extent to which Albanian universities are catering to the demands of the labor market through their specialized study programs. It investigates the strategies employed by universities to adapt curricula, incorporate practical skills, and collaborate with industry stakeholders to ensure graduates possess the requisite skills and knowledge sought by employers.*

*Furthermore, the article sheds light on the perspectives of Albanian graduates regarding the efficacy of their university education in meeting the challenges of the labor market. By examining graduates’ perceptions of the relevance of their academic training, their employability prospects, and the gap between academic qualifications and workplace requirements, valuable insights are gained into the effectiveness of specialized study programs in preparing graduates for the realities of the job market.*

## **Introduction**

In today’s rapidly evolving job market, the demand for specialized skills and knowledge is higher than ever. Albanian universities are striving to meet these demands by offering specialized study programs that cater to the needs of the labour market. In this study, we will explore the perspectives of both Albanian universities and Foreign Language (FL) graduates on these specialized study programs, and how they are preparing students for success in their chosen field. We will look into the challenges and opportunities that come with meeting the demands of the labour market, and the impact that specialized foreign language study programs have on the future of Albania’s workforce.

## **Literature Review**

In recent years, the global labour market has undergone significant changes, driven by technological advancements, globalization, and shifting industry demands. As a result, the demand for specialized skills and knowledge has increased, prompting universities to adapt their study programs to better align with the needs of the labour market.

Albanian universities have recognized the importance of offering specialized study programs to meet the evolving demands of the labour market. According to a study by Mehmetaj et al. (2020), Albanian universities have been proactive in developing specialized study programs in fields such as information technology, engineering, finance, and healthcare, in response to the specific needs of the Albanian job market. The study highlights the efforts made by universities to collaborate with industry partners to design curricula that are relevant and responsive to the needs of employers.

Furthermore, research by Maghnouj et al., (2020) emphasizes the importance of specialized study programs in enhancing the employability of graduates in Albania. The study found that graduates from specialized programs were more likely to secure employment in their chosen fields and were better equipped to meet the demands of the labour market. This suggests that specialized study programs play a crucial role in preparing graduates for the workforce and bridging the skills gap identified by employers.

However, while specialized study programs have shown promise in meeting the demands of the labour market, challenges remain. A study by Ergün, M., & Şeşen, H. (2021) highlights the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of specialized study programs to ensure their relevance in a rapidly changing job market. The study emphasizes the importance of incorporating industry feedback, updating curricula, and providing opportunities for practical experience to ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their careers.

In-desk research demonstrates the significance of specialized study programs in meeting the demands of the labour market in Albania. While universities have made strides in developing and implementing specialized programs, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure that these programs remain responsive to the evolving needs of the job market. By addressing these challenges and building on the successes of specialized study programs, Albanian universities can continue to play a vital role in preparing graduates for successful careers in their chosen fields.

## **Methodology**

The methodology used for this study is a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative aspect involves gathering insights and perspectives from the focus groups through open-ended questions in the questionnaires, while the quantitative aspect involves analyzing structured responses to assess the perceived alignment or misalignment between foreign language study programs and the demands of the labor market.

### ***Research Questions:***

1. What are the perceptions of Albanian businesses/NGOs regarding the alignment of foreign language study programs with the needs of the labor market?
2. How do stakeholders in public and non-public Albanian universities perceive the relevance of their foreign language study programs to the demands of the labor market?
3. What are the perspectives of foreign language graduates from Albanian English, French, and Italian study programs regarding the applicability of their education to the job market?
4. In what ways do the perceptions of these three focus groups align or differ in terms of the alignment between specialized study programs and the labor market needs?

### **Data gathered from HEIs**

***Workload distribution by type of HEI and its alignment with the demands of the labor market.***

Do you think that in the educational curriculum the relationship between knowledge and skills, applied in your institution, is in line with the demands of the job market?

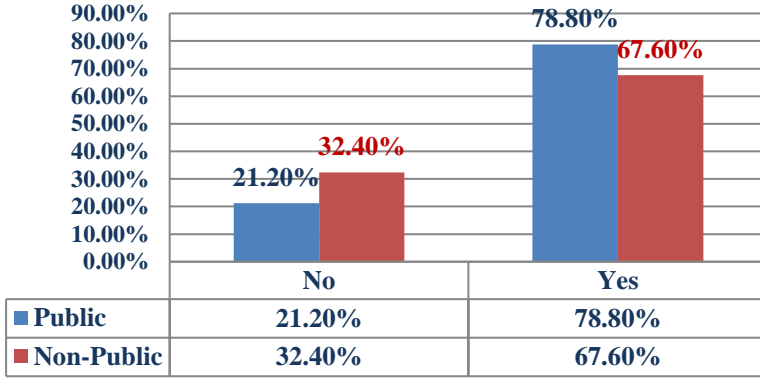
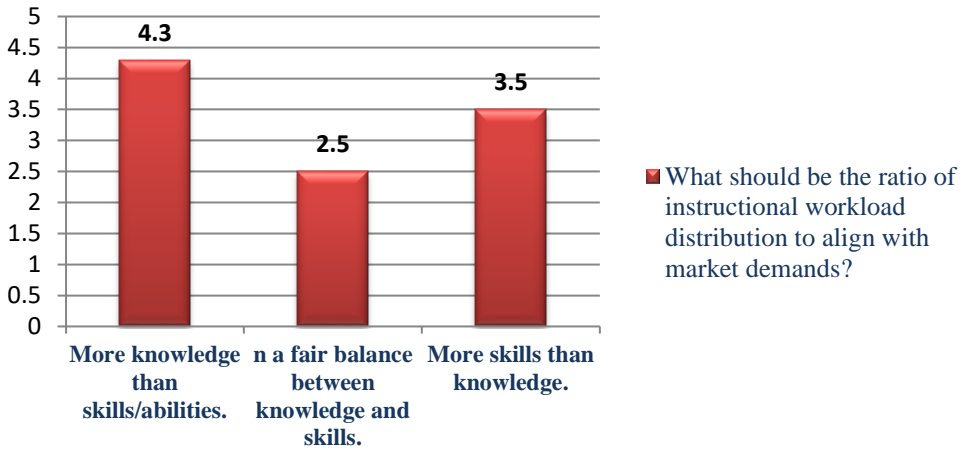


Fig 1: Workload distribution according to the type of HEI and alignment with the

**The ratio of instructional workload distribution needed to align with market demands**



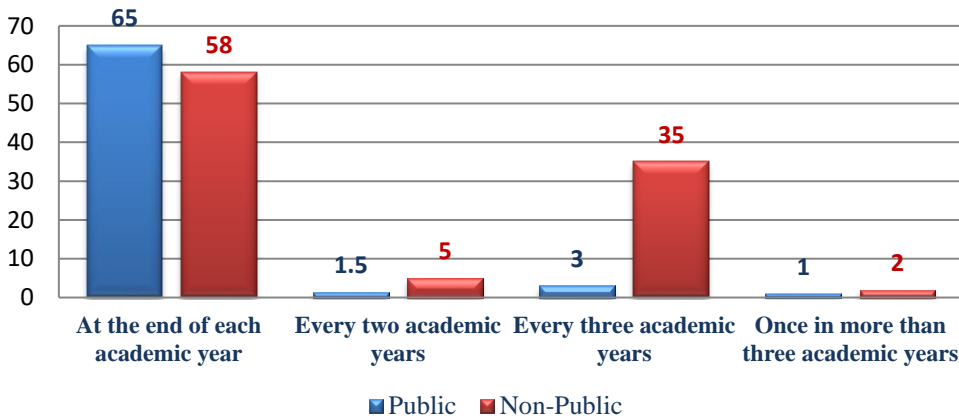
demands of the job market.

Fig 2: According to HEI, what is the distribution ratio of the teaching workload needed to be in line with the demands of the job market?

Higher education institutions (HEI) in Albania believe that the workload allocation between knowledge and skills/abilities is in line with the demands of the job market. Over 70% of them have expressed positive views regarding this allocation, with a slightly higher percentage among public HEIs. Non-public HEIs are a bit more skeptical, with nearly 30% stating that there is no alignment.

According to those HEIs who have given a negative opinion regarding the distribution of teaching workload between knowledge and skills in order to be in line with market demands, 55% of them think that this distribution should be in a fair ratio, while many others (nearly 40%) think that programs should have more hours provided to skills than knowledge.

**How often are the regulations and curricula offered by your institution reviewed to align with labor market needs and demands?**



*Fig 3: Curricula review based on the type of HEI*

According to the surveyed HEIs, their university foreign language study programs are reviewed periodically to align with labor market needs and demands. 65% of public HEIs and 58% of non-public HEIs stated that this review is conducted annually. It is noteworthy that 35% of respondents from non-public HEIs claim they review their curricula every three years, while this percentage is smaller among public HEIs.

**Does your institution collaborate with businesses/public institutions/NGOs in the development of the curricula for the foreign language study programs you offer?**



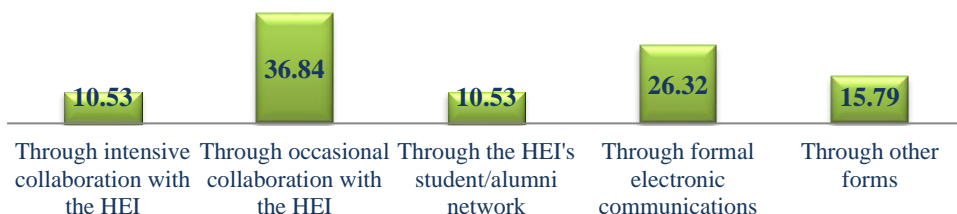
*Fig 4: Collaboration with businesses based on the type of HEIs*

It is observed that 76.19% of public HEIs claim they have no collaboration with businesses in the development of university program curricula. Similarly, a high percentage (63.16%) of non-public HEIs have expressed the same.

36.84% of them stated that they have occasional collaboration, while 15.79% reported having some form of collaboration but did not specify the nature of it.

**How do businesses/public institutions/NGOs contribute to the development of curricula of foreign language study programs at your institution?**

■ *How do businesses/public institutions/NGOs contribute to the development of curricula of foreign language study programs at your institution?*



*Fig 5: Business Contribution According to Universities*

On a rating scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “very much,” universities report an average score of 3.88, indicating that university-business collaboration has a significant impact on reducing the graduation-to-employment transition period. On the same rating scale, the effect of collaboration on increasing employment rates is rated at 4 (“quite a lot”), and the positive impact of university-business/public institution/NGO collaboration on aligning the competencies of a study program with labor market demands is rated at 4.10.

*Fig 6: The Impact of Collaboration on Enhancing Alignment, Employment, and Reducing the Transition Period from Graduation to Employment*

## Data Gathered from Foreign Language (FL) Graduates

### The Impact of Collaboration on Enhancing Alignment, Employment, and Reducing the Transition Period from Graduation to Employment

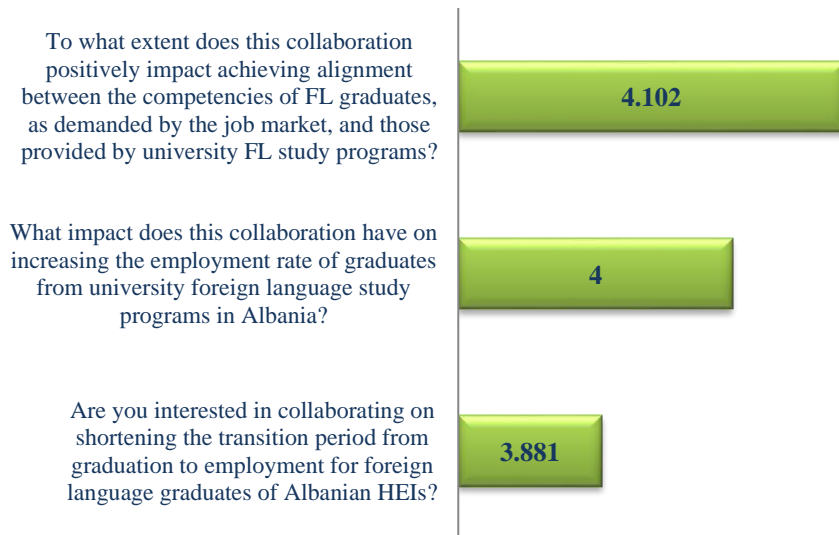
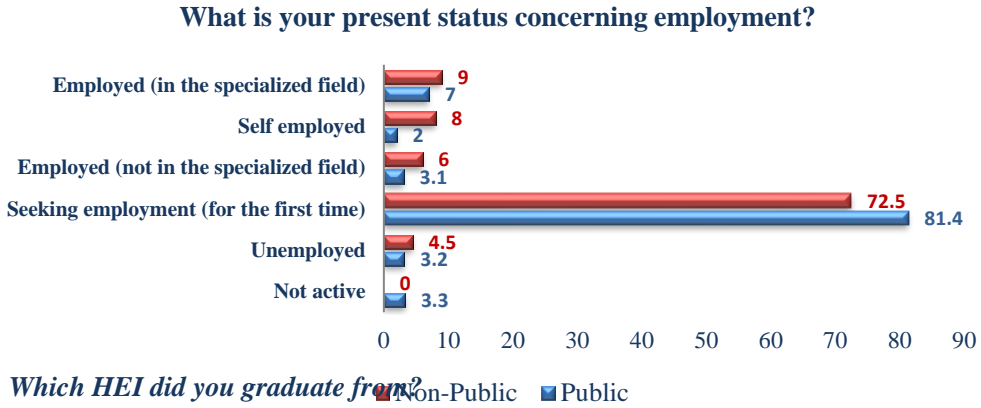
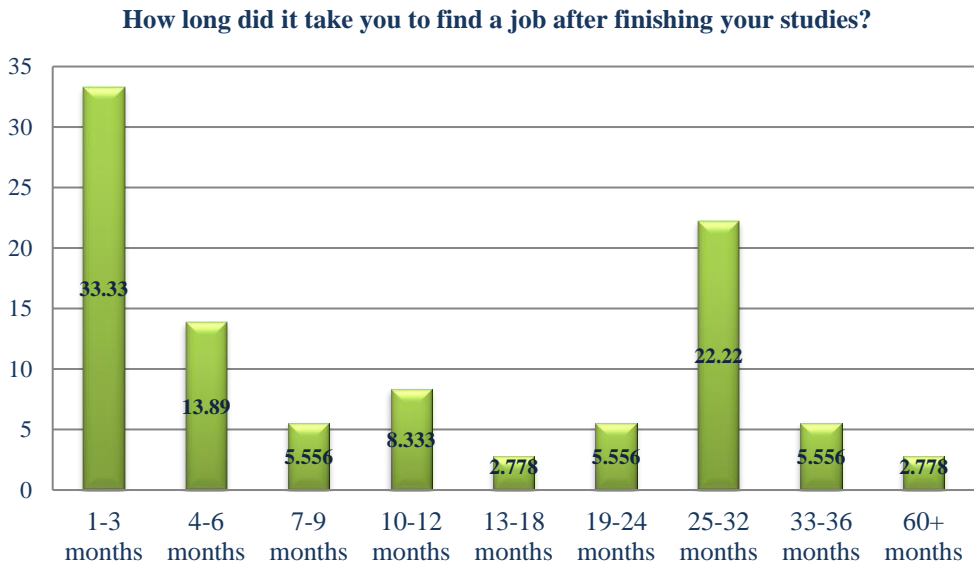


Fig 7: Current employment situation of surveyed graduates.



The results for the current employment situation of surveyed FL graduates revealed that over 80% of the surveyed graduates are declared as



unemployed. The difference in the unemployment rate of surveyed FL graduates from public and non-public HEIs is close to 10%, indicating that unemployed graduates from public HEIs are 10% more than those from non-public HEIs.



Fig 8: The time needed by graduates to find a job

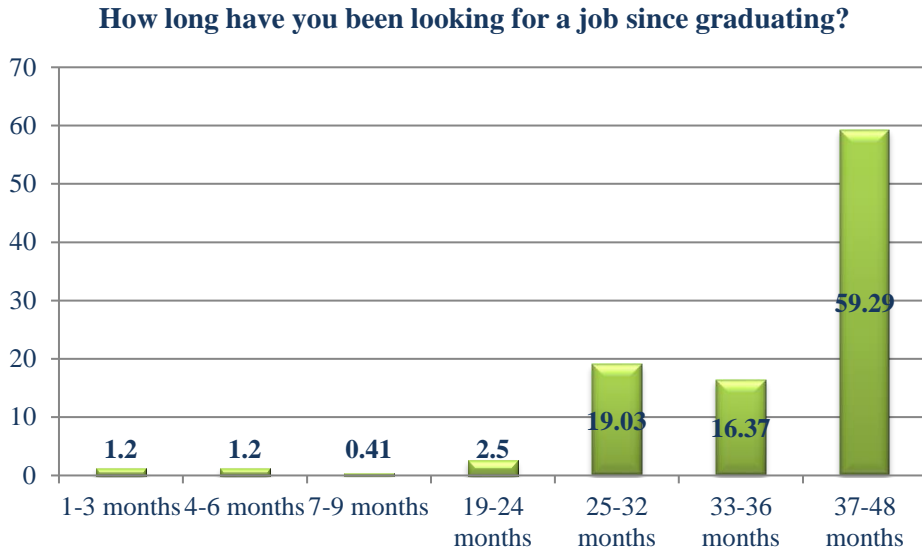


Fig 9: The time during which graduates are seeking a job

From the responses of the FL graduates, it is evident that the majority of them have either found a job within a few months or have been seeking a job for more than 3 years. 59.29% of the respondents stated that they have been seeking a job for 37 to 48 months.

### **A descriptive comparison of shared variables.**

Skill(s)	Average		
	Businesses	HEI	FL Graduates
	(n=220)	(n=59)	(n=263)
Communication	4.277	4.203	4.236
Presentation	4.168	4.305	4.171
Foreign language proficiency	4.082	4.017	4.103
The use of emerging technology	4.211	4.223	4.203
Expertise in education	3.982	4.002	4.012
Counting	4.014	4.136	4.148
Literacy	4.277	4.305	4.213
CALL	4.155	4.203	3.878
Creative Thinking	3.882	3.898	3.970
Flexibility	3.886	3.780	3.966
Critical Thinking	3.832	3.864	3.916
Analytical and Synthetical skills	3.859	3.983	3.886
Leadership	3.682	3.864	3.916
Group work	4.109	4.220	3.981
Decision-making skills	3.750	3.881	3.977

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*Fig 10: Businesses' Perception of the Utility of General Competencies Relative to their Integration within Curricula, and FL Graduates' Perception of Attainment.*

Upon comparing the data, as depicted in both narrative and tabular formats, a consistent perception among all three respondent groups regarding the utility of these competencies becomes apparent. According to the scale provided in the questionnaire, all competencies are evaluated above average, predominantly falling under the categories of “to some extent” and often “to a great extent.” “Communication,” “The use of emerging technologies,” and “Literacy” emerge as the most highly esteemed general competencies across all groups, with ratings surpassing 4.2 on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Additionally, “Creative thinking” and “Expertise in education” are also rated highly.

The table reveals that competencies such as “Communication,” “The use of emerging technology,” “Proficiency in foreign languages,” and “Flexibility”

receive higher ratings from businesses than the perceived inclusion of these competencies in FL study programs by HEIs.

***Businesses' evaluation of the congruence between the general skills acquired by FL graduates from HEIs and the job demands, juxtaposed with the perceptions of HEIs and graduates regarding the same.***

Competences	Average		
	Businesses (n=220)	HEI (n=59)	FL Graduates (n=263)
Communication	2.745	3.475	3.806
Presentation	2.732	3.610	3.778
Foreign language proficiency	2.750	3.305	3.278
The use of emerging technology	2.658	3.461	3.534
Expertise in education	2.805	3.567	3.781
Counting	2.668	3.288	3.861
Literacy	2.936	3.610	3.778
CALL	2.805	3.627	3.861
Creative Thinking	2.532	3.186	3.722
Flexibility	2.555	3.271	3.694
Critical Thinking	2.500	3.153	3.722
Analytical and Synthetical skills	2.518	3.254	3.556
Leadership	2.532	3.203	3.778
Group work	2.695	3.559	4.028
Decision-making skills	2.518	3.271	4.056

*Fig 11. The alignment of competencies with workplace demands.*

***Businesses' evaluation of the congruence between the specific skills acquired by FL graduates from HEIs and the job demands, juxtaposed with the perceptions of HEIs and graduates regarding the same.***

Competences	Average
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	<b>Business</b>	<b>HEI</b>	<b>FL Graduates</b>
	<b>(n=220)</b>	<b>(n=59)</b>	<b>(n=263)</b>
Advanced Language Proficiency	2.595	4.500	3.167
Translation and Interpretation	2.641	4.551	3.800
Technical Writing and Editing	2.623	4.520	3.633
Language Teaching	2.695	4.500	3.733
Intercultural Communication	2.632	4.471	3.767
Specialized Terminology	2.632	4.500	3.500
Content Localization	2.632	4.520	3.700
Research Competence	2.771	4.231	3.534
Language Assessment and Evaluation	2.632	4.420	3.333
Communication Technology Proficiency	2.536	4.346	2.633
Project Management	2.536	4.472	3.300
Public Relations and Marketing	2.623	4.437	3.333
Conference and Simultaneous Interpretation:	2.541	4.543	3.765
Cross-Cultural Negotiation	2.609	4.469	3.433
Foreign Language Media Production	2.686	4.437	2.900

*Fig 12. The alignment of specific competencies with the job requirements*

There is also a clear discrepancy in the assessment of businesses regarding the alignment between the specific competencies acquired by FL graduates and the workplace requirements, compared to the perception of HEIs and graduates regarding the same. Businesses consider the alignment of these competencies with what is required by employees in the workplace to be small to neutral. On a scale of 1-5, businesses rate this alignment approximately 2.6. HEIs and graduates, and especially HEIs, are more satisfied with this alignment, giving nearly maximum ratings, ranging above 4.5 with a maximum of 5.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that there is a significant misalignment between the specialized study programs offered by Albanian universities and the needs of the labor market, as perceived by businesses/NGOs, university stakeholders, and foreign language graduates. The qualitative and quantitative data collected through the questionnaires revealed a lack of perceived relevance and applicability of the education provided by the specialized study programs to the demands of the labor market in Albania.

The perspectives of the different focus groups highlighted various areas of concern, including the need for curriculum updates, practical skill development, and closer collaboration between academia and industry. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the disconnect between academic offers and labor market needs to better prepare graduates for successful integration into the workforce.

Moving forward, Albanian universities must consider the feedback and insights provided by businesses/NGOs, university stakeholders, and foreign language graduates to make informed improvements to their specialized study programs. By aligning educational offerings with the evolving demands of the labor market, universities can better equip graduates with the skills and knowledge necessary for professional success. Additionally, fostering stronger partnerships between academia and industry can facilitate the development of curricula that meet the current and future needs of the labor market.

Overall, this study sheds light on the importance of addressing the alignment between foreign language study programs and the labor market and provides valuable insights in enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of higher education in Albania.

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# INTEGRATING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS INTO LANGUAGE TEACHING: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LINGUISTICS EDUCATION

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## **Summary**

*The article explores the growing importance of integrating entrepreneurial skills into language teaching. Focusing on foreign languages, the author examines how this integration can not only improve learners' language skills, but also prepare them for success in an ever-changing professional world.*

*The article highlights several innovative teaching methods and approaches that help incorporate entrepreneurial skills into language education programs. This includes the use of entrepreneurial projects in which learners must use the target language to develop business ideas, communicate with potential customers and present their products or services.*

*Additionally, the article examines how teachers can encourage the development of skills such as creativity, decision-making, problem solving and collaboration through language activities. These skills are essential in the business world and can also enrich language learning by making lessons more dynamic and relevant for learners.*

*In conclusion, the article highlights the importance of rethinking traditional approaches to language teaching to better prepare learners for the challenges and opportunities of the modern global economy. By integrating entrepreneurial skills into language teaching, educators can play a crucial role in empowering learners and promoting their personal and professional success.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurial skills, language teaching, interdisciplinarity, key competences*

## **Introduction**

In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, traditional language education is being reexamined to better meet the demands of globalization and an increasingly competitive job market. While linguistic proficiency remains essential, it has become clear that language skills alone are insufficient for

ensuring success in a rapidly evolving global landscape. Students must also develop a broad set of competencies that enable them to think critically, innovate, and adapt to new challenges.

This growing recognition has sparked interest in an innovative approach to linguistics education: the integration of entrepreneurial skills into language teaching. By embedding entrepreneurial concepts into language curricula, educators can provide students with the tools needed to thrive in a complex, interconnected world. This approach not only enhances language learning but also aligns with the key competencies outlined in the Albanian curriculum framework, such as life skills, entrepreneurship, and environmental awareness. In this article, we explore the rationale behind integrating entrepreneurial skills into language education, discuss the methodology for its implementation, and examine the extensive benefits it offers. Through this innovative approach, language teaching evolves into a multifaceted educational experience that equips students with both the linguistic and entrepreneurial skills necessary for personal and professional success in a dynamic global environment.

### **Defining Entrepreneurial Skills and the Albanian Curriculum Framework and Key Competencies**

Entrepreneurial skills are a diverse set of abilities that empower individuals to translate ideas into tangible actions and results. At their core, these skills involve creativity, innovation, and a willingness to take calculated risks. They also include essential competencies such as project management, strategic planning, and effective communication. However, entrepreneurial skills extend beyond the mere mechanics of business. They also involve cultivating a sense of ethical responsibility, fostering good governance, and ensuring that individuals are equipped to handle both personal and professional challenges with integrity and foresight. (Europe Direct, 2007)

The concept of entrepreneurial skills is not limited to those aspiring to start their own businesses. These skills are invaluable across all professional fields, as they enable individuals to approach problems with a solution-oriented mindset, to innovate within their roles, and to lead initiatives that drive progress and growth. Thus, integrating these skills into language teaching can significantly enhance students' preparedness for the demands of the modern world. (Europe Direct, 2007)

The Albanian educational framework is designed to prepare students for life in a rapidly changing world. It emphasizes the development of key competencies necessary for both personal and professional success. Among these, the



competence for life, entrepreneurship, and the environment is particularly significant. This competency is geared towards equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand and navigate the complex interplay between economic, political, and cultural forces, both locally and globally. (MASH, 2014)

Competence for life, entrepreneurship, and the environment involves more than just understanding these forces; it also fosters a forward-looking perspective that encourages students to think critically about the future, to be proactive in their approach to challenges, and to remain motivated to achieve their goals. By integrating entrepreneurial skills into language education, educators can help students develop these competencies in a way that is both practical and deeply relevant to their future careers. (IZHA, 2018)

### **Profiling the Entrepreneur and the Role of Language Teaching in Developing Entrepreneurial Skills**

An entrepreneur is not just a business owner; rather, an entrepreneur is someone who possesses a diverse skill set that allows them to excel in various professional environments. These skills include the ability to solve problems systematically, think creatively, adapt to changing circumstances, and remain resilient in the face of adversity. Additionally, entrepreneurs must have strong communication skills, financial literacy, leadership abilities, and a deep understanding of market dynamics. (Miribel, Sido, 2019)

Language education plays a crucial role in developing these skills. For example, the process of learning a new language inherently involves problem-solving and adaptability, as students must navigate unfamiliar grammar structures and vocabulary. Moreover, language learners often engage in activities that require teamwork, leadership, and communication, such as group projects or language exchanges. By integrating entrepreneurial concepts into these activities, educators can help students build the skills necessary to succeed in a variety of professional contexts. (Robles, 2012)

Language education provides a unique platform for cultivating entrepreneurial skills. This is because learning a language involves much more than memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules; it also requires critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to engage with different cultural perspectives. These are the same skills that are essential for entrepreneurship.

Language learning has been shown to improve cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and problem-solving. This is because learning a new language requires students to constantly engage with new information and apply

it in different contexts. These cognitive benefits are directly transferable to entrepreneurial activities, where problem-solving and adaptability are key.

Language education fosters creativity by exposing students to different ways of thinking and expressing ideas. For example, students might learn how different cultures approach problem-solving, or how they use language to convey complex concepts. This exposure to diverse perspectives can inspire students to think outside the box and come up with innovative solutions to problems. (Grin, 2015)

Learning a new language opens up new opportunities for students by allowing them to communicate with people from different cultural and professional backgrounds. This can lead to new business opportunities, partnerships, and collaborations, all of which are essential for entrepreneurial success.

For entrepreneurs, language skills can be a valuable asset in expanding their customer base and reaching new markets. By learning a language, entrepreneurs can better understand the needs and preferences of different customer segments, allowing them to tailor their products and services to meet those needs.

Language education also helps students develop a deeper understanding of different cultures, which is essential for anyone looking to do business in a globalized world. By understanding cultural nuances and preferences, entrepreneurs can build stronger relationships with clients and partners, and avoid misunderstandings that could harm their business. (Woll, Bencie, & Li Wei, 2015)

Learning a new language can be a challenging but rewarding experience. As students progress in their language studies, they build confidence in their ability to achieve their goals. This sense of self-efficacy is crucial for entrepreneurs, who often face uncertainty and setbacks in their ventures.

Language learners often encounter difficulties and setbacks, but with perseverance, they can overcome these challenges and achieve fluency. This process helps to develop a growth mindset, which is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort and persistence. A growth mindset is essential for entrepreneurs, who must be willing to learn from their mistakes and continuously improve their skills.

Language learning often involves group work and collaboration, whether in the classroom or in real-world language exchange situations. These experiences teach students how to work effectively in teams, how to communicate clearly, and how to respect different perspectives. These are all essential skills for entrepreneurs, who must be able to lead teams, negotiate with partners, and build strong professional relationships.

Language education can also spark interest in other areas of knowledge, such as history, culture, politics, and economics. This interdisciplinary approach can provide students with a broader understanding of the world, which is essential for entrepreneurs who need to be aware of global trends and developments. (Asteres Report, 2021)

Learning a new language requires students to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty, as they must often figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases based on context. This experience helps to develop problem-solving and decision-making skills, which are critical for entrepreneurs who must navigate complex and uncertain business environments.

### **Our Entrepreneurship Project: "Entrepreneurship and Innovation Days"**

As part of our commitment to integrating entrepreneurial skills into language teaching, the Department of French Language at the University of Tirana has launched the "Entrepreneurship and Innovation Days" initiative in partnership with the French-speaking employability center of the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie. This project is designed to provide students with practical experience in entrepreneurship, while also enhancing their language skills.

The initiative begins by introducing students to key concepts of entrepreneurship, such as value creation, business models, differentiation, and problem-solving. These concepts are taught in French, allowing students to simultaneously develop their language skills and their understanding of entrepreneurship.

Creativity is a crucial skill for entrepreneurs, and the "Entrepreneurship and Innovation Days" initiative places a strong emphasis on fostering creativity. Students are introduced to idea generation techniques, brainstorming methods, and approaches to thinking outside the box. These activities not only help students develop their entrepreneurial skills, but also enhance their ability to think creatively in their language studies.

Students are also introduced to a variety of tools and resources that are useful for entrepreneurs, such as the business model canvas, customer experience mapping, and other practical methodologies. These tools are taught in French, providing students with the opportunity to apply their language skills in a real-world context.

One of the highlights of the initiative is the opportunity for students to prepare and present a pitch for their startup idea. This activity requires students to apply all of the skills they have learned, from language proficiency to entrepreneurial thinking. Students present their ideas in French, receiving feedback and advice from their peers and instructors.

The initiative also includes workshops on topics such as "From Idea to Reality: How to Transform an Innovation into a Successful Business." These workshops provide practical advice on the steps to take to turn an idea into a viable business, highlight common challenges that entrepreneurs face, and discuss strategies to overcome them.

Throughout the initiative, students have the opportunity to connect with industry experts, entrepreneurs, and other professionals who can provide valuable insights and guidance. These connections help students to expand their professional networks, gain a better understanding of the business world, and receive feedback on their ideas.

### **Conclusion**

The integration of entrepreneurial skills into language teaching marks a transformative evolution in linguistics education. By expanding the scope of language learning beyond mere linguistic proficiency, educators can equip students with the critical competencies required to thrive in an increasingly complex and globalized world. This approach not only aligns with the Albanian curriculum's emphasis on key competencies such as life skills, entrepreneurship, and environmental awareness, but it also provides students with practical, real-world applications of their language skills.

Through initiatives like the "Entrepreneurship and Innovation Days," students gain hands-on experience that blends language acquisition with entrepreneurial thinking. This holistic approach fosters creativity, problem-solving, and adaptability—traits that are indispensable in both personal and professional contexts. Moreover, it enhances cognitive abilities, expands cultural awareness, and builds confidence, all of which contribute to the development of a well-rounded, forward-thinking individual.

Incorporating entrepreneurial skills into language education does more than prepare students for the workforce; it prepares them for lifelong learning and success. By nurturing a growth mindset and promoting a proactive approach to challenges, this innovative educational strategy empowers students to navigate and excel in a dynamic, interconnected world. Ultimately, this model of education not only enhances linguistic abilities but also lays the foundation for a new generation of entrepreneurs who are equipped to lead, innovate, and make a meaningful impact on society.

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## **POLICIES IN EDUCATION, TEACHING WITH COMPETENCIES FOR AN APPROACH TO GLOBAL EDUCATION.**

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### ***Abstract***

*Education, as a key field in the education and emancipation of the new generation, is the fundamental element of a country's culture and society. For the realization of this mission, educational policies and the legal framework directly affect the efficiency of the educational system.*

*Many years of work in the field of teaching have created the possibility of knowing more and more deeply about the interaction between educational policies and teaching. Through this analysis, we can penetrate the complexity of the educational structure, where the main focus is on learning, the shaping of the individual and society in general. Seeing this process in the new context, in which the relations of educational policies and teachers, whether they have formal or informal experience in teaching, are placed.*

*The methodology of the work is based on the literature of the Ministry of Education and Sports, as in the Pre-University Education Legislation, the Pre-University Education Curriculum of the Republic of Albania. The National Education Strategy-Albania (2021-2026) on observations of research and personal experiences over many years in the field of teaching in pre-university education.*

*The study confirms the importance and role of educational policies, for the realization of national strategies in education, regarding the efficiency of the educational system, bringing not only a new face to the curricula but also the role of educational policies to teachers.*

*Teaching and learning in our schools should offer pupils and students a unique experience of social and humane values, for the future of Albanian citizenship in the European framework and beyond*

***Keywords:*** Policy in education, teaching, process, education, competencies.

## **Educational policies, legal framework in pre-university education**

Every time we sit down to write an article, or even a review for a published book, we get emotionally involved and try not to leave anything unsaid and no fact uninterpreted, undoubtedly many years of work in the field of teaching have created the possibility of recognition in an ever-increasing way depth of interaction between educational policies and teaching.

The educational policies and education of a country are organized and directed through the state, which acts as in any other field with certain laws and regulations. In recent decades, educational reforms have the most important element closely related to progressive education, compared to the time periods of other educational reforms, is that its goals include clear efforts to change pedagogy, accompanied by the construction of a legal base.

Our thesis is based on the importance of the role of educational policies for; The implementation of national strategies in education, which directly affect the increase in the efficiency of the education system. Evidence of social aspects with the common motto that learning in our schools should offer pupils and students a unique experience in social and humane values, for the future of Albanian citizenship in the European framework and beyond.

Through this analysis we can penetrate the complexity of the educational structure, the dynamics of its development where the main focus is on learning where the right to education is understood as the right to learn.

In this perspective (Tahiri.&Hadaj, 2022) we addressed the role of education in shaping the individual and wider society, seeing this process in the new context, in which the relations of educational policies, legal framework, teaching with competencies and teachers, whether they have formal or informal experience in teaching, highly qualified or unqualified.

Every teacher of pre-university education in his personal library or work file must have archived *"The Law no. 69, dated 21.06.2012 "On the pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania and the by-laws in its implementation. Updated with: Law No. 56, dated 28.05.2015. Regulation for the operation of Pre-University Educational Institutions in the Republic of Albania Order no. 31, dated 28.01.2020. The Constitution of the Republic of Albania. "Convention on the rights of children" . "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", but many different documents that are in the field of legislation and beyond. (Tahiri& Shemani, 2017)*

It cannot be accepted that a newly graduated teacher has no knowledge of the legislation in the pre-university education system, which regulates school relations and activities. The teacher with high professionalism and dedication to

work, gives life to the legislation in education by embodying new approaches and changes in his creativity. In this context, we bring innovation in the interpretation and acquisition of laws, by-laws, and institutional regulations, and more focus is directed towards educational policies (Tahiri, 2021).

In her book " Education in Countries Outside the EU in Western and Southern Europe (Education around the World) the researcher Terra Sprague (University of Bristol, UK) points out that an important driver of the reform in education was and still remains the harmonization of national policy objectives with pan-European and international aspirations and standards Legislation and its interpretation bring the necessary and necessary legal framework following the new educational policies of a country. (Sprague, 2016).

The Albanian education system and its complexity are undoubtedly a wealth of a series of historical, political, and social developments and activities, where the education of values is applied in every aspect of the education process, closely linking it to the ethical dimensions of life, which can be structured and monitored through appropriate educational methods and tools.

The legal framework in Albania is aimed at the formation of each individual, to face the challenges of the future, and to be responsible for the family, society and the nation.

The law guarantees the right to education for all children, regardless of their needs and special abilities, providing free and compulsory education. Article 2 of Law No. 69/2012, "On pre-university education" provides educational levels with codes 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively: a) "Level with code 0", preschool education; b) "Level with code 1", primary education; c) "Level with code 2", lower secondary education; ç) "Level with code 3", higher secondary education. (arsimi.gov.al 2018)

*Pre-school education in Albania includes kindergartens and pre-school classes, for children aged 3-6, but it is not compulsory. Children over the age of 6 have the right to basic education, which consists of primary and lower secondary education. The structure is currently, with compulsory basic education; it lasts 9 years and is for students up to 16 years old. All those who have not completed basic education and are over the age of 16 can complete it in part-time schools (MAS, 2014a, p. 14).*

Today in Europe and beyond, educational policies are in the function of constructive, collaborative learning and the use of a new assessment model, based on competencies, which does not make you turn your eyes to the quality of the preparation of the professional development of teachers (as they initial



and ongoing), wanting to reflect on the power of the law and educational policies both in theoretical and practical terms.

Therefore, the problem of scale can be included in the context of the current debate about the reform, as a need to change the essence of schooling as a comprehensive learning in the challenge of acquiring a high academic content.

Academic Richard Elmore, both an expert and critic of educational reforms in America, emphasizes the fact *that the theme of the argument, which focuses the analysis entirely on the essence of schooling, is not the suggestion that teaching and learning should be changed apart from understanding the factors that affect the lives of students. children; nor is the suggestion that the object of the reform should replace one kind of uniformity of teaching practice with another* ( Elmore, 2011, p. 6.) He thinks that many educational reforms have never achieved, let alone influenced, in the creation of long-term models of teaching practices, but they are still more useless and useless, if they aimed to influence only the improvement of students' learning. Teaching practices must change from the current model to a more ambitious and inclusive model, where we have what to offer in these teaching practices in a creative way to the demands of the labor market.

From this point of view, school reforms focused on changing the main conditions that affect student-teacher-knowledge relations, can be criticized as either too narrow or too broad. For better or worse, the main causes of the failure of educational reforms have brought at the same time a demand for performance that stimulates new knowledge related to curriculum, pedagogy and organizational improvement of the school.

*The main problem is how to connect what we know about best practices with what actually happens in our schools. Indeed, the main driver in the field of education has been the lack of connection between what is described in education policies and what happens in schools and classrooms in response to these policies. School reform must happen "from the inside out," says Professor Elmore. , such a position can be best expressed through the thesis that "the problems of the system are the problems of its smallest units".* ( Elmore, 2011, p.23)

With little argument policymakers at all levels should consider the successful practices of teachers in classrooms, or lecturers in classrooms, such a thesis applies to policymakers who have much to learn from school life, regarding design and implementation. of good policies.

## **Educational policies and their role in key areas in the education process**

As a key field in the education and emancipation of the new generation, education is the fundamental element of a country's culture and society, leading to developments in all areas of life.

Educational policies are determined by the ideological and political agenda of governments, which create learning strategies, often being linked to other factors, where political decisions must be multi-dimensional and within each context teachers and other actors must be involved and communicate with policy makers.

The Education Policy Analysis Report (APA) provides a broad perspective and in-depth analysis of three key policy areas: *Curriculum Development and Reform; Information and communication technology (ICT) in education; and Policies for teachers and school leaders, also points out several common issues that are of strategic importance for reform in the education sector such as improving information sharing, communication and transparency through inclusive education; Promotion of strong school institutions and infrastructure; Strengthening capacities for monitoring and evaluating reforms in education.* (UNESCO, Education, 2030)

The new context, in which the relations between the teacher and the student have been established in the new conditions of integration, in principle seems to have brought not only a new face to the curricula but also to the role of educational policies for teachers in our schools. *"The adoption of the competency-based curriculum is clearly in line with the desire to equip citizens with the skills they need to succeed in a Europe increasingly competitive multicultural. This desire may also explain the decision to used textbooks produced for the international market by foreign publishers..* (MAS, 2015 – 2017)

A number of issues should be of strategic importance for the reform in the education sector for the improvement of the most efficient strategies in the education of the new generation, based on the most scientifically successful European practices and beyond. such as

*Employment of young people, and their participation in decision-making.* The main responsibility to promote youth employment belongs to the state. Therefore, the existence of coherence, coordination, and cooperation between government institutions, both at the central and local levels, is important. Institutions therefore need a qualified workforce, committed social partners, and the cooperation of young people. (Rosas & Rossignotti, 2008)

*Prevention of corruption through education.* The integration of anti-corruption education in education would not be successful, if it were not placed in a concrete and real, historical, social, economic, cultural and psychological context. This requires that the curricula of social subjects, especially the spaces that exist in the framework of the school-based curriculum, be enriched with the concepts and knowledge necessary for education against corruption, in all its aspects. (PACA, 2012)

*Anti-corruption education* can be realized through two forms: To be included in the learning objectives in the compulsory and elective curriculum, both in compulsory and secondary education. It can be part of extracurricular activity, at the class, school, school community level, which includes: civic campaigns, conferences, youth activities, etc. (EU, EC, 2012)

*Multicultural education* refers to any form of education or learning that incorporates the stories, texts, values, beliefs and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds. In general, educating cultural diversity means applying the principle of equality in education for all students, regardless of culture, and trying to overcome barriers to ensure educational opportunities and success for students from different cultural backgrounds. (Tahiri, & Rama, 2024)

*Education with a more inclusive approach*, where according to UNICEF (2015), inclusive education is a response to the needs of students and their lives. Inclusive education is the means by which teaching methods are child-centered and promote equal opportunities, however, the need for inclusion must be integrated in all disciplines and implemented in an exact way.

*Improving democratic processes at school*, through the principle that everyone is equal, has equal rights and enjoys the freedoms they deserve. Collegial bodies are established in schools and children and young people have the right to organize, choose and choose. The problem lies in the need to establish and implement criteria through the determination of representation ratios.

Undoubtedly, the issues mentioned above are of strategic importance for the reform in the education sector in the improvement of efficient strategies in the education of the new generation, but without forgetting that every school can rely on its energetic, effective, engaged and interested teachers in the progress of the teaching and learning process, where for the realization of this mission they must undoubtedly find support in the educational policies and the legal framework of the country.

The policy profile is a contribution to the teaching and learning process, where the successful implementation of reforms would depend on the clarification of this reform for all interest groups, teachers, parents, employers, etc., where it is often not so clear. by educational policy makers which means that successful practices implemented in classrooms rarely influence policy making and that practitioners only have access to the policy after it has been filtered through the curriculum and texts school.

In this context, the American reformer Richard Elmore says that unfortunately, the study of organization and policies in education does not fill you with optimism. It often seems as if you are in Greek mythology, it reminds you of Sisyphus and the punishment he was given: to climb up a hill, a heavy rock, which as soon as he reached the top, fell from his hands and everything started again and again from the beginning. Even educational reform is a similar enterprise: we see it roll off the top where we took it so hard, to start all over again, with the next generation of reform ( *Elmore & Richard, 1986*).

Policymakers, in the world of political analysis, generally process the ebb and flow of political issues at three- or five-year intervals. Very rarely does a single political issue attract the attention of policymakers for a longer period than the one cited above; very rarely do policymakers engage further in issues that need to be addressed.

### **Teaching with competencies for an approach to global education**

Policies in education and teaching come as a significant and multifaceted binomial at any time. Student-centered teaching, called contemporary and interactive teaching, requires an all-round preparation of the teacher, so emphasis is placed on the role of the teacher, not only as a leader of a lesson but also as a transmitter of values and principles, through methods and innovations.

We have focused our research work in the field of education, because we believe that it is a good way to contribute to the well-being of our children and the whole society, leaving a mark on the further direction of our research. It is a beautiful thing when we work honestly and vividly and focus on the most important issues of our teaching work. Such inspiration continues to fuel optimism in this work, although it is not always evident in what we write.

Contemporary teaching is the basis of building a globalist society. The teacher is the student's model and idol as the doctor is to the patient; thus, the image that the teacher presents to the students, his authority, skills and the way he conveys his knowledge to them, become an inspiration and influence in the students' lives. Thus, all these elements are translated into values that the teacher

carries himself and necessarily cultivates for the students he works with. ( Tahiri, 2021).

We can all recall at least one teacher who inspired us to read and fill ourselves with a love of knowledge, or otherwise follow our hero's inspiration on our own path of leadership. We always respect and adore these teachers. Just as in our memories we often mention many teachers, who did not teach interestingly or excitingly but cared more about the way they dressed or the perfume they used.

Starting from the point of view of an education specialist, we think that effective teaching is related to individual characteristics where we still do not perceive such characteristics as a norm in policy making. As long as we continue to consider teachers' commitment and dedication to teaching as an individual characteristic and not as a norm designed to measure his professionalism, we have no reason to be surprised or wonder why such a specialist is so rare in our education system.

We think that uninteresting teaching, in a static and boring form, can also be related to our inability to train, select and evaluate teachers, following their capacity to develop learning comprehensively, or to the fact that the organizational aspect of our education system is such that it does not promote and support good teaching, even in those few cases where it is present.

The bureaucratic work of teachers, spending time filling out papers and not having time for scientific research to improve the teaching process, which leads to the professional weakening of teachers, is a concern.

The interaction between different actors of the education system, such as academics, policymakers, teachers, and relevant professionals, enables the sharing of views and the discussion of issues arising from different experiences which are tools to encourage experimentation and innovation, leading to positive changes of locally developed methods that improve educational progress.

*'Consultation with local experts and practitioners will enable policymakers to assess and respond to issues that may arise when foreign experts promote a particular teaching practice that may be at odds with local socio-cultural practices. "global specialist knowledge" needs to be adapted "to suit local circumstances. ( Rajagopalan 2005, p. 119)*

## Conclusions

The policy-making process should be inclusive. Teachers must be able to communicate their experiences to policymakers to ensure that what is taught in schools is relevant to the different contexts in which they work.

It is necessary to ensure that policymaking is a consultative process that takes into account the role of the teacher as the point of contact.

The lack of communication between policymakers and implementers (and other actors), means that successful practices implemented in the classroom rarely influence policy-making and that practitioners have access to policy only after it has been filtered through the curriculum and textbooks.

Such a conclusion reinforces the main argument put forward in this article, the efforts to influence the main models of teaching practices in our schools. The teacher is a matter of pride, dignity, respect, and value for society. One way to remedy this shortcoming would be to empower teachers to define school-specific competency-based curricula. Work plans, which aim to enrich text-based activities by adding relevant social and cultural context

Priority should be social and emotional development with less stress, more cooperation, calmer environment, teachers and students know and respect each other since a teacher works for many years with the same students. Teachers help students, and inspire them to achieve their goals for life.

The educational system should not boast, mainly, about the scientific achievements of children and young people, but with the civic education that it gives through examples. The examples, positive or negative, give the behavior and attitudes of the institutions, starting from the Parliament to the local institutions, where the citizens see them as models.

Children and young people must be taught how to live healthily, they must know how to behave in a system of civic value hierarchy in order to follow the path of our ancestors "for the Albanians - Gjergj Fishta".

The most urgent thing, today in Albania, is to teach children, parents, and existing teachers, "How to read different situations" and "how to behave in those situations". The priority should be learning the rules of civic education so that each of us "do small things with great value - Saint Teresa".

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# EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF BASIC PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS ON TEENAGE PERSONALITY FORMATION AND EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the psychological factors shaping adolescent personality development, particularly within the context of pre-university education. It highlights the lack of comprehensive empirical findings and calls for deeper studies across various social groups, especially adolescents, to create more cohesive educational strategies. The research emphasizes the relevance of ancient, classical, and modern scientific studies in advancing the understanding of psychological processes within Albanian psycho-pedagogy.*

*The paper addresses negative psychological influences such as authoritarian teaching methods, the erosion of student rights leading to identity conflicts, and the loss of historical memory. It critiques traditional pedagogical approaches and advocates for education systems integrating psychological insights, focusing on critical thinking and moral growth.*

*Additionally, the study examines the prevalence of psychological issues such as aggression, anxiety, and mental disorders, investigating the complex interplay of environmental and biological factors that contribute to these challenges. The report provides insights into the difficulties educators face when dealing with these problems. Furthermore, the paper underscores the importance of therapeutic interventions in effectively addressing psychological disorders, recommending a comprehensive approach that incorporates psychological knowledge. It also discusses key concepts in social psychology, including attitudes, bias, and social cognition, and their role in understanding and treating behavioral patterns at both individual and societal levels. In conclusion, this study provides an in-depth analysis of the psychological elements that impact adolescent personality development, advocating for a holistic approach that integrates psychological insights into educational and social strategies.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescent personalities, pre-university education, psychological factors, social groups, educational strategies, psycho-pedagogy, negative psychological*

## **Introduction**

The methodological foundation of psycho-pedagogy is rooted in the traditions of educating younger generations, the teaching and development systems throughout societal growth, their regulations, and the insights of enlightened writers, educators, and thinkers on education and enlightenment. Empirical deductions in this field are challenging, even for renowned social psychologists, as they often rely on the implementation of funded programs with vested interests. In-depth studies within social layers, particularly among adolescents, hold significant value. These studies enable educators to think and act cohesively, avoiding disparities and spontaneous actions while upholding the philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical triad. Research highlights that psychological and environmental factors profoundly shape adolescent personality development. Adolescence is a critical period for self-concept formation, influenced by family dynamics, social interactions, and educational contexts. Studies indicate that family environments and educational settings contribute to the development of traits such as self-esteem, communication skills, and autonomy, all essential in shaping adolescent personalities (Milenkova & Nakova, 2023).

## **Psychological Elements with a Challenging Approach**

Adolescents today confront delicate issues within the pre-university education system, presenting significant challenges in schools of democratic countries where, as Muka (1999) notes, "no one can look at them better than the people of that country themselves" (p. 3). This is especially pertinent when they represent a competent level in their country, where the values of the pre-university education system are evident during times of change, enhancing the educated nature of the population and nation in civilized values. Living in isolation and inactive forms can lead to mental disorders, resulting in harmful and unnecessary psychic actions. The teenage years are a period of rapid change. Cognitive neuroscientist and teen brain expert Sarah-Jayne Blakemore describes adolescence's unique challenge as a "perfect storm" due to the simultaneous and sudden increase in hormonal changes, neural changes, social changes, and life pressures. This perfect storm has led to new phenomena and developments in schools over the past two decades.

Critical thinking and moral education—learning right from wrong—are psycho-pedagogical trends that deepen knowledge acquisition and effective thinking.

Although some inappropriate borrowings or trends may seem new, these are traditional educational objectives that have been revitalized among teachers in this era of transitional experiences. The goal is to address the intellectual and moral challenges of a new era. Initiatives focusing on these two programs have already commenced. Children mustn't feel they are being observed in education; otherwise, they may feel uncomfortable, self-conscious, afraid, embarrassed, or shy (Samarkand, 2010). A child's social development is reflected in their behavior, attitudes toward the environment, and especially their participation in community activities as they begin to engage socially (Kholmuratova, 2020). Education plays a pivotal role in personality formation by fostering critical thinking, moral development, and social behavior. Character education programs that focus on building prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, and empathy have been shown to reduce aggression and improve conflict resolution among adolescents. Such programs demonstrate how education can address psychological challenges like anxiety and mental disorders through holistic approaches (Garon, 2023). Additionally, the Big Five personality traits—particularly conscientiousness and openness to experience—are strong predictors of academic success and positive social behavior, emphasizing the role of personality in educational outcomes (Bainbridge et al., 2022). There are differences in activity levels and moral development shaped by the societal laws in which an individual lives. Pedagogy views personal development as a complex and contentious process. It is beneficial to identify key elements while staying close to the core purpose of pedagogy.

Another consideration is the practice of dictating during adolescence. Dictating reflects a moral crisis in education, manifested through dependence, obligatory service to others, elimination of alternatives, obstruction, and imposition of restrictions. This phenomenon, observed in contemporary teaching, inhibits research and learning in children and students, fostering inattention and confusion. It unconsciously nurtures aggressiveness, forgetfulness, and negligence. High school students express the need for "more activities of a psychological nature," stating that "the pressure and psychological violence on students should be curbed; there should be fewer strict rules, as our school is slowly turning into a prison where teachers enforce the directorate's policies. This is not acceptable" (Celçima, 2017, p. 208).

The loss of rights, simulating denial and rejection, leads children and students toward a crisis of social identity. The methodology of Albanian education, aside from adopting methodological innovations from developed countries, must preserve its valuable teaching experiences based on psychological foundations,

distinguishing it in its psycho-pedagogical typology. The question arises: Can all educational approaches fit into the Albanian educational environment?

The loss of historical memory, an unforgettable part of nations and humanity, serves as an impetus for seeking justice. During the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence, it became necessary within the school system to refresh or correct students' understanding of national symbols. This phenomenon suggests that gaps in the teaching program needed to be addressed promptly.

Not only have philosophical divisions but also the accepted dimensions of pedagogical logic provided immense value in traditional, classical, and modern scientific knowledge and research. This backdrop of phenomena, events, tendencies, and biases is valuable for the scientific research model. Its dimensions, implied as the essence of reasoning to uncover incomplete and undiscovered secrets, help define the model's criteria. Given the complex nature of science and pedagogy, the dilemmas presented by advanced knowledge levels, the growing demands of the socio-economic and research-scientific market, and societal concerns like unemployment, demography, and ecology, those involved in pedagogical studies have responded through educational-formative processes and research based on logical models appropriate for the times.

Devotion to the profession remains a widely discussed topic, especially given factors that create delicate situations within the educational community. The modern era has become challenging for teachers. While there is greater autonomy in teaching, it demands more comprehensive knowledge. To maintain proper authority, teachers need to understand exactly what students think of them, even when incorporating foreign phrases that may surprise students. Teachers must be coherent to avoid becoming perceived as ridiculous or unconvincing moralists. Confronting current problems compels teachers to adapt to changes stemming from the vast information available today. They must be prepared to counteract negative influences infiltrating students' consciousness, not only morally but also in technical, linguistic, and technological aspects. Teachers should be well aware of the emerging immoralities in school environments, actively opposing them rather than accepting them under the guise of "modernity" often seen in educational contexts.

Ignorance is best countered with knowledge and wisdom. In opposition to misguided "modernity," teachers must exemplify standards of language culture, information, and exemplary behavior. They should believe in their positive

impact on guiding children toward higher levels of morality, confronting traditional values that may resist or challenge new standards. These recommendations should be integral to educational qualification and testing programs, which currently appear routine under the banner of reforms but do not represent a significant leap toward new, functional information.

### **Displays of Aggressiveness**

In our interconnected environment, actions and reactions significantly impact those around us. Understanding what motivates students to help or harm each other during social interactions and communication is crucial. Daily reports reveal instances of violence between individuals. Psychologists have been exploring this phenomenon to provide deeper insights. Aggressiveness, as a psychological concept, involves behavior intended to harm another member of the same species. It manifests in various forms, including direct physical actions, indirect behaviors, or verbal threats, and is associated with emotions like anger. Its occurrence is influenced by multiple factors and is studied from four perspectives: instinct theory, frustration-impulse theory, social learning theory, and cognitive theory.

Theoretically, a person might appear calm throughout life—a "person without nerves"—yet exhibit surprising behavior in certain moments. Recognizing that theories often contradict, especially when examining behavior from early childhood, we naturally question why a child cries. Is it due to fear, pain, discomfort, hunger, or other reasons requiring attention? Can crying be seen as an expression of anger toward circumstances? Factors like parental divorce, bullying, and shyness contribute to inherited instincts and can be cultivated due to flaws in upbringing and education.

Another psychological element is anxiety, which psychologists recommend examining closely due to its complexity. Generally defined as an unpleasant feeling—encompassing fear, boredom, and worry about the future—individuals often lack a clear understanding of its causes. Adolescents experience anxiety related to future uncertainties in various aspects of life. The desire for security clashes with feelings of insecurity. This state is prevalent in preschool, school, and university ages, primarily motivated by fear of the future. Psychological treatments often address human phobias, especially social phobias, which cause discomfort, mental instability, and apprehension about future events. This leads individuals to avoid confronting their fears, attempting to convince themselves that these fears do not intensify their anxiety.

Delving deeper, it's apparent that anxiety is an emotional reaction to stress, often stimulated by uncertainty. Anxiety arises when demands are placed on individuals without prior knowledge or understanding of subsequent outcomes. Recognizing uncertainty as a trigger helps in comprehending its existence and impact. Key questions include:

- What is uncertainty, and how does it stimulate anxiety in humans?
- What causes uncertainty, and what are its emotional and material implications?
- How does a person feel when anticipating uncertainty, experiencing it, and after enduring a perilous situation caused by it?

Anxiety often stems from unfamiliarity with the social and infrastructural environment. Although it may seem trivial, its effects are multifaceted. The future encompasses many facets of human life, including personal development, education, health, housing, and financial stability. People view the future with concern and anxiety, affecting not only themselves but also family members and others.

Colloquially, anxiety is referred to as worry—a concern individuals have about securing their future. Common expressions include "I was very worried that he was late" or "I am very worried about this problem." A significant challenge is that others may struggle to identify a person's internal experience of anxiety and their coping mechanisms. This understanding often relies on self-reports, which can be unreliable due to sincerity levels and the individual's psychological awareness.

An individual's ability to articulate their experience of anxiety depends on their psychological knowledge. Those with more extensive information can more accurately interpret and convey their emotional state. Health issues can cause profound anxiety until the underlying problem is identified. Serious illnesses, for instance, increase anxiety before a medical diagnosis.

Anxiety is an emotional response to stress and can be categorized as a trait or situational. Trait anxiety is a prolonged, stable aspect of personality, where individuals are perpetually anxious yet unable to change their circumstances. Such individuals may have unstable relationships and inadvertently transmit their anxiety to others. Situational anxiety relates to specific events, such as the nervousness before a first kiss. Educators should be vigilant for anxiety disorders. People with generalized anxiety disorder feel powerless against life's challenges, remaining insecure and perpetually worried, even when

circumstances improve.

### **Psychological Approach to Addressing Educational Challenges**

When applying dialectical principles in educational psychology, experienced teachers often use established knowledge to explore unknown areas. In doing so, teachers with deep psycho-pedagogical expertise tend to approach problems through reason and philosophical thinking. This method can lead to effective and rational outcomes, which help improve children's behavior and maintain their psychological balance. In this context, rational judgment operates differently, especially when educators utilize new methods and human experimentation. These rationalizers of innovative strategies often clash with rigid methodologies, resulting in debates, disagreements, and sometimes conflicts. Such conflicts arise from mismatches between outdated methods and the evolving needs of human psycho-pedagogical treatment.

Recent research supports the use of integrated therapeutic strategies in education, combining psychological and educational techniques to address psychological disorders. These comprehensive interventions help manage identity conflicts and psychological stress, contributing to healthier personality development and academic achievement (Milenkova & Nakova, 2023).

This evolving perspective challenges traditional, rigid methods and promotes approaches better aligned with ethical behavior and humanistic values, focusing on the child's psychological well-being and spiritual development.

### **Bridging the Gap Between Teachers and Psychological Insights**

This philosophical approach also highlights the internal concerns of teachers and psychologists, emphasizing the need for a holistic professional framework when working with "students or children with challenges." Teachers often find themselves in two camps: those who adapt and apply new methods, and those who rigidly adhere to established ones. This division sometimes results in professional competition and criticism, as new methods are often scrutinized unfairly due to resistance to change. However, these methods hold great potential for improving psycho-pedagogical practice, despite the professional paranoia that may hinder their adoption.

In educational environments, mental health issues such as depression and other psychological disorders must be addressed using professional standards and social rules. Teachers need to avoid rigid adherence to traditional methods that fail to meet the mental health needs of children. Addressing issues like depression and mental imbalance requires sensitivity and professional training. Simply being a trained psychologist or teacher does not automatically make one

effective in dealing with these complexities.

When working with children experiencing psychological difficulties, psycho-pedagogical methods need to simulate their previous state to allow for gradual professional intervention. For example, interventions should carefully manage stress and avoid exacerbating the child's psychological trauma. Teachers often experience anxiety themselves when evaluating the effectiveness of these methods, as their professional authority is at stake.

### **Aggressive Behavior and Psychological Responses in Children**

Aggressive behaviors in children, such as insults or harmful actions, challenge teachers in their psycho-pedagogical role. Freud's psychoanalytic model suggests that such behaviors stem from unconscious psychological forces, and children facing psychological trauma may exhibit hostility in their interactions with teachers. However, children may also withdraw and create emotional barriers when confronted with difficult experiences, leading to further communication breakdowns. For example, adolescents undergoing physiological changes might find it hard to discuss sensitive issues, resulting in feelings of isolation and a reluctance to communicate with their teachers.

Understanding and addressing these behaviors requires a delicate balance between professional intervention and respect for the child's emotional state. The ultimate goal is to build trust and mutual understanding, fostering therapeutic cooperation between teachers and students.

### **Collective Hypnosis and Mutual Trust in Education**

In psycho-pedagogy, the method of collective hypnosis—wherein all participants align their efforts toward a common therapeutic goal—can be highly effective in achieving behavioral change. By examining patterns from past experiences and comparing them with new data, teachers can develop effective psycho-pedagogical strategies.

Teachers need to establish trust with students in the initial phase of treatment within a supportive school and family environment. Mutual respect and a rational understanding of children's behavioral conditions significantly increase the chances of successful intervention. Moreover, respecting children as individuals is fundamental to creating a therapeutic alliance that facilitates psychological development and behavior management.

### **Conclusion**

In exploring the influence of basic psychological elements on teenage



personality formation and education, it is clear that adolescent development is shaped by a complex interplay of psychological, environmental, and social factors. Pre-university education plays a critical role in this process, yet traditional pedagogical methods often fail to address the nuanced psychological needs of students. The research underscores the importance of integrating psychological insights—ranging from critical thinking and moral development to managing aggression, anxiety, and mental disorders—into educational strategies.

A holistic approach, one that combines psychological understanding with educational techniques, offers a more effective means of supporting adolescent personality development. By fostering environments that emphasize mutual respect, individualized care, and comprehensive intervention strategies, educators can better address the psychological challenges faced by adolescents. Ultimately, this approach not only enhances academic success but also contributes to healthier psychological outcomes for students, preparing them for the complexities of adult life.

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# EXPLORING THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS IN TIRANA

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## **Abstract**

*In line, with education guidelines there is an emphasis on integrating technology into teaching practices to equip students for the digital age. My study focuses on examining how English language instructors at the University of Tirana actually incorporate technology in their teaching methods specifically looking at the use of tools in language education.*

*The primary objective is to understand the role of technology in teaching English as a language directly contributing to fostering innovation and digital transformation in education. By investigating the types of technology, applications or digital platforms utilized their functionalities, effectiveness, and challenges my research aims to support teaching approaches that align with digitalization objectives.*

*To accomplish this goal a quantitative methodology is employed through questionnaires distributed to professors who teach English as a Second Language at the University of Tirana. This approach is expected to gather data for analyzing trends and patterns in technology usage within the realm of English language education, at the university level.*

**Keywords:** *EFL, technology integration, app, digital platform, language skills, higher education.*

## **Introduction**

Using technology in the classroom is not something new. This has been going on for decades. In the USA, everything started with the radio which was used for the first time in classroom in the 1920s. Then in the 1930s the overhead projector was introduced. Later on in the 1950s headphones became a popular tool classrooms. They were used mainly for language learning purposes. The computers became a normal occurrence in classrooms in the 1980s, with programs focusing on basic programming skills and the first educational software. The 1990s marked a major shift with the rise of the internet. By the early 2000s, many schools and universities were incorporating learning

management systems (LMS) enabling blended learning environments.

Unlike the USA, where technological tools have been present for nearly a century, Albanian's integration of digital tools started later. It wasn't until the 1990s, following the fall of communism, that Albania began to introduce technology into its educational system. With the introduction of ICT policies by the Albanian Ministry of Education in the 2000s, universities began adopting digital platforms for administrative and learning purposes. LMS platforms such as Moodle were introduced, but their use was not widespread. There was an increased focus on equipping universities with technology, but there were also limitations such as lack of infrastructure and training.

Early efforts in Albania focused on expanding basic computer literacy and internet access, with significant advancements in ICT infrastructure happening in the 2000s. Various national strategies, such as the Digital Agenda of Albania 2015-2020, played a key role in expanding the use of ICT in schools and universities.

The pandemic was a major turning point for technology in Albanian education. The shift to online learning accelerated the use of digital tools in higher education. Platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and other digital resources became essential for teaching. While challenges like internet access in rural areas remained, the pandemic forced many educators to adapt quickly to digital tools.

These days educators are faced with a numerous range of digital educational resources from which they must choose to use in their classrooms. As there are a lot of them, the process of finding the right resources is challenging. As stated by Redecker and Punie 2017 "One of the key competences any educator needs to develop is to come to terms with this variety, to effectively identify resources that best fit their learning objectives, learner group and teaching style, to structure the wealth of materials, establish connections and to modify, add on to and develop themselves digital resources to support their teaching."

Digital technologies can enhance and improve teaching and learning strategies in various ways. Whatever pedagogic approach is chosen, the educator's specific digital competence lies in the effective use of digital technologies in the different phases and settings of the learning process.

According to UNESCO ICT Teacher Competency Framework Modules (2011) educators must be aware of the policies. Furthermore, they must have excellent knowledge of the curriculum standards of their subject, in order to integrate technology into the curriculum. Most importantly educators must know where, with whom, when and how to use technology for classroom activities and

presentations.

Teachers are active citizens of digital society, so their digital competences should be flexible enough to be relevant both now and in the near future. A comprehensive solution of this problem is possible providing the development of teachers' digital competences based on the DigCompEdu framework and its projection on the national education system (Balyk & Shmyger 2018). The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) is a scientifically sound framework describing what it means for educators to be digitally competent. It provides a general reference frame to support the development of educator-specific digital competences in Europe. This framework views six areas of competences. The first area highlights the need for professional engagement, where it is important to engage in collaboration with other educators, sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience. The second area targets digital resources, selecting digital resources, creating and modifying digital content, managing, protecting and sharing digital resources. The third area devotes attention to teaching and learning. The fourth area focuses on assessment, analyzing assessment strategies and the use of digital tools to provide targeted and timely feedback to learners. The fifth area is about empowering learners while using digital technologies to address learners' diverse learning needs and to foster their active and creative engagement with the subject. The last area directs attention toward facilitating learners' digital competences, which includes information and media literacy, digital communication and collaboration, digital content creation and the responsible use of technology. (DigiCompEdu 2018)

### **Methodology**

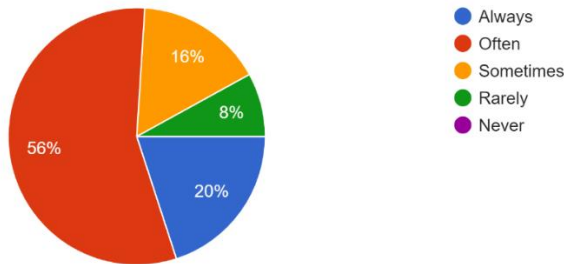
This article aimed to explore the use of technology when teaching English as a foreign language at the university level. The main focus was to gather data on what type of technology professors use, how often, and if they have encountered any barriers or challenges while using digital tools in class. The data was gathered through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms and it was administered to the professors online. It was composed of 9 questions. The first question was an open-ended one allowing professors to describe the technology they currently incorporate in their English language teaching methods. The other 8 questions were close-ended ones. The questionnaire was anonymous and its completion was entirely voluntary.

## Results and discussion

The first question of the questionnaire was an open-ended question, which aimed to gather data regarding the type of technology professors currently use in their English language teaching. Most respondents mentioned the use of traditional technologies such as interactive whiteboards, which means that many of the classes at the faculties are equipped with the tools to use technology in class, to facilitate the learning process. Another frequent response was online platforms and language learning apps. A professor said: “*Websites such as BreakingNews, TedTalk, Kahoot and Quizlet for quizzes, flashcards. Sometimes for fun to spend some extra minutes for my students to relax I use Lyrics Training when I see that the majority is a music lover group.*”

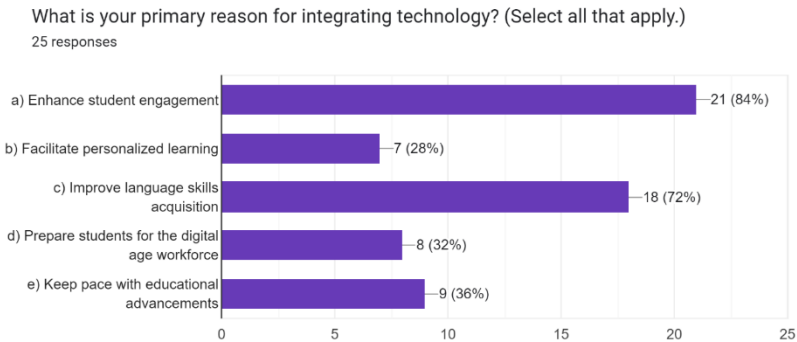
How frequently do you use technology in your English language teaching sessions?

25 responses



**Figure 1.** *How frequently do you use technology in your English language teaching sessions?*

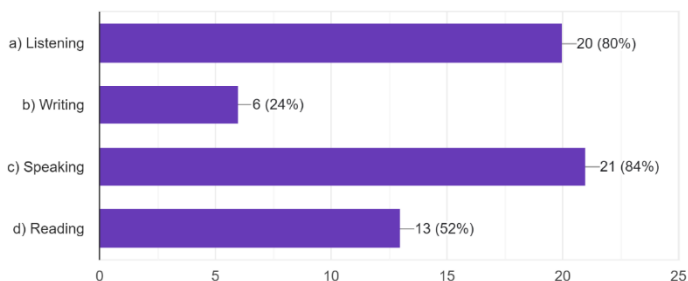
The majority of professors (56%) reported using technology regularly in their teaching sessions. This indicates a strong familiarity and comfort with using technology to enhance lessons. A smaller percentage (8%) indicates occasional use, potentially reflecting barriers such as lack of resources, familiarity, or preference for traditional methods.



**Figure 2.** *What is your primary reason for integrating technology?*

The highest percentage of teachers (84%) focus on making lessons more engaging and interactive. This suggests that technology is seen as a powerful tool to capture students' interest and maintain their attention. Another significant percentage (72%) use technology to enhance language skills, such as reading, speaking, listening and writing. This means that technology has a big role in supporting language development.

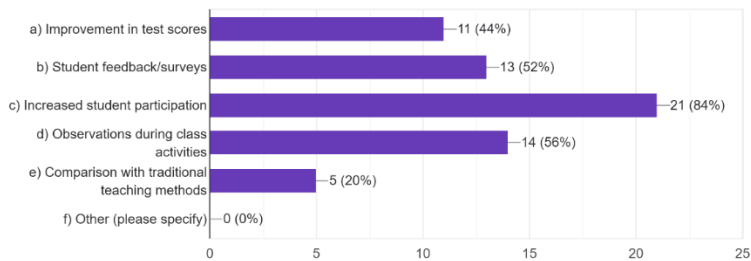
During which language skills do you mostly use digital tools or platforms in your teaching? (Select all that apply.)  
25 responses



**Figure 3.** *During which language skills do you mostly use digital tools or platforms in your teaching?*

It was seen from observations in classes that professors use technology to improve language skills, and later backed up by the data from the questionnaire, so there was a need to see during which language skills do they mostly use digital tools. A majority of respondents chose listening and speaking skills (80% - 84%). The lowest percentage of respondents use technology during writing classes. This might indicate that they prefer the traditional methods, or there is a lack of suitable digital tools for writing practice.

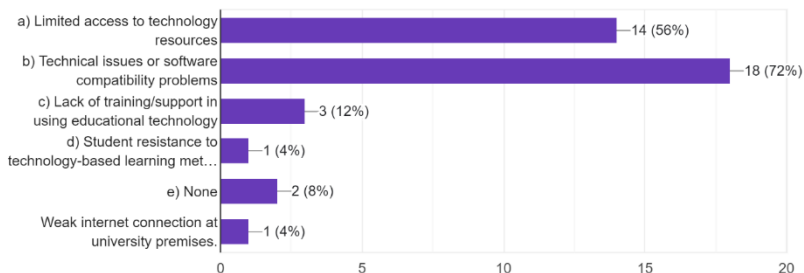
How do you assess the effectiveness of the technology tools you use in language education?  
 (Select all that apply.)  
 25 responses



**Figure 4.** *How do you assess the effectiveness of the technology tools you use in language education?*

Many professors use digital tools when teaching English language, but it is quite important to observe their effectiveness and impact on the students. From the data gathered from the questionnaire it was observed that the highest percentage of professors (84%) use students' participation as a key indicator of effectiveness. Comparison with traditional teaching methods was the least common method with only 5 of the professors choosing it.

Have you encountered any challenges or barriers when integrating technology into your English language teaching practices? If so, please specify.  
 25 responses

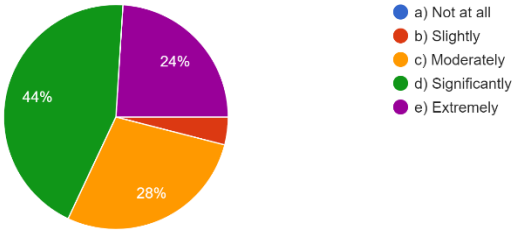


**Figure 5.** *Have you encountered any challenges or barriers when integrating technology into your English language teaching practices?*

The medal has two sides. If we look into the other side of the medal, there are also some barriers that professors face when using digital tools. A significant number of professors reported that technical issues (72%) and limited access to technology (56%) are major barriers. Only one of the professors was faced with students' resistance to technology, pointing out that there might be the need of

informing the students about the benefits of using technology to enhance their learning process and on the other hand to ensure that technology aligns with their learning preferences. We have to take into consideration which kinds of digital students are more comfortable with and easiest to use and comprehend.

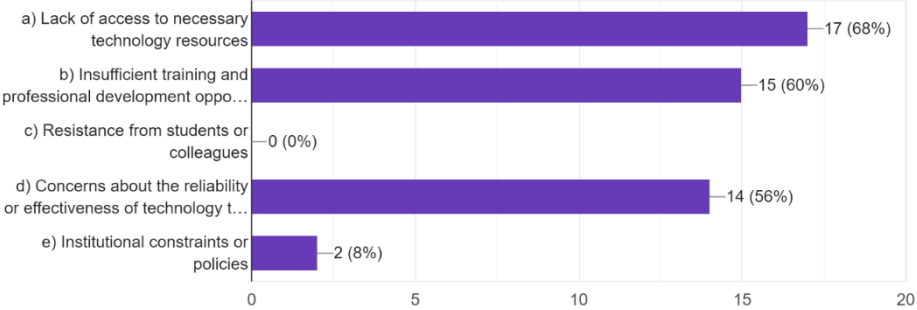
To what extent do you believe technology contributes to fostering innovation in language education at the university level?  
25 responses



**Figure 6.** *To what extent do you believe technology contributes to fostering innovation in language education at the university level?*

The data showed that technology helps to foster innovation in language education, and this was supported by 44% of the respondents who answered that technology significantly contributes to fostering innovation in class. This means that it is generally seen as a valuable tool in advancing teaching practices. Although, the variation in responses shows that there are different views on the extent of technology’s impact, which may be influenced by individual experiences, institutional support, or the specific technologies used.

In your opinion, what are the main barriers to adopting new technology in language education?  
25 responses



**Figure 7.** *In your opinion, what are the main barriers to adopting new technology in*



### *language education?*

A significant number of respondents (68%) see limited access as a major barrier highlighting issues related to equipment or institutional access to the apps, as not to use these resources with individual subscriptions. Concerns about whether technology tools are dependable or effective are also apparent, reflecting skepticism or past negative experiences.



**Figure 8.** *How do you stay informed about emerging trends and best practices in educational technology for language teaching?*

A majority of the respondents (68%) keep informed by networking with colleagues and experts, highlighting the importance of professional relationships and discussions in learning about new trends and practices. 52% of the respondents participate in conferences or workshops, which shows that there is a preference for formal, structured learning opportunities.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The main focus of this article was to examine the integration of technology in university-level English as a foreign language instruction.

Based on the professors' responses, it was evident that technology is a valued resource for many, but there's room to increase comfort and access for those who use it less frequently. The higher use of technology for listening and speaking may reflect the interactive nature of these skills and the availability of digital tools that support them effectively. There may be opportunities to explore and develop more digital resources for reading and writing to enhance their integration into language teaching.

It is significant to highlight that professors are advised to not use all the time the same digital tools as for them not to become too predictable and the tools to lose their faction, as students lose interest or get bored.

The data also showed that when implementing a new technology in class, there might be some barriers that professors face. Many respondents view a lack of training and development as a key obstacle. This means that educators need more support and professional development to easily integrate new technologies. Some of the professors who answered the questionnaire said that they attend conferences or workshops to stay informed about emerging trends and the best practices in educational technology. This underscores the importance of formal, organized opportunities for professional development. Online forums and networking play a crucial role in ongoing learning, emphasizing the need for active participation in professional communities.

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**FROM LANGUAGE TO CULTURE, FROM CULTURE TO LANGUAGE.  
THE PUBLICITY SPOT IN FLT (FRENCH LANGUAGE  
TEACHING) – A PRACTICE IN FORMING THE SOCIAL-CULTURAL  
COMPETENCE OF ALBANIAN-SPEAKING STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

*Communicative and cultural teaching is an important didactic dimension of teaching French as a foreign language. Different researchers have emphasized that the two concepts ‘culture’ and ‘communication’ frequently appear together in the process of foreign language teaching. Albanian learners of French language are, in some ways, influenced by cultural value systems, which bring rigid reactions to the people whose language he learns. It is up to the teacher to guide them away from clichés, helping and encouraging them with effective didactic practices, to create and interpret their personal hypotheses, in relation to the cultural component involved in learning French. The didactic practice of working on analyzing, understanding, and interpreting advertisements with second-year students aims to foster creativity and develop their interpretive skills as a crucial component of communicative competence.*

**Keywords:** *cultural communicative teaching, cultural values, hypotheses, interpretations, creativity, motivation*

**Introduction**

Intercultural pedagogy practices have become integral in teaching French as a foreign language. Researchers like Bertrand (1983), Pretceille (1989), and Puren (2002) have extensively explored this complex competence. Beacco (2004) identifies several key components that constitute the entirety of cultural competence as follows:

- a. Ethnolinguistic component: the ability to use social rules for successful communication.
- b. Actional component: which implies a minimum of pragmatic knowledge to navigate unfamiliar societies.
- c. Relational component: related to attitudes and managing interactions

with native French speakers.

d. Interpretative component: understanding society through observation of its members.

e. Intercultural component: concerning cultural content itself, viewed as an object of judgment by learners, who might fall prey to ethnocentrism, intolerance, cultural dependence, etc.

Given current practices in teaching French as a foreign language, it is essential to consider that the situations, tools, general openness of our country's, and aspirations to join the European community have varied and should further change the approach of students and teachers, as two key actors in successful language learning, towards the culture of other nations, specifically French. This new outlook increases students' motivation for diverse didactic activities in building communicative competence in French. These activities should also convey the Albanian students' perspective on French people, French culture, and people from different social backgrounds. At the same time, they should explore the various mechanisms that teachers and students need to implement for effective classroom work.

Authentic documents are an excellent opportunity to be utilized in working with high school and especially university students. This approach can prove even more successful due to the attraction and widespread use of multimedia and social networks as sources of information and entertainment for today's youth in didactic cultural activities. In this aspect, it is worth mentioning Fulford's (2003) idea that knowing a language implies having sufficient knowledge of its culture. In the same context, we bring into focus the fact that advertising, among other things, is a cultural product because it reflects its values, norms, and beliefs.

The cultural competence of Albanian students in French is different and independent from their linguistic competence. Understandably, knowledge on French culture and reality comes primarily from their background (through their native language). For this reason, as Beacco (2004) emphasizes, without confusing these two components or their content, the French language teacher can use the native language during the lesson. This can occur whenever the primary objective of the session is cultural, while the linguistic objective is secondary. On this topic, Beacco (2004) notes that the audience's age is a more important factor than language proficiency in setting cultural learning objectives.

Concerning the ideas discussed above, it can be argued that a French class not only brings together the Albanian and French languages but also their respective

cultures. This interaction involves a comparative approach, reflecting on the cultural messages conveyed by the foreign language. In today's context of openness to Europe and the world, seen under a multicultural perspective, this serves as a means of conveying the message of accepting the diversity and individuality. Based on these considerations, there is a need to develop a didactic activity based on analyzing the messages in advertisements. The entire process was conceptualized from a comparative perspective in both languages, focusing mainly on the range of Albanian and French advertisements.

## **1. Methodology**

The participants in this study were second-year students of English language study program bachelor (Level A2) who were studying French as a second foreign language. This group was selected based on their intermediate proficiency in French, which allowed for an exploration of both linguistic and cultural elements in advertisements.

### **Objectives**

The primary objectives of the sessions were to:

- Enable students to understand and analyze advertising messages.
- Develop reading comprehension and oral expression skills in French.
- Familiarize students with the cultural elements of French society and daily life.
- Encourage critical thinking about the role and impact of advertising in both French and Albanian contexts.

### **Session Preparation**

Students were divided into 2-3 groups, each assigned to find and bring two or three advertising spots from both Albanian and French media to class. The advertisements were selected from different product categories, such as:

- Food and beverages
- Perfumes and cosmetic products
- Clothing and footwear

Each group was tasked with identifying advertisements that represented a specific area. Within each group, a small subgroup was designated to record their impressions, comments, and arguments for selecting a particular spot. This provided a structured framework for subsequent discussions.

### **First Phase: Discussion and Reflection**

The session began with a discussion on advertising, focusing on students'

existing knowledge, opinions, and experiences with advertisements. This reflective approach was designed to:

- Elicit personal insights from students.
- Encourage active participation by prompting students to share their perceptions and interpretations.
- Facilitate the exchange of ideas, creating a collaborative learning environment where students could filter and process advertising messages through their own cultural and personal angle.

This initial phase was critical in preparing students to analyze the deeper cultural and linguistic implications of the advertisements they presented.

### **Group Discussion and Questionnaire**

Once the groups presented their selected advertisements, a structured discussion followed using a pre-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to stimulate in-depth analysis of both the linguistic and cultural elements of the advertisements. The following questions were posed to each group to facilitate discussion:

1. Personal Connection and Appeal:
  - Are advertisements important to you?
  - Which elements of the advertisement attract you the most? The text? The image?
  - Why does this advertisement appeal to you?
2. Influence and Targeting:
  - Is your preference for this advertisement a personal choice, or do you think it is influenced by factors such as society, age, or other reasons?
  - To which age group or social category is the advertisement you chose targeted?
3. Broader Reflection on Advertising:
  - Do you agree with the statement, "Advertising is everywhere. It targets all ages"?
  - How do you understand the core message of the advertisement?
  - What is the advertisement's primary goal? Is it to sell the product, inform the public, or provide entertainment?
4. Critical Thinking and Manipulation:
  - Can advertising be considered a form of manipulation, given that it might influence us to behave in ways we wouldn't without its presence?
  - Can you ignore or bypass advertisements, and how free do you feel in making that choice?

### **Purpose of the Questionnaire**

The primary purpose of this questionnaire was to encourage students to engage in debate, thereby enhancing their oral communication skills. By addressing personal, cultural, and critical perspectives on advertising, the questionnaire allowed students to explore the underlying social dynamics of marketing while using French as the medium of communication. Additionally, it helped students develop the ability to critically interpret both the linguistic and visual elements of advertisements. Moreover, the questions were adaptable to the needs and proficiency of different classes, ensuring that every student could participate actively, regardless of their language level.

### **2. Working with the Text or Slogan of the Advertisement**

This section integrated the students' preliminary independent work with the vocabulary encompassing areas such as food, beverages, and cosmetics, along with the teacher's interventions and explanations for the understanding of difficult words or expressions in class. Students identified stylistic devices, the function of discourse, the argumentative structure of the message, etc. The teacher guided students toward understanding the implied message, in addition to the explicit message of the advertisement. Groups could alternate in asking and answering questions and also complement each other's thoughts. All these communications took place in French, despite any difficulties in oral expression. The teacher ensured the balanced participation of all group members.

### **3. Image and the Meaning of the Message it Conveys**

During this crucial phase, elements such as the object and characters were distinguished. How are they presented? What can be said about the colors used in the advertisement? What is their symbolism? How does the text or slogan align with the image? Which elements convey this alignment?

### **Comparative Approach with Albanian Advertisements**

In this phase, a comparative approach with Albanian advertisements was conducted. We believe that this comparison would help students understand French advertisements better, since in Albanian ones, they have the advantage of knowing not only the discourse and slogan elements but also the real product, along with its quality and characteristics.

For example, in the "Arranxhata" advertisement with a pink background, students can identify the following elements:

- The message: "SA SHUME TE PRITA" (I waited for you so long).

- the brand: *Glina*

The image: A charming and very attractive woman with a dog (also wearing a pink vest) smiles and expresses a visible feeling of happiness. Meanwhile, she is leaning against the can of “Arranxhata”, a product of the *Glina* brand, which in the advertisement surpasses the size of the female character.

The interpretation: The message can be interpreted as a form of ‘longing’ comparable to that for a loved one.

The argument: The product is highly valued and appeals to the public's emotions. The subtext is clearly understood: *Glina's* pink “Arranxhata” is likely to bring us great pleasure when we buy/consume it, as the character has been waiting for it for a long time.

We believe these activities strengthen students’ communicative competence by creating a positive group environment through active listening and discussion.

#### **4. Describing and Understanding French Advertising Images and Texts**

Since advertising functions within French society, it reflects the world, society, values, traditions, and historical orientations of that society (Barthes, 1985). Beyond its role in developing linguistic competence in French lessons, according to Louis Porcher (1986), "advertising images can express the entirety of a particular culture at a specific historical moment and place." Moreover, many experts in the field of sociolinguistics distinguish several types of advertising. According to Gilles Lugin (2006), there are the following categories: *product advertising*, *brand advertising*, *connivance advertising (publicité de connivence)*, and *ethical advertising*.

In Albanian advertisement studies, there are no sociological treatments that achieve this kind of categorization. For this reason, and due to the audience's level (A2), our comparative approach more than treating the spots separately by these categories aims to deal with them as a single entity. A more in-depth study could be conducted with an audience at a higher linguistic level (B2) as a continuation of this current work. What is more, in support of the comparative approach, we continued with the analysis of several French advertising spots, using the same analysis as with the Albanian ones. It is worth mentioning that students expressed willingness to share their thoughts and analyze the content and messages of French advertising spots. Below are two of their most prominent observations:

- The image of women is always associated with the product being advertised to illustrate various products such as beverages, clothing, cars, food, etc.



- In other advertisements, the image of women is naturally linked to the product being advertised, such as perfumes, clothing, and body care products. Here, women appear to be the target audience or consumers to whom the advertisement is addressed. This image is idealized; women are always very beautiful and elegant, aiming to present a model for society.

In another advertisement category, students discussed the use of images of famous athletes, movie stars, actors, etc., whose role is to convince the public and encourage them to desire and purchase the same product. Thus, in the spot, the image, logo, and slogan are combined. Examples include *Volvic*, mineral water, presented by the photo of Zinedine Zidane, or the actress Monica Bellucci in the *Dior* perfume advertisement.

As a result of the work on understanding and interpreting the messages of the advertising spots, students were presented with examples showcasing that their cultural dimension is expressed through several cultural codes, such as famous people, movie stars, well-known athletes, works of art, figurative expressions, French stereotypes, etc. The difficulty for the teacher and students in the symbolic and cultural analysis of the spot lied in studying and understanding the associations that help decode these cultural codes. These codes often need to be inferred as they are not explicit but are related to the connotation of the image and slogan.

Student Observations and Questions:

- What is the advertisement about?
- Where is the product name or brand located?
- What is seen in the foreground?
- What do you notice in the background?
- What piques your interest in this advertisement?

### **5. Developing Comprehension and Oral Expression Skills**

Enhancing comprehension and oral expression was a key objective of this activity. As Bourhis et al. (1997) point out, intercultural competence plays a significant role in language learning by offering a deeper understanding of the cultural contexts in which the language is used. The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) similarly stresses the importance of embedding cultural knowledge in language teaching, as it strengthens both linguistic proficiency and communicative skills. In this particular exercise, students first engaged in decoding the visual and textual elements of advertisements, an approach that improved their comprehension and also creating opportunities for verbal

expression. By analyzing both the images and the messages, students were able to sharpen their interpretive abilities (an essential component of developing language and intercultural awareness).

### **Discussion Questions to Encourage Critical Thought and Expression**

Students were given the following discussion points:

- What is the theme of the advertisement?

This allowed students to condense complex ideas into clear summaries and also reflecting on the broader cultural messages being communicated.

- How is the message constructed?

Students examined how elements like visuals, slogans, and possibly background music work together to convey the overall message. This question encouraged them to analyze both the content and structure of the communication.

- What stands out most to you? The model? The colors? The product?

This task required students to prioritize what they believed to be the most effective part of the advertisement, fostering their ability to articulate reasoning and develop clear arguments.

- How is the message delivered? What catches your attention? A high rating of the product? Its quality? Comparisons with similar products?

This prompted students to explore how the product was presented and marketed, helping them to practice their analytical skills in comparing various elements.

- What do you think of the message? Does it inform? Persuade? Argue? Is it effective for you?

This question allowed students to offer personal evaluations of the advertisement's effectiveness, helping to improve their critical thinking and ability to express judgments.

- Who is the target audience? Which social category or age group does the ad address?

This encouraged students to think critically about the advertisement's audience, broadening their understanding of how advertising is crafted for different demographics.

- What French cultural elements can you identify? Are there any specific situations, clothing styles, or words with unique meanings?

Finally, students were tasked with identifying cultural nuances, symbols, or traditions represented in the advertisements, enhancing their ability to connect language learning with real-life cultural contexts.

### **Merging Comprehension with Verbal Expression**

The subsequent discussions took place entirely in French, requiring students to articulate their analyses clearly and confidently. As they responded to the questions, they were encouraged to use a range of cohesive devices to structure their arguments logically and fluently. For example, students used phrases like "tout d'abord," "ensuite," and "en conclusion" to guide their explanations. This not only helped them communicate more effectively but also improved their ability to link ideas coherently. Additionally, students worked in groups, which allowed for collaborative thinking and debate. In this setup, they could listen to each other's insights, offer alternative viewpoints, and build on ideas. This encouraged active listening and spontaneous responses, further enhancing both their oral proficiency and critical thinking skills.

### **Strengthening Critical Thinking Skills**

By focusing on advertisements, students were not only practicing their language skills but also engaging in critical reflection on broader topics. They began to consider how advertisements influence public perception, shape societal expectations, and reinforce cultural norms. These reflections were not limited to French culture; the students were also encouraged to draw comparisons with advertising in Albanian, which enriched the discussion. In this way, the activity transcended the boundaries of mere language acquisition. It helped students become more adept at interpreting media, questioning consumer behavior, and understanding the social forces behind advertising. By the end of the exercise, students had honed their ability to analyze both language and culture, becoming more skilled in critical expression and communication.

### **Conclusion**

The study of advertising spots is a valuable and successful practice for students and teachers of French as a foreign language because it brings numerous opportunities and advantages to classroom didactic activities. In this practice, all competencies of understanding and expression in the foreign language are developed, and students' motivation for an active approach to their learning is increased. It enables learning French language and culture by relying on sociocultural representations of the reality of the country whose language they study.

Furthermore, this practice goes beyond the narrow confines of text-based activities, providing students with a more free-spirited approach and personal engagement in their learning methods. The more sessions conducted in the

French language class using authentic support like advertising spots, the greater the cultural interest of the students, the recognition of French brand names, and their understanding of everyday life practices, thus contributing to their cultural formation. These didactic practices help develop their critical thinking regarding the French language and culture.

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## ETWINNING PROGRAM PROMOTING QUALITY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*Educational organizations collaborate internationally via eTwinning projects which are regarded as a quality assurance measure. eTwinning is a creative initiative of the European Commission that combines partnerships with innovative layouts. It has been successfully implemented since 2005 and contributes to the modernization of European education through the use of information and communication technology. Participants in this innovative program have the chance to collaborate on projects, communicate, grow professionally, and eventually receive high-quality education. As a result, eTwinning initiatives emphasize the significance of various competencies required for students and teachers to improve the learning process. This paper presents a European eTwinning project implemented by the Unified Special Vocational Gymnasium-Lyceum of Veria in collaboration with 6 schools in Turkey, 1 school in Italy, 1 school in France, and 1 school in Greece. Through this project, students collaborated in pairs, or individually to create comics using a variety of digital tools like Pixton and Storyboard. The two volumes including all of the comics made by the partner schools were the program's final deliverable. The ultimate goals of these programs are to provide students with a high-quality education, support their social and emotional growth, and promote a sustainable school environment. They align with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the 17 Global Goals of Sustainable Development.*

**Keywords:** *eTwinning, Quality Education, Vocational High School*

## **Introduction**

The European eTwinning programs are school cooperative programs that effectively contribute to the students' activation and involvement in the educational process and to the development and cultivation of life skills (Galvin et al., 2006). However, these programs are characteristically absent from the actions of Vocational High Schools. As an example, it is worth mentioning that during the 2023-2024 school year, out of the 58 schools awarded the "eTwinning school" label, only one Vocational High School received this title.

## **Literature Review**

The special education school units, specifically high and secondary schools have different characteristics in relation to the other types of high schools (mainstream high and secondary schools, music schools, and experimental Schools). The students who attend the Unified Special Vocational High Schools have special educational characteristics and needs (Hirvonen, 2011).

Most of the students are considered "weak students", while several of them have been diagnosed with learning difficulties. They have not developed metacognitive abilities and many of them have low self-esteem and low expectations, due to their reduced performance in previous educational levels (Di Paula & Campbell, 2002).

In these students, indifference is observed due to a lack of motivation, severe school failure, and increased school dropout. However, during their studies within the school unit, they should acquire the necessary skills (linguistic, social, soft, and digital) to enter the labor market and respond as efficiently as possible to an autonomous or semi-autonomous workplace (Legault et al., 2006). More specifically, advanced linguistic skills particularly improve special education (Lopez-Reyna, 1996), social skills may be enhanced through a teaching combination of heuristics and evidence-based decision-making contexts (Mahadeen et al., 2021), while smart technologies (Samara et al., 2024) and robotics (Samara et al., 2021) may be used as tools by the teachers to significantly progress the skills of the special education students.

The necessity for the development of these skills is a challenge for vocational education at a global level and goes hand in hand with the 2030 Agenda and the 18 sustainable development goals (European Commission, 2024). Graduates of secondary vocational education, in addition to specialized professional knowledge and skills, need digital skills, 21st-century skills, and life skills related to communication, social skills, and skills to solve problems and by

extension develop the status of an active citizen (Subrahmanyam, 2019).

The results of several studies indicate that such programs increase the interest of the involved students, who actively participate by taking on roles even after the end of the program and can effectively manage problems and make decisions using their critical thinking (Subrahmanyam, 2019).

It is worth pointing out that the structure of the syllabus of the Vocational High School and the Unified Special Vocational High School provides multiple possibilities for the implementation of school cooperative eTwinning programs. For example, various research works take place in the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) lessons, the lesson on professional orientation in the 1st grade, the lesson on creative activities, and the teaching of the Greek and English language, not only as a general education course but also as a special course in all the fields of a vocational school.

The integration of an eTwinning program in a Vocational High School course, or a Unified Special Vocational High School provides the right conditions for the development of learning motivation in students because it differentiates the way of approaching knowledge and opens the students' intellectual horizons towards Europe. All students regardless of their academic performance and their English language background participate in these European educational programs. Thus, each student is important and as much as all the others” (Scimeca et al., 2009).

Within this context, the eTwinning program "Kaboom! - Our Comic Book" was designed and implemented during the school term year 2020-2021. It is a European eTwinning project implemented by the Unified Special Vocational High School of Veroia in collaboration with 6 schools in Turkey, 1 school in Italy, 1 school in France, and 1 school in Greece. Through this project, students worked together individually, in pairs, or in multinational groups to create comics using various digital tools such as Pixton and Storyboard. The final deliverable of our program was the two volumes that include all the comics created by the partnering schools. The ultimate goal of the program was the development of creative writing skills in the students and at the same time, their awareness of issues of major interest.

## **Methodology**

The Unified Special Vocational Gymnasium-Lyceum of Veria sought to integrate the eTwinning project "Kaboom! - Our Comic book" into the curriculum of the Creative Activities Zone lesson, Modern Greek and English language. The ultimate goal was to include the content of the above academic

subjects in the eTwinning program for an interdisciplinary approach to the specific project.

It is worth pointing out that the students attending the Unified Special Vocational High School of Veria have special educational needs (general learning difficulties, moderate mental retardation, attention deficit disorder) and their mental age is lower than their chronological age. Therefore, through their interaction with students of typical development from other schools, the inclusion and exchange of experiences and concerns are promoted, as well as multisensory learning through the use of Web2 tools.

At the same time, working individually, in pairs, or in small groups helps students get the maximum benefit from their participation in this project. The individual short-term goals of this program are:

- The development of Greek language skills
- The development of English language skills (enrichment of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions)
- Developing creative writing skills in a playful way
- Raising awareness of issues that concern teenagers, such as:
  - Bullying
  - Internet security
  - The protection of the environment
  - Stress management
  - Peer pressure
  - Solar radiation
  - Healthy diet
  - Peace/war
- Development of digital literacy and use of Web tools 2
- Development of creativity, critical thinking, communication, and cooperation.

The pedagogical approach adopted for the teaching of the basic skills was the interactive educational environment (Ugalde et al., 2021) where the students were enabled to engage in experiential activities through discovery learning. Such educational environments that promote collaborative and multidisciplinary learning are increasingly technologically supported. In addition, project-based learning was implemented, which has a positive effect on student motivation and is a particularly suitable method for developing skills (Shin, 2018). Furthermore, role-playing strategies were used, which encouraged students to



think more critically about complex and controversial subjects and see situations from a different perspective. When used effectively, role plays can inspire pupils in an entertaining and interesting way (Berdiyeva, 2023).

The actions implemented in the eTwinning program were perfectly aligned with the curriculum of the Creative Activities Zone, the Modern Greek language course, and the English language course. In the lesson of Creative Activities, there was flexibility in the timetable, so that cross-curricular approaches could be achieved alongside the Greek and English language education. Therefore, the teachers of the Greek and English languages were initially processing the planned actions linguistically and at a theoretical level (vocabulary and terminology of the respective subject). Then through brainstorming, various opinions were formulated on the subject they were studying. Afterwards, students either individually, in pairs, or small groups practiced creative comic writing by using Web 2 digital tools, such as Pixton. Additionally, they were creating interactive games and posted them on the Twinspace platform. Through the discussion with students concerning important social issues, the goals of the syllabus of the Modern Greek language and at the same time the skills of the 21st century regarding critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and communication were achieved.

Thus, through the interdisciplinary approach and experiential teaching, students developed skills such as learning and utilizing the Greek and English language, autonomy and cooperation, social learning, digital literacy, empathy, ecological awareness, and sustainability skills.

As far as the collaborative processes with the partner schools are concerned, initially, all the cooperating school units jointly created a questionnaire investigating the topics that the students are interested in approaching in the program. After the results were posted on the Twinspace platform, all the participants were informed about the appropriate online behavior and digital safety online. Then, the partner schools published on the Twinspace platform photos with the personal Avatars of the students and teachers, as well as video presentations with the place of origin and the actions of each school unit. Each partner school posted on the Twinspace platform the comics and various interactive games created by the student groups. Thus, there was a diffusion of information and awareness in all cooperating schools. In addition, there was a digital bulletin board in order to provide information/feedback regarding the digital tools used (Pixton, Canvas, Storyboard, Wordwall, Padlet). Finally, both for the initial and for the final evaluation, the online application Google Forms was used. With regard to the digital safety of the students, all the necessary

parameters were taken (attending training on internet safety and appropriate online behavior) and the necessary documents were signed to ensure the digital safety of the participating students regarding password access, personal data, intellectual property as well as compliance with the basic rules of safe and correct use of the internet.

There were also video calls and online meetings via the Zoom platform and the Twinspace chat platform to provide feedback on the course of the program both among students and teachers. Through the online meetings, a collaborative word cloud with the feelings of all partners, a collaborative acrostic program, and a collaborative comic emerged. All the comics created were brought together in a collaborative presentation in the digital tool Canvas. So, the final deliverable of this eTwinning project was two collaborative volumes with the comics of all the partner schools in the various themes selected according to the original questionnaire. For the final evaluation of the program, a common collaborative questionnaire was used and finally, for the diffusion of the program, a public website was created with all the actions of this eTwinning program. Each partner school invited partner schools to view the comics and all the activities produced and play with the interactive games to gain information about the various social issues they were working on. At the same time, the partner schools, both teachers and students, made comments under each post and thus there was continuous feedback regarding the progress of the project.

Concerning the contribution of the program to the development of language and digital literacy skills, students who were participating in the eTwinning program "Kaboom! -Our Comic Book" were taught lessons about Greek and English language and at the same time the lesson of Creative Activities. To get the maximum benefit from this eTwinning program, students first created multimodal texts in the Greek language so that they could practice creative writing in their native language and then translate them into the English language. The result was the creation of two digital books with Greek-illustrated stories. One includes four illustrated and recorded stories on the topic "I work safely on the Internet" and the other includes three stories on the topic "Sustainable nutrition means a good and balanced life". Thus, they practiced how to create more comprehensible texts for their classmates who have learning difficulties and distraction problems, and via this project, they could learn in a playful way.

## **Conclusion**

The students through collaborative activities and their dissemination through

Twinspace in the partner schools, managed to get feedback on how their peers in different cultural and educational environments deal with issues that concern all teenagers. At the same time, through the creation of multimodal texts, they managed to transmit messages in a multisensory way, which was more understandable by both students of typical and non-typical development. The project “Kaboom! - Our comic book” was spread through *posting* the activities on the school website and social media, *creating* a public website that includes all the actions of the eTwinning program, *organizing* an event to inform the colleagues of the school unit of Unified Special Vocational High School of Veria and neighboring schools, presenting the impact of this project to the Pedagogical Responsibility Education Consultant.

From all the above, we can conclude that an eTwinning program can be a quality assurance practice in educational organizations. It is a European Union initiative that connects schools through online platforms, fostering collaboration and cultural exchange.

Specifically, eTwinning promotes collaborative projects between schools in different countries, encouraging the exchange of ideas, best practices, and innovative teaching methods. Teachers participating in eTwinning projects have access to a variety of professional development opportunities, including workshops, webinars, and courses that help improve their teaching skills. These projects leverage information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate collaboration, ensuring that both teachers and students develop strong digital competencies.

As far as cultural awareness is concerned, by working with peers from different cultural backgrounds, students and teachers gain a better understanding of diversity and global citizenship. In addition, eTwinning projects are often based on real-world problems and encourage students to work collaboratively to find solutions, enhancing their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. Schools involved in eTwinning often adopt innovative teaching practices and integrate new technologies into their curriculum. Thus, engaging in eTwinning projects aligns schools with international educational standards, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and excellence (Kaleli et al., 2024).

In conclusion, eTwinning programs can significantly contribute to quality assurance in educational organizations by enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, supporting professional growth for educators, fostering organizational improvement, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation processes. By integrating these programs effectively, schools can create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that prepares students for the

challenges of the 21st century.

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## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHING GRAMMAR COMMUNICATIVELY

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### **Abstract**

*The place of grammar instruction in second or foreign language pedagogy has been controversial. What is recently accepted is the importance of grammar in language teaching and learning. However, there are still questions about how it should be conducted propitiously. This paper presents some instructional options intended to enhance the effectiveness of grammar teaching, including both understanding grammar rules and helping learners use these rules in communicative interaction. These options include processing instruction, input flood and textual enhancement, discourse and language corpora, interactional feedback, grammar-focused tasks, and collaborative output tasks. There will be given examples of activities to be implemented in the classroom. As each of these approaches has its own shortcomings and limitations, there are some suggestions for optimizing the options of integrating grammar instruction and meaningful communication.*

**Keywords:** *grammar teaching, instructional option, communication*

### **1. Introduction**

The role of grammar and the approach to grammar teaching have changed over the years. In traditional classes, grammar had a very important role in teaching and learning a foreign language. Following the approach *focus on forms*, the teacher taught grammatical rules in isolation, and used an analytic syllabus, based on the assumption that language consists of a series of grammatical forms that can be acquired sequentially and additively; therefore students have few opportunities to use the target structures in real communication.

In the 1970s and 1980s, as shifting from a structure-centered approach to a communicative approach to language teaching and learning, the place of grammar instruction was reduced. The approach developed at that time, *focus on meaning*, was synthetic and it was based on the assumption that learners were able to analyze language inductively. Therefore, it emphasized pure meaning-based activities with no attention to form.

The recent grammar approach, *focus on form* draws the learner's attention to linguistic forms in the context of meaningful communication. Students are hereby expected to develop their fluency and accuracy. This approach has been widely embraced by teachers and researchers, but it is still indisputable, how to teach and learn it effectively. Therefore, through a literature review, this paper aims to present several proposals suggested to promote a focus on grammar in communicative classrooms (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011), their benefits and limitations: Processing instruction, Textual enhancement and input flood, Discourse and Corpus linguistics, Interactional feedback, Focus on Grammar through Structured Grammar-Focused Tasks, Focus on Grammar through Collaborative Output Tasks. There has been research on the effectiveness of these proposals.

## **2. Current developments in teaching grammar communicatively**

### *2.1. Processing instruction*

Processing instruction aims at raising learners' attention to grammatical forms through structured input activities. Applying this approach: an initial exposure to explicit instruction is combined with input-processing activities (free voluntary reading, silent true/false reading, read and discuss, listen and draw, parallel reading) aiming to help learners create form-meaning connections as they process grammar for meaning. Structured input activities can be referential and affective (used separately or in combination). Referential activities are those for which there is always a right or wrong answer [for example choosing between two noun phrases that have been associated with a drawing (e.g., a singular and a plural)] and affective activities require learners to indicate their agreements or opinions about a set of events. These activities can involve both oral and written activities.

For example: students have difficulty supplying the plural *-s* of the regular nouns in English. The teacher can first begin by giving students some explicit information about how plural forms are structured in English (the aim of this explanation is not to teach the learners grammar but to direct their attention to the problem.); then, the teacher may inform the learners of why they tend to ignore the plural-*s*; finally, the teacher would use several input-based activities designed to help learners process the plural-*s* correctly for meaning (For example, he or she may use sentence-matching tasks in which students read or listen to a series of sentences and decide whether the sentences match with a set

of drawings).

A number of studies have examined the role of processing instruction in learning grammatical forms (Pawlak, 2021). When combined with explicit instruction, processing instruction may be helpful, particularly in enhancing learners' abilities to comprehend the target form. In addition, the effectiveness of processing instruction may depend on several variables, including the type of linguistic feature the learner is supposed to learn, the length of the testing time, and the learners' level of language proficiency.

However, this approach has its limitations: it can address only linguistic forms that have transparent form-meaning relationships (e.g. plural –s of the regular nouns), not complex ones (f. ex. English articles). Moreover, it does not require learners to produce output.

To increase its effectiveness, teachers should combine structured input activities with other classroom activities, including output tasks and corrective feedback on learner errors.

### *2.2 Input enhancement (textual enhancement and input flood)*

Input enhancement is the process by which a certain aspect of input is made more noticeable to the learner while their focus remains on meaning. It can be of two types: textual enhancement and input flood.

*Textual enhancement* can be used to draw learners' attention to linguistic forms by physically manipulating certain aspects of the text:

- in written texts, by typographically highlighting certain target words using underlining, boldfacing, italicizing, capitalizing, color coding, or a combination of these,
- in oral input by intonational and phonological manipulations, as added stress, intonation, or repetitions of the targeted form, or even through gestures, body movement, or facial expressions.

In *input flood*, learners are provided with numerous examples of a certain target form (either oral or written).

Studies (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011: 44; Boers et al., 2017; Benati, 2017; Meguro, 2019; Lee & Jung, 2021), examining the effectiveness of textual enhancements including input flood, have shown varying results, from positive and facilitative effects to limited and even no effects to the learning process.



To be most effective, input enhancement needs to be preceded by a formal mini-lesson on the target grammar structure and include output-based practices and corrective feedback.

### 2.3 *Discourse & Corpus linguistics*

The use of *discourse* in teaching and learning a foreign language (including grammar) can help learners move from sentence-based grammar to the discourse level, developing learners' discourse competence and therefore their communicative competence. The discourse-level input activities provide learners with repeated authentic examples of the target forms and the discourse-level output activities can give learners chances to produce the new forms. Some discourse-based activities are: reading extended texts and answering comprehension questions; listening to extended speech and completing a cloze test or reconstructing the text or answering comprehension questions; watching movies/videos and analyzing, discussing, reporting, or debating; presenting speeches; writing essays and journals; e-mail exchange tasks; reading and writing blogs in the target language.

Many researchers (Weaver, 1996; Hughes & McCarthy, 1998; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, Oyama & Kang, 2023; Dehqan & Amiri, 2017; Strauss, Feiz, & Xiang, 2018; Farrokhi et al., 2019) have advocated and studied the effectiveness of teaching grammar through discourse-level contexts

*Corpus linguistics* (a collection of written or spoken texts) provides opportunities for learners to examine patterns of target language usage and their frequencies in natural discourse. Moreover, considering the great number of examples supplied by a corpus search, learners can inductively generate grammar rules.

There are no relevant studies related to the effectiveness of corpus linguistics to language learning.

The usefulness of the Discourse and Corpus linguistics approach is limited by learners' proficiency level because of the level of formality, the context may be more difficult to understand than the grammar structures taught.

### 2.4 *Interactional feedback*

Interactional feedback is another technique to draw learners' attention to grammatical forms in communicative contexts. It is based on the assumption

that through interaction learners not only communicate their meaning but can also receive corrective feedback on their ill-formed utterances through the use of conversational strategies such as:

- *Clarification requests*: when the teacher does not fully understand a learner’s utterance, he asks the learner to rephrase the utterance (by using phrases “pardon me?”, “sorry?” or “excuse me?”) encouraging self-repair.
- *Repetition* provides the learner with an opportunity to self-repair by repeating all or part of the learner’s erroneous utterances with a rising intonation.
- *Recasts*: the teacher reformulates the whole or part of the learner’s erroneous utterance into a correct form or pronounces it with added stress.
  1. Student: And they found out the one woman *run* away.  
Teacher: OK, the woman *was running* away.
  2. Student: And she bringed it.  
Teacher: She BROUGHT [added stress] it?
- *Metalinguistic feedback* refers to the feedback that provides the learner with metalinguistic comments in the form of a statement or a question about the correctness of an utterance

Student: I see him in the office yesterday.  
Teacher: You need a past tense. [Metalinguistic clue]
- *Elicitations*: pushing or prompting the learner directly or indirectly to self-correct (“Can you repeat what you said?”, “She ....”).

*Nonverbal feedback*: Feedback can also be provided nonverbally using body movements and signals such as gestures; facial expressions; head, hand, and finger movements

Studies that have examined the effectiveness of interactional feedback have found that in general interactional feedback is beneficial for L2 learning. However, its effectiveness depends on the type of linguistic form and the context in which the feedback is provided (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Ding, 2012).). Moreover, teachers should be careful not to overuse corrective feedback, as it

can have negative consequences: learners' disappointment and discouragement. Interactional feedback might work best when combined with other types of form-focused activities including explicit instruction (Lyster, 2004)

### 2.5 Focus on Grammar through Structured Grammar-Focused Tasks

Grammar-focused tasks (also called grammar consciousness-raising tasks) have the target grammar point presented implicitly or explicitly as the task content.

There have been identified three types of such tasks:

- (1) *structure-based production tasks* require learners to practice certain target structures through various forms of production exercises,
- (2) *comprehension (interpretation) tasks*: learners must notice, and then process the target form in carefully designed input,
- (3) *consciousness-raising tasks* require learners to communicate directly about grammar structures, by generating a rule for their use, from the presented sentences.

For example,

- (1) Prepositions of location: It is given a picture of a living room. Working in groups of three or four, learners are given cards with questions about the location of different items, such as a book, a table, or a chair. The other learners answer the questions. The target structure is the use of prepositions of location, although this is not mentioned in the task
- (2) Discovering rules about "If-conditional" forms: Working in groups of three or four, the learners read a dialogue in which if-conditionals have been put into italics, and are then asked to make several questions each from the dialogue using *if*. The other group members answer the questions, as in the example below:

Question: "What will happen if I don't study for the test?"

Answer: "If you don't study for the test, you may not pass it."

The students then ask the other class members the questions they have made. If desired, the task can be followed by a mini-lesson on if-conditionals to promote increased noticing of the target structure

- (3) Discovering rules for word order in the target language: Groups of three or four pupils are given two texts, one in the target language and one in the L1. The groups are then asked to mark the subjects and the verbs in the texts, comparing the position of the subjects and the verbs in the two languages. They then propose rules for the word order in the L1 and the target language to the rest of the class.

Studies (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Wong, 2005) have shown that the following features are needed in the task to be realized successfully:

- the tasks should be information-gap tasks,
- the learners should agree upon a task solution,
- learners should have a chance to think about what to say, to plan their language.

### *2.6 Focus on Grammar through Collaborative Output Tasks*

Collaborative output tasks refer to activities that push learners to produce output accurately and also consciously reflect on, negotiate, and discuss the grammatical accuracy of their language use, paying attention to both meaning and grammatical forms. During collaborative output activities, learners get collective help and guided support as a result of interacting with each other.

Collaborative output tasks include the following varieties:

- *Dictogloss* encourages students to work together and produce language forms collaboratively by reconstructing a text presented to them orally,
- *collaborative jigsaw*: learners receive a cloze version of the original text, (the teacher removes certain linguistic forms from the text),
- *text editing tasks* require students to correct a text collaboratively to improve its accuracy and expression of content.

A number of studies (Mayo, 2002; Nassaji, & Tian, 2010; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Dehqan & Amiri, 2017; Ghadiri & Heidar, 2022; Pishadast, 2022) have investigated the use and effectiveness of different types of collaborative output tasks. Studies have shown positive effects for task performance on learner

grammatical accuracy. Through collaborative output, learners have opportunities not only to co-construct their meaning but also to develop their linguistic and problem-solving skills.

## Conclusion

Considering the above current developments in teaching grammar communicatively, it is concluded that teachers should be eclectic in their instructional approach. They have to maximize opportunities for the students to encounter the target forms in communicative contexts. Combining form-focused and meaning-focused activities depends on the needs of both the curriculum and the learners, the particular instructional context, and the aim of empowering learner autonomy.

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# BUSINESS PLAN INNOVATION IN EDUCATION: THE CASE OF A PUBLIC-SCHOOL UNIT

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## ***Abstract***

This paper examines a business plan that was designed and implemented at a public school. More precisely, the process of developing a high school's strategic plan in Thessaloniki is described. First, the school unit's internal environment is analyzed to determine its advantages and disadvantages while taking the macroenvironment's opportunities and risks into account. Subsequently, market segmentation is implemented, with the school unit focusing on the most appealing category. The strategic planning's aims and objectives are then developed. The High School of Thessaloniki achieves a notable ranking in comparison to its rival educational institutions in this manner. After allocating roles and resources, strategic planning is implemented, and then it is evaluated. The study's conclusions about the implementation of the marketing plan at the school unit level are quoted at the end.

***Keywords:*** *Business Plan, SWOT Analysis, PESTLE Analysis*

## **Introduction**

The introduction of marketing in the field of education has been recorded internationally since the 80s and more intensively in the 90s (Levin, 2001).

Foskett (2002) points out that educational marketing aims to achieve effectiveness, primarily through satisfying the needs of students and parents and not through promoting products and services to customers who wish to purchase educational programs. Marketing in education is a management approach based on the ideal relationship between school and community (Foskett, 2002).

## **Literature Review**

Strategic planning is a process where, according to McCuskey (2003), the business or organization seeks and utilizes the information provided by its environment, in order to proceed with the development of an organized plan that will contribute to the achievement of the organization's effectiveness.

The internal environment of the business refers to the factors of the business (organization), which influence it and are in direct correlation with each other (Pashiardis, 1996). These are:

- Financial resources
- Natural resources
- Human resources
- Technological resources

The school unit can combine in the best possible way the needs of the students with the society, taking into account its strengths and weaknesses and adopting the appropriate measures, to face the threats and risks and take advantage of the opportunities of the environment.

The School Unit is located in the city of Thessaloniki, a region of Central Macedonia (a metropolitan city of 1,2 million people). It has approximately 300 students, 24 teachers, and 5 special education personnel (4 teachers and 1 Special Support Staff). It is divided into 5 sections of the first secondary school, 4 sections of the second secondary school, and 3 sections of the third secondary school. Of all the students, 265 students are attending regular education and 35 are students with special educational needs who can attend up to 15 hours per week in the inclusion classes of the first, second, and third grades respectively. Regarding the material and technological infrastructure, the school has modern technological equipment (interactive whiteboards, a sufficient number of computers in the Information and Communication Technology class and a computer in each department (general class, inclusion department), and an educational (LEGO) robotic system. This equipment which is considered a smart technology (Samara et al., 2024) can be used by teachers, who use various learning management information systems (asynchronous teaching system: E-me) (E-me, 2007), synchronous teaching system Cisco Webex Meetings (Cisco,



1984), web 2 tools, thanks to which they differentiate their teaching according to the student's learning profile. The robotic system can be used for the introduction of new digital technologies to students (Samara, et al., 2021).

The vision of this particular school is transformed into the phrase “a school open” for everyone, both locally and internationally. A school that will promote inclusion and constructive coexistence in a multicultural social environment, where every student, regardless of their cognitive skills, but also their social, linguistic, religious, and cultural background, will have equal opportunities to access free education. The school not only aims to strengthen the pure cognitive background of the students, but to provide them with special abilities that may transform them into responsible future citizens and scientists. These include the reinforcement of their decision-making ability, based on both heuristics and evidence-based information (Mahadeen et al., 2021) and the cultivation of responsible research and innovation capacities that may transform them into responsible future citizens (Bidstrup et al., 2024). At the same time, the specific school's mission is to create a culture that accepts diversity and promotes mutual understanding, mutual acceptance, and solidarity.

In addition, the school unit seeks to connect learning experiences with social reality and local businesses, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the extroversion and interaction with society, as well as the academic, social-emotional, and cultural well-being of students (Kaleli et al., 2024).

## **Methodology**

For this research, it was used the PESTLE analysis which is a useful tool that enables school units to collect and analyze macro-environmental information in order to understand their relationship with it. The PESTLE analysis refers to the Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal, and Environmental effects of the environment (Boyett, 1996).

The political environment refers to political factors, which can influence an organization's strategic planning. Greece has political stability with a government elected by the majority of the people. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are objections by specific citizen segments to government restrictive measures. Thus, Greece's EU membership offers political stability in the world pandemic turmoil. In addition, the operation of public and private school units has been suspended due to the pandemic. Modern and asynchronous teaching platforms were used by the teachers, who followed the aims and objectives of the curricula of the Ministry of Education. After about two months, the gradual opening of the schools began to be implemented, so that the students

began to attend the physical classroom, until the end of the academic year.

After a ten-year financial crisis, the Greek economy has been growing for three consecutive years. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a severe decline in the latest financial growth and an intense drop in the financial activity of private businesses. As a result, the Greek government has initiated financial support to citizens and private businesses due to the pandemic.

The social organization of our country is characterized by multiculturalism and national linguistic and religious diversity. Indeed, in recent years especially during 2015 and 2016, the European Union has been facing the biggest migration crisis since the end of the Second World War. All this immigration flow brought about changes in the demographic data of Greece and in the multiculturalism of the school.

As far as the technological environment is concerned, the time of the pandemic has brought a new wave of work flexibility. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the traditional technological education means. Software online conferencing platforms (Zoom, Webex, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, . etc) have dominated distance learning in education. Greece has also set up optical fiber networks in most of the cities in Greece, allowing high networking speeds (> 100 Mbps) and promoting e-learning.

Concerning legal conditions, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Greek government has legalized online learning in primary, secondary, and higher education, and all education units were closed.

Finally, the heavy consequences of the coronavirus are linked to other environmental factors, such as air pollution and unhealthy diets. The increase in the temperature of our planet, as well as extreme weather events, are likely to cause repeated and intensified occurrence of infectious diseases. This development may again affect the way in which educational work is delivered. Consequently, there should be a strategic plan regarding the way of teaching and dissemination of knowledge in schools.

After the PESTLE analysis, a SWOT analysis (Brinia et al., 2020) was implemented. SWOT analysis has as a main goal the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of an educational unit, as well as the opportunities and threats that appear during planning.

Thus, the strengths of this educational organization are:

- High sense of responsibility for teachers who provide high-quality educational services.
- Inclusion classes for individualized teaching of pupils with special educational needs.

- Rich material and technical equipment, use of differentiated teaching methods (modern-synchronous education, videoconferencing, Web2 tools).
- Teachers with postgraduate and doctoral degrees in the fields of pedagogy and information technology.
- Teachers with training in intercultural education, information, and communication technologies.
- Development of educational programs focusing on the development of cognitive skills and inter-school cooperation.
- Distinctions for pupils in educational competitions (Rhetorical competitions).
- Cooperation with parents and guardians' association, teachers, and local institutions (police, public library).
- Grant from the European Regional Development Fund to upgrade the school's building infrastructure.

The weaknesses of this particular educational organization are:

- Insufficient funding from donations-grants.
- Poor ergonomics inside and outside the school.
- Diversity of student population.
- Incident marginalization, bullying, and school violence.
- Occasional relative weakness of the teaching staff association in dealing with incidents of violence.
- Lack of administrative staff and a lot of bureaucratic work.
- Conflicts between students in the school: parents of pupils with special educational needs, parents of pupils from vulnerable groups, and parents of general class pupils.
- Staffing of the school by special education substitutes resulted in a lack of stable teaching staff in the school's inclusion department.

The opportunities that the educational organization should take advantage of are:

- Participation in European projects e-Twinning, Comenius (virtual tours-visits to schools) is an opportunity due to the conditions in the social and political environment.
- Distance provision of administrative and educational services from the school unit is an opportunity due to the development in the technological environment and globalization.
- Further training/information of parents on issues of intercultural education and undertaking of a school mediation program is an opportunity due to the conditions in the social environment (immigration).
- Utilization of the PGA (Parent & Guardian Association) as a link to the local community and businesses for obtaining sponsorships. The implementation "of

a "Virtual Business" project will also help in this opportunity due to the conditions of the technological environment.

Finally, the threats that the specific educational organization has to face are:

- Inability to receive sponsorships from local businesses due to the recession of the Greek economy because of the pandemic.
- Even greater heterogeneity of the student population and intensification of the phenomenon of bullying and school dropout due to the explosion of immigration and refugee issues.

Furthermore, a key point in marketing is the selection of the market segments to which a firm intends to address (Jain, 1999). Segmentation could be defined as “the process of selecting a group of individuals with one or more common characteristics, from a multitude of characteristics and behaviors” (Blackwell et al., 2001). A business segmenting the market does not use a single characteristic but usually uses several at the same time so that it can identify potential customers and target them with the help of the appropriate marketing mix (Blackwell et al., 2001).

In the wider area of the municipality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni, an attempt was made to segment the target market into distinct groups of customers-students, who due to their behavioral, psychographic, and special educational needs require differentiated learning and integration services.

The sections into which the students of the Municipality of Ampelokipi were divided are:

1st section: Students attending a Full-time High School, which is the main provider of compulsory education.

2nd section: Students attending Evening Gymnasiums, who are over 14 years old and working.

3rd section: Students attending the Artistic High School, and who have artistic aspirations, as the Artistic High School includes three directions: a) Visual arts, b) Theatre-cinema, c) Dance.

Based on the educational needs of the students of the Municipality of Ampelokipi-Menemeni, it was found that the 4<sup>th</sup> Gymnasium of Ampelokipi is the only high school in the Municipality of Ampelokipi which has an integration department for students with special educational needs. This is an incentive to enroll students who may have learning difficulties and parents assume that perhaps their children by attending this particular school will be helped in the integration department if necessary.

Finally, to target the appropriate segment of student potential, the market

potential must also be studied. In an educational organization, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> Gymnasium of Ampelokipi, targeting also concerns the reformulation of its mission and strategic goals, as they emerged from the analysis of the environment. The formulation of aims and objectives is of great importance as it indicates what the educational unit wishes to achieve in the long term. At the same time, the goals represent the right match between the external opportunities and its strengths. Unit goals should be distinct, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound (Johnson & Scholes, 1993).

## **Conclusion**

The High School of Thessaloniki has exploited its strengths, such as the high academic level of the teachers in the fields of modern pedagogy, information technology, special education, and administration. In addition, the use of the information systems available in the school will be exploited in order to enable teachers to offer differentiated teaching, depending on the learning profile of each pupil, and in this way achieve inclusion.

Furthermore, the development of European projects (E-twinning) and technology entrepreneurship projects (Kilintzis et al., 2023) (Virtual Business), may result in the promotion of the extroversion of the school unit, both locally and internationally. Teachers will use their academic qualifications to implement training workshops for parents on special education, intercultural education, learning strategies, and school violence.

The renovation of the school's courtyard will provide opportunities for people with disabilities to smooth access and participation in the school's educational activities. The dissemination of the educational services provided by the school will be achieved through the school's website, but also by publicizing them in print and electronic newspapers and granting interviews on local channels.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the educational institution, to fulfill its goals and objectives, should, at various stages of its strategy, make use of service evaluation models such as:

- the Academic Portfolio which refers to the current state of the institution's services in the market and is useful because it will be used as a basis for selecting the school's strategy (selection of the programs offered based on their quality and responsiveness to the market).
- the Market Share Growth Matrix (BCG), which can be used in the market of School Units to evaluate the school's service offerings, which depending on where they are placed in the matrix are classified as stars.

The tools mentioned above offer capacities that may strengthen the business model of private businesses of any kind and promote innovation (Kilintzis et al., 2020). The marketing plan of the 4th Gymnasium of Ampelokipi is a dynamic planning process, which requires continuous formative evaluation, in order to provide feedback regarding the needs of the school unit and the students. The formative evaluation combined with the continuous developments of the environment, will help to revise the objectives and readjust the strategic plan as a whole. Thus, through strategic planning, teachers participate in improving the quality of the services provided, upgrading the educational work, and, by extension, in the pedagogical autonomy of the school unit.

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# THE VERB *A SE DUCE* IN ROMANIAN AND ITS EQUIVALENTS IN SPANISH AND FRENCH

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## **Abstract**

*The study of verbs of movement has been a constant topic of research in specialty literature. In this article, we will go over some of the finer points of the verb a se duce. We will also look at how 'ir' and 'irse' are used equivalently in Spanish and French, respectively, to mean aller and s'en aller. From a synchronic standpoint, we will also consider when the verb a se duce combines with a locative preposition and when it does not. We will also talk about certain aspects of the aspectual characterization of the verb a se duce in Romanian. These established elements come together to form a linguistic perspective, causing the appropriate French and Spanish equivalent to be triggered. These are languages where all students have various challenges while attempting to translate the verb a se duce. This is partly because the verb only acquired the meaning of a verb of motion in Romanian, losing its earlier form and meaning of "carrying off oneself".*

**Keywords:** *movement, aspect, trajectory, Spanish, French, Romanian*

## **Introduction**

In this article, we will go over some of the finer points of the verb *a se duce*. We will also look at how 'ir' and 'irse' are used equivalently in Spanish and French, respectively, to mean *aller* and *s'en aller*.

We divide this article in three parts. First, we consider when the verb *a se duce* combines with a locative preposition and when it does not. Second, we will also talk about certain aspects of the aspectual characterization of the verb *a se duce* in Romanian. These established elements come together to form a linguistic perspective, causing the appropriate French and Spanish equivalent to be triggered, aspect that we will point out in the third part through some examples from the data corpus.

### **I. The verb *a se duce* in combination with a locative preposition and without it**

To analyze the different constructions with the verb *a se duce* in



Romanian, in constructions with a locative preposition and without it, as we illustrate in the following examples:

- (1) Mă duc la bibliotecă. [I go to the library.]
- (2) Paul nu este aici, \*s-a dus. [Paul is not here, he went.]
- (3) Mă duc, e târziu! [I leave, it's late.]
- (4) M-am dus de la școală la bibliotecă. [I went from school to the library.]

In (1) the verb *a se duce* appears in a construction with a locative preposition *la* [to], pointing the direction of the movement. In (2) the construction is ungrammatical without any locative indication, contrary to (3), an example in which the destination is not mentioned either. In (4), with a locative complement that indicates the extension of the movement, *de la ... la* [from...to] the construction is grammatical.

From the examples of the corpus

<sup>1</sup> we managed, we noticed that the verb *a se duce* appears in most of cases in constructions with a locative preposition and in a very few cases without it. According to this, *a se duce* can be characterized as a verb that can focus both, initial and final phase of the movement, with a clear focus on the final stage.

Relying on Aurnague's (2011) classification, we could consider that *a se duce* implies an initial change of relation, which can be independent or extended. That is, it can express an independent initial change of relation, contexts in which the goal of displacement does not constitute a mandatory requirement, in constructions of the type *Mă duc* [I'm leaving], interpretable only at the moment in which the change of relation occurs, like in the example (3). Likewise, it implies a movement subsequent to the change of relation, focusing on the final phase of the movement. It cannot describe, in this case, a posterior movement, in perfective constructions, in which the realization of a subsequent movement is denied, such as in (2) and (5) below:

- (5) \*Ion s-a dus la bibliotecă dar nu a ajuns niciodată. [Ion went to the library, but he never arrived.]

The ungrammaticality of (5) is due to the fact that the verb focuses in this context on the final phase of the displacement, therefore, the subject necessarily

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<sup>1</sup> The compiled corpus consists of six novels translated into Spanish and French. We have extracted all the contexts in which the analyzed verbs appear in the Romanian novels and searched for their equivalents in the same novels translated into Spanish and French.

reaches the goal, hence the impossibility of denying the realization of a subsequent movement. Therefore, although the verb *a se duce* has a 'from' trajectory, it prefers to combine with a preposition of opposite polarity. This aspect is related, in Sarda's (1999: 92) terms, to the general issue of asymmetry between goal or source-oriented verbs. In this way, following the cited author, "when an initial verb combines with a goal PP, the goal constitutes new information that cannot be omitted in the context, and the motivation for mentioning it is higher than the Source that is semantically involved" (Sarda, 1999: 92-93).

Taking into account these observations, we can conclude that the notion of delimitation is inherent to the lexical meaning of the verb *a se duce*. It can express a movement that originates in an initial point without obligatory mention of the destination, as we have seen in (3), in this case the goal of displacement does not constitute a mandatory requirement, but also a movement that is directed towards a goal, with a clear focus on the final phase, as we could see in (1). A special observation is relied on the example (4), construction in which both points, origin and destination, are mentioned. It is worth mentioning that in this example, the construction in which only the destination is mentioned is perfectly grammatical; however, the omission of it and the mention of only the point of origin makes the construction ungrammatical, as we can see in (6) below:

- (6) a. M-am dus la bibliotecă. [I went to the library.]  
b. \*M-am dus de la bibliotecă. [\*I went from the library.]

However, when both points of the movement are mentioned, the construction is perfectly grammatical. This aspect confirms the hypothesis according to which the verb in question is predominantly a goal-oriented verb. When the verb *a se duce* combines with a prepositional phrase, the goal introduces essential new information that cannot be omitted from the context, making its mention more relevant than the semantically involved source.

## II. Aspectual characterization

In the analysis proposed in I, it has been pointed out that for the verb *a se duce*, the notion of delimitation is inherent to the lexical meaning. We have also pointed out the fact that despite having an inherent trajectory 'from', it cannot always express a movement that originates in an initial point without obligatory mention of the destination. Likewise, we have highlighted the fact that, in most contexts, it expresses a movement that is directed towards a goal, with a clear

focus on the final phase. These particularities are reflected in the syntax, in the compatibility with adverbial modifiers, verbal periphrases, phase adverbs, which are known in the specialty literature as aspectual tests. We analyse below, from the aspectual point of view, the particularities presented by the verb *a se duce* form an aspectual point of view.

One of the most used criteria to distinguish between, on one hand, telic predicates, realizations and achievements and, on the other hand, atelic predicates, states and activities, is compatibility with the expression 'during x time'.

Non-delimited predicates, which extend over a period of time, that is, states and activities, are compatible with this adverbial phrase, while delimited or inherently delimited events, accomplishments and achievements, reject this construction. We propose the following examples to illustrate this aspect:

- (7) a. \*S-a dus în continuu timp de o oră. [\*He went continually for an hour.]  
b. #S-a dus timp de o săptămână la mare. [He went to the beach for a week.]

In (7.a) the adverbial complement *timp de o oră* [during an hour] indicates the time interval during which the subject carries out the activity of moving, uninterruptedly, through a non-specific place, *a se duce* is ungrammatical in this example. In (6.b), the expression *timp de o săptămână* [for a week], does not measure the duration of the event expressed by the verb *a se duce*, but rather the duration of another durative process implied by these (GA 2005). That is, it is understood that the subject made the trip at a certain time, to be at the destination during the indicated period. In the specialty literature of the Hispanic field, the NGLE (2000: 1699) points out that this interpretation is typical of verbs that express a change of state, and is also applicable to certain verbs of movements. The adverbial complement indicates in this case the time that the subject remains in the resulting place and not the time it takes to perform the action. According to this test, the verb *a se duce* can be classified as an accomplishment or achievement.

The adverbial 'in x time' is a complementary test to 'during x time' that serves to diagnose the telicity of a predicate, that is, its compatibility with an adverbial complement of the type 'in x time', which indicates the period needed to complete the event described by the predicate. Therefore, it is compatible only with delimited verbs, that is, accomplishments and achievements:

- (8) S-a dus la piață în cinci minute. [He went to the market in five

minutes.]

In (8) it is understood that the subject makes the movement in the time interval of 'five minutes' and, once this time has elapsed, it is located in the Reference Place, 'the market', which indicates the arrival point of the trajectory. The phrase can be paraphrased, in this case, by *A ajuns în cinci minute la piață*. [He reached the market in five minutes.]

According to Aurnague (2019), verbs that imply a final change of relation, incorporating prior motion, include in their semantic content a preceding change of position before the final relational change. The modification of these verbs by a temporal preposition introduced by 'in' measures the prior change of position included in the verb's meaning, which, as expected, results in very natural utterances. Verbs in this class allow for the activation of the presupposed part of their meaning in specific contexts and, as frequently noted, these verbs satisfy the tests typically applied to identify achievements (modification by a preposition headed by 'at') as well as those used for accomplishments (modification by a preposition introduced by 'in').

The deictic adverbial [at] is a temporal modifier that underlines the initial or final phase of the event. De Miguel (1999: 3022) points out that with ingressive verbs it indicates the point at which the event reaches the initial limit, while with terminative it indicates the moment at which it ends.

(9) S-a dus la ora cinci la Maria. [He left/went at five o'clock to Maria's house.]

In (9), a reading relative to the end point is preferred, that is, 'at five' indicates the moment in which the subject reaches the goal.

According to Aurnague (2011), verbs that exhibit this type of ambiguity imply that they incorporate a prior phase of movement into their structure, and the constraint of conceptualizing the event as terminative triggers the selection of one phase or the other.

### III. Problems in the translation to Spanish and French

In order to establish the differences and the problematic for the translation into Spanish and French of the verb *a se duce* it is necessary to present the characteristics of the verbs in the two languages.

According to De Miguel (2000: 2986), Spanish *ir* is a non-delimited verb that requires a prepositional complement of direction, unlike *irse*, a delimited verb, which indicates the starting point of the event. This point can be indicated by a prepositional complement that marks the origin of the movement, aspect that would explain the contrasts between *Me voy (de aquí)/\*Voy (de aquí)*,

context in which the verb *irse* expresses a delimited event whose meaning 'to leave one place (to go to another)', context in which the verb *ir* is ungrammatical without a mention of the goal, that is, *Voy (de aquí) allí*.

The verbs *aller* and *s'en aller* present the same particularities in French, specifically, *aller* is ungrammatical in a construction without a target complement, as in \**Je vais* unlike *s'en aller*, in a construction such as *On s'en va d'ici*. In summary, *ir* and *aller* are ungrammatical without any goal PP unlike *aller* and *s'en aller*.

From this point of view, *a duce* is situated halfway between *ir/aller* and *ir/s'en aller*, in the sense that, as we have shown in the first part of this presentation, it accepts the construction with or without a goal, as we pointed out it can be considered an initial verb that combines with a goal PP.

These particularities are important in the translation into Spanish and French, aspects that are illustrated through a few examples, in combination with the locative PP *la* [at].

The constructions in which the verb *a se duce* appears with the preposition *la* [at] are very numerous compared to other prepositions. Specifically, in the corpus prepared we have found 82 contexts of which 44 are translated by 'ir', in 13 by 'irse', in 6 by another verb such as 'volver', 'dirigirse', 'presentarse', 'asistir', 'encaminarse', 'acercarse', 'marcharse', 'acudir' y 'caminar'.

In what follows we comment on the contexts in which the verb *a se duce* is translated into Spanish by *ir* or *irse* and in French by *aller* y *s'en aller*:

- (10) a. N-am încotro, trebuie **să mă duc** la fântână. (Dan Lungu, Sunt o babă comunistă, pg. 16) [I have no choice; I have to go to the well<sup>2</sup>.]  
 b. No hay más remedio, he de **ir** al pozo. (Dan Lungu, Soy un vejstorio comunista, pg. 17)  
 c. Je n'ai pas le choix, je dois **aller** au puits. (Dan Lungu, Je suis une vieille
- (11) a. - Dumneavoastră **nu v-ați dus la** concert? [Didn't you go to the concert?]  
 - Nu. [No.]  
 - Nici eu. Nevastă-mea ținea morțiș **să se ducă** și am lăsat-o. [Neither did I. My wife was insistent on going, so I let her.] (Mihail Sebastian, Femei, pg. 7)  
 b. - ¿Usted no ha ido al concierto?

<sup>2</sup> The English translation in all these examples is ours.

- No.
- Yo tampoco. Mi esposa deseaba **ir** a toda costa y la he dejado. Pero yo... (Mihail Sebastian, Mujeres, pg. 22)
- c. - Vous **n'êtes pas allé** écouter la musique...
  - Non.
  - Moi non plus. Ma femme y tenait à tout prix, alors je l'ai laissé y **aller**. Pour ma part...(Mihail Sebastian, Femmes, pg. 12)

As can be seen from the previous examples, in all cases, in (9) and (10) it is a movement oriented towards a goal. In (9) the goal is *la fântână* [to the well], a concrete noun, and in (10) it is about an abstract goal, *la concert* [to the concert]. In all the proposed contexts the verb *a se duce* is translated into Spanish as *ir* and into French as *aller*. In both cases the verb *a se duce* focuses on the final phase of the movement, contrary to (12) that we discuss below:

(12) a. La revedereeeee! Eu **mă duc** la Bucureeeeeeești...  
 [Goodbyeeeeeee! I'm going to Buchareeeeeeeest...] (Dan Lungu, Sunt o babă comunistă, pg. 168)

b. ¡Adiós! **Me voy** a Bucarest... (Dan Lungu, Soy un vejestorio comunista, pg. 149)

c. Au revoir ! Je **m'en vais** au Bucharest. (Dan Lungu, Je suis une vieille coco !, pg. 162)

In (12) of the context it is understood that the subject is in a place that he intends to leave, therefore, in this case the point of origin of the displacement is focused and the destination phase is hidden. The context implies that the subject will abandon the place of origin from a certain period of time. In this context, the verb *a se duce* is translated into Spanish as *irse* and into French as *s'en aller*.

## Conclusions

The verb *a se duce* presents a singular case in the Romanian languages, being, as Iacobini (2015: 651) mentioned, a verb that codifies “pure motion” aspect that implies an analysis more detailed. As we shown, it is an ambivalent verb, in the sense that it can be characterized as a verb that focuses on the initial phase, as well as the final phase. It can be combined with or without a directional complement, although it presents certain restrictions when constructed without any mention of the movement's destination. On the other hand, it shows a high affinity to enter in constructions with a destination preposition. From the aspectual point of view, it behaves as an accomplishment and also an achievement verb. These particularities are also reflected in the translation into Spanish and French. Specifically, if the initial phase of movement is focused on,

with the meaning of abandoning one's place of origin, it is translated into Spanish and French as *irse*, respectively *s'en aller*. If, on the contrary, the final phase is focused, it is translated as *ir*, in Spanish and as *aller à* in French. We consider that these observations are of great interest in language teaching and can assist both the teacher and students in correctly explaining and translating the verb *se duce* in Spanish and French.

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# THE USE OF CONTEXT AND SITUATIONS AS KEY STRATEGIES IN AVOIDING AMBIGUITY WHILE LEARNING ENGLISH

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## **Abstract**

*This article aims to point out the role of the context and situations in avoiding ambiguity as well as how students can be helped to make appropriate use of it. It also tries to give practical examples that teachers might use to help their students understand ambiguous words. It is a well-known fact that most of the words in the English language can express more than one meaning. This might bring about a barrier to understanding as well as communicating. Avoiding and eliminating ambiguity is considered a challenging task in English language learning and teaching. Based on various studies, two main strategies are identified as suitable ways to avoid ambiguity as effectively as possible. First, all the meanings that the ambiguous word carries must be clarified, and secondly, the appropriate use of the construction of contextual relationships can be used to avoid misinterpretation and ambiguity. Context can help us distinguish between homonyms, which are words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings. Another procedure used for the reduction and avoidance of ambiguity is that of the word following the ambiguous one as a more effective strategy than that of the one preceding it. The context immediately succeeding a homographic word plays a crucial role in ambiguity resolution during voiced reading through interactions with the word's lexical and syntactic characteristics.*

**Keywords:** *ambiguity, lexical ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity, homonyms, avoidance, misinterpretation*

## **Introduction**

Learning a language includes, among other things, mastering the vocabulary of that language, learning the forms and meanings of words, as well as the different ways in which these forms and meanings are related (Perfetti & Hart, 2002; Rice



& Tokowicz, 2019). An important factor in the process of understanding a sentence or discourse is determining the most appropriate meaning of its lexical units. It is a well-known fact that lexical elements have only one grammatical function, but regarding their meaning, words often carry more than one meaning. Most of the lexical units have different meanings, so not infrequently, we come across the presence of unclear words or ambiguous elements that increase the perceptual complexity of the respective vocabulary.

But what should we understand with ambiguous vocabulary? According to the Macmillan Dictionary, ambiguity can be defined as "something that is unclear because it has more than one possible meaning" or even as "a confusing mixture of meanings or ideas that makes something difficult to understand" (Ambiguity, Macmillan 2009). But, if we have a look at the dictionary, we will find that these connections are not always one-to-one, a large number of words have such semantic maps that a word is connected to more than one meaning for example "bat" can mean "the baseball stick named bat" or "bat- the flying animal" (Eddington and Tokowicz (2015). It is precisely this semantic ambiguity that increases the degree of difficulty in second-language vocabulary learning and can interfere with vocabulary learning and the comprehension of the basic language block (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

So, to acquire and master a foreign language, we have to acquire and use properly the vocabulary and its grammatical structures. Vocabulary learning as well as its appropriate use is an essential part of foreign language learning as the appropriate meaning of the word used is very often emphasized as crucial in creating accurate conversation. It is also central to language teaching and of course, it is of paramount importance to a language learner (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008). At the same time, if language is not used in the right context and the use of words lacks the right intended meaning, it can act as a destroyer of human relationship bridges, as it can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the given communication. To create effective and fruitful communication between persons, the discourse must be true, short, appropriate, and clear. (Grice, 1978). If one of the elements that are mentioned above is not respected or neglected, the conversation may be incomprehensible.

Thus, there are not a few cases when the discourse may not be fully understood by the listener as a result of the use of ambiguous words which may result in misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the conversation. Several definitions have been made regarding ambiguity or ambiguous words, among which we can mention the one brought by Rodd, who claims that a word can be referred to as ambiguous when there are multiple interpretations for it (Vitello & Rodd, 2015).

What makes a word or sentences ambiguous is the presence of multiple meanings for them, making especially foreign language comprehension a very complex process (Vitello & Rodd, 2015). According to Oxford English, ambiguity is the state of simultaneously admitting plausible interpretations or explanations, thus permitting double meanings that “drive both ways” (Oxford English Dictionary 1989).

As previously mentioned, a large percentage of words are ambiguous as a single word form can refer to more than one concept (Rodd, Gaskell, & Marslen-Wilson, 2002). For example, the word "bank" can refer either to an institution that deals with money management, or to the bank of a river. This form of ambiguity is often called “lexical ambiguity”, but when referring to this linguistic phenomenon, several researchers prefer to use the term "semantic ambiguity" in the study and treatment of the phenomenon since this term makes clear the fact that it is the meaning of the word that is unclear and not its form or its grammatical properties (Vitello & Rodd, 2015).

To correctly understand the intended meaning of an ambiguous word, the reader must select a single contextually appropriate meaning for each word. There are three theories that are recommended to be used to resolve the problem of ambiguity and refer to the accurate and appropriate meaning of the word. The first one is called “Context-dependent theory”, which means that context defines the meaning (Glucksberg, Kreuz & Rho, 1986), the second one is called “Relative frequency theory”, which means that the most common meaning is retrieved first, and then it is referred to context (Hogaboam & Perfetti 1975), and the third theory implies that all meanings are retrieved first, and the selection of meaning that fits the context happens after the initial process of retrieval.

In summary, the language understanding system is very capable of receiving and understanding high levels of lexical ambiguity in natural language. Readers and listeners can find a single meaningful interpretation for each word and sentence without being overtly distracted by a multitude of other possible meanings for the constituent words if they make correct use of the appropriate context in which the word occurs (Rodd, Gaskell, & Marslen-Wilson, 2002).

### **Types of ambiguity**

Studies have highlighted that there are two types of ambiguity distinguished as lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity (Khawalda and Al-Saidat, 2012). Lexical ambiguity also referred to as semantic ambiguity, occurs when a word refers to more than one meaning. An utterance is structurally ambiguous when it can yield more than one syntactic interpretation or when it implies more than

one syntactic relationship between its constituents within a structure. So, structural ambiguity happens when the given sentence bears more than one meaning or syntactical interpretation (Berry, et al., 2003:12).

Words can be ambiguous in different ways. If we refer, for example, to the word "bark," the various alternative meanings are not semantically related to each other and do not share a common origin within the history of the language. Unrelated meanings words are usually given separate entries in dictionaries and these words are usually referred to by linguists as homonyms. However, a word like "bark" can also be referred to as a homograph, indicating more specifically that the two meanings share their spelling (Rodd et al., 2002). English also contains homographs, where two different meanings share only their spelling but not their pronunciation (e.g. "sow", "lead"). In contrast, the term homophone refers specifically to words that share their pronunciation, thus including both words like "bark" as well as words that have different spelling (e.g. meet/meat, buy/by/bye), which are therefore ambiguous in the spoken language but not written. True homonyms like the words "bark" or "bank" are relatively rare and studies have found that only about 7% of common English words should be classified as homonyms (Rodd et al., 2002).

A second and more common form of lexical ambiguity is the ambiguity between the meanings of semantically related words, commonly referred to as polysemy. For example, the word "run" is a polysemous word with multiple meanings. Let's consider the following examples:

"The athlete runs on the track."

"The mayor runs for the election".

These sentences convey different meanings of the word "run", but to fully understand any sentence containing the word "run", the reader/hearer must refer to the context and point out exactly which of its definition was intended by the writer/speaker.

In addition, the list of word meanings that we can find for a given word in any given dictionary probably captures only a small subset of the range of ways in which that word is used in natural conversation. Unlike homonyms, which can be seen as a troublesome form of ambiguity as it makes comprehension more difficult without the clarifying context, polysemy is of great benefit to the communicative property of the language. The fact that words can be used in a very flexible way to delicately capture different shades of meaning is a key property of language, on the other hand, if we were to restrict ourselves to a tightly specified meaning per word, then the range of possible meanings we could convey would be greatly reduced (Piantadosi, Tily, & Gibson, 2012).

This distinction between the ambiguity that exists between unrelated word meanings (homonymy) and related word meanings (polysemy) is well established within the linguistic literature (Cruse, 1986) and is respected by lexicographers who have created all dictionaries standards (Rodd et al., 2002; Klein & Murphy, 2001). But, it is important to consider the bilingual speakers, for whom, the level of ambiguity is even higher as they know words from more than one language.

Each speaker of a language will continue to acquire new meanings for the words they already know throughout their lives. Both children and adults will continue to learn meanings they did not know before as a result of taking a new hobby for example, a new career or academic subject (e.g. the navigational meaning of "boom" or the statistical meaning of "normal"). In addition, individuals will also need to learn new meanings that are added to the language over time due to technological developments such as the social media words like: "tweet", "post" and "friend" (Rodd et al., 2002; Blank, 1999).

In summary, lexical ambiguity is a common phenomenon which means that most words we use may refer to more than one possible concept. Although levels of lexical ambiguity may vary between languages (Bates et al., 2001), lexical ambiguity is the norm rather than the exception. Hence, any general description of how word meanings are represented and accessed must include an explanation of representational understanding and access to ambiguous words (Bates et al., 2001).

### **The main strategies used for avoiding ambiguity**

It is a well-known fact that most words in the English language can express more than one meaning (Kılıçkaya, 2007). This statement is consistent with the figures of the American Heritage Dictionary, which gives forty different meanings conveyed by the word "take", some of these meanings are closely related, while others have trivial meanings. Another example of polysemous words in English is "hold", for which Oxford Dictionary lists up to thirty-seven meanings. Such a wide range of meanings of a single word is a major factor in creating ambiguity.

Avoiding and eliminating ambiguity can sometimes be a challenging task in teaching English. The process of understanding of ambiguous words is based on three main theories:

- Context-dependent that means that context defines the meaning of the word (Glucksberg, Kreuz & RHO, 1986)
- Relative frequency means that the most common meaning is retrieved first,

then it is referred to the context (Hogaboam & Perfetti, 1975)

□ All meanings are retrieved and the selection of meaning that fits the context happens after the initial process of retrieval.

These are the main strategies that can be used to avoid ambiguity as effectively as possible. Let's consider the following examples:

- Spring revives us all. (Frequent meaning-referring to the season)
- Spring revives us and all the landscape around it. (Context -source)
- He always springs when he gets out of his house. (jump)

In the first sentence, the first meaning that comes to our mind for the word "spring" is the most frequent one that of the season, thus we retrieve the most frequent meaning of it. While in the second sentence, it is the context that clarifies the appropriate meaning of the word "spring". Whereas in the last sentence, at the beginning, all the meanings are retrieved and then, it is selected the appropriate one.

It is substantial that all the meanings conveyed by the ambiguous word must be clarified. Then, building contextual relationships is crucial to the retrieval of the appropriate meaning. However, some linguists cast doubt on the usefulness of context in clarifying ambiguity, pointing out that context only helps to activate the senses associated with it, to the exclusion of all other meanings of the ambiguous word. Some factors play a prominent role in text processing and ambiguity resolution e.g. word dominance and syntactic category. Word dominance is seen as the prominence of a word's meaning in the language. Researchers believe that meaning dominance is an essential requirement for activating that meaning, in the sense that when a word expresses multiple meanings, the brain is designed to invoke the most frequent or most recent meaning. When two words are equally dominant, they compete with each other until a meaning is selected based on context or world knowledge (Carpenter & Daneman 1981; Duffy et al. 1988; Rayner et al., 1986). The second factor influencing the meaning as well as meaning processing is the syntactic category. English words are categorized into several classes namely: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, determiners, and conjunctions. Some words in English can be grouped into two syntactic categories simultaneously with a difference in meaning as illustrated in the two examples below.

1- *The registration system does not **permit** you to add courses after the deadline.*

2- *Before entering the museum, you must get a **permit**.*

In the first example, the word "permit" serves as a verb that indicates the

meaning of allow, while in the second example, the word “permit” functions as a noun meaning consent. It has been demonstrated by several studies that word class exerts a tremendous influence on meaning processing in which comprehension of verbs is more challenging than nouns (Rayner 1977; Vigliocco et al., 2004).

In line with this study, Kılıçkaya, (2010) examines the resolution of lexical ambiguity. The study places a special emphasis on factors closely related to lexical ambiguity, such as word processing, recognition, and the effect of context. The study attempts to understand the basis on which the reader or listener determines the meaning of words. In addition, the study discusses the resolution of ambiguity in two aspects: context involving semantic items and calling out the multiple meanings of a word.

The study concludes that contextual information is of great importance in parsing words and sentences. Moreover, simple English words and expressions used in everyday communication are considered a great guide to remove ambiguity. Other studies attempt to explore the most dominant type of ambiguity; structural or semantic. In other words, these studies bring about more knowledge about the type of ambiguity that causes the most difficulties for students and the ways to avoid it. When readers/listeners are faced with an ambiguous word, its multiple meanings are usually activated in parallel but the level of this activation is influenced by two key factors: the context of the sentence and frequency of meaning, so that meanings that are too frequent or too strong as well as supported by prior context, are more readily available (MacDonald et al., 1994; Simpson & Kang, 1994;)

This view is exemplified in the highly influential "re-engineered approach-Ambiguity Resolution Model" (Duffy et al., 1988). These studies found that listeners do not retain multiple meanings for long, but instead do a rapid selection within a few hundred milliseconds when encountering an ambiguous word (Seidenberg et al., 1982;) Furthermore, Seidenberg (Seidenberg et al. 1982) proposed that this strategy should be used because the limitations in processing ability make it difficult to store multiple interpretations of sentences (Mason & Just, 2007; Miyake et al., 1994).

## **Conclusions**

Most words in English bear more than one meaning causing ambiguity in understanding the right meaning of their use. The process of understanding ambiguous words is based on three theories:

- ✓ Context-dependent means that context defines the meaning (Glucksberg et al., 1986)
  - ✓ Relative frequency is the theory according to which the most common meaning is retrieved first, then it is referred to as context (Hogaboam & Perfetti 1975)
  - ✓ All meanings are retrieved and the selection of meaning that fits the context happens after the initial process of retrieval.
- *Spring revives us.* (Frequent meaning-referring to the season)
  - *Spring revives us and all the landscape around it.* (Context-source)
  - *He always springs when he gets out of his house.* (jump)

The main strategies identified as suitable ways to avoid ambiguity effectively imply:

- all the meanings that the ambiguous word carries to be clarified,
- appropriate use of the construction of contextual relationships to be used to avoid misinterpretation and ambiguity,
- context can help us distinguish between homonyms which are words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings,
- another procedure that can be used for reduction and avoidance of ambiguity is that of the word following the ambiguous word which is more effective than the word preceding it regarding resolving the ambiguity,
- the context immediately succeeding a homographic word plays a role in ambiguity resolution during voiced reading, through interactions with the word's lexical and syntactic characteristics.

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