BUSINESS ENGLISH LEARNING

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The paper focuses on the theoretical background concerning one of the language skills, namely that of listening, and how important this is for the Business English learner. We will obviously refer to listening texts and tasks to illustrate our statements.

We all know that listening is a complex skill and it is worth mentioning that the listener has to cover some stages in order to reach comprehension:

1. The listener takes in raw speech and holds an image of it in short term memory.
2. An attempt is made to organize what was heard in constituents identifying their content and function.
3. As constituents are identified they are used to construct propositions, grouping the propositions together to form a coherent message.
4. Once the listener has identified and reconstructed the propositions/sentence meanings, these are held in long term memory and the form in which the message was originally received is deleted.

Sometimes learners encounter difficulties in reaching comprehension, not being able to follow all the above mentioned stages.

The sub-skills of listening

From my experience as a teacher of English, as well as from my readings in the field, I would say that, in order to reach comprehension, the learners need to develop some sub-skills. A number of authors (e.g. Richards) have identified what they consider to be the sub-skills of listening. The ones that I think are particularly relevant to the learners I have in mind (2-nd year students in Economics with an intermediate level of English knowledge) are the following:

1. The ability to recognize reduced forms of words (e.g. *he'd say* for *would say, he'd said* for *had said)*
2. The ability to extract key words (by word frequency or by the way in which the word is stressed)

3. The ability to infer the meaning from the context (the same meaning can be expressed in different ways)
4. The ability to identify the different situational functions of words (refusing, accepting, apologizing, etc)
5. The ability to recognize syntactical patterns (if clause, indirect speech, etc)
6. The ability to make connections and predictions (a simple recognized word can lead the listener to the answer of his question)
7. The ability to identify topic and main ideas (skimming)
8. The ability o listen for a certain purpose (for main ideas or for details)
9. The ability to recognize discourse markers and what they announce in discourse (*although, thus, therefore*, etc)
10. The ability to understand natural speech (with pauses, corrections, errors, etc).

Factors implied in listening-comprehension

Consequently, I would say that the factors implied in listening-comprehension, that could generate problems for listeners, are primarily those concerning the knowledge of the language; but knowledge of the world (*schemata*) too. Thus, knowledge of the subject content of the topic, of the socio-cultural context of the text and of the co-text (what happens before listening to the text and after listening to it) are also important factors in comprehension. I would add to these factors, stated by a great number of authors (among which Anderson and Lynch, 1988), the medium factor, that would include the voice and attitude of the speaker, the technical problems that may appear if it is a taped or video listening. It would mean that systematized, all the mentioned factors will look like in the following table:

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE SYSTEM	
Semantic	Systemic
Syntactical	
Phonological	
Medium	

KNOWLEDGE OF SITUATION	
Physical setting	Context
Participants	
Co-text	
Factual	Schematic
Socio-cultural	

In the light of the above-mentioned facts, when developing and using listening tasks, one should think of some desirable characteristics they should have.

Desirable characteristics of tasks

I confess I was influenced in my readings by Oxford's study: *Research Update on Teaching L2 Listening* and also by Terry Bray's study: *Teacher perceptions of Language Learning Tasks.* The following list of characteristics is a synthesis of both studies, with the specification that I am inclined to adopt Bray's *could* in connection with a good language learner task rather than Oxford's *must.* Therefore, such tasks could be used to

1. stimulate the appropriate background knowledge and help learners identify the purpose of the listening activity (pre-listening tasks e.g. discussing the topic, brainstorming, presenting vocabulary, etc)
2. require listeners to respond in some meaningful fashion, either individually or in small groups or pairs, by saying something, following a command or request, asking a question, taking notes
3. allow listeners to infer meaning from body language and related context, clues (when it is not taped)
4. require the use of more than one skill
5. ask for memory use, but also for comprehension
6. allow listeners with normal background knowledge to understand and solve language problems
7. help teachers check on learners' progress
8. help learners use information obtained from one activity in order to perform another one
9. encourage learners to use resources outside the classroom
10. involve learners in pair/group work to share information and opinions in L1 or L2
11. involve learners in solving a problem
12. allow learners to practise in class skills they will need in the real world

13. help learners learn how to learn independently
14. be meaningful to learners in relation to their perceived real world needs
15. offer content that is personally interesting and motivating

Apart from taking into consideration these general characteristics of good tasks, one should know to devise them according to the moment of the lesson in which it is likely to occur, namely before the text, while the text is read or after the text was read.

Therefore, in the following table I tried to select some features of the respective tasks with illustrative examples. It goes without saying that the nature of the task may cause difficulties to the learners if it occurs in an unsuitable moment of the whole process of the lesson (if, for example, without preparing the students you expose them to a difficult listening task instead of having a warming-up pre-task, etc).

Pre-tasks	*While tasks*	*Post tasks*
• suggested before the listening text •meant to activate the learner's knowledge Example • What does the title *Raising Funds* suggest to you? • Brainstorm about *Management Styles in Different Cultures* • What do you know about	• suggested while listening and immediately after it • meant to combine previous knowledge with new one; a mixture of meaning(content)and form (syntax, lexis, discourse structure) tasks, referring to the text Example • Complete the chart/table, using the information from the	• suggested after the listening, or later in the process of learning • meant to make the learners use the input creatively Example • Write an essay on *Multinationals* • Continue the article about *Negotiations and Cultural Differences* • Write an answer to the following letter…

the banking system in Great Britain? • List… • Describe… • Draw… etc.	text on *Franchising* • Match… • Extract the main ideas… • Summarize… • How would you solve the following personnel situation in a company? etc.	etc.

Teachers' approach to listening comprehension activities

Considering learners and their needs in terms of sub-skills development, what the teacher will ask the learners to do, will certainly affect their listening and will require one or more sub-skills to be used. He will choose either the *top down* approach (starting from the students knowledge of the world, or schemata, towards the meaning of the text) or the *bottom up* approach (starting from parts of the text towards the whole text), depending on what sub-skills the learners need to develop. These (the sub-skills) go from perceiving sounds correctly to understanding the meaning of a more or less scripted text.

My own feelings are that the teacher should not isolate skills and develop them in turn, but give tasks to the learners instead, that will require more than one sub-skill at a time, and thus, prepare them for the out of classroom experience, with the exception perhaps of the situation in which the learners would be at the beginning of L2 learning, dealing with phonology, in which case, they would need to develop phonological skills.

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EDUCATION AND TIME STRUCTURING

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Motto "*...it is one thing to* ***believe*** *in angels and another thing to actually* ***see*** *one. That's what separates Christians from loonies" (*Hassler*, North of Hope,* 1991: 256)

Transactional Analysis (TA) theory suggests that people need different ways of *satisfying structure hunger***,** one of the basic human needs. Eric Berne (1966), father of TA, listed *six types of time structuring (TS), six* different *ways* in which people *spend their time* whenever they get together in pairs/groups: *withdrawal, rituals, pastimes, activities, games* and *intimacy.* (*Time structuring: how people spend time when in pairs or in groups*). (Note: all definitions are quoted from Stewart, Joines, 1999: Glossary). An efficient educator ought to have some knowledge of these things, as they might prove fairly useful in educational work, if properly turned to account.

When people get into a situation where *no time structuring* is placed upon them, the first thing they are likely to do is *to provide their own structure.* Robinson Crusoe, arriving on his desert island, structured his time by exploring and setting up living quarters. The ship-wrecked children in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* did something similar. Prisoners in solitary confinement make themselves out calendars and daily timetables (Remember the same Robinson Crusoe or Count of Monte-Cristo).

In a situation when a group's time is initially completely *unstructured*, everybody will know it and feel the discomfort of the situation. A typical question will arise: "What are we here to ***do***?" Eventually, each group member will resolve this question by engaging in one of the six ways of time structuring. They can be defined by using the basic TA concepts of *ego-state model* (*a model depicting personality in terms of Parent, Adult, Child –P-A-C– ego*-states) and *strokes* (*units of recognition*).

It has been suggested in TA literature that the *intensity of stroking* and the *degree of psychological risk increases* as we go *down* the list, *from withdrawal to intimacy.* The *unpredictability* of *strokes* tends to increase too – it becomes less predictable whether a person will be accepted/rejected by the other person. From Child ego-state, people may perceive unpredictability as "risk" to themselves. As children, they depended for their OK-ness on the stroking they got from their parents and they perceived rejection by them as threat to their survival. Students may experience the same feeling, re-playing to some extent in class an infancy situation and depending on the stroking they get from their trainers (teachers, mentors, counsellors, other educators).

For grown-ups there is no such risk in *any* of the six ways of time structuring because nobody can "make" people feel. If another person chooses to act in a rejective way towards us, we can ask for the reason and ask him/her to change his behaviour. If not, we can leave that relationship and find another, where we are accepted.

Withdrawal: *mode of time structuring in which the individual* ***does not transact*** *with others. Transaction: the basic unit of social discourse.*

Supposing somebody has summoned or brought a group of people in a room, leaving them there with no other agenda than simply be there, they will probably sit in silence, for a while. Some may *turn their attention inward,* perhaps they carry on a *monologue* in their *head* (Stewart, Joines, 1999: 88): *"I wonder what we're here for? Ah, well, I suppose somebody else knows. Ouch, this chair is uncomfortable… Maybe if I asked that woman over there, she'd tell me what this …is for …".* They may go right away from the room in their imagination; they sit there in body, but they are off in spirit, to *next* year's holiday or *yesterday's* row with the boss. Such a person is engaging in *withdrawal*. When a person withdraws, s/he may sit with the group physically, but does not transact with other group members. (Note: As an authentic case study is problematic in psychology and education, we have used fiction for exemplification. All examples come from J. Hassler, *North of Hope,* a modern essential literary book focussing on psychlogical issues):

> A person attending a funeral, during the ceremony:
> "What possible good could result from watching somebody be buried? … It was scarcely two months since she had watched with horror as Tim Cashman's coffin was lowered into the ground … Ellen's boyfriend…in junior high…There ought to be a

limit…on the number of open graves you had to look down into in any given lifetime." (1991:166).

While a person withdraws, s/he can be accessing *any ego-state,* but other persons cannot make a behavioural diagnosis of his/her ego-state at that time, because of *lack of external clues* (that is why, in educational activity, this form of TS is difficult to detect in students, although it is fairly often resorted to). During withdrawal, the only strokes the person can get/give are *self-strokes*, since s/he does not engage with others:

(Libby, a teenager, during family conflicts)
"… for the past few days she'd sensed his anger building up, …had smelled liquor in his breath….now suddenly their plates were jumping… he was calling his wife a whore… Whenever he acted that way… Libby shrank in her chair… She felt abour four….. She wanted dolls to hold…" (48)

Some people *habitually withdraw in groups*, because as children they decided it was risky to exchange strokes with others. They may develop their *own stroke-bank* (*collected memories of past strokes which the individual can reuse*)**,** surviving for a long time without any external stroke input, but if they withdraw for too long, they run the risk of drawing down their stroke-bank and becoming stroke-deprived:

"She didn't answer…she was experiencing a moment of unusual *vision* and *insight ...she was seeing herself from a distance, watching herself* struggle year after year to straighten out her life and never get it right. *Tears* of self-pity pressed for release…" (134)

Another form of withdrawal would be *real/total withdrawal*, implying avoiding even physical presence in the group, sometimes motivated by a momentary feeling of insecurity. (Frank withdraws from transacting with Libby, his close friend, not being yet prepared for a more "risky" form of TS, i.e. intimacy, that Libby was looking for at the moment):

".. his *deserting* her on the riverbank…" (52)

Ritual: *mode of time structuring in which people exchange* ***familiar, pre-programmed strokes.***

In a group with no time structuring, people not knowing each other, may choose to introduce themselves and offer hands for handshakes etc. They have chosen to structure their time with a ritual, a *familiar social interaction* that proceeds as if people were *pre-programmed*.

All children learn rituals appropriate to their *family/culture*. In Western cultures, if someone holds out his hand for a handshake, the other is supposed to take that hand and shake it. Britishers learn to respond the ritual question "How do you do?" with the same construction, etc.

Rituals vary in complexity. The simplest of all is a *one-stroke exchange* "Hi! / Hi!":

> "I called to say…"
> "I wasn't at home" (414)
>
> "What can we do for you?" she asked the La Bontes.
> "Nothing", she said. (140)

At the other extreme are some *religious rituals* that may last for hours, with the sequence actually written down (detailed instructions/directions) for the priest and worshippers to follow:

> Funeral: "Some of the congregation walked while others rode the half mile to the cemetery etc." (166), St. Ann's Cleaning Day (121), Christmas religious ceremonial, Christmas religious plays performed by school children, etc.

Rituals are perceived from Child as involving *more psychological risk* than withdrawal, but they provide *familiar positive strokes*. They are *low in intensity*, but they can be important as a way of topping up the personal stroke-bank, and also, the *predictability* of ritual strokes may be a plus for people who decided in childhood that it was risky to exchange strokes within a close relation (imagine holding out a hand for a handshake and being ignored). Ritualistic elements may be exploited in classroom/lecture hall work for creating and maintaining a security, confidence environment. One or more ritualistic transaction/stroke-exchanges are also basic for language teaching/learning, especially for beginners, and for assessment/evaluation, with tests with objective items:

Pastime: *mode of time structuring in which people **talk** about a subject but have **no** intention of **taking*** **action** *concerning it.*

In a group, after ice has been broken, people are generally talking about their experience in similar groups etc. The speakers have moved in a *pastime*, they are *pastiming*. The pastime also proceeds in a *familiar* way, but the *content* is *not programmed so strictly* as that of a ritual. Participants *talk about* something but engage in *no action* concerning it. Pastiming is typified by the light superficial conversation heard at parties or in public places. Berne mentions some familiar pastimes for people who feel comfortable in traditional roles (sex-role: "General motors"- pastime for men, "Kitchen" or "Wardrobe" for women, social-roles, for example parents: "Parent-teacher association", or national-roles: "Weather" for Britishers etc.). A rewardingly illustrative example is presented in extenso. Bert, Tricia, Selma, Eunice and Frank are visiting Monsigneur Lawrence in hospital. The only transaction Frank, the hero of the novel, a priest, is involved in, is an Adult-Adult transaction, meant at actually exchanging a piece of information; all the other lines of the following dialogue are a very clear example of TA pastiming:

> "…Excited to be out, to be travelling, to be in one another's company, the four shut-ins, threw themselves into a spiritual and sour discussion that lasted all the way to Berrington. They started with the weather.
> "Horrible."
> "Depressing."
> "Worse than last year."
> "One night above 0^0 since December 12^{th}."
> "Dreadful."
> "Worse coming."
> *"Are the roads icy, Father?"*
> *"No, they are clear."*
> "Just wait, they'll be icy if this snowfall keeps up."
> "I don't mind the cold, but I hate the snow."
> "I hate the cold."
> "I hate the cold and the snow, both."
> "I hate winter. Everybody's so grouchy."
> "There isn't the old friendship any more, not in any season. In the old days… people were friendlier."
> "There isn't the friendliness and there isn't the respect for age."
> "There isn't the ambition."
> "There isn't the quality of food."
> "There isn't the respect for the elderly."
> "You already said that."

"Potatoes especially." Where can you buy a good potato nowadays?"
"And prices, my lord."
"Horrible prices."
"Dreadful prices."
"Worse coming, they say."
"Do you know what you pay for a good baking potato nowadays? You can pay as much as thirty cents."
"That's criminal."
"That's outrageous." I paid fifty cents for ten pound russets in 1955."
"Where will it end?"
"It's outrageous."
"It's depressing."
"It's the Democrats." (265)

Some people prefer *Parent pastimes* (pastimes in which people voice sets of pre-judged opinions about the world). Young people of today may also choose *Children pastimes* **(**which replay thoughts and feelings from when those persons were small children): **"**This silence makes me feel uncomfortable". In teaching, attention should be paid to the way in which students pastime during pair/group work, even to the way in which they construct their open-ended or free dialogues during class practice or in home assignments.

Pastiming yields many positive strokes, with some negatives. Pastiming strokes are *more intense*, but somewhat *less predictable* than those from rituals, therefore people perceive them, from Child, as carrying a *slightly greater risk*.

In *social* interchanges, pastiming serves the additional function of "sounding each other out" as possible future partners for the more intense stroke exchange in games or intimacy:

"… it dawned on to him that Libby was *seeking* him *out as a friend*…" (33)

Activity: *mode of time structuring in which those concerned have the* ***objective*** *of* ***achieving*** *an overtly agreed* ***goal****, as opposed to merely talking about it.*

If in a group with no pre-imposed time-structuring, people give suggestions of things they could do, they will then try to agree on one and then, *actually start doing that thing*. They are in *activity***:**

> " From his childhood he recalled the *appointed day each spring and fall* when dozens of men and women**,** clergy and nuns included, *went to work* on *St. Ann's* waxing floors, polishing pews, repairing kneeling pads**,** puttying windows, taking up old stair treads and laying down new, cleaning the furnace, washing and ironing the cassocks and altar linen, and sitting down, finally, to a festive potluck *supper* in the basement. Certain children also took part each ear; they ran for tools, beat rugs, watered plants, scraped old paints, sorted music in the choir loft. ... (121)

The communication between the group members is *directed* at *achieving* a *goal*, not just talking about it. This is the difference between *activities* and pastiming. In activity, people are directing their energy towards some material *outcome***.** For example, people are in activity when they repair an appliance, write a document, a cheque, and –ideally- for much of their time at their work place. The *Adult* is the *predominant ego-state*, this following from the fact that activities are concerned with *achieving here-and-now goals***.** One of the basic scenes in the novel occurs after Libby's failed attempt at committing suicide, in which the goal of the activity of Frank, the friend and the priest, is that of helping her out of that dangerous situation and state of mind. His strategy consists in combining activity, physically *doing* something, with a sincere, honest, heart-to-heart *talk*, which, in form, resembles closely the pastiming sequence rendered before, but which, in content, is goal-oriented Adult activity (oriented to here-and-now problem solving). Due to its high stroking level and to the uncensored way in which the participants in the scene express themselves, it comes to some extent close to intimacy as well:

> "She stood under the glare of the ceiling light, with her shoulders slumped and a fixed, empty look in her eyes. Her expression said "All right, if I'm supposed to go on living, you'll have to tell me why." He *removed* her jacket and led *her* into the bedroom and slipped off his coat and shoes and *lay with her in his arms*. He said nothing and neither did she. Several minutes passed before his breathing slowed to normal. More time passed before she spoke.
> "Why is my life so ugly, Frank?"
> *"Talk about it*, Libby."
> She was silent.
> He *prompted* "What's the ugliest part of your life, Libby?"
> "Verna with Tom, in that way."
> "That's over."
> "Not the effect. Not on Verna. That isn't over."
> Her voice sounded thin and far-off. It was the dull voice of the deaf, devoid of inflection.
> "We don't know the effect yet."

"We do. It drove her crazy."
"She's not crazy anymore."
"She's not normal."
"She's getting there." (414)

Strokes from activities can be **positive** and **negative conditional strokes**. They are usually *delayed* strokes, given at the end of the activity for a job well or poorly done. The degree of "psychological risk" perceived in activity *depends* on the *nature* of each person. (This part of the TA theory has wide applicability in education, and particularly in teaching):

> "Frank hung around, till the last crumb was swept up and the last light switched off, a *deliriously happy member of the expanded family* whose chatter and energy and *warmth* were so lacking in his own incomplete family. *Motherless,* he *was mothered* every *cleaning day*, by *all the women* of St. Anne." (121)

Game: *Berne's definition: a series of transactions with a Con/ a Gimmick/ a Switch and a Crossup, leading to a Payoff.* Stewart and Joines's definition (1999): *the process of doing something with* ***an ulterior motive*** *that is (1)* ***outside*** *of* ***Adult awareness****, (2) does not become* ***explicit*** *until the participants* ***switch*** *the way they are behaving and (3) that results in* ***everyone feeling confused****,* ***misunderstood****, and wanting to* ***blame*** *the other person.*

The analysis of psychological games is a major part of TA theory – it does not make the object of this presentation – we want only to mention that game-players exchange a series of transactions and at the end of that sequence, *both* players *feel* bad. In games, the exchange of transactions is not only at *social* level (*Social level message: an overt message, usually conveyed in verbal content*) but also at *psychological* level (*Psychological-level message: a covert message, usually conveyed by non-verbal clues*), it is an exchange of ulterior transactions (*Ulterior transaction: a transaction in which an overt message and a covert message are conveyed at the same time*). The social-level messages *sound* like exchanges of information etc., but at psychological level, one invites the other to play a game and this one accepts.

Everybody plays games from time to time, all games are *re-plays* of *childhood strategies* that are no longer appropriate to people as *grown-ups*. On the *psychological level*, games always entail an exchange of *discounts* (*Discounting: unawarely ignoring information relevant to the solution of the problem*) but on the *social level*, players always experience the game as an

exchange of both positive and negative stroks, but the *intensity of negatives is much higher***.** The degree of *psychological "risk"* perceived is *greater* than in activity or pastiming:

> After a few minutes of intense squirming on the fake leopard skin, Vernon panted:
> "You are asking for it."
> Breaking out of his embrace, Libby hung her head out the window and looked up through the pine bough.
> "For what?"
> "You know damn well. Tonight. After the game."
> "No", she said, not meaning it. She was ready.
> "Don't say *no*, dam it! That's all you ever say is *no."*
> She giggled and said *no* again. (43)

The repetitive character of the game, the presence of an ulterior motive, the negative payoff for both participants, other elements in the TA game theory , can be all found in the key-scene of the typical, habitual family conflict Libby relates to Frank, with a sincerity she does not experience as painful or resentful, as she and Frank share a capacity for intimacy in TA sense:

> "…her mother announced that she had found herself a cleaning job…. "We are behind the grocery store"… "We can use the extra money". From long practice, she, like Libby, had developed the ability to reply to his insane ranting in a matter-of -fact diaspassionate tone." (48)

> "Lay off her, Dad, said Libby's brother, Roy…visibly affected , even though his father's rage wasn't directed at him… he *broke* out in immediate defiance…at the first sign of trouble, he was *invariably* on his feet and moving lightly around his father in a nervous kind of *dance*, peppering him with appeals and sometimes with insults in an attempt to *deflect the abuse from his mother and sister*." (48)

> "You can't hate a drunk, can you, Frank? I mean I don't think he knows what he's doing. He's a different person when he is drunk."
> "Does he hit you?"
> " No, he threatens to. He's put his fist up to my face a few times, but he's never laid a hand on me. He *mainly hits* my brother."
> "Does he hit your mother?"
> "Not very often."
> "How often?"
> "Well, I mean she's had her share of black eyes in her life, but *usually* he just insults her… My brother always gets the worst of it, and it's like he *wants* to get the worst of it. I meant it's like he *doesn't want to hurt* my dad for fear of killing

> him. You can see how much he hates him… but he *never* really let him have it . But my dad really lets my *brother have it.* See, it's like this. My dad *will* insult my mother and my brother *will* step in to defend her and my dad will turn on my brother and really let him have it. It seems like when he goes after my mother, *it's really to get at my brother*…" etc (Hassler, 1991: 48)

Games People Play by Eric Berne (1966) and *Games Students Play* by K. Ernst (1972) are extremely illuminating "musts" for understanding everything and using whatever is useful about games as TS elements in educational activity.

Intimacy: *mode of time structuring in which people express* ***authentic feelings*** *and* ***wants*** *to each other* ***without censoring***.

Maybe while transacting, people feel anger or another feeling. If they quarrel, for example, they *express* those *authentic feelings* (*Authentic feeling*: *the original, uncensored feeling which the individual in childhood learned to cover with a racket feeling. Racket feeling: a familiar emotion, learned and encouraged in childhood, experienced in many different stress situations, and maladaptive as an adult means of problem-solving*) and *wants to each other without censoring*. They are in *intimacy***:**

> " …a pure mingling of souls…" (164)

In intimacy there are *no "secret messages*", that is the social level and the psychological level are congruent. This idea is also very important in education, counselling, mentoring and teaching. The feelings which are *expressed* are *appropriate to finish the situation*. People let the other know what they want through emotions**,** as well as through *words*. Neither of the participants in that form of TS could *make* the other behave in a particular way, but they can each make as clear as possible what they want, on feelings and thinking level:

> "…what she needed was *warmth***"** (49)
>
> "Frank, can I *come over* to your home for a while?" (49)
>
> "Do you ever think of leaving the priesthood?... I mean for my sake?"
> He looked at her in the eye and said "No."

This was followed by a few awkward half senteces which finally led Libby to say in a voice drained of emotion "Let's *not talk* about it… If *we talk* about it, we might lose what we have."

Frank nodded, relieved.
"What we have isn't much", she said "but it is..."
"That's where we differ, Libby. I think what we have is very important"….
"I'll try to see it that way."
"*Please*"….
"I'll try to be your sister…" (370)

Berne's concept of *intimacy* acquires specialised technical usage, only partially similar to the usual dictionary sense. When people are being sexually/personally "intimate" (usual sense), they may perhaps also be *sharing* their feelings/ wants openly with each other (TA sense) – but not necessarily:

> "… he *sensed* in Libby, as well as himself, a kind of liberating relief in realising that their relationship was not complicated by the threat or *promise* of *romantic intimacy***,** as though having put romance aside, they were free to explore whatever else was in their hearts…..A meeting of minds he could handle**,** for that entailed *only talking and* listening *– his two best skills, but the danger was in advancing from talking and listening to ... touching*... any sort of *intimacy* outside the intellect" (52).

That's why *games* are used as substitute structures *for intimacy*. They involve a similar *intensity of stroking* (though game-strokes are mainly negative, but we remember that any stroke is better than none) but without the same degree of perceived *'risk'***.** People have to go a long way to acquire intimacy, which, in most relationships, is a form of TS people are instinctively afraid of:

> "Greater than his infatuation with Libby was the *fear* that she might penetrate deeper into his solitary life than she already had. What if she asked him to hold her, to console her with his kisses? The prospect was *terrifying*… He was only now … learning to be comfortable with a girl as a daytime *companion*. He was light-years away from *intimacy***.** ….I don't mean to stay… I just want to sit somewhere *warm* and *quiet* for half an hour… You could get to bed if you wanted. I'd just like to sit in a chair in your house for a while" (49).

> "He was *alarmed*. It wasn't only his house that was *off limits* – it was *his heart* as well". (49)

In a game, each person shifts the *responsibility* for the outcome to the other. *In intimacy each person accepts his/her own responsibility:*

> "Do you miss him?"
> "Not as long as I have you …"
> " I have to say it Frank. I know it's the last thing you want to hear and it presents all kinds of problems and you know it without my telling you, but I have to say it. I have to say how much I love you… Having made this declaration, she had apparently achieved some sort of repose…Think of it, Frank, our love goes back 25 years…"Yes, we go back a long way"
> He, too, felt curiously composed, unruffled. There was a kind of *relief in facing this subject at last, and an even greater relief* in knowing he was ready to face it. He couldn't have spoken of it a month ago. Until now he'd been confused… Before Vernon…Before Chicago…and before Basswood"
> "Yes, before all that" he agreed. He loved Libby. He would never *not* love her. She knew more about him, understood him better than anyone since his mother , and to someone as private and inward as Frank, this amounted to a kind of *sacred intimacy"* etc… (370)

"Intimacy is a candid Child-to-Child *relationship* with *no games* and no mutual exploitation. It is set up by the *Adult ego-states of the parties concerned,* so that they understand very well their contracts with and their *commitments* to each other" (Stewart, Joines, 1999: 94).

That does not mean that the concept created by Berne can be oversimplified, considering intimacy only a purely Child -Child interchange. The Adult ego-state is also of great importance in intimacy. "To relate in intimacy, we first need *to establish the relationship with our full Adult powers of thinking, behaving and feeling***.** Then, within this protective framework, we can go back into Child if we want to, sharing and satisfying some of the unmet needs we carry from our early years" (Berne, quoted in Stewart, Joines, 1991: 92). Intimacy also entails caring and protection coming from Parent ego-state.

Stroking in intimacy is *more intense* than in any other form of TS. Either positive or negative strokes may be exchanged. But there will be no *discounting* (*unawarely ignoring information relevant to the solution of the problem*), since intimacy is by definition an exchange of *authentic* wants and feelings. The general message in intimacy is "I won't discount you and I won't allow you to discount me". Discounting automatically brings about lack of intimacy, impossibility to express or to accept the expression of uncensored feelings and wants:

> Gone was the chatty relationship she had loved in the early days of their marriage. Nowadays, when she expressed an opinion oppopsed to his own, he responded with a reprimand or worse, with a *silent, long-suffering smile***.** Often she told him how she was feeling, he informed her that she only *thought* she was feeling that way (134).

Intimacy is not necessarily *always* a kind of seventh-heaven of positive stroking (in groups stro*kes exchanged can be straight negatives), but when intimacy does entail* an exchange of *positive* strokes, they are experienced as *especially pleasant* and *gratifying.*

Intimacy is not pre-programmed – it is in fact *the most unpredictable* of all the ways of TS - so, from Child, people may perceive intimacy as being the most "risky" way to relate to another person, but paradoxically, it is actually the *least risky*. When two persons are in intimacy, they *communicate without discounting*. Therefore, the outcome of intimacy is always *constructive* for the people concerned. Whether or not they will always find it comfortable, is another matter. It depends on whether the strokes exchanged are straight positives or straight negatives.

Apart from being one of the six ways of TS, intimacy is, one the other hand, one of the *three components of autonomy (Autonomy*: *the quality which is manifested by the release or recovery of three capacities: awareness, spontaneity and intimacy; any behavoiur, thinking or feeling which is a response to here-and-now reality. Awareness: the capacity to experience pure sensual impressions in the manner of a new-born infant, without interpretation. Spontaneity: ability to choose freely from a full range of options in feeling, thinking and behaving, including choice of ego-state*). Awareness is a first step:

> "…we are lucky to have run across each other at this precarious midpoint of our lives, etc". (164)

Then, the road is open to achieving spontaneity and the capacity for intimacy. All these add up to forming *autonomy*, the ultimate *aim of personal change* in TA, together with *effective problem solving,* a particularly appropriate *goal* to set for *personal change in education* (and other settings outside clinical). "Constructive intimacy" will make "constructive autonomy", which will, in its turn, prove invaluable for *autonomous and effective problem solving.*

As a ***conclusion*****,** we present lengthy selected quotations from the most significant scene of the novel, to illustrate how a wonderful mixture of *activity* and *intimacy* works:

"Frank, you *saved* my life."
"I know."
"What are you going to do with it?"
"What do you mean?"
"It's your life. You saved it."
"It's your life, not mine."
"I don't want it."
"Why? It's precious."
"It's worthless."
"It is a gift."
" A gift? I want to give it away."
"There is no one to give it to, Libby. It's yours forever. It will get better. It seems worthless now, but it will get better."
"When?"
"In a few hours… I'm taking you to Hope Unit…"
"No"…
Now Libby slept. Frank lay awake. When at length she changed position, she woke…
"It's getting light out."
"Finally."
"What time is your Mass?"
"Forget Mass. I'm skipping it today."
"Do you do that often?"
"No."
"Ever?"
"Today."
"Never before in your life?"
"No."
…..
A minute of silence.
"Frank, I'm not going into the Hope Unit."
"Why not?"
"I've seen too much of it…"
"But somewhere…"
"…There's not another mental heath facility within a hundred fifty miles…"
"So? Why not Mineappolis, Chicago? What holds you here?"
"*You*.. .I'm not asking for all of you. Just to be able to *see* you. Talk to you…I don't need full-time… I mean just to see you *every* ***so*** *often* and *talk things over*. Is that all right?"
"Of course."

"Promise?"
"Yes."

And a final***, metaphoric conclusion:***

She lay back on the pillow and after a minute she asked:
"Frank, have you ever been hopeless?"
"Sort of."
"Have you ever felt like killing yourself?"
"No."
"Neither had I until this winter. It's like *hope doesn't reach that far* north."
"But it does, Libby. *Hope goes wherever you want it to."* (414)

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NLP TECHNIQUES IN THE MOTIVATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Being a teacher of English I have often met the paradoxical situation that my students know that they are supposed to do a test of some sort during or at the end of the course still they are not very hard-working in the phase of preparation. Often they do not take an active part in the lessons, they do not always do the homework and so on. At the same time when we talk about the coming test they say that they are afraid of it because they do not think that they are well-prepared and know everything they are supposed to know. A situation like this is difficult for the students and a challenge for the teacher.

Why is a test not enough motivation for studying something regularly, doing the homework before and after a lesson, doing individual, pair or group work in a lesson? I do not know. On the one hand, I think a lot of aims can motivate a learner like getting into a university course, finding a job, getting a pay rise, going on holiday abroad, etc. On the other hand, school aims like doing a test or passing an exam are also good to motivate a learner. However, it does not always seem to be the case.

I understand that an end-term test does not urge the student very much at the beginning of the term, not to mention a comprehensive exam ending a course of four or even more terms. As time passes some students change their attitude to work and start working harder than before. But there are students who become more and more paralysed as they get closer to the time of writing a test or taking an exam and they do even less work than before. Naturally, to them it seems less and less realistic to do the test or pass the exam successfully. If they are a relatively large number in a group of students, the teacher cannot ignore them.

It must be noticed that in Hungary today it is a course requirement at most colleges and universities that students should pass a so called state language exam (intermediate level, type C, i.e. written and oral tests) without which they cannot get their degrees. Students can pass this exam only if they have a clear understanding of English grammar, a large working vocabulary and

are competent at reading, writing, listening and speaking. Knowing this, I would expect my students to work very hard during their language course.

The problem partly may be that students do not know what requirements they should meet at the state language exam, or at any other exam. It is relatively easy to show them what they are expected to know. Then they get scared and feel absolutely hopeless. So the other part of the problem is, I think, that the students have no idea what to do. In fact, they have probably lost their ways and do not know what they are good at, what they should make up for and where they should start their preparation in general. So the teacher has to give them a helping hand. Last time I had to do so I decided to use an exercise taken and adapted from among the techniques of neuro-linguistic programming. The exercise, in which the learners are asked to answer a series of questions, helps the learners to define their goal of studying English first, then decide the steps they should take in order to achieve it. I attempted to word the questions so that by answering them my students would get a well-formulated goal. In neuro-linguistic programming a well-formulated goal is expressed in a sentence having a first person singular subject and an affirmative predicate in the indicative, the goal is described by the experience of the five senses, and the initiator and doer of the actions is the one who wants to achieve the goal, he/she can keep all the positive elements that he/she has in the present, (e.g. his/her eyesight, mental or physical resources, etc.), his/her goal is embedded in his/her circumstances/conditions and is in harmony with his/her life.

The questions I asked go back to an exercise called ‘What you really want’. I changed the questions according to our topic, namely to learning English. I asked my students to give their answers in writing. By doing so I wanted to make them consider the problem thoroughly and find their own ways to success. The questions were the following:

1. Define your goal of learning English this term. Use an affirmative, indicative sentence in the first person singular.
2. How will you know that you have achieved your goal? What will you see, hear and feel? What will other people see if they look at you?
3. In what circumstances will you achieve your goal? What, where, when, with whom will you do to achieve your goal? And what, where, when and with whom will you not do?

4. What external and internal resources do you have already that you will use to achieve your goal? Concentrate on your internal resources, experiences, knowledge, beliefs and emotions, etc.?
5. What hinders you from achieving your goal now? Consider your internal obstacles.
6. What resources do you want to get in order to achieve your goal? Think of your own internal resources.
7. Make a plan and use everything you have considered in the first six questions. (Your plan should consist of well-formulated steps. Taking any of which should be an achievement itself and the steps should lead to your goal in a fixed and well-defined order.)
8. What is your goal's goal? What (else) will you achieve by having achieved this goal?

The goals my students set for themselves varied according to their majors and course requirements and the term they were doing at college. Those in their 6th or 7th term at college who had the state language exam as a course requirement considered how they could pass the exam, while other students in their first or second term at college were thinking about the grade they should get at the end of the term. Such differences are obvious and natural.

I found some answers very interesting. I did not expect the answer to the first question to be so difficult as it seemed to. Many of the students did not give their answers in the first person singular, so instead of

> (1) *I want to prepare for the intermediate level state language exam*. (*Ebben a félévben föl akarok készülni az állami középfokú nyelvvizsgára.)*

they wrote

> *The goal of learning English this term is preparation for the intermediate level state language exam. (Az e félévi angol tanulás célja az állami középfokú nyelvvizsgára való fölkészülés*.)

Or to give another example, instead of

> (2) *I want to learn how to use correctly the English present simple, present continuous, past simple and past continuous tenses. (Meg akarom tanulni az angol egyszerű jelen, folyamatos jelen, egyszerű múlt és folyamatos múlt idők helyes használatát.)*

they wrote

My goal is the deepening and development of the English tenses.
(Célom az angol igeidők elmélyítése, kibővítése.)

The main problem here is that it is not clear who the doer of the actions is, which is in conflict with the criteria of well-formulated goals. The other problem in the second example is that the sentence speaks about 'English tenses' in general so we cannot know which tenses the student is thinking of, moreover, it remains absolutely obscure what he/she means by 'deepening and development'. Here we have an example of nominalization. Likewise, it is imprecise to say

(3) *I would like to learn more words. (Több szót szeretnék megtanulni.)*

We can ask the speaker to make his/her statement more precise by asking so called Meta-Model™ questions. When hearing example (2) we can ask 'Who deepens the English tenses, how, where, when and to what extent does he/she deepen the tenses?' In example (3) there is a deletion so we can ask 'Compared to what number of words do you want to learn more? and How many more words would you like to learn?'

It was somewhat surprising for me that in the answers given to the second question (How will you know that you have achieved your goal?) only a few students expressed their experience in terms of the five senses, e.g. *I have my certificate in my hands, I can hear that my parents/friends are congratulating to me saying that…,* etc.

The third question was about the ways the students can achieve their goals. Reading the answers it seemed to me that it was relatively difficult for them to answer the second part of the question, that is, to say what, when, where and with whom they would not do in order to achieve their goal. Perhaps it was too obvious or trivial for them to talk about things that prevent them from doing what they want. However, I think, to make a contrast is a good way to define what you really want and how you can achieve it.

The fourth, fifth and sixth questions asked about the students' resources and obstacles. Answering these questions the students had difficulties in defining their internal resources. The reason may be that they do not usually think and talk about the fact that they believe in themselves and trust that they can do something successfully although without it it is dubious to solve a problem.

Having answered the first six questions it was relatively easy for the students to prepare their plans how to achieve their goal. However, some of

them needed help with finding the right order of actions which is a key factor here.

The last question 'What is your goal's goal?' puts the original goal in a wider perspective and as it turned out it is not easy to name it. It should be obvious that the goal of my communication-major students' goal was getting their degree at the end of the fourth year at college. However, some of them defined other goals such as further studies abroad, getting good and well-paid jobs, moreover there was a student who hoped to see that her parents were proud of her. These goals show that motivation here is of instrumental character rather than integrative (cf. Zerkowitz, 1988:25-29; Harmer, 1990: 3-4) which may seem surprising especially in the case of communication-major students. Since according to their future profession they should be rather interested in using the language for communication and learning about foreign cultures. I think it is worth considering these factors and not only as teachers of English!

It may happen that even after such an exercise as the one I have just described some students cannot imagine that they are successful at their exam. Or else they can only see themselves as someone not being able to give appropriate answers to the questions or perhaps not understanding the questions therefore standing there speechless, etc. They often ask me things like 'what will happen if I don't remember a word that I would definitely need to answer a question, or I have no idea at all what to answer?' These problems show me that the image students have of themselves is a rather fearful one. I decided to try the NLP technique called 'swish'. The main steps are the following: ask your students to imagine/picture themselves in an exam situation in which they are usually not very successful. Ask them to stop their film before they have started the behaviour that they do not like and would want to change. Ask them to make the picture big and bright. Next, ask them to make a first person affirmative sentence in which they decide what they would like to be like. Then they should create a new picture in which they see themselves acting in a way expressed in their sentences. (That is, here they can understand the questions, they know what to say, they can remember any word they need, etc.) They should see themselves as an attractive person who they would like to resemble. Ask them to make this picture small and dark. Then ask your students to put the small dark picture into the bottom right hand corner of the big bright picture. When this is ready, ask your students to change the contents of the two pictures when you give a signal, e.g. clap. Repeat this step of the exercise several times. After a short break ask your students to find the contents of the first picture. If

they have done the exercise correctly it will be difficult for them to see the first picture which proves that the change has been established. In other words it means that now they can imagine that they are competent and successful in an exam situation.

To sum up, NLP techniques provide good opportunities to help students find their own ways to success and find out about their fellow students' study aims and objectives as well as about their ways of achieving them. As a consequence of this they are in a position to integrate their own aims and objectives in the work of the group throughout the term. By doing so they take a much higher responsibility for their own studies and success in general.

I can see other advantages of using NLP techniques, such as learner training (cf. Crooks, Schmidt, 1991:493; O'Malley et al, 1985), establishing a good group atmosphere bearing in mind that your students may be very different as far as their learning styles, motivation, knowledge or personalities go. At the same time the teacher can choose to do exercises such as discussed above in the students' mother tongue or in English if the knowledge of the group allows it, either as individual work, pair or group activity. As you could see, these exercises differ rather significantly from other more traditional exercises used in the language classroom. This being so it may be difficult for the students to do them for the first time. However, they are a refreshing break-away form the old tasks and very often seem to be more enjoyable and more efficient for both the teacher and the students.

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ORIGINS OF NOVICE TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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'Education ... must first and foremost be good for teachers' lives, if it is ever to be good for learners' learning.' (Allwright, 2003:10)

An idea similar to this one was the starting point for my research, too, even if at that time I was not acquainted with the ideas of Exploratory Practice. (The article by Allwright is 'Exploratory Practice: Re-thinking Practitioner Research in Language Teaching'). I knew from my own experience in starting teaching, from what beginner teachers generally tell, as well as from the fact that most of my students do not want to become teachers, that feeling inadequate for the complexity of the teaching job is one of the reasons that makes students not want to become teachers. Having decided to research this 'puzzle', I carried out my study as an '*action for understanding*', and in the hope of being able to 'reflect on *emerging understandings*' (Allwright, 2003:14) about the 'quality of life' in the language classroom.

In research on teacher education the focus of research has shifted from product to process facilitated by qualitative and narrative modes of inquiry.

New developments in modes of inquiry have accompanied recent substantive issues in teacher education research. One such issue is that of research on learning to teach or teacher learning, which examines how teacher education programmes and activities relate with changes in teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions. (Okhee, Yarger, 1996:25)

One of the research methods mentioned by Okhee and Yarger, that is used in teacher education research, is *case study research*. The popularity of it has increased with Robert K. Yin's book 'Case Study Research: Design and Methods' that was published first in 1984 followed by several reprints and a second edition in 1994. Yin's idea of a case study is that it is:

an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real life context. (Yin, 1994:13)

My research study belongs to the qualitative mode of inquiry and is a case study .due to the fact that it examines changes in teachers' knowledge and skills and investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real life context.

My research interest being linked to pre-service teacher education I have asked three of my former students, teachers of English at present, to write an account for which I set a task. The task for the account was:

What do you need to know and what do you need to know about in order to be a successful English language teacher in your situation? How, when, where did you get this knowledge?

I am looking at three of the texts of the accounts written by my respondents for ideas linked to the origin of their knowledge about and of teaching, the origin of language teaching awareness. I have looked at the three accounts in alphabetical order.

In her account **Anca** says that the university pre-service teacher training course did not offer students practical knowledge that they could use in the classroom, lacking mainly reference to handling discipline problems.

*'...the teacher has to learn how to cope with such situations. I don't think that the university has prepared us for handling such problems (*discipline problems in the classroom*) or for teaching in general.' (A)*

The pre-service course is too theoretical and beginner teachers do not have opportunity for practice. Learning to become a teacher is a continuous activity that peers and colleagues who are prepared to share their experience can help with. The beginner teacher lacks in confidence due to lack of practice and needs the support of their peers.

'To answer the second question, part of these things I know from the university, but I think the university hasn't prepared us for being teachers because there was too much theory and little practice. I think one needs at least 2-3 years of experience to realise how things have to be done. Each day I learn something and I am glad I have colleagues or former teachers whom I can talk to and ask for their help'. (A)

Experience shared with authors of books is useful but first hand experience is much more valuable. Peer support and access to knowledgeable people, people who can advise is crucial for **Anca**. She mentions her former teacher of English separately, which means that she is aware of a difference between teachers of English and of other subjects. There is also the issue of 'learning' from her former teacher of English in her new capacity, that of a teacher of English, which means that **Anca** now understands things differently compared to when she was a learner.

'Books about methodology were also very useful but I found out many things during teaching. I sometimes talk to the school psychologist and ask for

her advice, but most often I talk to my mother who is also a teacher and she has a lot of experience. I discuss with her everything that happens at school and she has helped me a lot in solving the problems I had at school. I can say that I feel lucky to have very helpful colleagues with whom I can co-operate at school and I can say that my former teacher of English has always served me as a model. I am glad that I will have the opportunity to teach at the same school with my former teacher because I'll have the chance to learn from her.' (A)

The origin of **Anca**'s awareness of language teaching as expressed by her in her account comes from:

1. Books about methodology
2. Learning by doing
3. University courses
4. Former experience as learner (Her former teacher of English always served as a model)
5. Talking to peers (colleagues, former teachers, her mother who is a teacher, her former teacher of English)
6. Talking to other people (the school psychologist)

Corina mentions other issues in her account. She refers to theories of learning and to the awareness of how you learnt yourself, as a learner, which give you the background that you need for support before you have experience.

'Another essential element is the knowledge about how a language is learnt. You need to know about the current theories in the field, but also to remember the way you have learnt it yourself. This way it is easier to understand the processes the students go through. It is also easier to predict what problems might occur, what things could be more difficult to understand and would need more explaining. This gives you an insight which makes your job easier and more efficient.'(C)

Corina knows now that learner feedback is a valuable source of information for the teacher who wants to be a helper and facilitator and that it is sometimes easier to find things out directly. She also raises the issue of teaching as a learning process that involves a human relationship of 'giving and getting'.

'Getting feedback from your students is very important because it provides you with a perspective over your activity and it may also provide you with solutions to problems that occur in the teaching process. You're actually learning from the students, as you teach them. I try to ask the students direct

questions about how they feel about what we are doing, but also observe their reactions when I ask them to do something.'(C)

Another issue that **Corina** raises is that of the knowledge of the language that one teaches which is not enough if one is not aware of the contrasts and similarities between the mother tongue of the learner and the foreign language that is taught. Because language is taught as a means of communication it is important to use it as such, a fact that she remembers to have learnt from her own teacher of English in secondary school. She proves here to be very much aware of language and communication being the object of teaching. She is also aware of psychological issues related to learner reactions to teacher requirements.

'You need to know how your own language, or that of your students, relates to English in order to understand the cause of these problems. You can use the differences and similarities between the two languages in order to clarify problematic issues. I think explanations in the mother tongue should be avoided though. Or better said used less and less, as the students' level rises. You need to know that it takes some work to encourage the students to interact among themselves and with you in the target language. I have seen that many use every opportunity to revert to their mother tongue. My English teacher in high-school used to pretend she didn't understand Romanian or Hungarian and thus forced us to speak English. This strategy can backfire, though, and inhibit a shy or less confident student.' (C)

There are several methods of teaching language, so it is important to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of each, to keep in contact with research in the field in order to be acquainted with the latest findings and to remember what your teachers did and resort to your language learning experience in order to be as efficient as possible as a teacher.

'You also need to be familiar with the various methods used or experimented by English language teachers and their results in order to be able to choose the one (or ones) most suitable for your class in order to make up your own 'recipe' combining elements from several methods at the same time.

Here again, you should try to remember the methods used by your teachers, in order to choose the most effective ones among them and to draw upon them in your teaching. I even use the same materials sometimes.' (C)

Corina considers that the basis of what she does when she teaches is her experience as a learner, the 'model' of her teachers from both school and university, her classroom observation opportunities and her own teaching

experience. The teaching practice of the pre-service teacher training is of least use as it was too short.

'I have learnt some of these things in school (mostly on the MA programme), some the hard way, in the classroom, once I started teaching, and very few during the too short practice period in the teacher training module. On the other hand, thinking about what my teachers and professors used to do has helped a lot. I rely very much on that background in my English classes. Of great help have been my (classroom) observations during the summer course in Oxford. I learnt a lot then, in just one month, as they used all sorts of communicative methods I had never experienced before. And even now I still use the materials I got then.' (C)

Among the issues that **Corina** mentions there are some similarities and some differences when compared to **Anca**'s list. **Anca** went into teaching straight away and did not have any other formal training opportunities. It appears that **Corina**'s perception of what is useful for language teaching awareness was enriched by her further contact with formal training while she was already teaching. Her list would be the following:

1 Awareness of learning strategies and teaching methods

2 Learner experience/ perceptions (1. getting feedback from the students - in class during the 'lesson' or in writing; 'you learn from your students', 2. being a learner herself)

3 Results of research in the field

4 Knowledge of differences/similarities between mother tongue and target language

5 Knowledge of psychology

6 Former school teacher of English as possible model

7 Teaching practice (too short)

8 Further courses (MA, Oxford summer course. Especially peer observation)

9 Own teaching experience ('the hard way')

Irina seems to be a special person who knew already at about the age of 10 that she wanted to become a teacher of English and she seems to believe that she knew already at that time what would have been better for her and her classmates when learning English. She considers all the teachers of English that she had as either good or bad examples of how teaching can be done.

'I will answer the question <u>how, when, where</u> this knowledge is acquired. It is difficult to answer because I have wanted to become a teacher of English ever since I was in the 5th grade. I loved my teacher, who taught us a lot of songs and poems, which I remember very well even now. I learnt that you attract young students in this way. Then, after one year, my teacher left for Sweden for good. I had the good luck or the misfortune to come in contact with no less than other six teachers of English until I went to high-school. I learnt from some of them, but I would criticise them all (in my mind, of course); nobody was good enough and I thought about what I would have liked to do during the classes of English'. (I)

Perhaps **Irina** did not realise all the issues that she writes about at the time when she was a learner, but she remembers having experienced them as a learner and she says that she enjoyed thinking of herself as a teacher because she was allowed to 'teach' her own classmates. She is aware of the importance of communication in language teaching, of communicative classroom activities but also of communication that belongs not only to words but also to body language and to culture and civilisation. But she cannot understand why her classmates did not like her teaching. The fact that she mentions this aspect is important as she proves to be aware of something lacking, which she could not account for.

'When I went to high-school I had a very good teacher of English, ready to use the new communicative methods. It was great and I remember many things even now: some role-plays, some pair-work activities. However, I was the best in class and I always wanted to learn more and more. That is why I attended the so-called summer camps - that is summer courses with students from Scottish universities as teachers. I learnt about British life and civilisation, I learnt that songs and body language help a lot when you teach, and I learnt how to organise a class debate. Later, when I was in the 11th grade my school teacher even let me organise role-plays and debates, but my classmates were not very enthusiastic about them.'

Besides teaching her classmates **Irina** also did some private tutoring. This also provided her with teaching awareness and teaching experience.

'Another important element in my training is that I have a young sister and I always wanted to teach her the English I knew. As a matter of fact I also helped some of my classmates who were not so good at English. I liked this. Everything I learnt made me think of how to teach that item. I had many ideas! I think I was born to become a teacher and a teacher of English.' (I)

As **Anca** and **Corina** mentioned before **Irina** also considers that the pre-service teacher training at university offered her very little. During the teaching practice she felt proud to teach at one of the 'best' secondary schools in town, but because it felt as a show not like real practice she considers it valueless. Her own experience as a teacher is the one that counts and from which she has learnt the most.

'The university years disappointed me in a way. I learnt things about psychology and methodology and I even taught in High School, but frankly speaking that was too little. It was interesting teaching high-school classes and I felt like an actor on the stage. That is why I think that the practical stage was not long enough. I ought to have learnt that a teacher shouldn't be noticed in class, like an actor. A teacher has to be somewhere in the background and to co-ordinate things just like a director. The students should be the actors.

I have acquired a lot of knowledge about teaching ever since I have been teaching. The contact with the classes has helped me a lot more than all my university training.' (I)

Peers in school are important as they are the people who can advise you and who may or may not accept you as a peer. **Irina** brings forward here the issue of the beginner teacher 'feeling', 'believing' that they are a teacher. One is a teacher only if the others also consider that. If it is only you who thinks so it is not enough. This issue is connected to the social relationships in a school and also to the beginner teacher learning how to behave as a member of a certain profession.

'A person who has helped me a lot is the head of the department of English in our school, who is a remarkable human being from all points of view. She is not only a good professional, ready to offer the most appropriate advice as far as teaching is concerned, but she also helped me feel like a member of the teaching staff and has supported me in the most difficult moments of my teaching experience.' (I)

Other sources of training and/or ideas are the books that are available at the British Council Library, but **Irina** does not have the patience to adapt and use them in her own classes

'The British Library is also very important in my teacher training. There is a special corner for teachers there, with a lot of material. My only difficulty is how to adapt it to my classes.' (I)

The issue that **Irina** also raises is that of teaching allowing for a special kind of relationship, that **Corina** has also mentioned. The teacher also 'listens' to the pupils and may help them.

'Teaching is a special job because you come in contact with souls. You don't only have to give them some knowledge, but you also have to listen to them, to help them shape their personalities. That is why for the beginners it is very difficult to be a good teacher. You have to be patient because everything comes as time goes by.' (I)

Like **Anca**, **Irina** has also started teaching in a secondary school, so there are more similarities between what they both refer to. She does not mention any further training and the issues they both mention are of a more practical nature. This is also due to problems (discipline problems) that they have because of teaching learners of a younger age.

1 The teacher's job is not just a job but 'one's life', a way of being, a way of living.

2 Learning teaching from observing one's own teachers and thinking critically of what they did, choosing critically from what was observed.

3 Remembering class activities and what was useful about them.

4 Practice - which she sees as part of her training - with her own colleagues in school, with tutoring her sister and some of her colleagues.

5 Pre-service training offered too little practice and in the 'wrong' manner and some theoretical knowledge of psychology and methodology.

6 Learning while teaching.

7 Peer support in 'difficult' moments related to teaching.

8 Being acknowledged as a member of the teaching staff, (the need to be part of a group, the need to belong).

9 Access to books, materials and reference in the library.

	Issues related to LTA origin – in :	Anca	Corina	Irina
1.	Teaching experience	*	*	*
2.	Pre-service courses at university	*		*
3.	Teaching practice	*	*	*
4.	Experience/ perceptions as learner	*	*	*
5.	Talking to peers	*		*
6.	Talking to others	*		
7.	Former English language teacher model	*	*	*
8.	Former teachers	*		*

9.	Feedback from own students		*	*
10.	Classroom observation		*	*
11.	Teaching as a way of being, of behaving/ it suits the personality			*
12.	Peers'/ head of department's advice/ support. Being part of a group/ association	*		*
13.	Materials and references in the library		*	*
14.	Reading methodology	*	*	
15.	Results of research in the field		*	
16.	Differences between the learners' lang. and the target lang.		*	
17.	Further training		*	
18.	Awareness of teaching methodology and learning strategies		*	
19.	Psychology		*	*

(The * in the table means that the issue is mentioned by that respondent.

The issues mentioned as the origins of language teaching awareness could be grouped into issues related to **institutions**, **courses, people** and **fields of knowledge** besides what the teachers themselves did - **actions.** The institutions are the educational ones from primary school to university and also the BC library. The courses are the pre-service teacher training course offered at the university plus the teaching practice as well as summer courses or MA programmes. The people who are mentioned are the teachers one had while a learner, the colleagues and peers now, but also people like the head of department, the school psychologist or one's own mother and the teachers' association. The fields of knowledge are English (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation), psychology, methodology, learning strategies, contrastive linguistics. The experience gained from 'doing' teaching is the most valuable and is considered by the three beginner teachers as the most important.

Among the findings of this study there are some similar to the ones that resulted from the needs analysis carried out for the British Council 'Newly Qualified Teachers' Project (Vuscan, 2003). The newly qualified teachers – the NQTies – felt that they needed more input in several knowledge areas connected to teaching English as a foreign language and guidance and help from somebody either with more experience or just willing to listen. These are issues that are similar to what my respondents consider to be the source of their

awareness of language teaching and they also emphasize the importance of peer support.

Another study that I would like to mention is that by David McNamara (1994). The aim of David McNamara's study 'The influence of Tutors and Mentors upon Primary Student Teachers' Classroom Practice' was to find out to what extent the information, advice and support which is assumed mentors and tutors provide actually informs student teachers' preparation for practice and subsequent teaching. (McNamara, 1994:107)

The students (28 on a postgraduate course) were asked about the most frequently used sources of advice and information for planning their classroom activity and for their classroom practice. McNamara's conclusion is that from the point of view of teachers as learners, teaching is very much a practical activity

Knowledge about teaching is "situated knowledge" located within the physical and social context (of the classroom). Students draw upon the obvious resources, themselves and their 'natural' and 'common sense' dispositions, mentors and tutors. In addition, students live in a network of social relationships and they are also likely to refer to friends and relatives as a resource. (McNamara, 1994:120)

Finally beginner teachers, generally, feel that their own practical experience and the feeling of belonging are of crucial importance for them at the beginning of their career, serving as the main source for what they do in the classroom.

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THE LEXICAL APPROACH AND ITS IMPACT ON THE TEACHING OF ECONOMIC ENGLISH

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In our paper we are going to point out some of the important insights provided by the lexical approach which can be successfully implemented in the teaching and testing of different varieties of Economic English such as Business English, Financial English, Accounting English.

Michael Lewis has developed the lexical approach in the book with the same name "The Lexical Approach. The State of ELT and a Way Forward" first published by LTP in 1993. Since then follow-up books were published by the same author such as "Implementing the Lexical Approach. Putting Theory into Practice" LTP, 1997, or by a group of authors with Michael Lewis as editor: "Teaching Collocation. Further Developments in the Lexical Approach." LTP 2000. The main objective of the author of this approach has been to assess the nature and the role of lexis and of lexical items rather than words and structures as the units of language. By lexical item he means "*the concept of the individual word extended to multi-word objects which are the fundamental units of the language"*, while lexis is "*a more general word than vocabulary;… it covers single words and multi-word objects which have the same status in the language as simple words, the items we store in our mental lexicon ready for use."* (Lewis, 2002b: 217). Among multi-word items Lewis (2002) distinguishes collocations, which are message- oriented and institutionalised expressions, which are essentially pragmatic in character. According to Lewis the lexical approach starts from the assumption that "*language consists of many smaller patterns, which exhibit varying degrees of fixedness or generalisability, each based on a word; in a sense each word has its own grammar."* (Lewis, 2000: 137).

Besides collocations, mention has been made of another category called colligation. The latter term has been defined as *" the way one word regularly co-occurs with a particular (grammar) pattern."* (Lewis, 2000:137). Or, to put it in another way, according to Michael Hoey (2003), colligation is " *the grammatical company a word keeps and the position it prefers" (*Lewis, 2000: 234). Hoey also defines another category beyond

collocations that he calls semantic prosody. This is a category which "*occurs when a word associates with a particular set of meanings"* (Lewis, 2000: 232). Lewis (2000) also mentions a very important change in the methodological field, in consequence of the theoretical insights provided, *"the whole vocabulary/grammar dichotomy needs to be replaced by a spectrum of patterns which exhibit different degrees of restriction and generalisability.* ***Words are used in patterns which learners need to notice****"* (Lewis, 2000a: 142).

As Lewis (2000a: 95) points out: *" an important part of language acquisition is the ability to produce lexical phrases as unanalysed wholes or 'chunks' and these chunks become the raw data by which the learner begins to perceive patterns, morphology, and those other features of language traditionally thought as 'grammar'."*

In Economic English we have identified examples of collocations, colligations and semantic prosody that we are going to illustrate in the following part of this paper and see how they can be pedagogically exploited in our classes.

Collocations in Economic English are, in our opinion, mainly *subject specific.* That means they refer to particular economic fields and should be understood in such a context. To give a few examples of subject specific collocations here is a table where we have *an adjective (or noun used as an attribute) + noun collocation,* where the noun is **price.**

Reserve Retail Wholesale Unit Total	Price

Reserve price is specific to auctions, retail and wholesale prices are specific to trade, unit and total prices are used in accounting documents.

We shall now also illustrate other collocations specific to different financial contexts. The following table refers to collocations in the field of taxation. The nouns **tax** and **duty** collocate with adjectives or nouns used attributively.

Income Corporation Inheritance Direct	Tax

Indirect Progressive	
Customs Excise	Duty

The following table supplies examples with the noun **cost** collocating with adjectives or nouns used attributively in the field of cost accounting.

Direct Indirect Labour Raw materials Historical Fixed Variable Manufacturing Non-manufacturing	Cost

As for colligations, we must say that in our illustrations they are genre-specific. In business letter writing, the genre we have called "making a request" Hollinger (2003: 200-201) supplies us with an example of patterns consisting of *Verb + possessive adjective (your) + superlative degree of an adjective + noun* to express the pragmatic function we have labeled "requiring advantageous terms."

The following table shows examples of such a *use*. This term is understood in the sense of " functional and contextual appropriacy of an utterance"(cf. Lewis, 2002a: 12).

Please quote us	your	most advantageous most favourable best keenest lowest	prices/ terms/rates
Please send us	your	latest	catalogue/ price list

The same genre also supplies us with another illustration of a colligation.

The pattern used is *let + us + have/know + noun (*direct object) and the function is to request that something is sent or some information is conveyed. Examples are provided in the following table:

Please let	us	have	your quotation for 1 ton of fertilizer/ your pro-forma invoice
Please let	us	know	the date of delivery/ packing details etc.

Various other patterns/ colligations, which are closely related, are worth mentioning as they illustrate how language is actually used, and how grammar and lexis are linked, each word.having its patterns of use.

Have +zero article + pleasure + in + gerund

Ex. We have pleasure in enclosing/ acknowledging receipt/sending you…

but: *Have+ definite article + pleasure + of + gerund*

Ex. We have the pleasure of enclosing/ confirming/sending…

Or: *Give + personal pronoun + great + pleasure + to infinitive*

Ex. It gives me great pleasure to send you …

The genre of letters of the above examples has been called by us "supplying information requested by the correspondent" (Hollinger, 2001: 28).

Such language chunks should be presented to the learners so that they should become aware of the different language patterns used by lan

What has been termed semantic prosody is illustrated in our paper in a financial co-text. We should say therefore that as far as our example is concerned, it is subject- specific and not genre- specific, as has been the case of the above mentioned colligations.

We have **incurred** a(n) loss / debt/ cost expense

The verb " to incur" is associated with an unpleasant meaning, is forming more than a collocation, it forms what has been called semantic prosody with a limited number of nouns, all in the financial field.

So far we have tried to find illustrations, in our field of expertise- economic English, for the theoretical categories which are at the core of the

lexical approach. In the following part of our paper we shall analyse how such insights are useful for the implementation in the economic English classes.

It is consistent with the lexical approach to encourage learners to perceive and become aware of whole patterns rather than break them down to the level of individual, single words. In this way learners will be able to fluently express a certain function in writing, let us say in a business letter, or in speaking, when making a presentation or taking part in a business negotiation or meeting. In the latter case the above mentioned institutionalised expressions are quite useful. Examples of such expressions should be made available to the learners so that they can observe them, then hypothesise and experiment by using them in appropriate business contexts. The cycle "Observe- Hypothesise-Experiment " should replace (Lewis, 2000a: 56) the Present-Practise-Produce learning strategy. It is in this way that input can become intake in the acquiring of L2.

In order to make them aware of lexical chunks, teachers should supply learners with written or spoken texts and require them to find out the lexical patterns- collocations- or lexical + grammar patterns- colligations -and store them. In the *hypothesise and experiment* stages different types of activities could then be devised. For example collocational grids can be supplied such as:

	An account	A bill	An invoice	A difference
To settle				
To overdraw				
To Overcharge				
To open				
To discount				

Learners could be asked to use + in the rows where the collocation noun plus verb is possible and to use – in the rows where such a collocation is not possible.

Another possibility is to use the "odd combination out" type of activity. Here is an example.

Certified	Chartered	Good	chief	**Accountant**
Historical	Cost	Creative	financial	**Accounting**
Corporation	Managerial	Direct	indirect	**Tax**
Unexpected	Direct	Historical	labour	**Cost**

A crossword puzzle for filling in a slot in a lexical item could also be used either as individual work or as class work The words to be filled in are part of a larger context, a fact that is consistent with the lexical approach which states that lexical 'chunks' rather than words in isolation are stored in the learner's mind. We supply an example we have devised where collocations from Business English are used and one slot has to be filled in.

						1	
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							

Down 1.We have pleasure…our catalogue. **Across. 2** We confirm…of your letter.**3.** We are ready to … supply the goods from stock. **4**. Unless we receive the goods within a week we shall see ourselves compelled to…the order **5.**We cannot accept any … in delivery, as our customers badly need the goods **6**. The contract… provides for penalties in case of delay in delivery.**7** You may ... a loss if you invest in this corporation. **8** The insurance policy…you against the risk of breakage **9** Please take out a …policy for the goods we ordered from you.

The key to the slots to be filled in is: 1. pleasure 2. receipt 3 supply 4. cancel 5. delay 6. clause 7. incur 8. covers 9. valued.

Other types of activities, we should like to suggest, include matching exercises, cloze exercises, or the reproduction of collocations by learners based on definitions.

A matching exercise can comprise two columns and learners are asked to find which words match to form collocations. In some instances more than one collocation between words is possible.

For instance:

a. conclude	1 the deadline
b. meet	2 an order
c. fill	3 a contract
d. cancel	4 a complaint
e. file	5. a demand

In clozes the deleted words should be part of a collocation, deletions should not be randomly performed.

The reproduction of collocations by learners based on definitions will be illustrated by an activity where learners are required to supply collocations including the words: *tax and duty.*

1. a tax paid on imports 2. A tax paid on tobacco, alcohol, and gasoline 3. A tax paid on salary, dividends. 4 a tax paid on the profit made by a company .The key to the exercise is 1. Customs duty 2. Excise duty 3. Income tax 4.corporation tax.

As testing should, as a rule, be based on types of activities the learners have already practised we suggest that the above mentioned examples of activities are also useful for tests.

To conclude our paper, we should say that the essential thing in implementing the lexical approach is the change of focus from individual word to lexical chunks, larger groups of words as they naturally occur in language use. Awareness raising of collocations and of other patterns which combine grammar with words, as each word has its own grammar, its own preferred combinations is another useful objective to be had in mind when teaching according to the principles of the lexical approach. In a way our teaching has already included the lexical approach as business letter writing is taught based on lexical chunks to be used for each function of a business letter that belongs to a certain genre. We have also used the teaching and practising of collocations for some time. The theoretical framework made available by Michael Lewis is useful for the further implementation of this approach.

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS FOREIGNERS

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The study of attitudes in the context of foreign language learning has an implied practical end which directs the inquiry towards finding not only whether certain attitudes exist, but also to what extent and in what way they interact with the other elements of the foreign language learning continuum. The rationale behind the study of attitudes is given by the two areas it may be connected to: language learning motivation (Byram, 1989; 1991; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Jackobovits, 1970) and cultural understanding (Byram; 1989, Byram and Essarte-Sarries: 1991, Hinkel: 1999, Spolsky: 1989, Kramsch: 1998, Morgan and Cain: 2000). The latter is also important in cross-cultural communication (Meyer, M: 1991, Brislin and Yoshida: 1994, Hecht et. al.1989, Banks et. al: 1991, Liberman: 1995), which requires more than linguistic competence. Brislin and Yoshida (1994:48) argue that approaches focussing only on language teaching produce 'fluent fools', which they define as:

> *'[...] someone who can speak a language fluently yet knows nothing about the culture. Since these people are fluent in the language, host nationals tend to assume that they must be equally fluent in the culture as well. A cultural misunderstanding, therefore, is less likely to be interpreted as due to the person's good-natured ignorance. On the other hand, people who do not speak the language well are often given the benefit of the doubt.'*

The aim of the present paper is to discuss the relationship between cultural attitudes and cultural understanding in the context of foreign language education.

Research methodology:

The data provided by the administration of the research instruments used in the study of the above mentioned topics (an attitude questionnaire, a cultural understanding quiz, and interviews) were both qualitative and quantitative ones. The respondents were Romanian learners of English enrolled in 'general schools' (age 13/14) and secondary school (age 17/19). Location

was another criterion in the selection of the respondents. Thus half of the respondents lived in a commune, while the others lived in a big town.

Learners' rating of three or four foreign nations are considered as quantitative indicators of their attitudes towards the respective nations. Stereotypes will be considered as qualitative indicators of the learners' positive or negative attitudes. Hedging is also considered an indicator of the learners' attitudes, because it is a way to down tone their critical attitude towards a nation otherwise admired.

Analysis:

The data illustrate the fact that misunderstanding or lack of knowledge of the foreign culture influenced the learners' attitudes towards the foreign nation. This relationship is evident in the sketches provided by respondents in both age groups and locations. The quotes also illustrate the fact that, in their turn, attitudes can influence the learners' understanding of the foreign culture. Therefore the relationship between cultural attitudes and understanding may be represented as below:

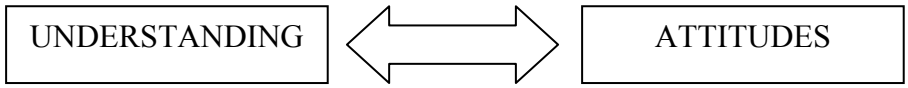

Fig. 1. Relationship between cultural understanding and attitudes towards foreigners

The term 'understanding' is used here to refer to the learners' capacity to rely on their cultural knowledge in order to identify and make sense of a foreign society, its institutions, people, origin and development. Cultural understanding has been treated differently in literature. Thus Brislin and Yoshida (1994) design a four steps approach to intercultural communication training: **awareness - knowledge – emotions - skills**. Yet, it is not very clear where 'cultural understanding' would fit into their plan, because when defining the four cultural awareness competencies they refer to 'self-awareness' as learners' ability to perceive and **understand** the way their native culture has shaped their lives. In this case understanding precedes knowledge, which is in contradiction with the same authors, who state that the function of 'awareness' is that of learning to notice, which does not necessarily include 'understanding' as well. In terms of foreign language education, 'understanding' of a target culture would enable learners to predict the target population's behaviour, way

of living, beliefs, etc, as well as foreigners' appropriate behaviour when visiting that country and interacting with the native population. For practical reasons one could establish a hierarchy in the learners' developing cultural understanding, by identifying the stages represented in the figure below:

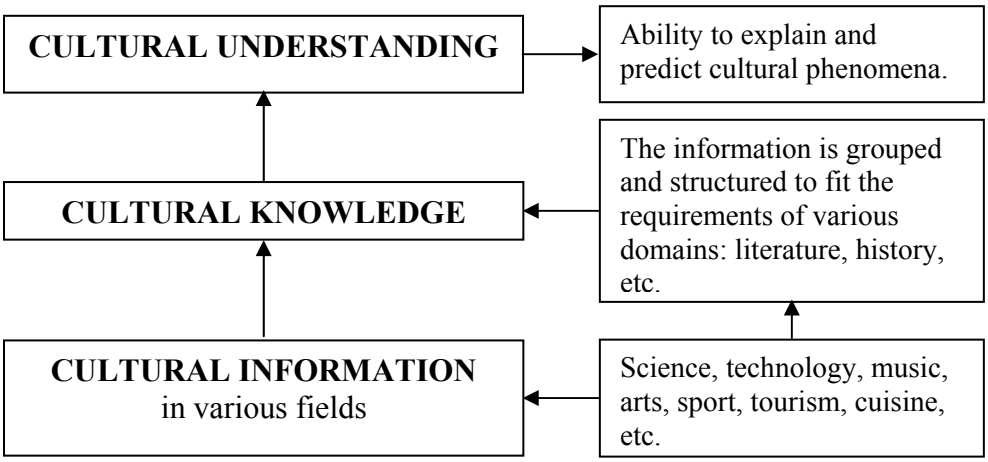

Figure 2 Stages in developing cultural understanding

Foreign language teachers usually cover the lowest two stages, without asking learners to explain 'why' the facts are as they perceive them. The first two stages at the bottom of the diagram correspond to what Brislin and Yoshida (1994) include into the category of 'area specific knowledge'. Yet, in the diagram at Fig. 2 'knowledge' is divided into two steps: information, and the learners' processing of it. This 'process' relies mainly on categorising, which is a cognitive skill leading to 'knowledge' that is the second stage in the diagram. Therefore the first step, that of getting informed, would answer learners' needs regarding 'what' the foreign culture is, namely the elements that constitute the foreign country. The second stage refers to the learners' using their cognitive skills in order to categorise the information that could thus become 'knowledge' in various fields. The last stage, that of 'understanding', goes beyond categorisation, because it is concerned with what Byram (1989:84) calls 'looking at meanings of the actions and the artefacts of a given culture'. This would enable learners to find the rationale behind cultural products and behaviour and would allow them to even make predictions regarding the behaviour of foreigners.

The stages in the diagram are illustrated in the examples discussed next. In the first example one can trace the influence of the English culture (mainly literature), that learners were exposed to during their English classes. Sources of information overlap and the stereotypes that learners use are thus compounded from various areas, the result being, in this case, a portrait that can hardly be placed in a definite period of time:

> *'The nationality that I **admire the most** is the English. I find the English people refined, highly cultivated and elevated. Whether this is true or not, it remains to be seen. The things **I like** about them is the aristocratic-like behaviour, their five o'clock tea (I'm a great fan of tea), the pubs, the houses they live, the simplicity of their behaviour, well, **I like almost everything** about them' (VLR-02).*

In terms of attitudes, the words in bold clearly express the respondent's positive attitude towards the British. The report on what the learner perceived to be some characteristic features of the target language culture reveals a rather uncertain 'understanding' of the foreign culture. Thus one cannot be sure of what exactly the student meant by 'aristocratic-like behaviour', nor about how it relates to 'simplicity', but the overall impression is that the respondent is impressed by tradition.

Another respondent from the same school also mentions the 'five o'clock tea': 'As all English, she [Princess Diana] liked to have her 5 o'clock tea' (VLR-01). The respondents in these examples are not sensitive to the changes that different periods of time imposed on the 'tradition' they admire (the custom of having 'tea' at 5 p.m.), and the outcome is a rather inaccurate perception of the contemporary foreign culture and people. In this case the learners' reports give the impression that they are not familiar with all the connotations that 'having tea' had in the past, and how many of them are still observed. The comment in brackets suggests that what the learner actually refers to is a cup of tea he or she likes, without any reference to it as a social event. In terms of their degree of cultural understanding, they are at the 'information stage' (Fig. 2), which prevents them from understanding the changes in timing and socialising. In what their attitudes are concerned, their cultural 'understanding', inaccurate as it is, contributed to the positive evaluation of the people.

The next quote from a written sketch illustrates hedging (1) and criticism triggered by misunderstanding [2] the foreign culture:

> *'Americans are known in the whole world as being ambitious, optimistic and in <u>great number hardworking</u>. (1) Generally they are*

friendly but less honest (1) (they get rich on others' misery, not taking into account that they cause harm [2]). Their generosity is debatable, but they are a very developed people. (MSG 8-08).

The first negative trait could be a reminiscence of communist indoctrination. According to that ideology the only way that 'capitalists' obtained profits was by exploiting the 'working class'. This way of thinking is still very common in Romania, and thus even younger learners are exposed to it. The respondent's explanation in brackets justifies the interpretation of the origin of this negative label in the information that led to the misunderstanding of the American culture. It also illustrates the fact that the respondent does not discriminate between 'corporations' and 'sections of society' and the American people, which is again the result of insufficient knowledge of the target society. It is therefore safe to assume that in this case the negative attitudes were influenced by the respondent's misunderstanding of the target culture. Yet the tendency to hedge criticism is a sign that the respondent's attitudes are 'mixed' rather than just negative. In this respect the learner used 'less honest' instead of 'dishonest'. Another way to avoid direct criticism is by restricting the number of people who share a certain positive trait. Thus the Americans are 'in great number hardworking'.

The next quote is another example where negative and positive stereotypes co-exist. It is one of the rare examples of Americans being portrayed in the 'bad' corner of the questionnaire (C2b). Mention should be made that the 'good' corner was filled in this case with the sketch of a typical Belgian whom the respondent met while being on a tour in that country. Since most respondents did not have any experience abroad, this one is also an example of 'experience abroad' influencing attitudes.

The opening line *'I don't know too much about Americans'*, justifies the assumption that the admitted lack of knowledge of the American society was one of factors that triggered the rather confused perception of the nation.

'He's a friendly, polite person, <u>but</u> mean. He's hardworking <u>but</u> all he does is for himself because of his lack of generosity (because he's not generous, noble hearted). I mean that he does not help the other, he's not emotional. (1a) A large number of the Americans are rude, conceited, ready to fight, <u>but</u> a small part of them are polite with strangers and other nations <u>when they are motivated by something</u>. Otherwise I don't think they are, as they seem to be. Americans are conceited (1b) because <u>they live in a country where</u>

they can do everything and do not have to work (2), […]' (SM 7-16).

The key to this presentation is 'but'. In the first part of the sketch 'but' is used to contrast adjectives: 'friendly, polite'…but 'mean'…'hardworking but […] 'lack of generosity'. It is hard to state whether the function of the conjunction is to contrast opposite traits or express surprise.

The reverse procedure is to use the positive attribute after 'but'. In this case what follows after 'but' although positive in meaning (polite) is weakened by the subject of the clause: 'a small part of them', as well as the subordinate clause following it (underlined). 'With strangers…other nations' also restricts the number of Americans characterised by 'politeness' Thus in contrast with the large number of Americans… a small number are sometimes polite, when they are motivated by something. By admitting that not the whole group displays the negative traits listed, the learner wants to camouflage his or her prejudiced evaluation of a group of people.

The previous quotes reveal the learners' need to stereotype, which affect their attitudes that in their turn will affect language learning. One can also sense confusion in the use of some concepts. Thus a learner justifies the trait 'not emotional' with the fact that 'he does not help the other'. Yet the best example here is the reason provided for the use of 'conceited' (2). It shows lack of knowledge of how societies in general are constituted and function. Here the respondent admits of the existence of a country where they can do everything and do not have to work and identifies it with America.

The next quote illustrates the way a secondary school respondent perceived the same society. The choice of another sketch on Americans is justified by the decision to make comparison possible. The aim here is to signal the relationship between attitudes and understanding and not the way learners perceive different nations.

The requirement to sketch a typical person belonging to the nation they rated the lowest proved to be a real problem for some respondents. The dilemma of such a respondent is illustrated in the following quote:

'The Americans have a low score because I was thinking of common people when grading, and they are not very learned. Their intellectuals are to a great extent foreigners who have finished their studies there and they usually settle there. For this reason the Americans deserve all admiration. They succeeded in being

competitive in almost any field because they entice the best specialists away from their native country' (MSVL 12-23).

The respondent's problem is in fact the question of whether or not to consider immigrants as 'Americans'. The solution he or she opted for is obvious in the text. The genuine Americans are the common people who are not considered to be very learned, hence the low score obtained. So, in this case, inaccurate knowledge of the foreign culture triggered the low rating of the nation. It is also important to note that the learner's high opinion about the role of formal education may also be considered to be one of the factors that influenced her evaluation. Most of the 'learned' people, university graduates whom the respondent equates with 'intellectuals', are considered to be still foreigners living in America. Yet he or she ends in a positive tone, expressing admiration for the Americans who not only attract but also integrate the many foreign 'specialists' who help their nation become 'competitive' 'in almost any field'.

The quote is also an example of the way 'attitudes' may influence 'understanding'. Positive attitudes towards the target culture influenced the learner's appreciation of the American policy of 'attracting' and integrating foreign specialists. Persons with a negative attitude towards America might condemn such an act on the premise that the specialists' native country has invested into their education and training to the advantage of the foreign country.

The data provided examples that illustrate the impact of negative attitudes on the understanding of foreign cultures as well. The effect of the negative feelings towards the foreign nation could be defined as a 'cultural blindness' that prevents the learner to 'see' what otherwise is clear for those having a positive or neutral attitude. One could, for example, hardly label as 'indifferent' and 'unpractical' (SM: 11-16) a nation (Hungarians) who found enough strength and determination to fight the Russian oppressors in 1956, and who succeeded in bringing their country into those organisations (NATO, EU) that Romanians are also eager to belong. Since there is plenty of information about our neighbouring country in the media, the only possible explanation for the respondent's lack of knowledge is his or her 'blocking' any positive interpretation of the facts related to the despised nation.

The focus in the present paper is on the way attitudes interfere with the understanding of the foreign culture, and this was already illustrated in analysing data where positive attitudes, as acknowledged in sketches, had an impact on respondents' understanding of foreign cultures. Consequently only

one example of how negative attitudes interfere with cultural understanding is discussed next.

The situation referred to is in the area of customs and behaviours directly related to human interaction (greeting, queuing, disagreeing, etc), where lack of knowledge or understanding could lead to a negative attitude, as in the following examples.

> *'Most of the English **aren't polite**. They are ambitious and they would like to be the best. You can expect some of them to be revengeful' (SM7-21).*
>
> *'Now the reason I don't like the British. First of all they are the **coldest men** I know and they always have a demanding expression. They always expect you to behave like in a book [by the book]. They have very strict traditions that are also very cold. They have a code of manners that doesn't allow you to get closer to a person even if you wish. I respect them for their tidiness and discipline but I don't think I could ever live in such a cold place' (VLR-07).*

At the origin of many negative stereotypes, considered here as signs of a negative attitude, lies the learners' referring to the foreigners' way of life outside their cultural context. They use their experience and knowledge of the Romanian context to try to make sense of what and how foreigners do things. Thus they develop a 'misunderstanding' of what they perceive to be the correct understanding. The danger lies in the fact that being convinced of having understood the phenomenon, they do not seek further information.

One of the examples already discussed (VLR-02) made reference to customs as well. In the case of the above quotes, the examples cover both age groups (13/14-17/18) and towns (VL-SM) in order to point to the fact that the phenomenon is not restricted to a group of learners. Mention should be made that the respondents had opportunities of meeting British people in Romania and observe their behaviour. The criticism present in the examples above is mainly the result of a lack of cultural awareness. Learners' 'experience' with the British gave them the opportunity to see that the foreigners' behaviour differed from theirs (underlined parts). In their case 'different' is equated with 'bad'.

At the origin of their negative perception is, I believe, the discrepancy between the Romanian and British culture, namely their different attitudes towards maintaining personal space and body contacts. These are made evident in their interaction with foreigners. The fact that the British follow the same

rules in relating to their fellow countrymen is probably not perceived by the Romanian learner.

The consequence of the Roman colonisation of Dacia (101-106 AD), which is considered to be at the origin of Romanians, is that their behaviour is closer to that of the other Romance peoples (Italian Spanish, French) and therefore do not avoid touching or 'invading' somebody else's personal space. In this case, the reluctance of the British to shake hands, hug, etc. may be perceived as less friendly, or even 'cold'. The learners' perception of the French as 'friendly and sincere' (SM 7-14), friendly (SM 7-4, MSG 8-11), polite (SM 7-17) could rest upon similarities in behaviour and disposition, granted, according to a respondent, by a common origin: The French nation has a Latin origin, as the Romanians have (SM 7-14).

Conclusions

The close relationship between attitudes and understanding is based upon the interaction of the 'affective' (attitudinal) and 'cognitive' evaluation (based on cultural understanding) of foreigners. In this respect the data revealed instances when lack of knowledge and understanding of the foreign culture lead to unfavourable attitude towards foreigners. Yet, the situation is complex and does not allow of generalisations, because the examples discussed provided evidence of inaccurate knowledge leading to positive attitudes. A possible clue to discriminating between areas where inaccurate knowledge could lead to negative attitudes is to sort out domains that are directly implicated in interaction with foreigners. The data illustrated the fact that whether the British have their tea at 5 p.m. or any other time, could not affect their relationship with the Romanian learner, therefore their attitude remained positive. The situation changes in the case of 'greeting', where reluctance to shake hands could induce a negative evaluation of the foreigner.

The analysis of the examples referred to in this paper leads to the conclusion that there may be reciprocity in the way attitudes and influence each other. This paper is an attempt to explore the above possibility, but the complexity of the problems of 'emotion' (attitudes) and 'cognition' (understanding) would require a more complex approach to the issue of the relationship between them. The examples considered here support the hypothesis that positive attitudes may influence learners in their interpretation of the cultural phenomenon, thus leading to a favourable evaluation. A negative attitude may bring forth an 'unfavourable' decoding of the foreign culture. This

highlights the importance of the study of attitudes and cultural understanding in the context of foreign language pedagogy.

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THE CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

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What will be the consequences of the fact that English has become *lingua franca* of the 21st century is a question that most of us who use English in our international interactions ask ourselves quite often these days. How will the use of English in the international community affect its acoustic image? Will it be influenced by so many non-native English pronunciations or will it follow the native path of development? These are the questions that we who teach English pronunciation often ponder and are eager to find the answers to.

This paper addresses the issue of English pronunciation teaching in view of recent attempts to develop a phonological core of international English. In 2000 Oxford University Press published a book by Jennifer Jenkins, entitled *The Phonology of English as an International Language: New Models, New Norms.* The author argues that since the ownership of the English language has changed – in the sense that the native speakers no longer own it – and 'new owners' use it mainly for the purpose of being understood by other foreign speakers, the goals for the teaching of English pronunciation should be adapted to the new situation. In other words, the English pronunciation model should no longer be a standard native pronunciation. Instead a *Lingua Franca Phonological Core (LFPC)* should be developed. This would provide foreign learners with the phonological, phonetic and prosodic features of *International English (IE)*.

Below I will try to present some considerations regarding the plausibility of the LFPC as the most suitable basis for the teaching of English pronunciation to non-native speakers of English. First I will explain why the codification of IE is impossible and counter-productive. Second, I will argue that when it comes to the teaching of English pronunciation one has to bear in mind who the learners are and why they want to learn English. Then I will briefly present the LFPC and determine whether it makes any allowances for Slovene speakers of English. Finally, I will critically examine Jenkins's (2000) 5-step proposal for the teaching of pronunciation of IE.

1. The codification of international English

The transfer of linguistic elements from L1 to L2 is an inevitable process when two languages come in contact. L1 speakers bring pronunciation features of their mother tongues to their English pronunciation. As a result, there cannot be only one international English but several varieties of it. International English is like an amoeba, changing its size and shape according to several parameters, such as the participants, their linguistic competence and the purpose of interaction. If the interaction among non-native speakers of English is to be successful, a very high degree of speech accommodation is necessary. This means that both parties – the speaker and the addressee – have to accommodate to each other's pronunciation: the speakers put a sufficient amount of effort into the pronunciation to make themselves as intelligible as possible, while the listeners, knowing who they are talking to, raise the level of tolerance with respect to the speakers' linguistic performance.

Speech accommodation, of course, is something that also happens in native interactions, as well as in the interactions between native and non-native speakers of English. Jenkins (2000) believes that in IE interactions its importance becomes enormous. This is the reason why she claims that one of the greatest challenges of future phonological research of IE should be the identification of those areas which are benign and those that pose potential threats to intelligibility in international interactions. On the basis of her own field observation and recordings of different L1 pairs, Jenkins (2000) is able to propose the phonological core of international English. It is grounded in RP and GA, but only because the features of these varieties are shown in the data to be crucial to intelligibility among L2 speakers of English (Jenkins, 2000:131).

Thus the phonological core comprises of a minimal number of phonological features of the English language that are necessary for mutual intelligibility in an international interaction. The teachers should no longer insist on native-like pronunciation because it is an unrealistic goal for L2 speakers. Instead they should encourage their learners to correct only those pronunciation features that inhibit intelligibillity in an international interaction.

Although the idea of describing international English seems very appealing and research into all linguistic levels should be supported, I find Jenkins's proposal of the phonological core of IE and the teaching of

pronunciation according to it premature and problematic in several points. Let me mention only three of them: first, if the phonological core of IE is grounded in RP and GA, why do we need it at all. Would it not be enough just to predict, on the basis of contrastive phonological analyses of different languages and English, areas of possible unintelligibility and expose learners to a variety of international Englishes? By proposing a special phonological core of IE, Jenkins is in fact proposing a new code which is very unstable and above all artificial.

Second, prior to the analysis of intelligibility, a number of important points should be made clear. For example, who will judge the intelligibility: native or non-native speakers? Probably both. Beginners or fluent speakers of IE? What will be the criteria for evaluating intelligibility?

My third point refers to Jenkins's (2000) assumption that native-like pronunciation is an unachievable goal for non-native speakers. As a teacher, as well as a non-native speaker of English I find this standpoint rather condescending. It underestimates the efforts of all those L2 speakers who for different reasons want to sound as native-like as possible. I agree with Jenkins that imposing a native-like pronunciation upon non-native speakers against all costs may be undemocratic and counter-productive, but imposing an artificial pronunciation such as LFPC upon them is equally wrong. I strongly believe that teachers should give their learners a chance to master English pronunciation as much as they possibly can.

2. The learners and the teaching of English pronunciation

It is a well-known fact that children are much better at learning sounds of foreign languages than adults. The teaching of pronunciation may be more successful with young learners than with the adults. Thus the spectrum of phonological, phonetic and prosodic features that a teacher may want to teach largely depends on the learner's age and the purpose of learning English.

A young learner will pick up the sounds of a foreign language almost imperceptibly, through play and songs. An adult, on the other hand, may resent the idea of twisting the tongue, shaping the lips and changing the oral cavity in unusual ways in order to produce strange/foreign sounds.

An elementary school English teacher in Slovenia, whose pupils start learning English at the age of 11 (soon 9), is expected to teach standard British English thus giving the pupils the possibility to master the accepted English pronunciation. If we bear in mind the fact that more and more Slovene children

are exposed to a variety of English accents through television and that a large number of them start learning English at a very young age (in kindergarten or special courses for children), the teaching of English pronunciation acquires a different dimension, that of particularising, i.e. drawing learners' attention to phonological differences and the consequences that 'wrong' pronunciations may have upon intelligibility.

An ESP teacher, on the contrary, may want to make pronunciation allowances for the fact that the learners are either too old to master pronunication successfully, resent the idea of using strange sounds for fear of being laughed at, or simply because there is not enough time for pronunciation practise (ESP courses for adults are often very short, intensive and with a very restricted and targeted purpose). Adult learners who attend such courses will probably use English for a very specific purpose and in a restricted interaction. But even they should be given a chance to master as many pronunciation features as possible and to make themselves more intelligible.

Three years ago I carried out a very small-scale opinion poll among 13 secondary school teachers of English and 140 learners in the fourth year of secondary school in Ljubljana. The purpose of the poll was to observe the pronunciation preferences among the teachers, on the one hand, and the learners, on the other.

The results showed that the teachers were conscious that the teaching of English should be modernized and that it should also include the teaching of native and non-native variants of English. What was most surprising was the fairly negative attitude of teachers towards 'Slovene English' as a variety of international English. Although a large number of their learners use 'Slovene English', the teachers believe that they should be trained to speak with a native accent (preferably British) otherwise they may have problems in achieving their communicative goals in English.

Learners, on the other hand, are equally aware of the importance of good/correct pronunciation for successful communication. The figures showed that 55.7% of learners were careful about their English pronunciation, 54.3% believed that standard pronunciation played the main role in the intelligibility and thus successful communication. 88.6% of the learners also knew which standard English pronunication their teachers taught them, while 87% of them were also aware that their own pronunciation was inconsistent and contained pronunciation features of American English.

When asked to evaluate the inelligibility of different accents of English, teachers and learners provided completely different answers to the question: *Whose English do you/your learners understand best: British, American, Slovene, or another foreigner's?* The teachers believed that their learners were best at understanding another Slovene, then another foreign speaker of English and finally native speakers of American and British English. The learners, on the other hand, claimed that they best understood speakers of British English, then American English and finally foreigners using English. This also proves how very difficult it is to evaluate intelligibility and how our perception of the level of intelligibility varies.

3. The Lingua Franca Phonological Core viewed from the Slovene perspective

Jenkins proposes that »although the LFC attempts to impose certain phonological forms on learners, to a large extent it leaves them free to make choices, and use L1 varietal features if preferred« (Jenkins, 2000:131) The LFPC contains only those items which are crucial for the intelligibility of pronunciation. On the segmental level, teachers should insist on the acquisition of:

Consonants

a) Teachers should insist on the acquisition of 22 from the 24 consonats of the English (RP and Gen.Am.) language; the two consonants that they can replace by any other similar one are the two dental fricatives /❄/ and /👎/. The reasons why this is allowed are:

- many native speakers replace them by other Cs such as /♦/, /♎/, /↗/, or /❖/,
- all learners of English have problems with them and cannot learn them
- they do not play very crucial roles in the understanding of speech.

b) The aspiration of voiceless plosives in initial prevocalic stressed syllables is obligatory because it helps to distinguish between voiced and voiceless plosives.

c) In English it is possible to have two or even three consonantal clusters in initial positions. This usually causes problems to speakers of languages where consonantal clusters are not possible. Not pronouncing the consonantal clusters in English can cause misunderstandings, thus teachers should insist on their acquisition.

Vowels

a) It is important to observe the long/short vowel opposition in international English. If this is not achieved, communication and understanding can break down (too many homophones).

b) For the same reason, teachers should insist on the right length of long vowels which is affected by the following consonant.

Suprasegmental or prosodic features

a) Weak forms, which are typical of spontaneous native English speech, need not be insisted on because it has been found out that they are not so very important for the rhythm of sentence intonation as used to be thought. It is also not necessary for non-native speakers to learn them because their speech is slow and weak forms are not typical of slow speech.

b) Tonicity, tonality and pitch movement are the three most important features of sentence intonation. The first two should be taught because they are the key elements in the process of understanding speech.

The contribution of the Slovene language to the LFPC

If the LFPC is supposed to ease the learning of English pronunication, let us see what allowances are made for a native speaker of Slovene. A quick look at the most important pronunciation errors made by Slovene speakers of English is enough to conclude that most of the LFPC remains to be taught:

Looking at the error analysis of RP consonants, the following pronunciation features cause main problems:

a) lack of aspiration of voiceless plosives

b) replacement of voiced plosives, affricates and fricatives with their voiceless counterparts before strong/voiceless consonants and finally

c) replacement of dental fricatives by dental plosives

d) replacement of the glottal fricative with the Slovene velar fricative

e) velar nasal pronounced together with the following velar C

f) dark /l/ pronounced as clear, or clear as dark; syllabic /l/ as non-syllabic

g) /r/ pronounced finally and before consonants.

Following Jenkins's (2000) recommendations, only (c), (f) and (g) can be ommitted from the pronunciation teaching. Although she is not explicit

about (b), we can assume that it should not be allowed since it produces many homophones.

The error analysis of vowels revealed the following problems:

h) /i:/ too short before weak/voiced C
i) /✋/ too close and front, confused with /i:/
j) neutralized /e/ and /✈/
k) /✌:/ too front, not fully open; replaced by /✈/ as in Gen Am.
l) /u:/ too short before weak/voiced C
m) /✝/ too close and back, confused with /u:/
n) /✍/ too open confused with /✌:/
o) insertion of /r/ after V

It is immediately obvious that the teaching of vowels and vowel distinctions to Slovene learners is of prime importance. The only allowance is (o), since IE is going to be rhotic.

Typical suprasegmental errors of Slovenes are:

p) absence of weak forms
q) narrow pitch range
r) lack of the fall-rise tone
s) stressing auxiliary and modal verbs

Here the allowances are made for all the features except perhaps the last one.

4. The 5-step proposal for the teaching of pronunciation

When careful readers of Jenkins's book have reached the last chapter, they may have the impression that the teaching of pronunciation will be easier, faster and the learners may even begin to enjoy pronunciation exercises and classes. But what a mis-judgement!

The phonological core of English as an international language is primarily meant for the teaching of production, i.e. pronunciation. It is not meant for the teaching of perception of English. In order to train non-native speakers of English to become successful communicators in both aspects of interaction (production and perception) the phonological core is not sufficient. To become successful listeners, non-native speakers of English should learn to expect, guess and logically conclude. For that, one must have access to more information than the phonological core of English as an international language can provide.

Jenkins, who is convinced that the teaching methods of pronunciation should be revised and adapted to the needs of non-native speakers of English who will use English merely as means of communication with other non-native speakers of English in the international community, proposes 5 steps in the teaching of pronunciation of English as an international language:

1. Addition of core items to the learner's productive and perceptive repertoire
2. Addition of a range of L2 English accents to the learner's receptive repertoire
3. Addition of accommodation skills
4. Addition of non-core items to the learner's receptive repertoire
5. Addition of a range of L1 English accents to the learner's receptive repertoire.

Jenkins is convinced that the learners who successfuly acquire all 5 phases will be phonologically richer than those who are taught in the old tradition of immitating native-like pronunciation.

The five steps that Jenkins proposes require:

- a teacher who is well-equipped with the phonological, phonetic and prosodic knowledge of standard English, international English, native-English varieties, as well as of L1,
- a large variety of acoustic material,
- a lot of time, good will and motivation.

Conclusion

In this paper I tried to present some views regarding the plausibility of teaching pronunciation of international English. I argued that international English is a variety which is constantly changing and as such cannot be standardised. I believe that international English will continue to live a life of its own thus its form should not be prescribed in advance.

In order to understand what is going on in interactions carried out in international English, a large amount of data of spoken IE has to be collected and analysed with the aim of finding common features which inhibit mutual understanding between L1 and L2, as well as between L2 speakers only.

When it comes to the teaching of pronunciation, the teachers should never underestimate their learners' pronunciation abilities. Instead, they should

give them a chance to perfect the pronunciation, not necessarily with the purpose of sounding native-like but with the purpose of being intelligible.

Since English has clearly become *lingua franca* of the 21st century, it is to be expected that a large majority of interactions in the international community will be carried out in English. Teachers should expose the learners to native as well as non-native varieties of English. They should teach the learners to expect, make intelligent guesses and logical conclusions, rather than train them to hear every sound, word and phrase in order to understand the utterance.

And finally, the teachers' main task should be to train the learners to become tolerant listeners and intelligible speakers.

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THE CENTRE'S VIEW OF THE PERIPHERY: THE CASE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Introduction

The theme of 'Centre and Periphery' has been a topic of discussion in several disciplines lately. This paper addresses the issue of periphery and centre in English Language Teaching (ELT) and explores some of its dimensions .Whereas the first part of the paper initiates discussion concerning the operation of centre and periphery in the ELT field, the second part illustrates the centre's view of ELT periphery through an analysis of ELT discourse that comes from the centre. A theoretical articulation of the concepts of Centre and Periphery is found in Galtung's (1988) theory of imperialism in which the world is divided into a dominant centre and a dominated and dependent periphery. According to Galtung's multidimentional model, the norms, whether military, economic or linguistic, are dictated by the 'Centre' (the powerful western countries) and are then internalized by those in power in the 'Periphery'(mainly the underdeveloped countries). According to this view, through an interlocking and cyclical process which affects domains such as education, technology, popular culture, technology, mass media, among others, the centre's superiority and the periphery's dependence are sustained.

It is recognised though that centre-periphery relations and interests are sociohistorically specific and have thus been different in different sociohistorical contexts. However, as Altbach (1982:472) has noted, even today especially in underdeveloped countries, the organization of educational systems, from kindergarten to research institutes, reflects western models which originate from a powerful centre. In several of these countries, the English language has played an important role in the education system and has been the language which has been primarily promoted, together with the transmission of linguistic as well as cultural and social norms[1].

[1] Although in the present discussion we will be concerned with the role of English language and explore the operation of Centre and Periphery in the field of English Language Teaching, this

Thus, for Tollefson (1995:2), it is important to examine English Language Teaching within the context of the spread of English as a world language, since it has been shown and repeatedly suggested that 'commonsense' assumptions about language teaching and learning are rooted historically in the relationships of unequal power that characterise contemporary society (Auerbach 1995, Pennycook 1995, Tollefson 1991).

Conceptualising centre and periphery in ELT

In the ELT field, the role of the centre has been important concerning the promotion of professionalism, in the sense that centre institutions from Britain and US have primarily served as models for the development of ELT for those in the periphery. For instance, research in the discursive practices of ELT has actually revealed that the discourse of ELT carries with it "an unquestioned belief of the superiority of the teaching theories, methods and practices of the donor countries and the inferiority of those of the recipient countries" (Dendrinos 1997:260).

According to Phillipson (1992:62), by promoting the superior skills of the profession and by projecting its philosophical and moral values as being of interest to all, the ELT centre has developed a mechanism of 'professional transfer' to the countries of the periphery, the rest of the world where ELT has developed. This mechanism of 'professional transfer' and dependency on the expertise of the centre has operated in different ways, one of which is the publishing industry and the availability of ELT books and materials which can be used for the teaching of English as a foreign language in different parts of the world. In fact, it is this professional transfer that facilitates the reproduction in the periphery of the institutions and practices of the centre and ensures the continuation of the centre's interests and the periphery's dependence.

This mechanism, which has played an important role in the development of the ELT field itself and has ensured the role of the centre countries in it, has also been significant for the promotion of teachers who come from the Centre and who are native speakers of English, putting at a disadvantageous position all non-native speakers who are teachers of English. Rampton (1990:98) suggests that "the supremacy of the native speaker keeps the UK and the US at the centre of ELT" whereas Pennycook (1994:176) argues that the insistence on

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by no means implies that other languages and cultures have not taken up the position of Centre in different parts of the world and in different historical periods.

monolingualism and the native speaker is closely related to the political economy of global ELT:

> If claims can be made that English should be taught in English and by native English speakers, then once again the English-speaking centre is able to maintain a strong hold over the production of language textbooks and forms of English teaching. Unilingual EFL textbooks can sell universally, and the skills of the native speaker English teacher are applicable anywhere.

Moreover, the insistence upon the native speaker as the preferred model has clear implications for the maintenance of language standards derived from the central English-dominant nations. According to Wu (qtd in Pennycook 1994:176), by labeling expressions which are unfamiliar to them as 'not English', native speakers tend to be dismissive of other possibilities which do not originate from the centre countries and do not constitute standard and legitimate language forms. As a result, these native speakers and language teachers of English stand as representatives of central language forms.

Furthermore, it is primarily the ELT centre which produces theories in key disciplines such as linguistics and applied linguistics which inform the ELT field[2]. At the same time, there has been a widespread mechanism to ensure the promotion of a common sense discourse and the spread of a prevailing ideology which promotes English as the language of development, science and technology and which systematically relates the learning of English directly to employment skills. For instance, a widely accepted position in the Western world is that by simply providing access to a language of power, such as English, one also is provided with access to those powerful domains in which English is used, such as international business (Dendrinos 1997).

Another effect of the operation of centre-periphery ideology in ELT is found in the argument which claims that the teaching of English remains the same all over the world and so do the needs of language learners. Concerning this argument, we cannot ignore, according to Dendrinos (1997:255), vested interests by the centre countries, taking into account that ELT constitutes a multi-billion business all over the world. This international conception of ELT can also be seen, Pennycook (1994) suggests, as a mechanism which ensures the participation of the centre countries in this international business. Recently,

[2] See Pennycook (1994, chapter 4), for a detailed account of the role of linguistics and applied linguistics in ELT.

however, there have been several objections which strongly suggest that ELT is not and cannot be the same in different parts of the world. What is interesting though is that whereas the international nature of ELT is often stressed, this international aspect is rather one-sided with the Centre 'equipping' the Periphery, without at the same time taking into account the particularities of the Periphery.

Another interesting aspect of the centre-periphery issue in ELT concerns the intellectual dialogue among professionals. Despite the fact that over the last forty years ELT developed as an area of study in which systematic research has been conducted all over the world, analysis of ELT professional articles has shown that, at least until the beginning of the 1990s, it was primarily the ELT experts coming from the centre who most often identified the problem areas in ELT and the needs of language teachers and students all over the world (Mitsikopoulou 1997). On Phillipson's (1992:259) account, "centre perceptions tend to define both the problems to be pursued and the proposed solutions". However, this identification of the problems and the suggestion of 'appropriate' solutions from the centre has often proved one-sided and insufficient since the centre has rarely analyzed in detail the specific needs of the peripheries or taken into account practical and ideological local determinants.

At this point it is worth noting that it would be a mistake to conceive of the centre-periphery relationship in ELT as a deterministic one, with the centre imposing and the peripheries accepting. Phillipson (1992:63) warns us against the idea of a conspiracy theory with 'pure' peripheries and 'corrupt' centre. There are centres of power, both in the centre and in the periphery, and elites in both the centre and the periphery are linked by shared interests. Today most of the ELT elites of the peripheries have strong links with the centre. For instance, many ELT professionals from periphery countries have been educated in centre countries and through the medium of the English language, the centre language. Thus, what happens in the peripheries should not be seen as irrevocably determined by the centre. In addition, recent research has shown that ELT peripheries have developed ways of appropriating centre pedagogies to different degrees in terms of the needs and values of the local communities (see, for instance, Canagarajah 1999).

ELT Centre's view of the periphery

In what follows, I attempt an illustration of the centre-periphery relationship in ELT as conceived from the centre's point of view by analyzing

ELT discourse from the centre. The purpose of this analysis has primarily been to explore the different ways through which an unequal relationship between the ELT centre and periphery is discursively construed. Adopting a critical discourse analytic approach, the brief analysis which follows is based on the assumption that centre-periphery relations are construed and activated (produced, reproduced, challenged etc) in discourse through the discursive practices of the ELT subjects. This approach views texts as instances of socially situated practices and it is not concerned with individual writers producing individual texts nor with their intentions, but with the effects that the texts entail for ELT disciplinary practices.

I will presently analyse a small number of extracts which come from two published ELT articles. These articles have been selected from a large corpus of published papers written by ELT experts from the Centre. The use of the limited number of texts analysed here is justified by the fact that my purpose in this paper has not been to arrive at generalizations of some kind, but to illustrate with specific examples from actual data some of the points already discussed.

The first article, entitled 'Culture, values and the language classroom' by R. Barrow was published in 1990 by The British Council (ELT Document 132). We read in the introduction of this article:

> On the face of it, teaching English, whether to ethic minorities in English-speaking countries or to members of non-English speaking countries, stands in little need of justification. The ability to speak the language of a country in which one lives has obvious values; but English is also useful for those whose mother tongue it is not, given that it is the second most widely used language in the world. It has an unsurpassed richness in terms of vocabulary, and hence in its scope for giving precise and detailed understanding of the world.[lines:1-8[3]]

What is interesting in this extract is not of course the statement that one needs to know the language of the place where she lives, in the case of ESL, nor the statement that English is a language with rich vocabulary. What is interesting is the naturalization process which is activated here through the statement that because of this richness in vocabulary the English language gives "precise and detailed understanding of the world". The connection between the importance of the English language and culture, in fact, the superiority of the English culture, is stressed throughout the article. In another part of the same article we read:

[3] The numbers in brackets which follow the extracts from data indicate the lines in the article.

"Some cultures are superior to others, at least in certain specific respects" [line 250] and a few lines below "it would be an instance of relativism gone mad, if one were to pretend that some cultures are not superior to others in respect of their literature, their morality, their industrial capacity, their agricultural efficiency, their scientific understanding and so forth" [lines 262-66]. The argument concerning the superiority of some cultures at this point aims at promoting the idea that the English culture is one of these superior cultures. Going back to the initial extract from the introduction of the article, we read:

> However, it seems that **we sometimes get cold feet** in this enterprise and **worry about our right to proceed**, largely out of fear of what may be termed 'cultural imperialism'. **Are we not guilty**, the suggestion goes, of imposing the values and beliefs of the English-speaking western world on individuals and countries whose traditions are quite different? [lines 8-13, emphasis added]

An analysis of voices which populate this extract is rather revealing at this point. On the one hand, we identify the voice of those who believe that it is "our right to proceed". On the other hand, there is the voice of those who claim: "we are guilty of imposing the values and beliefs of the English speaking western world on individuals and countries". Who are though the people who voice this statement? In fact, it is the voice of the native speakers of English, the ELT experts and teachers of the centre, who make the above statement, as the use of the first person plural of the personal pronoun 'we' indicates. Surprisingly, this is a 'worry' that comes from the centre itself, not from the people who are the receivers of these values and beliefs. The receivers of this 'cultural imperialism', the people of the periphery, are in fact excluded from the article. They are primarily backgrounded. According to Van Leeuwen (1996:41), in the case of backgrounding, the excluded social actors may not be mentioned in relation to a given activity, but they are mentioned elsewhere in the text, so that we can infer with reasonable certainty who they are. In this sense, they are not so much excluded as de-emphasized, pushed into the background. By backgrounding the people who would most naturally express such views, and by having the 'worry' expressed by the people of the centre itself, the text develops an intellectual dialogue among the centre experts, rather than among the centre and the periphery experts. In a case like this, where the objections would most naturally come from the periphery, constructing this argument as an argument which is articulated by the centre itself entails a number of implications concerning the intellectual dialogue which takes place in ELT. The centre here

is discursively constructed as being in a position to identify its own problems (or, more precisely, according to the article, the 'so-called' problems) and provide solutions. Strangely enough, this issue is not addressed by those who suffer the consequences, but it is voiced by those who seem to be the source of the problem itself, making it their business to deal with and disqualifying the periphery.

In addition, there is another instance of backgrounding in the above extract whose function, however, is different from the previous one. Those who use the term 'cultural imperialism' are also backgrounded, hence it is not made clear in the text whether the ELT experts who have coined this term are in fact coming from the centre or the periphery. According to Van Leeuwen (1996:41-2), backgrounding is also used for either taken for granted knowledge or for things which are not of immediate concern. Since there is no reference at all to the periphery experts, the implication might be here that the centre itself has in fact coined the term in the specific context of ELT.

Let us now turn to another point of interest from the same article. This is the repeatedly stressed view that the transmission of values and worldview is, in the case of English, desirable. We read at the beginning of the article:

> In this paper I shall argue that we do indeed transmit particular values and beliefs by teaching English as a Second Language, but that to some extent this is inevitable, that in respect of some values and beliefs it is desirable, and that therefore it is not something about which we should feel guilty. [lines 13-17]

And then, towards the end of the paper, we read:

> It is true that at a sophisticated level of language use students will encounter much that is foreign to their thinking, but we can reasonably argue that much of what they are introduced to is desirable, in some instances we may even say superior to alternatives. [lines 274-77]

These two extracts, from the beginning and concluding parts of the article, construct a consistent view of the argument being developed. The inequality of the cultures and the superiority of the English culture that we encountered in the previous examples come back here too, as lexical items and expressions such as 'desirable' and 'superior to alternatives' indicate.

Moreover, the fact that this article was included in an international publication of the British Council to be read by people all over the world gives

the whole argument proposed in this article another dimension. Although these publications strongly suggest to provide a forum of international exchange of ELT ideas, the above case constitutes an instance of an article which conducts this dialogue exclusively among centre ELT experts and which systematically excludes from the discussion the periphery experts and teachers, even in an issue which primarily concerns the periphery.

Finally, in another extract from the same article, the understanding of science and its principles is considered synonymous to the understanding of the language which most naturally expresses scientific laws, English:

> one obvious way, and the only way that we have any control over, to develop a conceptual grasp of the world is to provide understanding of the language that encapsulates our understanding to date. In short, and by way of example, if we wish to enable people to understand laws of science or principles of aesthetics or religious faith, the obvious way forward would seem to be to give them understanding of the language of these subjects. [lines 54-60]

The above extract relates scientific language and understanding of principles of scientific laws to the English language. This connection is systematically construed not only in the above, but in other extracts as well, in different parts of the article. In fact, this view which has been a rather popular one among centre countries has been disproved by recent research. For instance, in Nigeria, Afolayan (1984) has shown how the notion of importance of English for the understanding of science and mathematics has been exaggerated. He also proposes to the educational authorities to consider the promotion of the Nigerian languages as the languages of instruction in primary and secondary schools.

Overall, contrary to an apolitical view of ELT which has been consistently promoted by centre countries over the last few decades (Mitsikopoulou 1999: 1-4), the analyzed paper argues in favor of the superiority of both the English culture and the English language. Turning the 'cultural imperialism' attack against those who articulate it in the first place, the article does not attempt to mask the relationship between culture and language (a widely employed practice in ELT, according to Phillipson 1992: 67) but in fact argue: "What's wrong with it?"

The second article I will briefly analyze is entitled 'Team teaching: a case study from Japan' by P. Sturman and was published in 1992 in a collection of articles concerning collaborative language learning and teaching. This article is

describing a project in which both English and Japanese teachers worked together to teach English to first-year lower secondary school students. However, cultural and attitudinal differences led to the construction of 'us', experienced ESOL teachers from the Cambridge English School, The British Council, as opposed to 'them' Japanese teachers:

> All Japanese teachers feel that they do not have enough time to prepare the students well enough for the examinations, and accordingly that the team teaching project is taking away time from the essentials. This group of teachers also believes that the techniques and approaches they already use are successful, given the nature of the syllabus and examinations and, considering the overwhelming importance of the examinations, why should they change anything? They are polite, but genuinely believe that we are wasting their time, the students' time and a considerable amount of money as well. [lines 366-375]

Throughout the report there is a consistent construction of distance between the Japanese and the British teachers. 'We' British teachers participating in the project is distinctly separated from 'them' Japanese teachers and a contrast is implied between the two categories of teachers.

Moreover, although the project was to team teach a class, the published report was written only by the British teachers giving their account of what happened during the team teaching. Nowhere in this article or in another one of the same collection of articles do we have a chance to read the view of the Japanese teachers who participated in this project. Even the title of the article itself 'A case study from Japan' does not allow any room for the Japanese perspective to be heard. What we indeed have is the British teachers' account of what the Japanese feel and do. This brings forth another point related to the dissemination of ideas and views. As Phillipson (1992: 308) notes, it is generally easier to trace written sources originating from the centre than the periphery: "the issue is part of the more general one of the proliferation of centre journals and books… This is bound to over-represent the perspective of one party", in this case, the British view at the expense of the Japanese.

In addition, as we read in the above extract, the Japanese teachers did not actually want to take part in this project which they felt was wasting their time, yet it was imposed on them, perhaps by their educational authorities. This project can be seen as an instance of what has often been called 'educational aid' from the centre. As it is implied in this extract, the British teachers from the centre would like to implement some changes in the teaching of English, but to

which the Japanese teachers objected. Of particular interest here is the imposition of this educational 'aid' project on periphery teachers.

Conclusion

It has mainly been during the last two decades that some systematic research has been conducted concerning the centre-periphery operation in ELT. Specifically, more research is conducted by researchers from the periphery which is evaluative and critical, and which explores aspects which concern the peripheries in different parts of the world. In addition, as also stated at the beginning of this paper, the centre-periphery operation is conditioned by sociohistorical and cultural determinants and should not be approached as monolithic. Similarly, ELT "has not been promoted globally as a result of a master-minded plan" but "is reconstituted continually in lived experience" (Phillipson 1992:307) through a number of hegemonic practices, embedded in discursive practices, which are associated with arguments relating the English language to modernization, progress and scientific understanding. In our post-modern society with its fast-moving technological advances, the centre – periphery operation will change, too. For instance, Phillipson predicts that eventually the centre's "inter-state" actors will not be necessary since the computers will ensure the centre's control over the periphery (1992:242).

Taking the above issues into account, it becomes important to sensitize language teachers all over the world about the operation of ELT centre and periphery and the various forms that this operation may take, and to place any discussion concerning the ELT centre-periphery operation within the wider context of ELT cultural politics. By 'de-naturalizing' the practices of the ELT centre, we can become more critical of both the 'cultural imperialism' which originates in the centre and, perhaps most importantly, develop an awareness and a better understanding of our own practices as peripheries.

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CAN WE STILL SAY "TYPICALLY ENGLISH" IN A CHANGING WORLD?

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> "The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it"
>
> (Widdowson, 1994: 385)

1. What teachers should teach when referring to English? Its status is a matter of much current debate. Many questions and immediate consequences arise from the global spread of English. The use of English as an international language or English as a lingua franca (ELF) lead on the one hand to the idea of *globalisation* and on the other hand to *the national paradigm*. More and more voices say that English as an international language has become independent of its origin.

Even if "English" has become in many literature and linguistic courses "Englishes" , English is still a rather fixed entity when it comes to teaching and using the language as such. What English classes have in common is that they deal with English as it is used by its native speakers, either in the UK or the US. English as a native language (ENL) provides the yardstick against which students' work is judged in essays, cultural studies or language proficiency examinations.

2. The description of the language offered by reference works and textbooks is defined in terms of speakers for whom English is "either a majority first language…or an official additional language" (Greenbaum, 1996: 3) . We can hardly talk about any descriptive empirical work on the most extensive contemporary use of English world wide that of English as lingua franca (ELF).

Textbooks and English courses display topics that are sometimes common denominators, though the level is different. The *Prospects* series for example, (from intermediate up to super – advanced) offers such an example through:

- discoveries
- health
- music
- past time
- planet – earth – environment
- relationships
- studying languages
- television
- transport
- travel

Combining private and public discussions, casual conversations one – to – one interviews or texts presenting information, these topics are addressed to fluent speakers (to be formed) whose very early socialisation did not take place in English.

That is why several questions might remain open:

- which are the most- relied – upon and successfully employed grammatical constructions and lexical choices?
- are there aspects that contribute especially to smooth communication?
- what are the factors that tend to lead to "ripples", misunderstandings or communication breakdown?
- what do we understand by a communicative success?
- do we find commonly used constructions or lexical items and sound patterns, ungrammatical in standard L_1 English but generally unproblematic in ELF communication?

3. *Typically English* or *French* or *Romanian* is a common thing to say, but is it really possible to say that something is *typically* + nationality ? Is this kind of remark xenophobic ?

Task 1

For a fruitful discussion students are asked to read a series of quotations about the English and match them with the following themes:

- English people are careful with their money
- they are unwilling to talk about their health

- English food is terrible
- the weather is terrible
- the discipline of queuing

a) The English may not like music but they absolutely love the noise it makes

Sir Thomas Beecham (1879-1961)
English orchestra conductor

b) The most dangerous thing in the world is to make a friend of an Englishman, because he'll come and sleep in your closet rather than spend ten shillings on a hotel.

Truman Capote (1924-1984)
American writer

c) The English find ill-health not only interesting but respectable and often experience death in an effort to avoid a fuss.

Pamela Frankan (1908-1967)
American novelist, journalist and story writer

d) The climate of England has been the world's most powerful colonising impulse.

Russell Green
American humorist

e) If you want to eat well in England , eat three breakfasts.

Somerset Mangham (1874-1965)
English novelist

f) An Englishman, even if he is alone, likes to form an orderly queue of one.

George Mikes (1912-1987)
Hungarian-born writer and satirist

Task 2

Students are invited to explain what the quotations mean to them (speaking or writing activity).

Task 3

Students are asked to discuss the content of the quotes: the age of the quote – an old quote doesn't necessarily mean that it is no longer true;

Americans are so often criticised by the British – this suggests that they are "getting their own back" (taking revenge) ; people remember humorous remarks longer but they may not be taken seriously enough.

4. A *discussion* can be continued by a *forum*. ; students can address each other as if they were speaking to people from another country, who do not know everything about your country. The advantage of such an activity is that students can say things which they know, other students already know , but which helps them to practise the kind of things they would say if they met people from other countries.

Task 1

Work in groups of four. Divide into two pairs.

Pair 1 . Discuss the following question and make a list of your nationality's good points.

Question: What are your country's good and bad national characteristics?

Pair 2 . Discuss the question above and make a list of your nationality's weak points

Task 2

Re-convene as a group of four and discuss what you have written. Debate the points you have raised in front of the rest of the class.

Task 3

Write either a two paragraphs letter to a friend or send an e-mail to a foreign student who is visiting your country for the first time . Do not forget to warn each of them on certain aspects and do not forget you own sense of self-worth.

5. Implications for teaching English should make researchers and "practitioners" (methodologists and teachers) think about clear terminological distinctions between EFL and ENL, where they are important. "Non – native" speakers of English will no longer have a borrowed identity, but an identity of their own, as international users of an international language.

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HUMOUR IN THE CLASSROOM: CATEGORISATION AND SOURCES

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This paper presents the findings that resulted from an empirical study that I undertook with my students, 3-rd year Philology students majoring in English, during six language classes designed around humorous teaching materials, with a view to identifying types of humour occurring in the language classroom as well as their source.

I will present first an inventory of the *categories and subcategories* that I found in each lesson individually and in combination. The system has 3 main types, 8 categories and 27 subcategories. These have been identified through the application of grounded theory and through the development of the category system, but here I will also discuss possible explanations for the frequencies and proportions of the categories in the data.

Frequencies and proportions illustrating the main distinction, i.e. *material-generated categories* vs. *interactional categories*, are presented in Table 1. The differences between the two are due to the fact that in one sequence, which has one initiating utterance and hence one initiator, there may be several categories.

Lesson	Number of material generated categories of total number of occurrences (column 14 of the coding chart)	Number and % of interactional categories total number of occurrences (column14 of the coding chart)
1. Syntax	2-(25%)	3-(38%)
2. Talking about humour	1-(9%)	7-(64%)
3. Cinderella	14-(33%)	2-(63%)
4. Helen of Troy	0-(0%)	23-(82%)
5. Jokes	20-(47%)	22-(51%)
6. Misprints	29-(21%)	103-(76%)
Total	66	185
%	**25%**	**69%**

Table 1: Frequencies and distribution of the two main types of categories of humour occurring in the classroom: material-generated and interactional

Table 1 suggests that materials generate approximately a quarter of the humour, while interactional categories represent almost three quarters of the total number of occurrences of categories found in the data, i.e. 268.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the six combinations of interactional categories, i.e. frequencies and proportions of occurrences of *interactional categories* to the *total number of occurrences of categories*, expressed as percentages:

Lesson	Interactional Structural (column14 of the coding chart)	Interactional Thematic (column14 of the coding chart)	Interactional Structural Material (column14 of the coding chart)	Interactional Thematic Material (column14 of the coding chart)	Interactional Thematic Structural (column14 of the coding chart)	Interactional Thematic Structural Material (column14 of the coding chart)	Unclear	Total occur-rences
1. Syntax	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	8
2. Talking about humour	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	11
3. Cinderella	9	1	0	17	0	0	2	43
4. Helen of Troy	1	7	0	14	0	1	5	28
5. Jokes	11	0	4	6	1	0	1	43
6. Misprints	37	13	8	37	6	2	3	135
Occ.	62	28	11	73	8	3	19	**268**
%	23%	10%	5%	28%	3%	1%	6%	

Table 2: Frequencies and proportions of Interactional Humour categories

The largest category, Interactional-Thematic-Material-related, with 73 occurrences, is a topic-oriented category, which includes participants' personal opinions about the teaching materials, metacomments on the content, form or humour of the materials, reinvoking humorous materials, or production of materials after a model. This finding is enlightening in the sense that although the occurrences of interactional categories are more numerous than material-generated ones, i.e. 69% vs. 25%, the humorous exchanges *referring* to the teaching materials are the most frequent, an argument in favour of the importance of the choice of these materials. As I will show, this category completely excludes *Classroom-specific humour* and was problematic for the respondents.

The second largest category, Interactional-Structural, is activity-type oriented as laughter is the result of disruptions at the discursive or social level

(in terms of allowable behaviours). This is the category for which *Classroom-specific humour* was identified as the main subcategory, which therefore represents an important proportion of the humour occurring in the classroom. (Classroom-specific humour is present in other forms as a subcategory of other types of humour occurring in the classroom, therefore these figures do not say everything about it.)

I will now present the findings about a type of humour that I found specific to the context of this foreign language classroom, *foreign language classroom-specific humour*. First I describe the subcategory 'Classroom-specific humour' and give frequencies and proportions to the total number of occurrences of categories, then setting it in contrast to 'foreign language classroom-specific humour'.

Classroom-specific humour (CRH), has the following characteristics, which both derive from and inform the four analytical principles used in the definitions for the categories:

- CRH is generated in interaction**,** by the participants; it is not directly generated by a humorous point in the materials. (*material vs. interaction generated humour*)
- CRH is activity-oriented, the structural element, i.e. the structural expectations and the inferences of the participants, being typical for this subcategory. (*activity vs. topic-oriented categories*)
- CRH is associated with education-related topics. (*education-related vs. education non-related topics*)
- CRH is specific to the classroom situation. I assumed, for instance, that the humorous point in the teaching materials brought into the classroom would be perceived as funny outside the classroom too, or that, conversely, breaching the school regulations, e.g. bringing mobile phones into the classroom, would not generate a humorous reaction outside this environment. (*the funniness of the same episode inside vs. outside the classroom*)

As shown in Table 3, Classroom-specific humour overarches Interactional-Structural, Interactional-Thematic and Interactional-Thematic-Structural humour, hence this type of humour, irrespective of the details of actual analysis, is characterised by two elements, considering the above-mentioned distinctions used in categorising the data:

- it results from the *challenge of the allowable contributions* inherent in the activity type, and/or
- it is *associated with education-related topics, contained or not in the materials, local or general.*

Also, as indicated in the definitions, it is completely absent from the largest category of humour occurring in the classroom: Interactional-Thematic-Material-related. I will return to this apparently contradictory finding whereby the category best represented in the data excludes classroom humour.

Table 3 reminds the reader of the distribution of *Classroom-specific* vs. *Classroom non-specific* humour in the categories of humour identified in the data. I have completely excluded Material-contained humour and referred only to interactional categories on the assumption that material-contained humour would be relevant both per se and in the classroom situation, an assumption implicit in the fact that I had brought humorous materials to class with the intention of producing a humorous effect.

Humour occurring in the classroom	
Classroom non-specific humour	**Classroom-specific humour**
1. Interational-Thematic Banter Local General 2.Interactional-Thematic- Material-related	1. Interactional-Structural CRH Discursive Social 2. Interactional-Thematic CRH Local General 3.Interactional-Thematic- Structural
Border categories Interactional-Structural-Material-related Interactional-Thematic-Structural-Material-related	

Table 3. Distribution of the category classroom-specific humour

Table 4 shows frequencies and proportions of classroom-specific humour to the total number of occurrences of all categories.

Lesson	Total occurrences Classroom-specific humour	Total occurrences of Categories
1.Syntax	3	8
2.Talking about humour	5	11
3.Cinderella	10	43
4.Helen of Troy	1	28
5.Jokes	14	43
6. Misprints	55	148
Total	**88**	**281**
%	**31%**	

Table 4: Frequencies and proportion of classroom-specific humour

Classroom-specific humour thus represents 31% of the total number of humorous occurrences. Similarly, the features of classroom non-specific humour (non-CRH) can be outlined on the same principles:

- Non-CRH is generated in interaction. (*material vs. interaction generated humour*)
- Non-CRH humour cuts across half of the category Interactional-Thematic. It includes 'banter', a term used to cover all education non-related topics. It also includes the category Interactional-Thematic-Material-related, for which a general term is *humorous talk around the text,* cf. 'teacher talk around the text' (Sunderland at al. 2001). (*activity vs. topic-oriented categories*)
- Non-CRH humour excludes education-related topics. (*education-related vs. education non-related topics*)

- Non-CRH humour covers a larger range of topics and situations than CRH and therefore it would be still perceived as humorous outside the classroom too. (*the funniness of the same episode inside vs. outside the classroom*)

Table 5 presents the distribution of varieties of classroom non-specific humour across the seven relevant subcategories in all six lessons and in the dataset as a whole:

Table 5: Frequencies and proportions of varieties of Classroom non-specific humour.

The acronyms stand for:
A =acting
BG =banter general
BL =banter local
com M =comment on material
MM =metacomment on material
MMC = metacomment on material
MP =material production
MR =material reinvoking

	Interactional Classroom non-specific humour							Total number of occurrences
Lesson	**A**	**BG**	**BL**	**Com M**	**MM**	**MP**	**MR**	
1.Syntax	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	7
2.Talking about humour	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	6
3.Cinderella	0	1	0	6	9	0	3	34
4.Helen of Troy	0	5	2	0	7	0	8	28
5.Jokes	1	0	0	0	2	0	5	30
6. Misprints	0	2	3	15	12	4	6	80
	1	9	7	21	31	4	22	**185**
	1%	5%	4%	11%	15%	2%	11%	
	33%							

Table 5 shows that classroom non-specific humour represents 33% of the instances of humour occurring in the classroom, while classroom-specific humour represents 31%. They are approximately equal in terms of frequency of occurrence, the rest of the occurrences having teaching materials as the source of their humour.

As indicated earlier, the fact that Interactional-Thematic-Material-related humour, largely represented in the data coming from the classroom context, excluded classroom-specific humour, was intriguing, all the more it contains as subcategories activities directly related to teaching, i.e. comments and metacomments on the materials, 'material production' and 'material reinvoking'. A possible explanation is the fact that this category is in fact a category specific to the *foreign language classroom*, where language is both an end and a means, unlike other classrooms. Similarly, the category Interactional-Thematic, realised by subcategories such as 'Acting', 'Banter', i.e. joking about topics non-related to education, is also typical of the foreign language classroom, where recitation or role-play are common (and specific) techniques, and where approaching a large range of topics in conversational ways is encouraged.

Seen in this light, the humour which is not classroom-specific, i.e. specific to classrooms *in general*, is in fact *foreign language classroom-specific humour*. The type of teaching that is normally done in the foreign language class is 'hidden' in this form of 'humorous conversational teaching': a disguised, non-traditional form. The fact that this category was not identified by the respondents (see Appendix 3B) suggests that students perceive it as the normal course of action in the foreign language class, where language is approached through language. This type of humour blurs the distinction between frames, in the sense that teaching is done jokingly, in the 'hidden teaching frame'. I suggest that it is also a form of socialising the students 'into' the world outside the classroom in a way that is authentic for the foreign language classroom situation (Cook 2000) to such an extent that it is not perceived by participants as 'teaching'.

Table 6 accordingly shows the category of foreign classroom humour, a type of humour that is not described in the literature:

Foreign language classroom humour								Total number of occurrences
Lesson	The joking frame (Interactional-Thematic)			The 'hidden teaching frame' (Interactional-Thematic-Material-related)				
	A	BG	BL	Com M	MM	MP	MR	
1.Syntax	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	7
2.Talking about humour	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	6
3.Cinderella	0	1	0	6	9	0	3	34
4.Helen of Troy	0	5	2	0	7	0	8	28
5.Jokes	1	0	0	0	2	0	5	30
6. Misprints	0	2	3	15	12	4	6	80
	1	9	7	21	31	4	22	**185**
	10%			39%				
	33%							

Table 6: Foreign language classroom humour

If we look at these findings in terms of the occurrence of the categories in conjunction with the materials, only a small proportion do not relate to/draw on the materials directly or indirectly, i.e., 1 occurrence of 'acting', 9 of 'banter general' and 7 of 'banter local', i.e. a total of 17 out of 193, less than 10%. These findings tend to support the importance that the teaching materials have in teaching with humour in the classroom, as although interactional humour sequences are in greater number, in the majority of cases their topic is nevertheless the humorous point in the materials.

This paper started from the assumption that the main source of humour in the classroom is the teaching materials that the teacher brings to the class. However, these materials are not the only source of humour. Many other things go on in the classroom which also provoke laughter, which in its turn can also have various functions. Though we can find explanations for some of the episodes, others remain unclear and contradictory.

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HOW DO TEACHERS AND THEIR TEACHING INFLUENCE THE STUDENTS?

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The Beginning of the Journey

It all started as a project for a graduate course in qualitative research. I did not know anything about research prior to this and I considered it a challenge. First I had to decide upon a title, a thing that is easier said than done since the research question is essential. In the end I chose something to do with teaching because I tried to find something practical, something I wanted to know more about and I realised that this was teaching. So I started reflecting on my own experience as a student and as a teacher. Then I discovered something that laid there in my mind but which I had not put into words before, namely that teachers do not realise how much they influence their students and how this affects the latter's whole life.

I thought of the teachers I have had and the ones who came to my mind first were those who influenced me in a negative way - from disliking the subject, to resolving not to choose it as a career. It seems that negative examples are usually easier to remember, as they stay vivid in our minds for a longer period of time, sometimes acting as a reminder of what not to do and sometimes simply being painful memories. But of course I was also positively influenced by some of my teachers and my career stands as a proof of their influence.

Then, several questions troubled me. Do other students feel they are influenced by their teachers or is it just me? To what extent do teachers actually influence their students? Are they aware or not of this influence they have? What exactly do teachers think that influences their students, what they are or what they do? How does this influence affect the students' future lives? These were all questions that came to my mind and the only way to find the answers was to start researching this topic and so I started a small-scale research.

The Opinion of the Experts

I wanted to find out whether this topic was covered before in research or not so I have read different books on teaching and I came across many useful pieces of information about how the performance of the students is influenced

by what the teacher does or does not do. For example, in their book *Classroom Management*, Levin and Nolan make the reader aware of different ways in which the teacher may influence the performance of his/her students. (Levin, Nolan, 1996: 38-67) Starting from the findings of different researches and using case studies, Levin and Nolan (1996: 38-67) present the multifaceted vicious circle: teacher's behaviour triggers student's behaviour and so on, focusing on the binary action – reaction to present a way of preventing disruptive behaviour. Self-esteem, the motivation of the students, or the expectations of a teacher are mentioned as factors influencing the learning process or the performance of the students.

Observational studies were conducted beginning with the 1970s in order to examine the behaviour of teachers towards the students whom they perceived as low achievers and towards students whom they perceived as high achievers. It was discovered that:

> […] Teachers often unintentionally communicate low expectations toward students whom they perceive as low achievers. These lower expectations are communicated by behaviours such as:
> - calling on low achievers less often to answer a question.
> - providing fewer clues and hints to low achievers when they have initial difficulty in answering questions.
> - praising correct answers from low achievers less often.
> - staying further away physically and psychologically from low achievers in the classroom.
> - smiling less frequently at low achievers.
> - making eye contact less frequently with low achievers (Levin, Nolan, 1996: 102-103).

These are only several examples of behaviours that communicate low expectations to students although several more are presented.

Suzanne Peregoy and Owen Boyle underline the importance of showing sensitivity towards students coming from different sociocultural backgrounds and suggest that teachers should know more about their students through personal interaction, through observation and interpretation of their behaviour. Teachers should help newcomers adjust to the new learning environment thus improving the student's performance and social development. (Peregoy, Boyle, 1997:4-23).

Rita and Kenneth Dunn on the other hand discuss about learning styles and how important it is for the teacher to be familiar to the different learning styles of their students and in this sense they have created a guidebook for in-service coordinators to assist in retraining professional teachers. (Dunn, 1999).

But all these examples had only little to do with my topic since they did not consider the possibility that students might be influenced by the teacher's body language, gestures, choice of vocabulary, clothes, or personality. They focused on the performance of the student who is positively or negatively influenced and not on the possible effects that this influence might have on their future careers.

Insights of the Process

Since I knew very little about interviews and how to conduct them or about other techniques of collecting and analysing data I read the diary of Ma Yamona and found out how she had organised her own research (Yamona, 2000).

In this research I experimented with different methods of data collection, such as interviews, questionnaires, students' reflections on their being influenced or not by teachers. I have to say that self-reflections and some exam papers of 4th year students majoring in English helped me form an opinion or reach certain conclusions.

The interviews were conducted among students, teachers and parents, as I wanted to validate the information received from one with what the other two had to say about the same thing. Therefore I have conducted four one-to-one interviews and I did not find it very easy. I had never interviewed people before but the fear of the unknown was not greater than the will to experiment. The thing that I find most difficult when interviewing people is to look them in the eyes all the time and to try to remain objective and not get involved in a leading conversation. Recording the interviews was very helpful and less time consuming for the interviewees, but the transcribing part was not something I enjoyed too much.

In writing the research report I used several quotations from the interviews since:

"Stories without variables do not tell us enough about the meaning and larger import of what we are seeing. Variables without stories are ultimately abstract and unconvincing." (Miles, Huberman, 1994:302).

Concerning the questionnaires I can say that these were even more challenging for me than the interview because I had seen very many badly written questionnaires and I wanted to come up with a well-conceived one. Besides I felt I had to write the perfect questionnaire as now we were experts, we had a different status. This was not very easy because I had to use many

open-ended questions in order to find out people's opinions and this might account for the questionnaires that were not properly filled in. After writing them I asked fellow MA students to tell me what they thought and thus I understood what I had to re-write or change in order to make things clear. The return rate was good (about 65%) and the reason why this happened might be the fact that the respondents were my students (4th year), a semi-captive population, or colleagues of mine in the MA course, who knew the importance of taking the time to fill in a questionnaire for a research. This is also probably one of the most important things that I have learnt from doing this research, namely that it is important for a research to be successful to have respondents who can take the time to answer a few questions. I have learnt to look differently at the people in the streets of Timisoara who stop you just to ask a few questions and you find some excuse for having no time.

So What Did I Find Out?

I was very surprised to find out that most high-school students did not admit to having been influenced by their teachers. They mistook influence for manipulation and most of them said that they had strong personalities and nobody could influence them. However there were a few who realised that spending so much time with somebody implies being influenced.

"It is hard not to be influenced by people with whom you spend 6-7 hours a day. The teachers, without necessarily wanting to, are like parents for us. Every word, every gesture that is inappropriate is judged by the students. Some students may have teachers as role models, I for one have only met about 2-3 teachers whom I could have as model and who could influence me." (11th grader)

Others had contradictory opinions.

"I think teachers have a great influence on the life of their students. If the students are young the influence is even bigger!

In general, teachers have no influence on me, except the ones I like very much the way they teach and the way they are.

If I could choose, I would choose not to be influenced by anyone because I would like to be myself 100%." (11th grader)

A former teacher told me in an interview that parents and teachers have the strongest influence upon our lives and this is also the result of my research. I have found out not only that teachers have a great influence on their students, but that even the most insignificant things a teacher does are interpreted by the

students as favourable or not as the first 11th grader said. This is also verified by my own experience as a teacher when the students look at me from head to toes with scrutinising eyes and by what L. D., a former primary school teacher said in an interview (Interview 4).

"*First of all the elementary school students […] have a model in their teacher. And then they see how their teacher thinks, how s/he solves a certain problem, […] even her/his mere presence in front of the classroom has a great influence upon the students' future behaviour, even if then […] s/he does not realise it, the student borrows something from the teacher's way of being. The children told me in the first grade, even P. was among those who told me, I think, that they went home, would take the dolls and do everything that I did during the class, everything I told them, the way I introduced myself, the intonation, the gestures, they did in front of the dolls, so they actually imitated me, involuntarily they imitated me. […] First of all, the gestures, then the way of thinking, so we do influence the students very much, especially in elementary school. […] In secondary school, they start creating their models; they start being critical, so it is a little more difficult to "shape" them. Therefore the first four years of school are decisive in their future formation."*

The opinions of the 4th year and MA 1 students are divided in this respect. Some admit to having been influenced by their teachers so far and others do not. Most MA students admit to having been influenced by their teachers in the choice of their careers.

"My first to fourth form teacher made me love working with children; everything seemed so easy for her and she loved us very much. At the beginning I wanted to become a teacher of Romanian, then a Maths teacher, then a teacher of French until I made my final decision: English." (MA student)

This is obviously a case of a student who was influenced in a positive way by her teacher, but there are very many things that a teacher does that trigger the opposite reaction.

"During secondary school I hated Maths because my Maths teacher was interested only in the result of the exercise and the rest was not important. Then I said to myself I wouldn't ever do that." (MA student)

I could identify two categories here: a long-term positive influence and a long-term negative influence. We could say a few things about short-term influence although this is not the purpose of this research. This kind of influence works like a mechanism; it is triggered by different things a teacher does/ says or simply by the way s/he is at a certain moment. The teachers can

easily identify this kind of immediate response from the students, as students do not fail to show agreement or disagreement; approval or disapproval with what the teachers do.

As we have already seen from the examples, the long-term influence can be positive or negative. Further on we shall see what triggered a long-term positive or negative influence from what the interviewees said. First of all the fact that the teacher is or is not emotionally involved is essential for the further development of the students.

"[…] She loved us; her love, the way she taught us, the way she loved the subject she was teaching, the fact that she was kind and didn't want to punish us, she suffered when she punished us, made me love Russian and want to become a teacher of Russian." (Retired teacher, interview 1)

On the other hand

"[…] My Maths teacher was very severe, very strict and it seemed to me that she wasn't quite correct with us and that's why I didn't like Mathematics, I hated Mathematics; she used to shout at us […] I mean it was a kind of turning point for my career, so I would never, I would never have gone to study Mathematics..." (Retired teacher, interview 1)

Of course the bad things that teachers do will not always have the same result as was the case of another teacher whom I interviewed (interview 4). Her psychology teacher treated students from the countryside differently from those coming from cities in the sense that he did not expect them to know much. This made L.D. want to prove him wrong and made her study harder instead of demotivate her. However she mentioned the fact that there were many students who failed his exam as they did not want to learn for that subject.

An example of a teacher who is not emotionally involved is a 7 grader's Romanian teacher who is considered annoying by the students. When asked if she had teachers she didn't like P. answered:

"Does 'dislike' also mean hate?" [Laughs] "I hate my Romanian teacher; I can't stand him, but nobody can." (P. Interview 2)

Why does she consider him as annoying? Because

"[…] Everything he does, as if he wants us to do what he likes and he's so naïve; he thinks everybody's good and nice. That's the way he seems to think. Besides that he's really boring. If you look in our notebooks […] between the notebook and the textbook you will find very small differences; it's like we have two books, which is very boring because he sometimes just says 'copy that, copy that, copy that' […] in the classroom, not even homework. […]And

he wants us to do lots of exercises. He gives us an immense amount of homework. One day we had to do, from Monday 'till Tuesday, we had to write about six pages.

[…]And another thing annoying about him is that he's always talking on the phone. The mobile always rings." (P. Interview 2)

If I were to make a prediction about the students in this teacher's class I would say that they will most probably not choose Romanian as a career and that they will lose interest and eventually stop learning it and therefore have to have tutoring in Romanian in order to pass the "Baccalaureate" exam at the end of the high-school.

Students have in my opinion very good radars when it comes to teaching methods, they can easily tell apart a good lesson from a not very good one although they are not experts in methodology. They simply know what to look for. For example when I asked P. why she liked a certain teacher she said that she is a good teacher. When asked to explain a little she said:

"I guess her methods are just good because we always get the lesson; we don't have to study very much at home." (P. Interview 2)

She also mentioned the fact that the teacher clearly explains to them what they will do during that class. Interesting activities, group work and a teacher who creates a pleasant atmosphere were among the things they like.

Students look for teachers who are open-minded, active, imposing, convincing, determined, who do not always give in to what students want (P. interview 2), who can create rapport with their students, who are kind, correct and close to the students.

"The problem with these teachers is that they don't want to get close to the students. This is very bad for the students. They won't be able to communicate with other people in the future due to this problem." (11^{th} grader)

P. claims that a teacher who is open-minded, imposing, convincing has managed to influence her whole class in the sense that they are more united and can speak their minds (P., interview 2). P's mother (interview 3) has also validated this piece of information.

When asked what was that influenced her the teacher's way of teaching or her character, P. said that it was the character.

In the End

I found out that students are very much under the influence of their teachers, but that they do not always realise it. On the other hand teachers may

have known this when they first started teaching but probably forgot this along the way.

I would like to conclude by quoting L.D., a former elementary school teacher and now head mistress, who gives a good piece of advice to teachers who are not aware of the influence they have on their students.

"To invest feelings in what they do and to think of the fact that they have a responsibility, and a great one too, because if an engineer fails in making a screw he throws it away and makes another one, if we fail in shaping a personality, […] how hard it will be to repair it, and maybe you can never repair it. So we have a great influence upon our students, upon their future development. We leave a mark upon their lives and it depends how we do it. If we are responsible, conscious, serious, we transmit these features, if we are superficial and indifferent to things we transmit these features, because this is the model they are offered; we spend 8-9 hours a day with them, how much time do their parents spend with them?" (L.D., Interview 4).

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ACROSS THE 49TH PARALLEL

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Background. Learning a foreign language is learning a foreign culture. Language education is a process of acculturation. Since language is always in context it reflects specific dominant assumptions and values, or ideology in a society. In an extended concept of communication the use of language demands a cultural as well as linguistic competence. Communication in a foreign language requires communicative competence, which is, in fact, intercultural by definition. Users of English have to be sensitized to cultural diversity in order to develop skills and competences enabling them to interact successfully in a multitude of English language contexts. The study of culture is a study of the close interconnections between language, literature and society - which is the main objective of a foreign language study.

The questions arises: which culture? Is it native speakers' culture? If so, will it be British, American, Canadian, Australian? In a quantitative perspective, speakers of English as a second and foreign language exceed in number first language users (Graddol, 1997). Therefore, the issue is which culture or cultures should be emphasized and how. We think that it is more helpful to assume a cross-cultural perspective, balancing between target and source culture elements as content input for both the foreign language and culture studies courses, thus promoting students' cross-cultural awareness and sensitizing them to the diverse dominant beliefs and values of varying culture systems (for a detailed culture course content cf. Yankova 2001, 2002).

Dominant beliefs and values are not static - they change over time. What is exceptionally useful for FL students is to develop skills to understand other cultures, to decode personal and societal values embedded in texts. Such activities are usually comparative (cf. Byram 1997, Kramsch 1993) and offer insight of source culture norms, target culture norms and develop awareness of the possible difficulties and misunderstandings which might arise in relating the two (or more) cultures.

We would like to suggest several classroom activities which aim at increasing students' awareness of target culture(s) based on humorous pieces

of writing about the US and Canada. We have also opted for native student culture as input, since students use English as a vehicle for their own particular purposes, which may not include use in an English-speaking country. The need to learn English is sometimes less integrative than instrumental. Besides, familiar cultural content facilitates the learning of a foreign language. These three-fold comparisons will enrich students' experience and sensitize them to the fact that although some culture elements are being globalized there is still diversity among cultures.

Emphasizing on cultural diversity cultural elements of any English speaking country can be employed in an activity.

Sample activities:

1. Labeling, or making or breaking stereotypes.

Looking for cultural patterns with the view of discovering intercultural similarities and differences.

Task 1. How do you perceive a 'typical' Canadian, American, and Englishman? Is there a stereotypical 'Canadian', 'American', 'British' character? Do you know any jokes about these nationalities?

Task 2. Read the following jokes and discuss whether they conform to, modify or challenge existing stereotypes.

> An Englishman, a Canadian and an American were captured by terrorists.
> The terrorist leader said, "Before we shoot you, you will be allowed last words. Please let me know what you wish to talk about."
> The Englishman replied, "I wish to speak of loyalty and service to the crown."
> The Canadian replied, "Since you are involved in a question of national purpose, national identity, and secession, I wish to talk about the history of constitutional process in Canada, special status, distinct society and uniqueness within diversity."
> The American replied, "Just shoot me before the Canadian starts talking."

ELEPHANTS

> An international symposium on elephants was convened. Every nation in the world was represented and was expected to deliver a report on elephants.
> Germany contributed a report: "The Elephant -- A War Machine".
> France's report was typically: "The Love Life of an Elephant".
> America saw the economic values in: "Raising Elephants for Fun and Profit".
> Great Britain had their own unique view: "The Elephant and the British Empire".
> The Canadian report was, of course, typically Canadian . . .
> "The Elephant: A Federal or Provincial Responsibility?"

Task 3. Can you think of any Bulgarian jokes that are stereotypic?

Task 4. Make a list of some characteristic features of the Bulgarian national character (e.g. industriousness, patience, thrift, negativist attitude, pessimism, lack of confidence in authorities, sense of humour, lack of social conscience, warmth in personal relationships, indifference in public relations).

2. Making three-fold comparisons: American-Canadian-Bulgarian.

Intercultural comparisons which involve more cultures lead to the development of multicultural competence. They also put a small country like Bulgaria on the radar next to the big two: Canada and the US and foster confidence in the Bulgarian students who are otherwise known to be hesitant in promoting their cultural and historical heritage (cf. Grozdanova 2002). We can start this activity by focusing on factual knowledge:

TEN THINGS AMERICANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CANADA

- Our president is called a Prime Minister.
- We have never had a Prime Minister assassinated. Although we've been tempted, a few times.
- Members of our Senate are appointed by the national party in power. It is a life time position. Even though they are not elected by the people, they can still control government legislation.
- Our states are called Provinces. We even have three Territories.
- Our Prime Minister does not have a limit on how many terms in office they can do. The record is held by Liberal leader Pierre Eliot Trudeau who stayed leader of the country for around 16 years. It is known as the Trudeau Era.
- We have had a woman Prime Minister. Her name was Kim Campbell. She was Deputy Prime Minister (that's what we call our Vice President) when the Prime Minister of that time, Brian Mulroney, quit. There was an election shortly after that (the Deputy PM is not allowed to finish the term, like the Vice President is).
- You don't have to be born in Canada, to be Prime Minister.
- New York City has more murders in a week than the entire nation of Canada does all year.
- We have no right to keep and bear arms. So leave your guns home if you're visiting, otherwise they'll be confiscated at the border. We have very strict gun laws, and fully automatic weapons are pretty much illegal. It almost takes an Act of God to get a licence to own a pistol. (This may be a contributing factor as to why we only have about 600 homicides a year, nation-wide.)
- The border between Canada and the US holds the title of the "World's Longest Undefended Border".

Task 1. What factual knowledge about Canada have you learned? (e.g. the head of the executive branch is the Prime Minister, members of the Senate are appointed for life, the administrative division is into territories, there is no limit on the number of terms a Prime Minister can serve).

Task 2. What can you infer about the US? (they have never had a woman President, you have to be born in the US to run for President, you have a right to keep and bear arms, etc.)

Task 3. Compare Bulgarian institutions and order (e.g. administrative division of Bulgaria, head of executive power, limit of terms in office, etc.)

Task 4. Devise a list: Ten things Canadians/Americans should know about Bulgaria.

3. Seeing foreign culture through the eyes of other foreigners.

Comparing different interpretations of one and the same realia offers students a better grasp and a balanced perspective of the dominant assumptions and values under study. Seeing American culture as perceived by Canadians, for instance, would fill in the blanks of American culture as perceived by Bulgarians.

THIS IS A LIST OF SURE SIGNS THAT YOU'RE IN CANADA.

- The CBC's evening news anchor is bald and doesn't wear a toupee
- There are billboards advertising vacations in Cuba, and Cuban cigars are freely available.
- Nobody worries about losing a life's savings or a home because of illness.
- We DO NOT have snow all year round. We DO NOT live in igloos. We DO NOT ride around on dog sleds. We DO NOT have to check the back yard for polar bears, before we let our kids go out to play.
- Stop asking if we know somebody in Canada, when you find out we're Canadian. We DON'T know everybody in Canada.
- We are not "just like Americans", we have our own national identity, we just haven't figured out what it is, yet. Someone once said that, "Canadians are unarmed Americans with health care." That pretty much sums it up, I guess. We are internationally (but unofficially) known as the "World's Most Polite Nation."
- Our national animal is the beaver. Sure it's just a rodent, but they're not even CLOSE to being extinct. You can still get money for beaver pelts. It is NOT our main unit of exchange; we have money, just like you.

Task 1. How do Americans perceive Canadians? (they think Canadians live in igloos, surrounded by polar bears, they think Canada is a small country, where everybody knows everybody else).

Task 2. How do Canadians perceive Americans? (TV anchors are chosen by the way they look, you can become broke because of illness, Cuba)

Task 3. How do Canadians perceive themselves? What image do Canadians like to give of themselves? What does it tell us about the values of the people who made the cultural material?

Task 4. How would you comment on the following quotations:

"The Bulgarian dream is not to be Bulgarian". Stanislav Stratiev (contemporary Bulgarian writer);

"Americans are benevolently ignorant about Canada, while Canadians are malevolently well informed about the United States". J. Bartlett Brebner.

4. Using native culture as input

Using native culture as input rather than unfamiliar content facilitates student comprehension of the foreign language. An additional advantage for using source culture content is the augmented ability for students' self-expression in a new linguistic environment which acts as a great confidence booster in any foreign language student. Here are some activities that have proved useful in the foreign language classroom:

Task 1. Students compose a booklet in English about Bulgaria taking into account what they know about Canadian/American cultural beliefs and values and the stereotypes of Bulgaria.

Task 2. Students are asked to look for and record instances of using US/Canadian cultural icons in Bulgarian magazines, newspapers, TV, billboards, advertisements. The aim is to register manifestations of the target culture in Bulgarian society.

Task 3. Each student presents a native culture object in class, one that would be difficult for a non-native to identify. In groups, descriptions of the objects are written. Then a guessing Yes/No game is played – the teacher is a non-native, asking questions concerning the function of the objects. The idea is to use English to communicate purely Bulgarian cultural artefacts, thus promoting cross-cultural awareness.

Task 4. Students make a list of how they think they are perceived by foreigners. It might be under different headings, e.g. Top ten reasons for living

in Bulgaria, You know you're a Bulgarian if…Then they conduct a survey and ask foreigners living in Bulgaria (e.g. university lecturers, members of diplomatic missions) to make the same list and compare the perceptions or misconceptions.

Concluding Remarks.

Language communication is culture based. Whether it is the culture studies classroom or the foreign language classroom, the cultural component is always present. Intercultural skills are developed through being exposed to target cultural patterns in the context of native culture or in the context of other cultures. Thus, students are presented with the opportunity to uncover cultural similarities and differences, comparing and contrasting dominant beliefs and values in a given society, with the chance of seeing target culture through their own and through the eyes of other 'foreigners', acquiring a multifaceted perspective that respects diversity (plurality) in unity and finally develop multicultural competence.

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