Abstracts

Plenary lectures

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Adopting a Complexity Theory Perspective in Language Studies:
From Pedagogy to Curriculum as a ‘Simplex System’

This presentation builds on Larsen-Freeman’s 2015 talk at this conference regarding the consequences of taking a complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) perspective on classroom-oriented research (see SSLT, 6, 3 (2016), 377–393). She enumerates key epistemological assumptions for that shift and explores diverse compatible research methodologies. Quite rightly, in the end her primary concern is with what happens in the classroom in order to improve teaching and learning by encouraging how researchers and teachers might rethink how they enact ‘pedagogy’ within a CDST framework.

In my presentation I want to extend this insightful line of inquiry by (a) recognizing a key dilemma raised by Larsen-Freeman herself when she says “If everything is connected with everything else, how can we adopt a perspective that does justice to the complex system that is the classroom in all its multiple embeddedness?” and (b) considering one possibility of overcoming it that she suggests, namely by looking to “a higher level of organization [that] determines constraints on the dynamics at the focal level” (p. 384), typically of pedagogy. Specifically, following van Geert and Steenbeek (2014), I propose ‘curricular thinking’ as such a higher level, an educationally identifiable ‘simplex system’ that resides within the epistemically complex system of education. The intention is to find a way of making “education tractable, understandable and manageable for the various communities involved in the process of education” (p. 37). These qualities are critical for the ability of theoreticians, researchers, and educators in the language studies field to embrace a dynamic approach to language development.

I will explore possible consequences of adopting curricular thinking in the interrelated areas of enacting pedagogy, understanding instructed language development (e.g., through the constructs of CAF, variability of acquisition orders, and motivation), and researching it in methodologically rich ways in educational contexts.

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Strategy-based instruction: The role of metacognitive and affective strategies

Even though research on language learning strategies in language education has a long history, there are still areas that need further consideration. As we all know, within current education trends, the emphasis is on increasing students’ active participation in the learning process. Hence, it is important to realize, that student language learning and performance can be either inhibited or facilitated, and that there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration in the context. Among such factors, attitudes and approaches to
language education (or education in general) seem to be of key importance, acting as either inhibitors or motivators.

Language teachers need to realize that they have a central role in changing learner attitudes and approaches through strategy-based instruction, introducing and teaching/supporting strategies that would contribute to more effective learning and higher achievement. Thus, the presentation focuses on the role of metacognitive and affective strategies, whose contribution to success in language learning has not been fully understood or recognized.

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Cultural Models of Emotions and the Foreign Language Perspective

The present paper focuses on the nature and meanings of emotion, particularly in the context of different languages and cultures and the foreign language and culture acquisition. The first part of the paper discusses the dynamicity of emotion concepts. The questions essential from the foreign/second language acquisition perspective elaborated on in the further part are to what extent monolinguals from one culture learn to experience the emotions of another language and culture and to what extent full L2 emotion concept internalization can be realistically foreseen in the classroom context. A dilemma between conscious and unconscious acquisition is referred to, and what is foregrounded is the place and function of metalinguistic knowledge and awareness, which include the registration of verbal and non-verbal stimuli, not only with reference to grammar but also with regard to the semantic and cognitive content of language utterances. The role of a translation bias and the Cluster Equivalence hypothesis is also discussed, i.e. the fact that some differences can also be interpreted as a consequence of the use of not fully equivalent terms in different languages. A discussion of the special role and function of emotions for the development of human cognitive abilities on the one hand and language and culture acquisition in the context of a foreign language classroom on the other concludes the paper. It points to the advantages of a number of emotion awareness raising techniques towards the development of a deeper understanding of culture-based emotion distinctions in L2 contexts.

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Classroom-oriented research: Processing Instruction (findings and implications)

Empirical research on Processing Instruction has investigated and measured its relative effects on the following:

- Different languages
- Different linguistic features and processing problems
- Different populations and individual differences
- Different language tasks (interpretation and production)
- Sentence and discourse-level assessments
- Primary and secondary effects
- Immediate and durative effects

Experimental research within this research framework has primarily made use of listening and reading measures (so-called off-line measures) to elicit how learners comprehend and process sentences. On-line measurements such as eye tracking and self-paced reading has now been incorporated into Processing Instruction research to measure more directly implicit knowledge.

The purpose of this talk is three-fold:
• To clarify what Processing Instruction really is
• To present and discuss the main findings of the research measuring Processing Instruction and the methodological advances made in Processing Instruction experimental research. For this purpose, the speaker will present the results of past and most recent research into the effects of this pedagogical intervention
• To establish specific guidelines for teachers about when to employ Processing Instruction, in what formats to use it, whether, when and how to combine it with other pedagogical interventions

Suggested reading:


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*Reflective practice in TESOL: An appraisal*

What is reflective practice within teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL)? What research has been carried out on reflective practice in TESOL? What does the research conclude about the practices that encourage TESOL teachers to reflect? Does engaging in reflective practice improve TESOL teaching? In this talk I outline and discuss the results of a survey of research articles from 68 academic journals & 138 articles over a seven year period on the practices that encourage TESOL teachers to reflect. I operationalize reflective practice according to five levels/stages of teacher reflection: philosophy (teacher-as-person), principles (assumptions, beliefs, and conceptions of teaching and learning), theory (theories-in-use), practice (actual teaching), and beyond practice (sociocultural and political consequences). After explaining the framework, I apply it to the research articles that focus on practices that encourage teacher reflection. The results of this survey/review are overwhelmingly positive; clearly, teachers, whether reflecting on their identities, beliefs, theories, or their own teaching do recognize the developmental value and transformative potential in the activities of reflection.

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*An ecological inquiry in SLA – balancing between micro and micro perspective in doing classroom research*

of language as a springboard for all further considerations, my original intention was to incorporate the idea of experiential learning through discursive activity to account for a qualitative change in cognition about language and its learning among prospective L2 language teachers. Two perspectives, which may stand in opposition to each other, were united by concept of languaging (Swain, 2006). Even if I applied that inquiry to the development of professional/personal knowledge of the would-be teacher, its grounding on phenomenological epistemology makes it, in my opinion, a perfect match for ecologically-oriented research in SLA, in which language learning is envisioned as a process of dynamic interaction between different factors (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Consequently, my presentation aims at articulating double plannedness of my research. Consequently, it constitutes a mode of learning, a kind of “self-discovery” by means of symmetric, collective scaffolding (Donato 1994), or peer scaffolding, and, at the same time, as a research methodology, when combined with a microgenetic analysis (Swain and Lapkin 2012). Ultimately, I aim to elucidate how ecological research aims at hitting the micro perspective through examining micro patterns.
Participants’ abstracts
(alphabetically by surname)

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From imitation to interaction – analysis of young learners foreign language course book exercises and tasks

The analysis of exercises has been present in course book research since the 1960s. Theoretical and methodological contexts of such research have varied, however the model which prevails is the diachronic perspective of the development of the concepts of teaching and learning of language skills and systems. The aim of the presented research project is to investigate whether the currently used foreign language course books for young learners along with attached materials support the transition from language imitation to communicative language use. The research focuses on German and English course books used in Early Education (1st educational stage).

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Children’s Brains and the Effectiveness of Processing Instruction: An EEG Study on past simple -ed by L1 German school-age children

This study tests the effects of the input-based grammar intervention Processing Instruction (henceforth PI) before, during and after the instructional intervention. PI is a grammar intervention that structures the input in a way that it pushes learners to map form (e.g. grammatical marker for pastness -ed) and meaning (e.g. -ed denoting accomplished past events) - something they would usually not do by default as they process input initially for meaning before they process it for form (Lee & Benati 2007, VanPatten, 1996, 2004, 2007). Our subjects are children who are beginner learners of English as a Foreign Language, recruited in Austrian primary schools. Only subjects who will score lower than 60 % will be included in the pool. Further, they will be assigned to two groups: experimental (PI group) and control group. Subjects for the control group will have to meet several conditions: same age group and grade as the experimental group, same school type and area, and no previous PI training (both for instruction and practice) on any language feature (to avoid transfer of training effects). To advance our understanding of the neural representation of L2 English morphological processing among school-age children, we use a combination of advanced online measures (eye tracking, EEG/ERPs, and fNIRS) enabling us to gain more objective results about the instruction effects of PI in real-time processing. We focus on discussing the research design of the study and present preliminary results from a pilot study.
Mediated development through the prism of concept map activity

Following Vygotsky’s argument about the leading role of instruction within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), Gal’perin developed Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI), which encourages the active construction of materialized concepts and their monitored transformation into mental processes to foster development. The present paper proposes a framework for fostering dialogic interaction with learners intended to render concept map instructional materials as cognitive tools to regulate learner L2 use and understanding of academic concepts (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). The paper in particular examines self-generated concept map representations of abstract linguistic concepts derived from academic articles during a trainee teacher EAP support unit in a UK based university. It starts with an overview of the adopted STI approach. Then, the pre and post treatment concept maps along with the recorded pre and post treatment oral presentations of 13 university postgraduate trainee teachers on Moodle are closely analysed to reveal how materialization activities were critical to the trainee teachers’ ability to construct and consider new meanings in English. Conceptual development was observed in the creation of learner concept maps that actually elaborated on the given academic article concepts.

The findings revealed that the concept maps were successful in fostering the students’ conceptual development and that specific types of support that were available to the L2 trainee teachers along with their creative and flexible use should be given strong consideration for the dialogic support they offer.

References:

A situated study of emotions and learner agency: analyzing strategy use in classroom micro-situations

Learner agency is increasingly recognized as a key aspect in classroom language learning. Researchers indicate that learners make choices and play a key role in their learning and management of their emotions (Duff, 2012; Dewaele, 2009; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). However, the exact role of emotions in language learning has not been adequately researched. Vygotsky’s (1999) suggestion for the study of emotions involves unity in the approach to psychological phenomena as emotions are neither only social, nor only individual. The present study comprises the analysis of video recorded excerpts from the observation of 4 different postgraduate EAP classroom interactions with 40 UK based University students from a sociocultural perspective. It is argued that the study of emotions should be grounded in the analysis of concrete situations, in order to show its usefulness and potential for further study. Therefore, the context in which emotions are studied needs to be acknowledged, in order not to split their individual and social aspects. Two sources of data are used in order to construct classroom micro-situations: a) video-recorded classroom interactions and b) field notes. Their analysis offers an explanation of the way in which emotions emerge and change in the classroom. The field notes offer information that helps to make sense of the situations presented in the videos but also of the emotion self-regulating strategies employed by the students in four specific micro-situations. Results have shown that the EAP classroom micro-situations may trigger different emotions depending on the positive or negative aspects of teacher-student interactions. Analysis has indicated that as not everything about emotions takes place in the realm of consciousness when emotions are brought to students’ awareness and appropriate strategies are employed to manage them then the learning micro-situations are viewed positively and support learner agency.

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Effects of introducing pronunciation FFI on willingness to communicate in and outside the FL classroom.  
Analysis of selected mediating factors  

The presentation has two major objectives. Firstly, it report the results of a quasi-experimental longitudinal study conducted among Polish pre-intermediate high school learners of English. Among its aims was to examine whether raising phonetic and phonological competence of the students and improving their pronunciation affects their willingness to communicate (WTC) in and outside the FL classroom. The construct was measured with the use of an 18-item self-report questionnaire based on a 6-point Likert scale (Cronbach alpha = .94), inquiring about the respondents’ eagerness to (1) speak during particular FL class activities and to (2) participate in real-life situations requiring talking to other non-native speakers or native speakers of the target language. The independent variables, i.e. the pronunciation level, phonetic competence, and self-assessment of pronunciation, were measured before and after the treatment with oral and written tests, respectively.

After the one-school-year treatment, the experimental group, representing a higher level of phonetic competence and pronunciation self-assessment than that of the control group, revealed a bigger increase of level of WTC outside the classroom (t=2.734; p=.012). However, no statistically significant differences were found when the changes of the level of WTC in the FL classroom are concerned. Consequently, the second objective of the paper is to present a selected group of mediating factors from among several potential mediators, mainly teacher-related factors, which might explain the insignificant difference in the level of WTC in the classroom between the control and experimental group. The mediating variables will be presented on the basis of qualitative data collected with the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with the students and observations of lessons run with their regular teacher.

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The role of the phonological loop and the central executive in grammatical proficiency of adult learners of English  

The aim of this presentation is to report the findings of a study which investigated the relationship between the central executive and the phonological loop and grammatical proficiency in both controlled and free production of English as a second language. The participants of the study were sixty intermediate adult learners of English as a second language, students of English philology. The phonological loop was operationalized as a nonword repetition span and digit span (simple tasks), and the central executive was operationalized as a listening span test and reading span (complex tasks). All the four memory tests were conducted in the L1- Polish. Grammar proficiency was operationalized as the ability to recognize and produce morphologically and syntactically correct sentences in a series of tasks: recognition task, controlled production (selected-response tasks and limited-response tasks) and free production, as measured by a written test and an oral test (extended-production tasks).

The aim of our study was to investigate the problem of which of the components of WM plays what role in the development of grammatical proficiency (cf. Fortkamp 2003; Linck et al. 2014; Martin & N. Ellis 2012; Tagarelli, Mota & Rebuschat 2015; Wen 2015; Williams & Lovatt 2003). Both components are implicated in L2 grammar learning (Wen et al. 2015), but the problem which of them is more responsible for grammar production remains unresolved and even less is known about the complexity of this relationship, especially between the executive
function and accuracy (Tare et al., 2016, Wallace 2016; Wen 2016). A rationale for our study was Linck et al.’s (2014) assumption that the central executive is more strongly implicated in grammar production than the phonological loop, with the caveat that the relationship is complex and task-dependent. The second argument was the claim that phonological working memory is more relevant for younger L2 learners and early stages of SLA, while the central executive is more important for college-level and post-critical L2 learners, that is at later SLA stages (Doughty et al. 2010; Wen et al. 2015). We will discuss the results of our study, its limitations and directions for further research.

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Foreign language classroom anxiety sources in a further education context

Apprehension and unwillingness to communicate frequently occur in educational domains, however, they seem to be particularly widespread in FL acquisition. This is largely owing to the fact that language learning is a personal process, closely connected to the learner’s ego. Foreign language learners endeavour to express themselves authentically with the limited resources at their command. The apprehension related to the delicate nature of language learning becomes much more severe when an insensitive teacher adds to inherent anxiety, for example by making students perform in front of others so they are evaluated by both the instructor and their peers.

Language anxiety has been shown to affect about 30% of foreign language students (Horwitz, 2013). Not only does it cause discomfort for learners but also hinders foreign language acquisition mainly due to unwillingness to communicate (Horwitz, 2001, 2010, 2013). In order to reduce student foreign language classroom anxiety, and thus to increase learner chances of success in FL acquisition it is vital for teachers to be aware of its sources. The presenter hopes to have contributed to second language acquisition research in this respect by investigating anxiety sources in the further education context in Poland. In order to identify the main stressors in the foreign language classroom action research was employed and both qualitative and quantitative research instruments were utilised. The presentation will demonstrate the study results followed by conclusions and pedagogical implications. The presenter will also show activities that the study participants have found the least anxiety provoking in their foreign language class.

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English language textbooks for early school education in Poland – state-of-the-art research from a micro- and macro- perspective

Textbooks, including these for teaching English, may be perceived as an integral element of education. As Magdalena Sopotowicz and Marek Muszyński concluded in their study devoted to effectiveness of teaching English (BENJA) published in 2015, English language teachers in Poland still base their lessons on a selected textbook and they carry out up to five exercises from it in every classes (Muszyński & Sopotowicz, 2015, p. 99-100). Owing to a seemingly vital role of textbooks in the Polish system of education and the significance of teaching foreign languages to pupils at the first stage of education, it can be argued that English language textbooks (hereafter ELTs) utilised at this level require careful monitoring in terms of both their content and form. Therefore, the paper aims at presenting the outcomes of the state-of-the-art research conducted by the author into studies concerning the analysis of ELTs for early school education in Poland in order to provide a potential answer to the question whether their quality is monitored carefully enough.

In her presentation, the author provides justification for conducting her study, describes methodology of achieving the assumed goal that was based on searching through both repositories of the Polish universities and worldwide open access resources as well as using a few academic search engines, for instance, Google scholar, or BASE. Finally, the author elaborates on the outcomes of the research that has indicated a profound lack of works in question. Hence, the author discusses perspectives on ELTs utilised at higher stages of education
adopted by scholars not only in Poland, but also abroad, and emphasizes the importance of performing the analyses of ELTs for early school education.

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"Reflection time": The effectiveness of CCA-oriented tasks in an EFL classroom

One of the aims of the paper is to present the results of my empirical research project which is focused primarily on measuring the effectiveness of reflective tasks designed for raising EFL university students' critical cultural awareness (CCA). Firstly, the concept of critical cultural awareness, as defined by Byram (1997) in his model of Intercultural Competence, along with its five constituents, i.e. (a) self-discovery, (b) ability to decentre, (c) reflectivity and meta-awareness, (d) cultural understanding, and (e) attitudes will be discussed. Secondly, a set of 9 reflective tasks which aim at developing the aforementioned elements of critical cultural awareness will be analyzed in terms of their objectives, procedures and students' performance. The reflective tasks aim at developing a number of abilities, such as defamiliarizing, challenging ethnocentric patterns and finding difference in similarity. Each reflective task is followed by a reflective journal – a set of follow-up critical questions which require students' both introspective and retrospective analysis of what happened in the classroom. The journals were delivered on an e-learning platform and were completed by the students at home. Finally, the preliminary results of the analysis of the journals will be presented and discussed in terms of whether the objectives were achieved by students and whether the CCA-oriented tasks contributed to raising students' critical cultural awareness.

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Friend or foe. The influence of teacher behavior on the foreign language learning process

According to Dörnyei (2001b: 120), "almost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students, which makes teacher behaviour a powerful motivational tool". A similar opinion has been presented by Allison (1993, after Dörnyei 2001b: 120), who says that mutual trust is seen as key element to establish motivational relationship with the learners. Another factor which contributes to motivationally successful teaching is enthusiasm. Such a commitment towards the subject matter, excitement about the content, not only in words but also by body language, defines enthusiastic and motivating teachers. As Brophy and Kher (1986) state, enthusiasm may be understood as the ability to make enthusiasm explicit and is seen as one of the most important ingredients of motivationally successful teaching. What is more, as Dörnyei (2001a:34) points out, the educator embodies the class spirit and students should sense that the teacher cares about them, and their personal success. There are many ways to increase motivation among learners, such as: offering concrete assistance, responding immediately when help is requested, correcting tests and papers promptly, arranging extracurricular instructional programmes/opportunities, encouraging extra assignments and offering to assist with these, showing concern when things are not going well. Additionally, the teacher should have high expectations for what the student can achieve. However, like yin and yang inappropriate educator's behavior may lead to demotivation among learners and result in unsatisfactory foreign language learning. Therefore, the aim of the study, described in the presentation, was to identify which teacher conduct is perceived as motivating and which may result in the decrease of motivation among senior high school learners.

Does contemporary Telemachus still need his mentor? Identifying the characteristics of mentors in modern-day educational context.

The term ‘mentor’ is often used to describe a knowledgeable, experienced, highly proficient educator who works with and alongside a pre-service inexperienced teacher or less experienced colleague. Their cooperation is close
at first, but this gradually diminishes as the new teacher becomes more capable and confident. Furthermore, mentors should have extensive knowledge about the process of teaching and learning, students, parents and the school. This knowledge and know-how is invaluable to new pre-service teachers. One of the mentor’s roles is to guide and support the beginning teacher through the registration process, rather than evaluate, judge or assess their performance against the standards. Mentors may help the beginning teachers to recognize how they’re progressing in relation to the standards and help them to know when they’re ready to become more proficient educators. Moreover, the relationship between a mentor and a pre-service teacher is based on trust and mutual respect. Having said that it would be of primary importance to identify these characteristics which identify and describe mentors best. Therefore, a study has been conducted in order to investigate which mentor attributes are considered as the most indispensable. To gather the necessary data the author interviewed pre-service teachers and educators who are considered mentors by students or colleagues. The results are described in the presentation along with some suggestions concerning teacher development and training.

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The Influence of using bilingual dictionary and no dictionary on reading comprehension and word power improvement of Iranian EFL learners: Focus on translation skill

The effect of dictionary usage on English as a foreign language (EFL) test performance is a controversial topic. Teachers generally regard both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries as necessary tools for effective reading comprehension. Students of EFL are expected to know how to use bilingual dictionaries without specific guidance (Marsha Bensoussan & Donald Sim, 1984).

This study aimed to explore the impact of the use or non-use of bilingual dictionary on reading comprehension performance and word power improvement of Iranian EFL learners in Kerman Azad University. 80 English students studying at Kerman Azad University who had taken reading comprehension course in the academic year 2016-2017 were randomly selected for the purpose of this study. The instruments used to collect the required data were an attitude questionnaire to evaluate learners' attitudes, and the students' scores to evaluate their reading comprehension performance. After filling the questionnaires by learners, the collected data were analyzed by using SPSS tools. Also, an interview with some of the learners was done to determine learners' attitudes toward bilingual dictionary. The findings of the study demonstrated that using bilingual dictionary had positive effect on reading comprehension performance of EFL learners.

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Humor in the L2 classroom

Humor is probably one of the few elements applicable to virtually all people in the world, but the perception and appreciation of humor can be circumstantial and culture-dependent (Martin, 2007). Although the potential role of humor in language classrooms has been the topic of research over the last years (Bell, 2005, 2009; Forman, 2011; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011; Sterling & Loewen, 2015), scant attention has been given to cross-cultural variability in humor perception and comprehension. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate whether there were national and cultural differences in the perceptions of humor use in ESL classrooms. One hundred and six international students studying at a large American University participated in this study. Participants had a variety of cultural and language backgrounds (e.g., Chinese, German, Korean, Spanish, and Turkish). After completing a language background questionnaire, participants were asked to rate 10 humorous scenarios including lexical, phonological and universal jokes, on a scale from not funny to extremely funny. Then, they completed a 25-item humor perception questionnaire consisting of four sub-sections (i.e., desired teacher characteristics, low affective filter, increased attentiveness, and increased learner confidence), and three open-ended questions. Since there was not enough sample representing each language group, participants were
divided into three main groups: Turkish (N = 43), Asian (N = 40), and European (N = 23). The results showed that overall international students assigned more positive scores to universal jokes than lexical and phonological jokes but there were no significant between-group differences. However, as for the perception of humor use in English classrooms, Asian group held slightly less positive attitudes towards the use of humor whereas Turkish group was the one most open to the employment of humor. Implications of such national and cultural differences in the employment of humor in English classrooms will be considered.

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_in listening lies great power: Effective in-class activities for teaching listening_

Most learners find listening a challenging skill. They lack confidence in this area, but have a strong desire to improve. As teachers, we need to help our learners to develop their listening skills rather than test their ability to memorise text and answer questions from memory. We can do this in many way and we will explore some of them in this workshop.

We will come away from the traditional PDP approach focused on playing the CD and answering comprehension questions. We will work on:

- going deeper into texts
- developing text construction skills while listening
- developing skills to activate schemata
- developing skills to help improve prediction
- interacting with texts
- building confidence with listening.

We will also discuss ways to personalise material and help learners to develop better communication skills.

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_researching the relationship between the use of L2 and L3 learning strategies by foreign language majors with an additional language_

Language Learning Strategies (LLS), are a well-researched topic in the field of second language acquisition (cf. Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Oxford, 2011) and they are defined as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own progress in developing skills in a second or foreign language (which) can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval or use of the new language." (Oxford, 1999: 518). However, despite numerous studies investigating different variables influencing the use of LLS, there is a scarcity of research which would compare the employment of LLS in a second (L2) and third language (L3). The paper examines the way in which students learning two languages (i.e. L2 and L3) use LLS. The participants include students majoring in foreign languages (i.e. English, German, Spanish and French) who, at the same time, study an additional language at university. The aim of this paper is to look at the ways in which strategies are applied by these learners and to compare the application of strategic devices as used by the same learners in order to acquire different languages. The data was obtained by the means of two research tools, namely: questionnaires and think-aloud protocols. The results present global tendencies associated with the application of LLSs in general, where it is visible that the respondents use LLS more frequently in L2 than in L3. However, the specific categories of strategies were also analyzed indicating that there are differences which lay in the application of specific types of LLS, e.g. metacognitive strategies.
Team-teaching in higher education: An analysis at micro level

The main stumbling block to implementing EMI (English-medium instruction) programmes in Spanish universities has to do with the lack of English competence. In addition, it has to be noted that the majority of Spanish universities do not offer their EMI lecturers any specific training related to EMI teaching (Halbach & Lázaro, 2015). This is one of the main reasons why content EMI lecturers do not usually consider language aspects (Aguilar, 2015). However, language development and learning the nuances of the language used in each specialization should be an integral part of any EMI experience. This entails students learning the specific discourse, vocabulary and syntax characteristic of each discipline (Llinares, Morton & Whittaker, 2012).

This study is part of a 4-year longitudinal research project whose main aim is to boost content and language teachers’ collaboration at university level. With this in mind, 15 content teachers’ beliefs and practices were analysed through discussion groups carried out at the University of the Basque Country and the University of Cordoba in Spain. The participants discussed their approach to language teaching (if any at all) and the way in which collaboration between language and content teachers can be implemented.

The analysis of the results firstly showed that content teachers pay no heed to language forms, although they acknowledged that they would welcome support from language teachers in order to tackle language issues. Consequently, they were positive about (language and content) team teaching collaboration. Secondly, they also noted the similarities and differences between teaching content in their L1 and in English. Lastly, the participants pointed out the need to find ways of bolstering students’ participation, as the latter are often reluctant due to their low English proficiency. The results of this study will help us to lay the foundations for team teaching.

Simultaneous attention to form and meaning: insights from L2 Spanish

The role of attention has been one of the main issues studied in SLA. Following VanPatten’s (2004) primacy of meaning proposal, a number of researchers (e.g. Leow et al. 2008; Morgan-Short et al. 2012) have explored whether attention to meaning takes precedence over attention to form when learners engage in comprehending L2 texts.

The paper reports on a study which is part of a larger multi-site replication project (Morgan-Short et al. 2016). Specifically, we investigated the effects of attention to form on listening comprehension by 59 L1-Polish learners of Spanish. The learners listened to a short story and answered several comprehension questions. However, as they were listening to the story, they were asked to pay attention to different linguistic features: a lexical item (‘sol’), an article (‘la’), a verb-ending suffix (‘-n’). The aim of this procedure was to check whether directing L2 learners’ attention to grammatical and lexical forms affected their comprehension.

The students reached a fairly high comprehension level (40%) but their results varied depending on the feature they focused on. The score of the verbal ‘-n’ group was significantly lower than that of the ‘sol’ group, suggesting that attention to grammatical features causes more processing difficulty than attention to lexical features. The difficulties of the verbal ‘-n’ group were further confirmed by its significantly lower comprehension score in comparison to the control group, who focused only on listening comprehension. The negative effects of the
simultaneous focus on the form and meaning were also observed when proficiency was considered as a moderating variable. The paper concludes with a discussion of the role of attention in L2 comprehension.

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Motivational self systems in a second and third language: An investigation of four English majors

One of the leading models of second language (L2) motivation at present is the theory of the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2013; Dörnyei & Csizér 2002), according to which this system is composed of three elements: (1) ideal L2 self, which is related to the abilities and skills learners imagine they could possess, (b) ought-to L2 self, which is connected with the attributes learners think should be possessed in order to ward off adverse consequences, and (c) L2 learning experience, which constitutes a situation-specific factor, related to the immediate learning environment. The discrepancy that a learner perceives between the current abilities or skills, or the actual self, and those envisioned for the future, or the ideal self, is the driving force behind his or her efforts to master the target language, mediated by external factors, such as the impact of significant others or the learning experience. It has also been argued that the possible selves are dynamic, both as a result of the modifications of the goals set and the ongoing impact of other self-related variables (Henry 2015). The present study aims to address an issue that has been thus far neglected by researchers, that is the nature of the motivational systems in a second and third language, interactions between these systems and their dynamism over time. The participants were four students majoring in English, also attending intensive courses in another language (i.e., French, German and Spanish). The relevant data were collected by means of semi-structured, in-depth interviews and were subjected to qualitative analysis. It was found that there were differences in the extent to which the future self-guides changed in the L2 and L3, the nature of the motivational systems varied, and they were affected by somewhat different constellations of factors.

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Factors affecting changes in willingness to communicate in a second language: An overview

In the last decade or so there has been an evident shift in research on willingness to communicate in a second language (L2 WTC) from studies seeking to establish the internal structure of the construct as well as determining the relationships among various factors underlying it, to empirical investigations that have as their aim identification of factors that are responsible for moment-to-moment changes in L2 WTC, both in naturally-occurring classrooms and in laboratory settings (cf. Mystkowska-Wiertelak & Pawlak, 2017). While such a micro-perspective is not intended to entirely replace the previous line of inquiry but, rather, to complement it, its value lies in the fact that it offers important insights into various influences on L2 WTC in a particular context, also shedding light on the intricate interplay of different variables. The paper is intended to provide a synthesis of the available empirical evidence of this kind, bringing together information on the significance of factors that have been explored so far, charting future research directions and considering the methodological challenges involved in such research projects.
On old dogs and new tricks: Neurobiological, cognitive, socio-affective and linguistic benefits of foreign language learning in the third age

While there is a growing body of research on second language acquisition in children and young adults, much remains to be explored about how mature adults, and particularly seniors, learn a new language and how good additional language learning is for them (see Singleton, in press). My goal in this paper is to summarize what is known about the linguistic, socio-affective, neurobiological and cognitive underpinnings of the L2 learning process in older individuals, and how best to approach these phenomena methodologically in future research.

I present the findings of two longitudinal studies in which 22 German-speaking subjects between the age of 65–90 attended a 7-week intensive English course for beginners, and were tested on a range of linguistic, cognitive, neurofunctional and motivational parameters – vocabulary and listening tests, different working memory tasks, EEG experiments, and interviews about learner investment, among others – before, after and during the training, with the aim of identifying factors that facilitate successful learning in the third age and help explain inter-individual differences that are age-independent. The results of exploratory factor analyses and qualitative analyses support previous research (e.g. Schlegel et al., 2012) arguing that the brain preserves large parts of its plasticity even at an advanced age, and that age-related social, psychological and contextual factors may play as significant a role as strictly maturational factors.

Bearing these findings in mind, I delineate methodological issues that arose and need to be considered when conducting similar research on SLA in old adults in the future. In so doing, I hope to facilitate not only the comparability between studies but also increase the particularizability of findings as we suggest measures to account for inter-individual differences that vary as a function of age. This is crucial in the establishment of learner profiles and, subsequently, the design of individualized language training.

References:

Intra-individual variability in the emergence of complexity, accuracy and fluency in English L2 writing - a case study of a good language learner

According to Dynamic Systems Theory (DST), language is a complex dynamic system consisting of subsystems which are never fully stable and which show a lot of variability, especially when the system undergoes intensive development. Second language development is generally connected with an increase in complexity, accuracy and fluency but there are trade-offs within and between these language subcomponents, which is visible in dense, longitudinal data. What is more, intra-individual variability, which is defined as differences in the level of a developmental variable within individuals and between repeated measurements and which may be called developmental variability if it spans over a year or more, is said to be an important developmental phenomenon which does not only indicate the ongoing learning process but promotes language development. The aim of the presentation is to analyse the relationships between different measures of syntactic complexity, lexical complexity, accuracy and fluency, which may constitute the so called supportive, competitive or conditional growers, and to analyse the patterns of intra-individual variability in these measures with respect to their rate of development in longitudinal written data provided by a good language learner at the level of secondary-school.
**L2 learning in the context of cross-cultural relationships**

The “love factor” has long figured in SLA research. Thus, Piller (2002) studied the language “glue” between cross-lingual couples; Marinova-Todd (2003) found a link between L2 proficiency and co-habitation with native speakers; Muñoz & Singleton (2007) reported a romantic connection between successful late L2 learners and native speakers; and Kinsella & Singleton (2014) found that the participants in their study of late L2 learners whose L2 test results were all within native-speaker range had native-speaker life-partners. This issue is now being taken very seriously, as Dewaele & Salomidou’s (2016) recent article on “loving … in a foreign language” demonstrates.

In the present paper I report on the results of recent qualitative research, based on interview data collected from a number of L2 learners who, besides having experience of classroom L2 learning, are also involved in relevant intercultural and cross-lingual relationships. Their L2 learning process is clearly influenced by the affective context in which it occurs. The data suggest that identity construction may be moved in a particular direction by the language principally adopted by the couple, and that, for the partner for whom this language is the L2, the results can be dramatic in terms of both linguistic and cultural affiliation.

References:

**Developing intercultural competence in the language classroom - a qualitative study**

Globalization, advanced internet technologies and the status of English as a *lingua franca* have posed a considerable challenge for the EFL profession. In such a new context, where our learners are likely to move between cultures on a regular basis, the long-established objectives of English language teaching have to be reconsidered and an intercultural approach has to become one of its prerequisites. Students have to be equipped with the ability to comprehend quickly and accurately, then act appropriately and effectively in culturally complex environments in order to achieve the desired goal/s. Thus, language training, except for traditional work on the four skills, should incorporate developing students’ knowledge of foreign cultures and principles of intercultural communication, along with intercultural skills, namely: the ability to mediate, de-center, and postpone judgment, just to mention a few. Simultaneously desirable attitudes to culturally diverse foreigners should be honed in learners, empathy towards them and tolerance fostered, which, in the long run, will allow for benefiting rather than suffering from intercultural experience.

This presentation will report on the qualitative research carried out at the secondary education level in Poland. The study tried to investigate whether and to what extent the English language classroom is conducive to developing learners’ intercultural sensitivity and competence. Lesson observations (53) and interviews with teachers (10) provided ample resources which allowed to answer a few research questions, among them whether students are encouraged to analyze and interpret cultural input interculturally, i.e. explore foreign cultures and their own, compare and contrast one culture with another, including their native one, or discuss critical incidents, ultimately finding what contributed to communication breakdowns in the analyzed situation. The collected data
also revealed whether students have a chance to challenge cultural biases, prejudices and stereotypes and thus practice self-regulation and control over the affective domain, so important for stimulating their development in this area.

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An application of Task-Based Language Teaching for immigrating graduate students

This research reports the process of implementing a new French language curriculum, following Long’s (2016) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) model for curriculum and syllabus design, which consists of five common instructional design phases: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. A non-credit L2 French program at a university in Canada intended for graduate students to improve their conversation skills had a mandate of creating a curriculum that would address the needs of the students and support future teachers. Previously, this 5-level program did not have any consistent curriculum, as teachers were asked to develop their own syllabi.

The first step was to collect feedback from the current students and teachers to determine the goals of the curriculum. The primary goal of the students turned out to be to pass immigration exams. The immigration language tests in Canada follow the CEFR framework and B2 is the minimum level of proficiency required. A task-based syllabus for each level was developed with the primary unit of analysis being task completion. The tasks were based on the needs of incoming students. Secondary linguistic components were also built into the syllabi to support focus on form. One example of how linguistic elements were incorporated was through providing vocabulary goals for each level according to Milton and Alexiou’s (2009) recommendations (i.e., B2 students know on average 2650 words). Gathering teachers’ perceptions revealed that many of the teachers needed additional support teaching pronunciation. A phonology workshop was set up and resources were created to support teachers’ needs. An evaluation of the TBLT model as implemented here suggests that it was successful at establishing goals and providing a flexible structure across courses but regular meetings with teachers is essential in promoting autonomy. It is too early to report whether the program is successful in better aiding students’ goals.

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Measuring change in longitudinal research on pragmatic competence

Despite a steep increase in studies into pragmatic competence (PC) in a second/foreign language, researchers’ predilection or preference for contrastive studies continue to set the tone in this research domain. Consequently, research enabling a deeper and more nuanced understanding of learning pragmatics is still in short supply. This paucity of research is caused inter alia by the fact that there are very few publications devoted to measuring change in PC, i.e., how to capture development over time. Consequently, this paper aims to contribute to the rather limited sources on this topic by providing a theoretical and empirical discussion of two approaches to studying interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) with the assistance of the multinominal logistic model. In particular, it is intended to be a think-piece regarding how this statistical tool can be applied to analyze two types of pragmatic data: (1) output collected over an extended period of time from the same group of participants, and (2) data on pragmatic comprehension collected in a cross-sectional design. The author posits that the tool offers a comprehensive and flexible approach to modeling relations between independent and dependent variables in ILP.
How will I teach English? Pre-service English teachers’ beliefs and attitudes

In Spain, teacher training for Secondary Education is a one year programme that students take after obtaining an undergraduate degree with specific majors, like English Studies. Consequently, future English language secondary school teachers have a relatively short period of time in which to go on placement and develop the necessary skills for professional practice. Therefore, one of the goals of training is to aid future teachers in reflection processes that can help them develop these skills. In this study, pre-service English teachers explored their previous language learning experiences and their beliefs about classroom practice. Before going on placement for a six week period, a group of forty students were asked to fill in the Personal Statement of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL). The importance of this exercise was to make students aware that their classroom procedures are based on attitudes, intentions, beliefs and values (Scirvener, 1994). After the placement period, students were asked to go back to the personal statement and take a second look at the questions. In some cases, this resulted in more content being added to complete a response, in others, students rewrote the response from a different viewpoint, and in a few cases, no changes were made at all. Therefore, the use of the Portfolio Statement provides a register that enables contrastive analysis of data that serves as an indicator of the process of reflection and awareness in training future English teachers. In the Spanish context, thus, it can be seen as a useful tool to trigger reflection and create awareness of classroom practice in the Master’s programme.

Polish and Spanish EFL teacher trainers’ beliefs about the use of the L1 in learning and teaching the L2. A qualitative approach

The role of learners’ native language (L1) in the process of learning an L2, as well as its presence in a foreign language classroom, is a controversial issue in contemporary L2 didactics. While a number of researchers see the L1 as an important resource serving cognitive, organizational, social and affective functions in L2 instruction, others maintain that teaching with an (almost) exclusive use of the L2 should be recommended. Teachers’ perceptions of the role of the L1 are likely to be influenced by the educational context and tradition, previous experience as L2 learners, and their teacher education. Hence, an investigation into teacher trainers’ attitudes toward the L1 seems to be an important research area. The presentation will report the findings of an interview-based study whose aim was to analyze the beliefs held by EFL teacher trainers about the role of the L1 in learning and teaching English as a foreign language at university degree level. The participants were twelve trainers involved in EFL teacher preparation, six working at a university in Poland, and six at a university in Spain. The elicited qualitative data were subjected to content analysis, in which certain recurring themes were identified. The presentation of the results will highlight both the congruent views expressed by the sample as a whole, as well as the differences in the beliefs among individual trainers and between the two groups working in different countries. Implications concerning the role of trainers’ beliefs on trainees’ cognitions in teacher education programs will be discussed.
Rhosticity as a feature of ‘clearer speech’ in Polish advanced learners of English

Rhosticity has been claimed to be one of the most significant phonetic variables in English (Sundkvist & Gao, 2015). The pronunciation of /r/ in non-prevocalic contexts functions as one of the major accent variables in the English-speaking world (e.g. Wells 1982), with the main reference varieties, i.e. General American and Standard Southern British English characterised by pronouncing vs. not-pronouncing /r/ in these contexts. When discussed from the learner perspective, rhosticity tends to be associated with the choice of the reference variety (e.g. Rindall & Piercy, 2013, Sundkvist & Gao, 2015). However, as <r> is present in spelling across contexts, its pronunciation by learners may reflect spelling pronunciation, particularly in learners whose L1 allows this consonant in the coda. This latter tendency may contribute to the perception of rhotic pronunciation as clearer and consequently, more desired in communication with non-native speakers (as in the English as a Lingua Franca, see Jenkins 2000). Thus, the presence of non-prevocalic /r/ can be attributed to an accent choice by the learner or it can reflect the spelling-based, clearer speech pronunciation in learner English.

In order to explore this issue, a study was conducted among Polish students majoring in English. The students were asked to read a text containing a variety of contexts for /r/ twice – first as they often do for the class purposes, and then with the purpose of using the recording for their own learners. The degree of rhosticity of the students was compared to their declared accent preference and the results for both readings. The results support the effect of accent choice on rhosticity in the case of some, but not all students; the effect of a potential audience had a slight effect, mediated by accent-choice.

Fluency development in academic presentations

Fluency has been defined in a number of ways, encompassing concepts as diverse as speech fluidity and language proficiency; in this paper, however, we adopt a relatively narrow understanding of the term as “the ability to communicate one’s intended meaning effortlessly, smoothly, and with no or little disruption” (Tavakoli, Cambell & McCormack, 2016, p. 447). Consequently, we follow Segalowitz (2012) and concentrate on such qualities of speech as pauses, hesitations, repetitions and repairs. The specific context for the study is the course of academic presentations, where fluency is one of major objectives for the students majoring in English.

The study reported here aims to discuss the development of fluency in speech as the result of pedagogic intervention in the academic presentation class. It is a part of a larger study, in which the relationship between the training and a number of variables is investigated (as reported in Klimczak-Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2016). In the course of their training, Polish students majoring in English have recorded three short speeches, the impromptu, a short speech and a longer presentation. One minute from each recording has been analysed for the fluency markers. The results are interpreted in terms of the effectiveness of pedagogic intervention as well as the stylistic differences between the tasks.

References:
From imitation to interaction – analysis of young learners foreign language course book exercises and tasks

The analysis of exercises has been present in course book research since the 1960s. Theoretical and methodological contexts of such research have varied, however the model which prevails is the diachronic perspective of the development of the concepts of teaching and learning of language skills and systems. The aim of the presented research project is to investigate whether the currently used foreign language course books for young learners along with attached materials support the transition from language imitation to communicative language use. The research focuses on German and English course books used in Early Education (1st educational stage).

Embedding duo-ethnography in preservice language teachers’ learning

Duo-ethnography is a research methodology, through which people of difference reconceptualise their histories of a particular phenomenon in juxtaposition with one another. Although initiated by researchers, duo-ethnographies can also be used by students as a useful pedagogic tool that develops deep reflection. After discussing the efficacy of duo-ethnography, a one-semester-long duo-ethnographic study will be described, which was conducted by the author with six preservice English teachers. In the study, the participants worked in pairs (duo) and reflected on their own understandings of language teaching and language learning (stage one), themselves as language learners and future language teachers on the basis of the data from stage one (stage two), their conversational partners as learners and teachers on the basis of the data from stage one (stage three) and, finally, on the value of the duo-ethnographic project in language teacher preparation courses from their own perspective (stage four). The presentation ends with the author’s remarks about the project as a learning tool that undoubtedly encourages students’ deep reflection but, on the other hand, as a pedagogic instrument that has limitations to be acknowledged, especially if duo-ethnography is to be employed in the classroom context.

The implications of metaphorical reflection for professional awareness development of prospective EFL teachers

This study documents and explains the effect of metaphor use on the university EFL students’ understanding of selected aspects of ELT methodology. The theoretical point of departure for the discussion of study results was Lakoff and Johnson’s approach to metaphor as a mapping from concrete entities to their abstract counterparts. The data, gathered from a questionnaire filled out by 26 fifth-year EFL students, was examined on a qualitative and quantitative basis alike. The respondents were asked to rank 30 metaphorical definitions of selected ELT methodology concepts in order of preference as well as to descriptively comment on one of them. The obtained results showed the subjects’ eagerness to analyze proposed metaphorical definitions and connect them to their own linguistic metaphors, which encouraged the use of related terminology and the examination of chosen concepts from different perspectives (cause-and-effect relationships, personality factors, learner needs).
Consequently, the study revealed promising opportunities for conceptual metaphors to function as models for a variety of applied linguistic ideas.