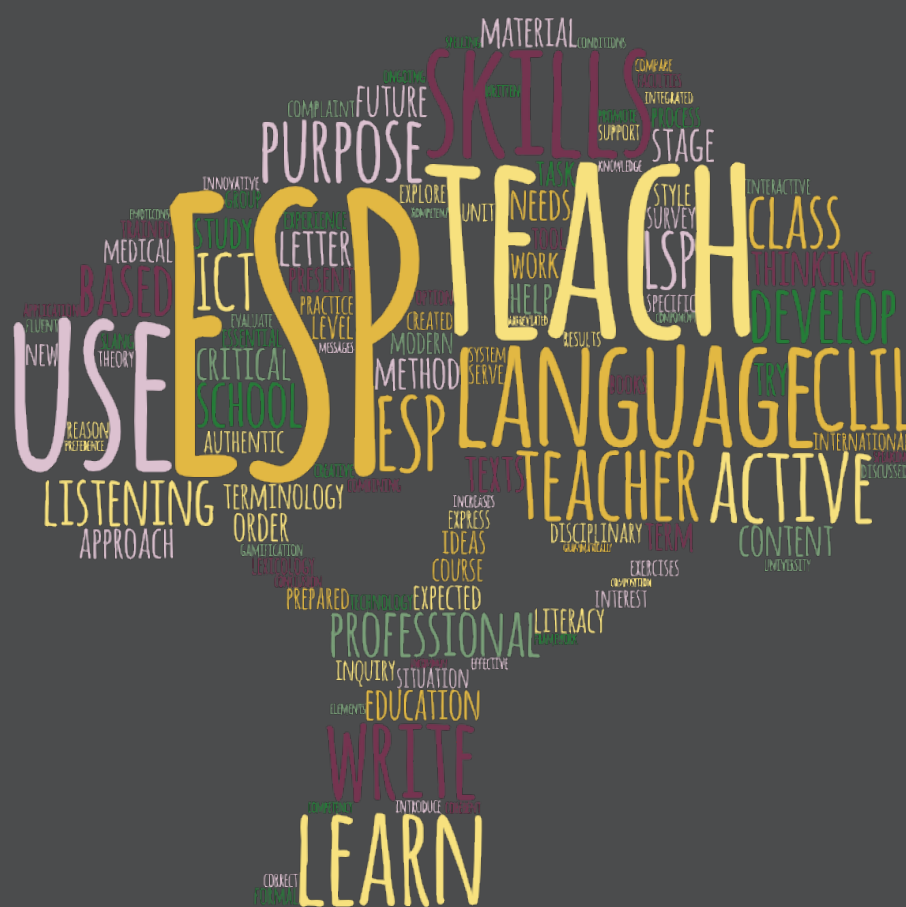


**Developing ESP Competencies:  
Between Tasks, Experience, Skills, and Method**



**PROCEEDINGS**

**2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference**

**Languages for Specific Purposes: Opportunities and Challenges  
of Teaching and Research**

**Published by the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers**

## **Inter Alia 7**

### **Developing ESP Competencies: Between Tasks, Experience, Skills, and Method**

Zbornik 2. mednarodne konference *Tuji jeziki stroke: Priložnosti in izzivi poučevanja in raziskovanja* /

Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference *Languages for Specific Purposes: Opportunities and Challenges of Teaching and Research*

Urednici številke 7 / Editors of issue number 7: Mateja Dostal in Polona Vičič

Vsi prispevki so šli skozi postopek dvojnega slepega recenziranja. / All contributions were subjected to double-blind peer-review.

Oblikovanje / Design: Saša Podgoršek

Slika na naslovnici / Cover image: Mateja Dostal, <https://www.wordart.com>

Spletni naslov / Web page: [www.interalia.si](http://www.interalia.si)

Založilo in izdalo / Publisher: Slovensko društvo učiteljev tujega jezika stroke / Slovene Association of LSP Teachers

Za založbo / For the publisher: Violeta Jurkovič, predsednica SDUTSJ / President of SDUTSJ

Ljubljana 2021

Prva izdaja / First edition

Publikacija je brezplačna / Publication is free of charge



To delo je ponujeno pod licenco Creative Commons Priznanje avtorstva-Deljenje pod enakimi pogoji 4.0 Mednarodna licenca. / This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili  
v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani  
COBISS.SI-ID=81744387  
ISBN 978-961-95543-0-2 (PDF)

**Developing ESP Competencies:  
Between Tasks, Experience, Skills, and Method**

**PROCEEDINGS**

**of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference Languages for  
Specific Purposes: Opportunities and Challenges of  
Teaching and Research**

**Editors: Mateja Dostal and Polona Vičič**



**Published by the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers**

**Ljubljana, 2021**



## Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	7
<i>Katja Bogovič</i> <b>Eat That Frog Called Inquiry, Complaint and Thank You Letter – Interactive Exercises Can Help!</b>	9
<i>Anna Dávidovics</i> <b>Is Gamification an Option to Reach the New Generation of Learners? A Comparative Survey between International and Hungarian Medical Students Studying Languages for Medical Purposes</b>	27
<i>Marina A. Sokolova, Elena A. Nikulina</i> <b>Teaching LSP in Higher Education: The Experience of Teaching Terminology to Pre-Service Teachers</b>	39
<i>Sandra Tominac Coslovich, Jana Kegalj</i> <b>Using Authentic Materials in Developing Maritime English Students’ Listening Skills</b>	45



## Editorial

Welcome to the special edition of *Inter Alia 7 Developing ESP Competencies: Between Tasks, Experience, Skills, and Method*, featuring contributions from the *Second International Conference of the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers of Languages for Specific Purposes: Opportunities and Challenges of Teaching, and Research*, held online on 15th and 16th October 2020. The conference brought together 169 teachers and researchers from 18 countries to share their research and their teaching practices from a variety of international LSP teaching contexts: Australia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain, Ukraine and the USA.

This edition of *Inter Alia 7* explores the theoretical and practical dimensions of English for Specific Purposes in various professional and academic communities. It focuses particularly on the applicability of ESP competencies development and materials design, which can contribute to the diverse ESP teaching community, especially since the onset of the pandemic.

Four papers from the conference cover a range of research topics by authors from Slovenia, Hungary, Russia and Croatia listed in alphabetical order.

The article *Eat that frog called Inquiry, Complaint and Thank you letter – interactive exercises can help!* by Katja Bogovič from the Education Centre SIC Brežice, Slovenia, gives a step-by-step overview of formal letter writing practice in an ESP learning situation. The author highlights the opportunities and challenges of students' formal letter writing by using interactive online activities. She presents the results of a survey carried out among students on how engaging and effective the learning process was.

In the article *Gamification an Option to Reach the New Generation of Learners? A Comparative Survey Between International and Hungarian Medical Students Studying Languages for Medical Purposes (LMP)*, Anna Dávidovics from the Medical School, University of Pécs, Hungary, looks into the gamification theory in education to establish how gamifying Languages for Medical Purposes (LMP) classes can serve the needs of both local and international medical students. The author compares the findings of two online surveys in order to collect, contrast, and evaluate the methods that international and Hungarian students find most effective when studying LMP.

The article *Teaching LSP in Higher Education: The Experience of Teaching Terminology to Pre-Service Teachers* by Marina A. Sokolova and Elena A. Nikulina from the Moscow Pedagogical State University, Russia, describes the experience of teaching British School Education terminology to 3rd-year university students of English to expand their awareness of terminology and interest them in their future scientific work. The article also illustrates the processes of term building in modern English, which could be useful for designing an LSP course syllabus.



In *Using Authentic Materials in Developing Maritime English Students' Listening Skills* Sandra Tominac Coslovich and Jana Kegalj from the University of Rijeka, Croatia, explore the processes of applying the methodology in materials development supported by background research. Their article illustrates the benefits of using authentic listening materials for designing classroom activities according to a simplified four-stage approach to second language acquisition – the comprehension stage, the implementation stage, the developing stage, and the usage stage.

In conclusion, we would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude for the priceless contributions of our reviewers and to everyone involved in the creation of *Inter Alia 7*. And finally, we would like to thank you, our readers, for your continuing interest and support. It is our hope that you find *Inter Alia 7 Developing ESP Competencies: Between Tasks, Experience, Skills, and Method* inspiring and beneficial for both your teaching and research.

Mateja Dostal and Polona Vičič  
Editors



# Eat That Frog Called Inquiry, Complaint and Thank You Letter – Interactive Exercises Can Help!

***Katja Bogovič***

*Strokovno izobraževalni center Brežice, Slovenia, katja.bogovic@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

Writing is certainly not a popular activity among secondary school students. It simply does not fit in with their lifestyle of short messages consisting of abbreviated words, emoticons, and slang. It is not uncommon for a student to be almost fluent in speaking but struggling with creating a written composition. Spelling and combining ideas into a coherent and grammatically correct unit is often an effort students do not enjoy exploring and developing. However, a student who completes a four-year technical program is expected to demonstrate a certain level of writing skills in a foreign language. As stated in the Subject syllabus for first foreign language (Andrin et al., 2011), students are expected to write texts such as offers, inquiries, orders, complaints, job applications, biographies, and various descriptions. How can a teacher convince students that it is worthwhile to learn how to write formal letters? How can a teacher adjust teaching to the habits and expectations of students? First, students must express their ideas and experience in order to adopt the reason for writing. Secondly, students like online interactive tasks. This article presents a learning situation that is divided into three phases - general revision of formal letter (types, layout, and style), personalization of the reasons for writing, and creation of letters. It includes an analysis of the students' texts and an evaluation of this learning situation by the students.

**Keywords:** inquiry, complaint, thank you letter, ICT interactive exercises.



## 1 Introduction

“Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day” is a quote presumably said by a famous writer Mark Twain. Nowadays, the quote is frequently used by many motivational speakers to stop procrastinating and be successful. Writing formal letters is not popular among secondary school students. On the other hand, they absolutely enjoy taking, for example, online quizzes, doing crosswords, and finding matches. Therefore, why would teachers not serve the “formal letters” frog with an “online activities” dressing to ESP students if this is the way to acquire relevant writing skills.

Writing is one of the skills of language learning that requires a complex knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, sentences structure, content, and format. Information should be presented in cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts, as Nunan explained (Rao & Durga, 2018). According to Subject syllabus for first foreign language (Andrin et al., 2011), secondary school students of technical programs are expected to write texts such as offers, inquiries, orders, complaints, job applications, biographies, and various descriptions. It also emphasizes that it is essential to gradually introduce and practise various language patterns and structures from simple to more complex ones, including text formats, in order to get students produce cohesive and coherent texts. In the Vocational matura exam syllabus for English (Andrin et al., 2018), one of the examination objectives is that a candidate must demonstrate that he/she can express him/herself in one of the text formats (letter, invitation, application, biography, description, report, and similar). Students with good writing skills are able to express their ideas successfully, which leads to good grades at school level and the achievement of their plans with regard to a later professional career. It is of great advantage to have good writing skills:

- it is easier to apply for a job and keep it,
- it requires less effort to prepare presentations,
- it is useful when writing technical documents,
- it helps when composing reports or research papers to choose which information and facts to emphasize,
- it improves one’s communication skills so that messages are clear.

Unfortunately, most students these days dislike writing and prefer speaking and “playing games” on the Internet. As stated by Rao and Durga (2018), writing has a positive effect on the thinking skills of analysis and synthesis and that it improves memorizing, therefore it is important to focus on encouraging and guiding students to develop writing skills. If a teacher wants to encourage students’ motivation to acquire a certain level of writing skills, it is necessary to consider the most obvious characteristics of today’s students. According to my own teaching experience and the source *Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Teaching Today’s Students on Their Terms* (International Education Advisory Board), the following characteristics of students seem rather obvious:

- their concentration span is relatively short,
- they want to learn fast and get an instant feedback,
- instead of broad and profound knowledge, they are interested in acquiring skills to resolve current needs and situations,
- they are interested if they can relate to school assignments (personal experience)
- they love using their smartphones,
- they like challenges in the form of crosswords, quizzes, puzzles, etc. and are motivated to improve their scores,
- they do not like their knowledge gaps to be exposed in front of the class.

The question arises as to how these characteristics can be linked to the goal that needs to be achieved – namely, that students write the required text formats appropriately. In pursuing the goal, the focus in the classroom was on the inclusion of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the form of interactive online exercises (matching, gap-filling, quizzes) to revise the layout, vocabulary, register, and style of formal letters. Sharing students' personal experiences (Padlet) was another important aspect taken into consideration. All these activities gradually led students to writing an adequate formal letter.

This paper presents a learning situation which consisted of three phases: general revision of formal letter (types, layout, and style), personalizing reasons for writing, and producing letters. It includes a brief analysis of students' texts and presents the results of a survey on students' evaluation of this learning situation.

### 1.1 Starting assumptions

Good writing skills are essential for students' educational achievements as well as their future career. They have to be developed gradually with the goal that upon graduation all students should be able to properly express themselves in written form. Since formal letters follow a certain pattern of structure (layout, vocabulary, style), they seem to be the right starting point. They are more easily introduced, practised, and mastered than other text formats (for example, opinion essays). Through a series of examples, students adopt the content structure, phrases and layout, and manage to create their own texts. However, most students are not highly motivated for writing, so the use of ICT seemed a good choice in order to “gamify” the activities through which students would learn the basics. Namely, students are not reluctant to take online quizzes of different forms as they accept them as a challenge, and they get immediate feedback. What is more, they are ready to take the same activity again to improve the score, and they are not put under stress that their knowledge gaps will be exposed in front of the class. Online activities add flexibility as students may take them any time. What they are not aware of is that they are eventually learning, repeating, and acquiring/upgrading knowledge.

It is also important for students to be able to relate to the topic that they are learning and to find it meaningful and useful. It is up to a teacher to elicit students' experience referring to a variety of situations, which in reality would force an individual to write a formal letter. Students often believe that they do not have any experience that would lead them to writing. They are usually not aware that it serves various purposes, e.g. when we want to collect information, we may write an inquiry, or we may write a thank-you letter when we are grateful to someone or when we are dissatisfied and seek some sort of compensation we can write a complaint. Sharing their experiences through ICT (Padlet) gives a nice starting point for a class discussion in which different ideas are exchanged.

Equipped with “know how” and adopting the reason for writing, students need only to do the final and most important step – to write an inquiry, a thank-you letter, and a complaint. In order to do their best, it is important that students are given a certain freedom of choice. Therefore, students had to write two letters but could choose which two of them, and it was up to them to decide whether to respond to the given situation (worksheet) or their own situations.

The starting assumptions were:

1. Students have a rather negative attitude to writing in general.
2. Students are willing to do online exercises - since students belong to the e-generation, they will acquire basic elements of formal letters through gamified online activities and will relate their personal experiences with reasons for writing an inquiry, a thank-you letter, and a complaint, which will result in producing their own texts.



3. Since students' knowledge of English ranges from A2 to C1, their letters will show significant differences in the level of grammar, vocabulary, and consequently coherence. However, students will appreciate the use of ICT in the learning situation and will acknowledge the importance and usefulness of mastering formal letters.

## 2 Approach to the Learning Situation and Students' Texts

This part of the paper describes the learning situation focused on gaining skills to write an inquiry, a thank you letter, and a complaint, utilizing ICT. A brief analysis of students' letters is presented next.

### 2.1 The Learning Situation

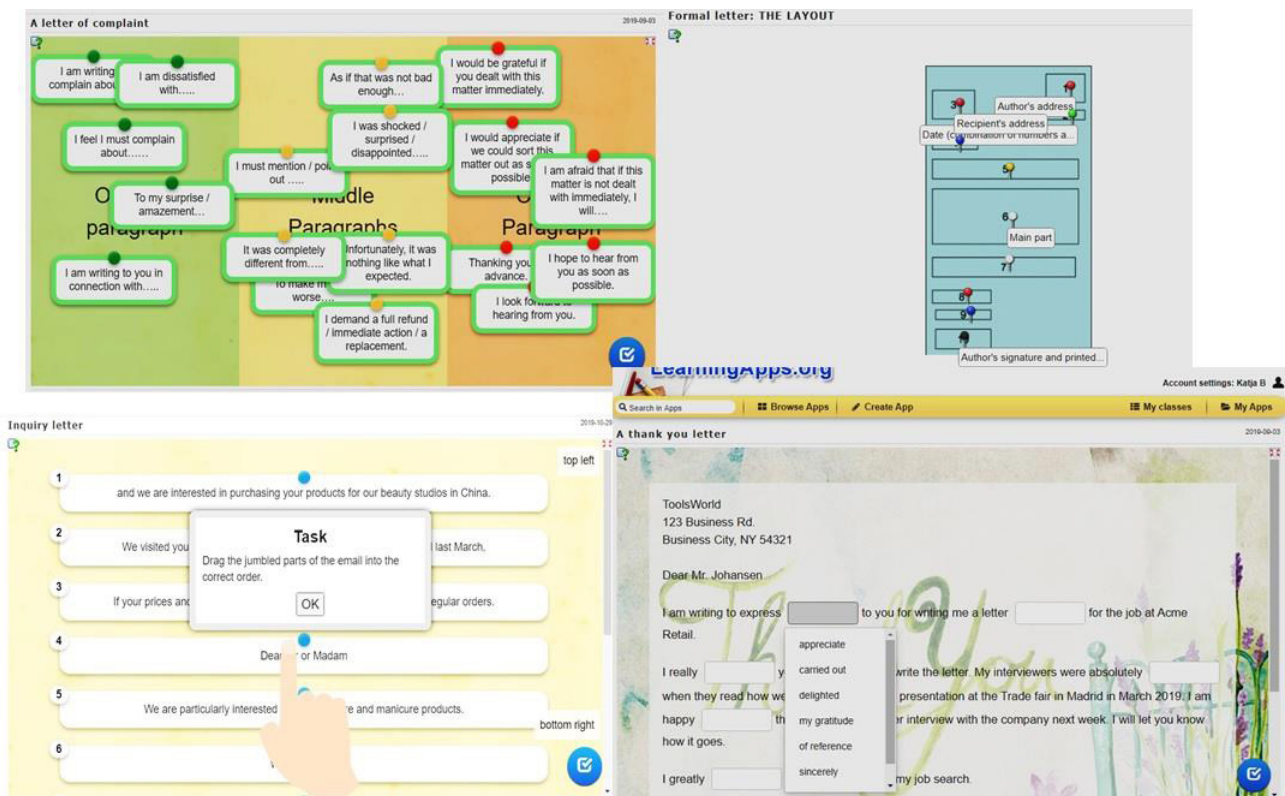
This learning situation was carried out in a class of 29 students of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year economic technician programme at SIC Brežice. Part of the ESP content are formal letters, which tend to cover business topics. However, it is important to consider the fact that students at the age of 17-18 have very limited professional experience of business, so it is difficult for them to relate. Eventually, some modifications are necessary if we want all students to be productive. The textbook we use - New Headway Intermediate, Fourth Edition (2019) – written by Liz and John Soars has a limited scope of the ESP topics, so additional material has to be carefully collected and prepared by a teacher. Normally, the lessons are supported with PowerPoint presentations so that students can follow and take notes more easily. This was also the case with formal letters. The students had already been familiar with the format of application letter as it was part of the unit covering jobs in the previous school year. However, in my teaching experience, students are generally not excited about writing letters. Formal letters are put rather low on the popularity scale of language topics. Therefore, it seemed useful to do some revising. Students were directed to an online activity in "LearningApps.org", where they had to arrange the parts of an application letter (<https://learningapps.org/display?v=peo5rehi219>). The online activity was assigned because students never react with reluctance to "playing games" and because a teacher can always offer additional and more advanced activities for more competent students, which means that activity differentiation is also addressed. To introduce the further three types of letters, i.e. an inquiry, a thank-you letter, and a letter of complaint, we started with a class discussion supported by Padlet. This is a platform where students can participate by posting their opinion or video and audio files links. It serves as good support for developing a class discussion. Students used the given QR code to get to the site and contributed their ideas, which we commented on together. They had to describe when, why, and what about they would collect information (inquiry), who and what about they would be thankful, and what they would complain about. This was a good opportunity to draw their attention to the proper style and tone of formal letters. Namely, when the debate was about complaining, some students got quite emotional. Then we focused on different types of letters, with the emphasis on the typical structure and phrases. After each type of letter, they were directed again to "LearningApps.org" to revise and acquire the text formats and eventually took a quiz to challenge themselves and cover any knowledge gaps.

#### 2.1.1 LearningApps.org

This is an online platform offering assistance to teaching and learning in the form of interactive online games. LearningApps.org has 19 template interactive modules. One can, for example, choose among matching pairs, group assignment, free-text input, matching pairs on images, multiple-choice quiz, simple order, cloze text, audio/video with notices, the Millionaire game, crossword, pairing games, word grid, where is what, and guess the word. It covers 32 topics (e.g. languages, psychology, history,

biology, environment, mathematics, and economy) ranging from elementary to vocational and further level. The idea of the platform is to create a recyclable collection of online exercises covering different topics at different levels of knowledge - one can either use the existing apps or customize them to his/her needs or create his own ones. A teacher can also create classes in his/her account and include students, which gives them non-stop access to the games in their class and the teacher gets an insight into his/her students' work and participation. A thorough analysis of individual student's answers and mistakes is not possible, though.

For the purpose of acquiring and practising characteristics of formal letters students played several different games: "matching pairs on images" was used to practise the proper layout, with "simple order" students rearranged jumbled parts of an inquiry, with "group assignment" they practised formal and informal language and matched phrases with the parts of a complaint (Picture 1). There were several "cloze test" exercises for practising thank-you letters and complaints. The overall revision of formal letters was carried out by means of multiple-choice quiz, which is the second most popular app following the Millionaire game, as far as my students are concerned.



Picture 1: *Formal letters online practice (LearningApps.org)*

It is important to point out that all the activities are "teacher friendly", meaning they are relatively simple to create, and there is a variety of activities you can create /use/adapt in one place and they certainly make a great difference to how motivating they are for students. It is interesting to notice that students' attitude to online activities is different even if activities are very similar to those they would traditionally do on paper (e.g. crossword, cloze text). On the other hand, these activities are obviously "student friendly" because students can play them on their smart phones, and they can also access them outside the class lessons, which they do because they do not consider them an actual practice, but an entertaining challenge. What is more, more competent students can also take a challenge to create "games" themselves and share them with their school friends.



## 2.2 Students' letters

After all the preparations had been carried out, students were given to write two letters, either to address the situations described on the worksheets they were given or the situations from their own personal experience. Surprisingly, most of the students chose the first option. They explained that it was easier to organize their thoughts and write letters as the situations in the worksheet exercise were clearly presented. A large majority of students decided to write a thank you letter. With the exception of one, all students addressed the situation described on the worksheet. I assume that the reason for that was that they found the described situation in the exercise relatable as it involved a person giving a presentation at school and that it was structurally simpler. They wrote some holiday inquiries and few inquiries about an advertised job. They mostly avoided writing a complaint as they found it most complex. Presumably, a complaint was also the least relatable to them at that point.

### 2.2.1 A brief analysis of students' letters

Students' letters were analysed on the basis of a four-element scale which is also used for grading on the Vocational Matura Exam, which is a part of Vocational matura exam syllabus for English (Andrin et al., 2018), consisting of content and meaningfulness, grammar, vocabulary (register), structure, and coherence. Focusing on the content and meaningfulness in complaints, students mostly addressed the given cues, though only few of them managed to provide only relevant information supported with adequate arguments, which reflects a rather loose cohesion. Sentences did not flow smoothly, and new ideas were introduced suddenly without any link to previously mentioned ones. It was rather common that students used phrases from the instructions and the described situations on the worksheets but were unable to add their own ideas and connect them into a meaningful unit. A lot of students used only the most basic connectors (and, but, so), though some students tried to use more advanced ones (unfortunately, therefore, however) to sound more formal. In complaints, students mostly described the situations but did not express what they expected to be done to resolve the problems, or their suggestions were unrealistic, even inappropriate (for example, they exaggerated to the level it was obvious they were making fun). Students proved better with inquiries and thank-you letters as they found such situations more easily manageable.

Students' letters showed a great range of differences in the level of their grammar competencies. In some texts, only the simplest forms were used and there were elementary grammar mistakes (e.g. final -s missing, uncountable noun added plural-s, use of possessive pronoun instead of an adjective) as well as spelling mistakes, but some students used more complex structures such as passive voice, relative clauses, and participles with full confidence. Expectedly, there were also big differences in students' vocabulary. Those, who were less fluent, merely copied and used words and phrases from the description of the situation in the instructions to the task on their worksheets. However, more competent students used a diverse vocabulary and easily met the requirements of the register, such as the use of long forms of auxiliary verbs, which was more or less ignored by less competent students. They also fully applied the rules of the layout. On the other hand, less competent students neglected to organize their letters in paragraphs, as well as to the right position and form of addresses, greetings, signatures, etc. Therefore, the structure and coherence showed a similar variety of students' skills as other elements.

In the letters of less competent students, it was easy to spot the interferences of their mother tongue. For example, the most common mistake they made was "I am writing you to complain..." instead of "I am writing to you to complain/ I am writing to complain" from the Slovenian phrase "pišem vam, da..." Another common mistake was to write "I have 17 years" from Slovenian "imam 17 let" instead of "I am 17 years old". In a complaint about a hair product, a student mistakenly combined hair with a plural form of the verb 'to be' because of the influence of the Slovene grammar.

### 3 Questionnaire and Survey results

An online survey was carried out among the students to evaluate the efficacy of ICT implementation in acquiring and practising formal letters.

The survey was accessible on 1ka: (<https://www.1ka.si/admin/survey/index.php?anketa=286581-&a=analysis&m=sumarnik>). The goal of the survey was to learn about students’ attitude to writing formal letters and if online “gamified” activities motivated them and improved their skills of writing formal letters.

Twenty-five students (10 – male, 15 – female) took part in the survey consisting of nine questions and eight sub-questions. However, there were twenty-four participants who answered all the questions. In six questions, students had to choose one of the offered options; there was one question with multiple-option answers and two questions where they had to evaluate the options. These students’ choices were further investigated, where they were also given an option to write their own opinion (open-ended questions).

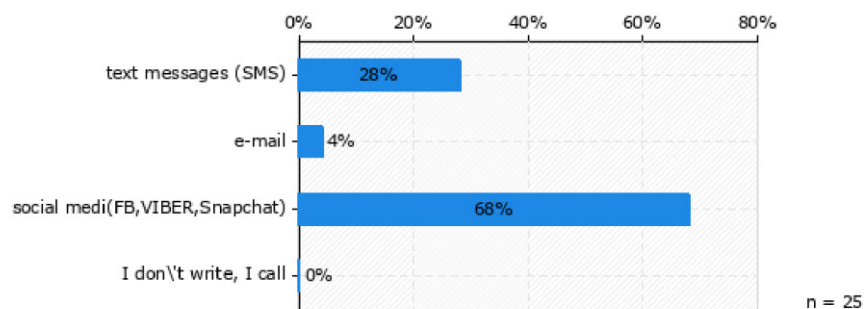
This part of the paper presents all the questions and analyses of students’ answers.

In question Q1, which collected information about students’ everyday writing and communicating routines, they could choose one out of four options.

#### Q1 – What type of communication do you use most often in everyday life?

- short messages (SMS)
- e-mail
- social media messaging (FB, VIBER, Snapchat..)
- I don’t write, I call

The results in Graph 1 show students mostly use social media such as FB, Snapchat, Viber to communicate – 17 students or 68%; followed by text messages, which was chosen by seven students (28%), whereas the use of e-mail is rare, only one student (4%) decided for this option. There was nobody who preferred calling to messaging. The results suggest students like to communicate via social media and are open to online activities at school lessons.



Graph 1: *Students’ preferred type of communication*

Question Q2 addressed students’ preference and usefulness of certain language skills. They could choose more than one option from six possibilities.

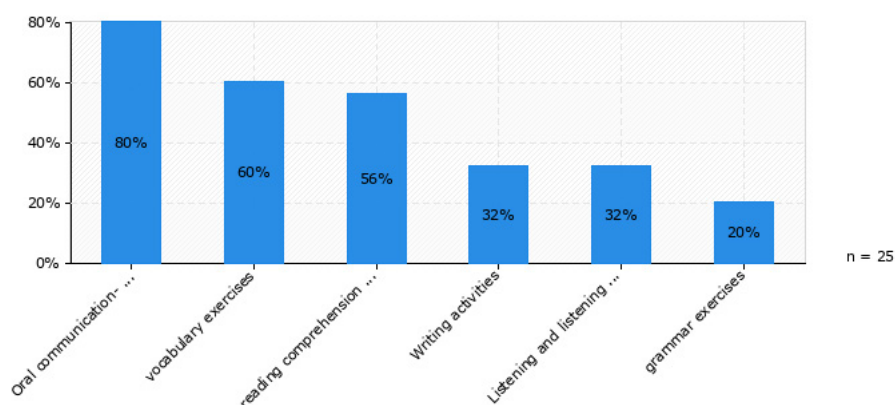


## Q2 - Which activities in English lessons do you prefer or consider most useful?-

More possible answers

- doing grammar exercises
- vocabulary activities
- reading comprehension activities
- writing activities- descriptions, opinions, letters
- oral communication- discussion, debate
- listening comprehension activities

Graph 2 shows how students evaluated various activities for acquiring different language skills. Students most often opted for oral communication as 20 students (80%) chose this option (discussion) as their favourite, which was followed by vocabulary improving activities – 15 students (60%), and reading comprehension activities, which was chosen 14 times (56%). They considered listening and writing activities as the second least popular. Both options were chosen by eight students or 32%, while grammar exercises were most disliked (five students or 20% chose that option). The results confirmed our initial assumption that students' attitude to writing is negative, which results in huge efforts needed when teaching text formats.



Graph 2: Popularity of various language skills among students

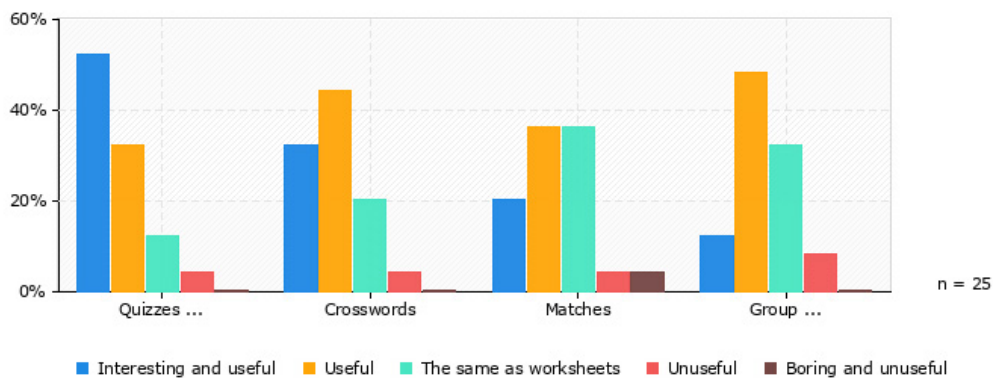
Question Q3 asked students to evaluate different online activities we use in lessons of English.

## Q3 – How useful do you find online exercise in English lessons?

	Interesting and useful	Useful	The same as exercises on worksheets	Useless	Boring and useless
Quizzes (Millionaire, multiple choice, Edmodo)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crosswords	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Matching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Group assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Their answers in Graph 3 show 13 students (52%) found quizzes the most interesting and useful and eight students (32%) found them useful. To five students (12%), they were the same as worksheets and one student (4%) believed they were useless. At evaluating crosswords, eight students (32%) found doing crosswords interesting and useful, eleven students (44%) useful, five students found crosswords the same as worksheets, and one student (4%) thought they were useless. At evaluating matches, five students (20%) believed they were interesting and useful. To nine students (36%), matches were useful or the same as traditional worksheets, one student (4%) again believed they were useless. “Group assignment” (an activity in which you put elements in the proper group) was evaluated by three students (12%) as interesting and useful, twelve students (48%) found it useful. To eight students (32%), it was the same as worksheets and two students (8%) believed it was useless. We can conclude that in general students have a positive attitude towards online exercises.



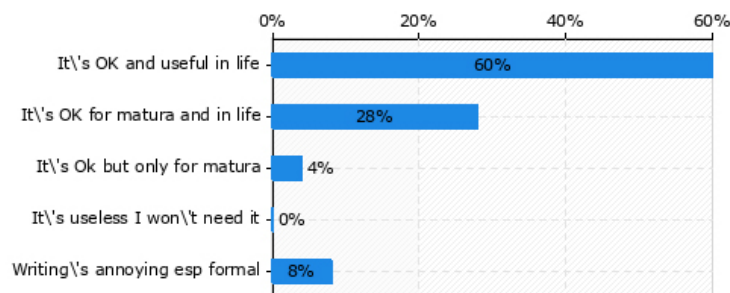
Graph 3: Students' preferences about English lessons online activities

In question Q4, students provided their opinion on learning to write formal letters.

**Q4 – What do you think about learning to write formal letters in lessons of English?**

- I think it is OK as it is useful in my life
- I think it is useful for the Matura Exam and later in life
- It's OK, but only because of the Matura Exam
- It's useless, I won't need
- I find writing annoying, formal letter in particular

As illustrated by Graph 4, 15 students (60%) believed that learning how to write a formal letter is useful for their lives, though seven students (28%) emphasized the usefulness of this knowledge also at



Graph 4: Students' attitude to learning to write formal letters



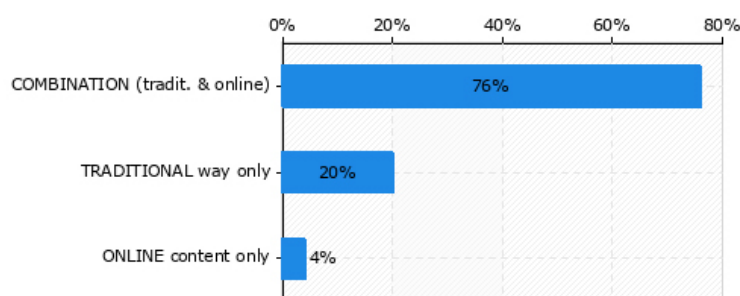
the Vocational Matura exam and for life. Only to one student (4%), the competence of writing formal letters was important solely for the Matura exam. Two students (8%) found writing annoying. A conclusion we can make is that the majority of participating students have positive attitude to learning to write formal letters.

In question Q5 (and questions Q6 and Q7), students evaluated the methods of acquiring the writing skills that were applied at lessons on formal letters. They were given three options to choose from.

**Q5 – Which of the options below is the most appropriate method for covering the topic of formal letters?**

- a combination of traditional explanation (with PPT, notes) and e-content (e-exercises, quizzes, independent writing)
- acquiring the knowledge on traditional way only with explanation, PPT, and worksheets and independent writing
- acquiring skills with e-content only supported with quizzes and e-exercises

As Graph 5 presents, 19 students (76%) chose a combination of traditional explanation with notes and online activities as the most effective method to get proper writing skills. Five students (20%) opted for option two – the traditional method of covering a topic and one student (4%) chose that acquiring writing skills with the support of e-content only is his/her favourite.



Graph 5: Students' evaluation of methods for covering formal letters

Their decision was further explored in questions Q6 and Q7 to find the reason behind their choices. In both questions, students were offered two options and a possibility to write their own answers.

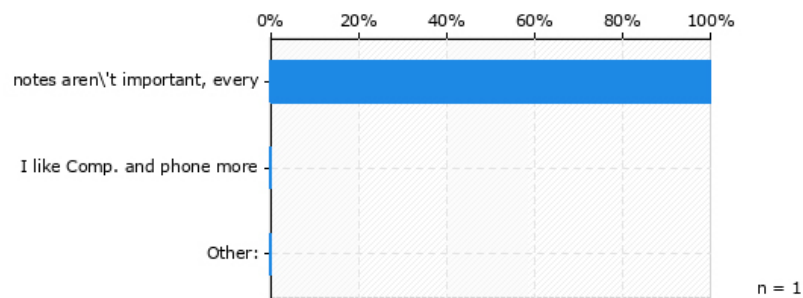
**Q6 – Why do think acquiring skills with e-content only, supported with quizzes and e-exercises is a better method?**

- Notes are not important as there is everything on the Internet
- I like working on computer or phone much more
- Other:

**Q7 – What is the main advantage of the combination of traditional explanation and e-content?**

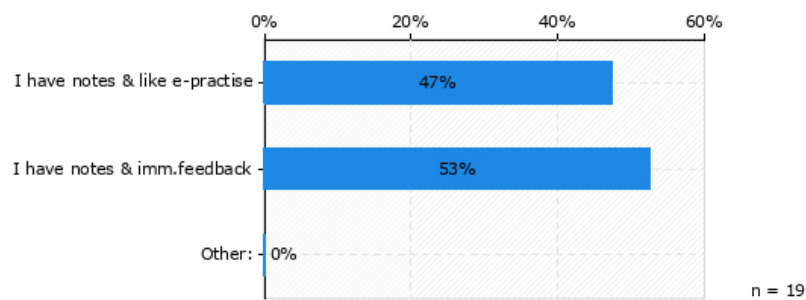
- I have my own notes and I practise in the way I like more than writing in my notebook
- I have my notes and with e-exercises I get immediate feedback about my knowledge
- Other:

Graph 6 shows the answers of students who decided that covering the topic of writing formal letters with e-content only is the best way. One student (4%) who chose this option decided for the answer that notes are not important as everything in on the Internet.



Graph 6: Student's reason why e-content is the best

As already mentioned, 19 students chose a combination of traditional methods and online activities as the best choice. Graph 7 presents students' reasons for choosing the combination of traditional and e-content as the best method. Nine students (47%) chose the answer that they can rely on their own notes and can practise in the way they like more than writing in notebooks. Ten students (53%) explained they have their own notes whenever they want and they can get immediate feedback about what they know and what they have to improve from the online activities. No students decided to write his/her own reason, which was offered as the third option.



Graph 7: Student' reasons for choosing a combination of traditional method and e-content

In question Q8, students were asked to evaluate cloze test activities, quizzes, and matching activities used at covering the topic of formal letters. They could decide if they found them interesting and useful, useful, the same as worksheets practice, or boring. Twenty-four students answered this question.

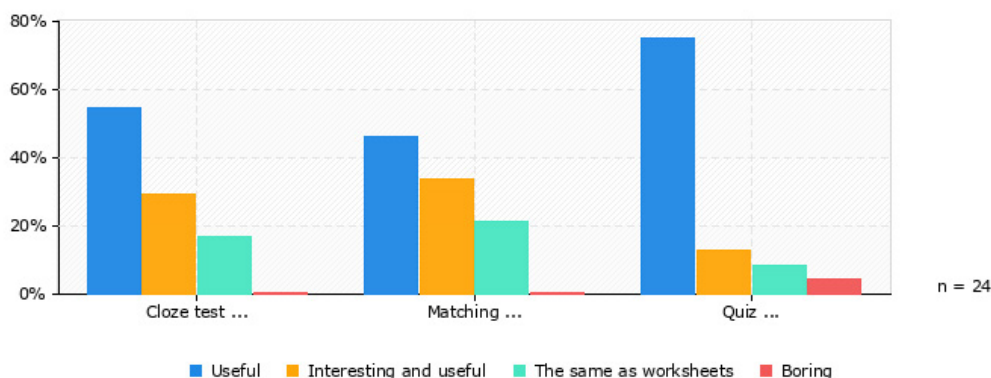
**Q8 – How do you evaluate the use of e-activities (in LearningApps.org) for covering and practising formal letters?**

	Useful and interesting	Useful	The same as on WS	Boring
Cloze tests (where you filled in words and phrases)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Matching activities (reorganizing parts of letters)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quiz for checking your knowledge of formal letters (elements, style, phrases)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Graph 8 shows that seven students (29%) found cloze test activities interesting and useful, 13 students (54%) believed they were useful, and to four of them (17%) online exercises were the same as



on traditional worksheets. Students' opinion on matching exercises was rather similar to those of cloze test exercises: to eight students (33%), they were useful and interesting, to eleven students (46%) useful, five students (21%) found them the same as worksheets. Evaluation of quizzes, in which students checked their knowledge of letter layout, register and typical phrases, showed slightly different numbers, as 18 students (75%) believed quizzes were useful and three of 24 students (13%) thought quizzes were interesting and useful, two students (8%) found them the same as worksheets exercises and one student (4%) described it as boring. The results suggest that students' attitude to online activities is positive.



Graph 8: *Types of online activities and students' preferences*

In question Q9, students were expected to share their impressions on the quality of knowledge of writing formal letters gained through online activities. They were given to choose among three options. Twenty-four students provided their opinion. Questions Q10 and Q11 further explored students' reasons for their choices.

**Q9 – With online activities (cloze test, matching, quizzes), I gained quality knowledge of formal letters' layout, typical phrases, and content.**

- I completely agree, as these activities are a challenge, so I learn while I »play«
- I partly agree
- I don't agree

If students chose "I don't agree" in Q9, they were directed to Q10.

**Q10 – What is the main disadvantage of e-activities at covering formal letters?**

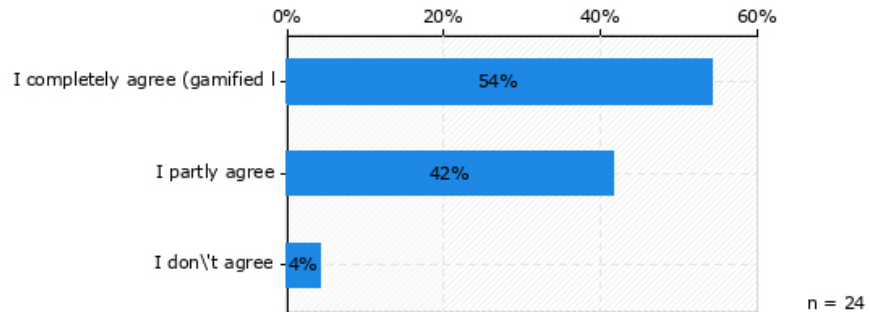
- It's boring
- It isn't the right way as you don't immediately write a letter yourself
- It isn't the right way, because

If students chose "I partly agree" in Q9, they were directed to Q11.

**Q11 – This method has its advantages and disadvantages.**

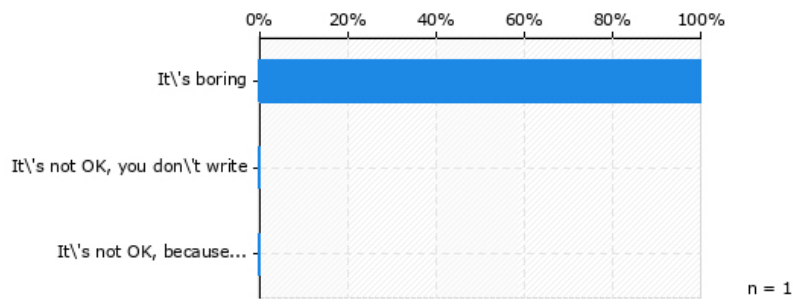
- It's boring
- It's not a challenge
- I don't have the right conditions for that kind of work
- I still can't write a letter on my own
- Other:

As illustrated in Graph 9, thirteen students (54%) completely agreed that they gained good quality of knowledge as the online exercises are a challenge and they learn while »playing«. Ten students (42%) agreed partly and one student (4%) did not agree.



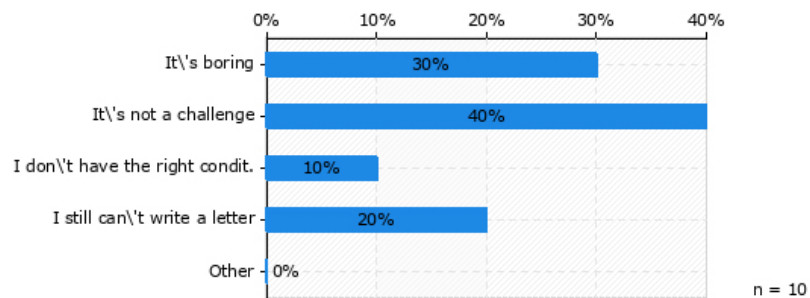
Graph 9: Students impressions on the quality of knowledge they gained through online activities

In the following question Q9, the reasons for their choices were researched. Those who answered that they did not agree were directed to question Q10, where they could choose between two answers or write their own reasons. As Graph 10 shows, the student explained he/she found activities boring.



Graph 10: Student's opinion why he/she disagreed with online activities' positive effect on knowledge

Those students who chose the answer that they partly agreed with positive effects on quality of knowledge gained from online activities were directed to question Q11. They were given to choose among four options or to write their own reasons. We can see in Graph 11 that from ten students three students (30%) chose it was boring, to four (40%) of them it was not a challenge, one student (10%) chose a lack of right conditions, two students (20%) chose they were still unable to write a letter. Nobody wrote their own answers.



Graph 11: Student's opinion why he/she partly agreed with online activities' positive effect on knowledge

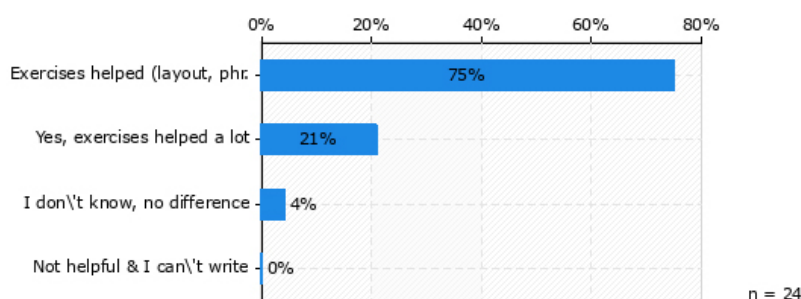
In question Q12, students were asked to evaluate how helpful online exercises were for developing their writing skills.



### Q12 - Do you think you could write formal letters more easily and better after you had done the online exercise?

- Yes, exercises helped me a lot, so I can write a letter without problems (I acquired the layout, remembered the phrases, and I made fewer mistakes)
- Exercises helped me memorize the layout and typical phrases
- I don't know, I think they didn't make any difference
- No, these exercises didn't help me and I still can't write a letter

In general, as Graph 12 shows, students had a very positive attitude toward online activities. Five students (21%) agreed online activities helped them a lot to remember the layout and phrases and they easily wrote a letter on their own with fewer grammar mistakes. 18 students (75%), which is a majority, believed those exercises helped them remember the layout and typical phrases. Only one student (4%) thought online activities did not play any particular role in improving his/her writing skills.



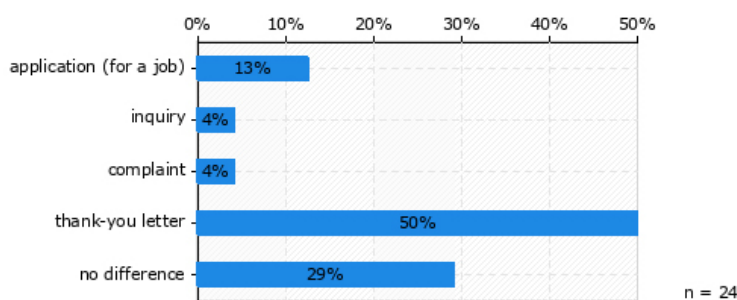
Graph 12: *Students' evaluation of online exercises' contribution to their writing skills*

Question Q13 checked if there were any differences about which type of formal letter students prefer to write.

### Q13 – Which type of formal letter do you prefer to write?

- application (for a job)-
- inquiry
- complaint
- thank-you letter
- no difference

It is interesting that students found different types of formal letters more or less their favourite choices. As we can learn from Graph 13, twelve students (50%) chose a thank-you letter as their favourite to write. Three students (13%) decided for the application letter as their favourite. An inquiry and



Graph 13: *Students' preferences to types of formal letters*

a complaint were each chosen by one student (4%). However, seven students (29%) do not have any preferences for any particular type of formal letters.

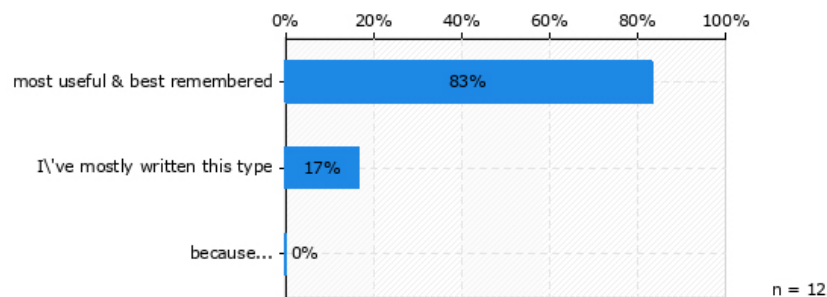
Their choices were further explored by questions Q14–Q17 in order to find out why they prefer to write a certain type of letter. Twenty-four students answered these questions.

Question Q14 checked why students chose a thank-you letter as their favourite.

**Q14 – Why do you prefer to write a thank-you letter to writing other types of letters?**

- I find this type most useful and I remembered the phrases and the content the most
- I have written mostly this type of letter so far
- Because (write your own reason)

As it is evident from Graph 14, ten students (83%) chose they prefer to write a thank-you letter to writing others because they managed to memorise the phrases and the content, two students (17%) explained it was because they had written mostly that type of letter so far.



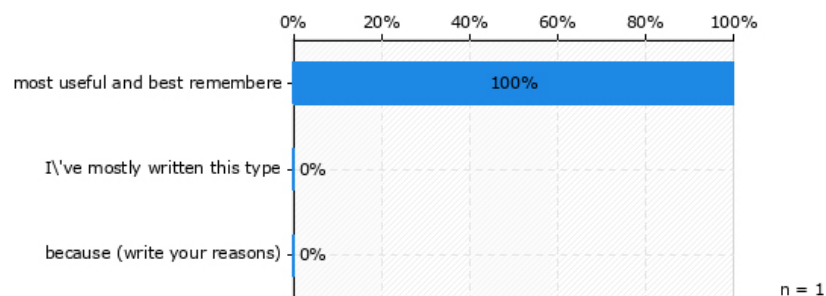
Graph 14: Student's reasons for choosing thank-you letter

Question Q15 checked why students chose a complaint as their favourite.

**Q15 - Why do you prefer to write a complaint to other types of letters?**

- I find this type most useful and I remembered the phrases and the content the most
- I have written mostly this type of letter so far
- Because (write your own reason)

Graph 15 shows that the student who chose a complaint as his/her preferred type of letter did so because he/she finds this type of letter most useful and he/she remembered the phrases and the content the most.



Graph 15: Students' reasons for choosing complaint

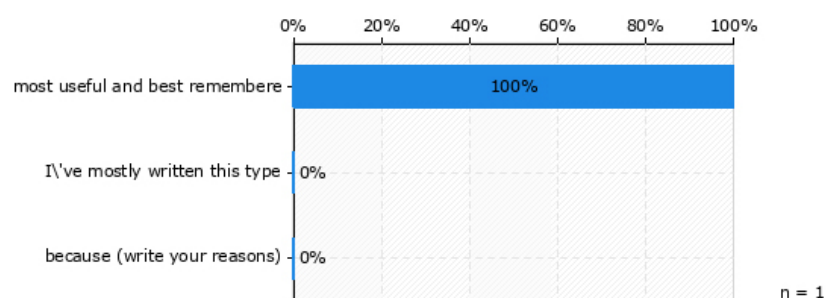


Question Q16 checked why students chose an inquiry letter as their favourite.

**Q16 - Why do you prefer to write an inquiry to writing other types of letters?**

- I find this type most useful and I remembered the phrases and the content the most
- I have written mostly this type of letter so far
- Because (write your own reason)

Graph 16 presents that the student who chose an inquiry as his/her preferred type of letter selected the option - I find this type most useful and I remembered the phrases and the content the most as the reason for their choice.



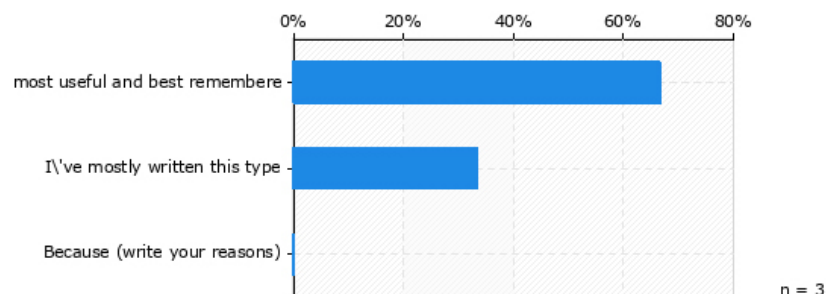
Graph 16: *Students' reasons for choosing inquiry*

Question Q17 asked students why they chose an application letter as their favourite.

**Q17 - Why do you prefer to write an application to writing other types of letter?**

- I find this type most useful and I remembered the phrases and the content the most
- I have written mostly this type of letter so far
- Because (write your own reason)

Three students (13%) decided for an application letter as their favourite, and according to Graph 17, two students (67%) claimed the application was most useful and they remembered the phrases and the content most, and one student (33%) chose the answer he/she had written mostly this type of letter so far.



Graph 17: *Students' reasons for choosing application letter*

Students did not write their own reasons in any of the questions where reasons for their preferences were researched.



## 4 Conclusion

It is not easy to acquire proper writing skills, despite the fact that it is common knowledge how important and beneficial they are. Students are aware of that, which the survey confirmed, but at the same time, they are not mature enough to be motivated to learn how to write formal letters and willing to polish their skills. However, they belong to a generation that likes instant solutions. Therefore, online activities are helpful. There are lots of online activities a teacher can use to keep his/her students motivated and give them the opportunity to practise and upgrade their knowledge and skills. With activities on LearningApps.org, a teacher can adjust activities to students and make learning more challenging and interesting. These activities cannot be a substitute for writing, but they do help students remember the basic elements such as the types of formal letters, layout, register, and typical phrases. With online exercises, the frog, called writing formal letters, is not that horrible to eat. The results of the online survey suggest that online activities are generally well accepted among students and they find them useful for developing their writing skills.

## Literature and references

- Andrin, A., Kozar, H., Rehberger, S., Volčanšek, S., & Zakošek, M. U. (2011). *Katalog znanja PRVI TUJI JEZIK – angleščina/nemščina*. [Subject syllabus for first foreign language – English/German] ZRSŠ. [https://www.svsgugl.si/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Katalog\\_znanj\\_ang\\_nem\\_prviTJ\\_PV\\_ZRSS.pdf](https://www.svsgugl.si/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Katalog_znanj_ang_nem_prviTJ_PV_ZRSS.pdf)
- Andrin, A., Horvatić, S., Petrovič, M., Stopar, A., & Šušnica Ilc, V. (2018). *Predmetni izpitni katalog za poklicno maturo – angleščina*. [Vocational matura exam syllabus – English] Državni izpitni center. <https://www.ric.si/mma/PIK%20ANG%202020/2018083013372563/>
- International Education Advisory Board. (n.d.). 21st Century: *Teaching Today's Students on Their Terms*. Retrieved July 3, 2021, from [https://www.certiport.com/portal/common/documentlibrary/ieab\\_whitepaper040808](https://www.certiport.com/portal/common/documentlibrary/ieab_whitepaper040808).
- Rao, V. C., & Durga, Ms. (2018). Developing Students' Writing Skills in English-A Process Approach. 2. *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching*. Retrieved March 9, 2020, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325489625>
- Soars, L., & Soars, J. (2019). *New Headway 4th Edition Intermediate Student Book & Osp Pack*. Oxford UP ELT.



# Is Gamification an Option to Reach the New Generation of Learners?

## A Comparative Survey between International and Hungarian Medical Students Studying Languages for Medical Purposes

*Anna Dávidovics*

*Department of Languages for Biomedical Purposes and Communication, Medical School, University of Pécs, Pécs, Hungary*

*Doctoral School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pécs, Pécs, Hungary*

*anna.davidovics@aok.pte.hu*

### Abstract

The Medical School of the University of Pécs (UPMS) has welcomed students from all over the world for over thirty-five years. International students akin to Hungarian students arrive with high expectations and certain perceptions regarding teaching and learning, therefore it can be quite a challenging task for the teacher to determine the finest methods possible when teaching Languages for Medical Purposes (LMP). This paper aims to demonstrate and compare the findings regarding two online surveys conducted at UPMS with the purpose to collect, contrast, assess, and evaluate methods international and Hungarian students find most effective when studying LMP. While there were only a handful of differences between the choices of the two student populations, a vast number of similarities are seen in the results. It is worth noting an extremely high preference was indicated by both student groups regarding gamification elements in classes. In conclusion, we can unequivocally state gamifying LMP classes serves the needs of both local and international medical students and makes the learning process more engaging and effective.

**Keywords:** gamification, teaching methods, learning preferences, studying styles, Languages for Medical Purposes



## 1 Introduction

Astonishingly, one of the many effects of globalization is the increased number of international students since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reaching nearly 3.7 million students worldwide in 2009 (Huhn et al., 2016). This number increased steadily in the following years, and by 2017, 5.3 million international students were studying in tertiary levels of education (OECD, 2019).

The appearance and increasing presence of international students, however, is not the only factor which underwent change in higher education. Educational systems all over the world are rapidly becoming intertwined with the newest digital technologies, which offer ways to enhance both the teaching and the learning processes. Utilizing these technologies is becoming quite essential, as students born and raised together with technology possess different needs, learning styles, and attitudes than former student populations (Kiryakova, 2014; Németh & Tseligka, 2018; Plochocki, 2019). As Németh and Csongor (2019) elaborated, this new generation of students prefer to rely on and utilize an environment infused with technology in order to make their learning most effective, which can also aid the teacher to select the finest tools possible for use in their classrooms.

### 1.1 Characteristics of student populations at UPMS

The increase in the number of international students can also be observed at universities in Hungary, where the four medical schools seem to be the highly preferred choices among the international students (Marek & Németh, 2020; Németh & Pozsgai, 2018; Pozsgai et al., 2012). As stated on the website of the University of Pécs (UP, 2020), there were approximately 4500 international students originating from more than 114 countries claiming active student status at one of the University's faculties in June 2020. Slightly less than half of these students, the exact number being 1911, were progressing with their studies at one of the programmes offered by UPMS, listed on its website alongside with the students' nationalities (UPMS, 2020).

Interestingly, the number of international students reached nearly 60% of the total student population at UPMS, resulting in a rather unique situation, in which the number of the host native students was lower than the number of their international peers.

### 1.2 Teaching and Learning Languages for Medical Purposes

There are three different programmes at UPMS (general medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy), offered in three languages: Hungarian, German, and English. Students enrolled in the Hungarian and German programmes form mostly homogeneous groups, belonging to the same or similar nationalities and cultural backgrounds. In the English programme, however, classes often consist of a multitude of nationalities from different cultural backgrounds. Some joint courses are also offered in support of the international and the Hungarian students, with the sole objective to bring the two student groups together, thus improving their cultural awareness and cooperation skills (Németh & Kajos, 2014; Németh & Rébék-Nagy, 2015).

Both student groups study Languages for Medical Purposes (LMP), which, again, leads to some notable differences. Hungarian students attend English, while international students are enrolled in Hungarian for Medical Purposes classes. The main difference is based on the premise that Hungarian students generally are at the intermediate or advanced level of English use and comprehension, while only a small percentage of international students have pre-existing, rudimentary Hungarian language use. The channel of instruction also varies, since Hungarian students can rely on their native language when consulting with their lecturers, while international students are taught Hungarian using English as the language of instruction. Since many of the international students speak English as a second

(sometimes third or fourth) language, they oftentimes struggle with the language barrier (Huhn et al., 2016) while learning Hungarian, a language so unlike their own.

### 1.3 Teaching digital native students and the role of gamification

There are several quite straightforward differences between the international and the native Hungarian groups. The former consists of students with a colourful range of cultural backgrounds, while the latter tends to be more homogeneous in the sense of nation and culture. Significantly many traits, however, seem to be shared among the two student cohorts. Most of the students belong to the same generation, one which was born and raised together with technological advances, earning them the name “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). As Mironov (2014) explained, today’s learners can use technologies as effortlessly and fluently as one relies on their native language. Teachers are presented with the opportunity to use the newest technologies, already an essential part of the students’ lives, as a way to increase their engagement and motivation throughout the learning process (Ebben, 2020).

Games are integral parts of human nature and behaviour, therefore using game-like elements in a non-gaming environment can usher in numerous benefits. Games tend to invoke positive feelings among the participants and aid in reducing levels of anxiety (Rigócki et al., 2017), which enhances student performance while studying LMP. Deterding (2011) explained how gamification can increase motivation, while participants still define gamified environments as enjoyable and fun. However, the purpose of gamification in an educational context is, first and foremost, not considered a legitimate form of entertainment. The different types of games and game-like features, which are used in education, have a clear objective, set prior to the beginning of the game. Although game-like elements are featured in these activities, they serve a specified purpose, which is not the sole enjoyment of the participants. Therefore, gamification is different from the commonly referred to “serious games”, in which the topic of the game might be related to the students’ studies, but the overall purpose of the game is to entertain the participants (Kiryakova et al., 2014).

The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the results of two online questionnaires regarding the effectiveness of certain methods of teaching and learning LMP, according to Hungarian (n=93) and international (n=133) students studying at UPMS.

## 2 Methods

As part of a longitudinal research study aimed to collect, assess, and evaluate international students’ perceptions and attitudes regarding teaching and learning, this paper was based upon the findings of a qualitative survey, conducted at UPMS. The survey involved international and Hungarian medical students enrolled in one of the courses offered by the Department of Languages for Biomedical Purposes and Communication during the second semester of the 2018/19 academic year. Both student groups were studying LMP, the former had Medical Hungarian, while the latter had Medical English classes. Convenience sampling was applied as a method for the current research, thus students who were easiest to reach at the time were involved.

### 2.1 Instruments

The participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire, accessible on the platform Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed via emails, using Neptun, the education system of UPMS. The questionnaire consisted of thirty-nine items, including questions regarding



socio-demographic information (such as gender and age), the programme and year of studies, nationality, native and other spoken languages. The questionnaire was organized into four sections, with the main part including questions about the teaching and learning process, classroom management, methods, and tasks. Students were also encouraged to indicate their preference regarding gamification elements and the usage of technology, equipment, devices, and peripherals during classes.

Each question was followed by a five-point Likert scale, in which the respondents indicated the level of their agreement from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. A “neutral” option was also available in the event one had no clear preference regarding specifics of the question. There was one open-ended question at the end of each section, in which students had the opportunity to express their opinion using their own words.

## 2.2 Participants

A total of 226 responses were recorded, 133 international students and 93 Hungarian students responded to the questionnaire. The international students represented a colourful variety of nationalities, including but not limited to Norway, Iran, South Korea, and Japan. There was one other interesting difference between the two student populations. Most of the students declared English as their second language (both in the Hungarian and the international groups); however, Hungarian students only listed one or two languages they felt proficient in, whereas international students typically identified three or four.

Table 1: *Biodata*

Gender	Female	Male	Other
International	77	55	1
Hungarian	57	36	-
Age	>20	21-25	26-35
International	7	118	8
Hungarian	3	87	3

As Table 1 depicts, the majority of the students were female, and most of the respondents were under the age of twenty-five years of age, so it can be stated, the majority were aligned to the same generation.

Table 2: *Programme and year of studies*

Programme	General medicine	Dentistry	Pharmacy		
International	116	11	6		
Hungarian	83	10	-		
Year	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
International	36	81	12	4	-
Hungarian	8	42	18	10	15

All students were actively studying in one of the programmes offered by UPMS, as displayed in Table 2, and most of them were in their first, second, or third year of studies.

### 3 Results

Interestingly, the choices and preferences among the Hungarian and international students were quite similar in many aspects. There were only two questions, in which the differences in the two student groups' choices were noteworthy, and Hungarian students often refrained from selecting the "extreme" answers (i.e., "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree"). For the sake of simplicity, in most cases, the aforementioned choices, along with their counterparts ("disagree" and "strongly disagree"), were grouped together as an indication of like or dislike.

The first part of the questionnaire posed questions regarding classroom management. A slight majority of Hungarian (63%) and half of the international (50%) students preferred a (relatively) quiet classroom for the benefit of efficiency while studying. Being actively involved during classes was also preferred by both Hungarian (40%) and international (42%) students (23% and 20% of the students expressed their dislike against active classroom participation in the respective student groups). A considerable neutrality was expressed in this question in the two groups. Neither student group answered in favour of strict classes, only 13% of the Hungarian students and 17% of their international peers preferred a rigid, stern learning environment. There was one question, however, in which the two student groups expressed considerably different opinions. While being asked about the form of course materials (whether they preferred to use books and printed materials or digital ones), Hungarian students (66%) indicated a strong need for the use of the former. Interestingly, only 38% of the international students answered in favour, while the majority preferred digital materials over printed textbooks.

The second part of the questionnaire included questions about the teaching process. Both student groups expressed a strong dislike for PowerPoint presentation-dominated classes, and a high preference was indicated for a facilitator-like teacher (74% of the Hungarian and 58% of the international students answered in favour). A strong need was indicated by the students for frequent questions by the teacher during classes. 76% of the Hungarian and 73% of the international students chose a positive answer in this case. When asked about the preferred method of correcting mistakes, both student groups (57% of the Hungarian and 67% of the international students) answered in favour of immediate and direct intervention from the teacher.

Lastly, students were asked to answer questions regarding activities and tasks they found most useful and effective during classes. A slight preference was indicated by both student groups for groupwork over working independently (50% of the Hungarian and 47% of the international students answered in favour).

An astonishingly high number of participants, 88% of Hungarian and 87% of international students, expressed the need to be able to access all course materials online, since their purpose, first and foremost, is to pass the course. Being digital natives in both groups, over 60% of the students preferred to use their gadgets and devices during classes for educational purposes. There were only eighteen international and twelve Hungarian students who expressed their doubts and fears regarding their gadgets being distracting, thus hindering the learning process. A strong and universal preference was also noticed in the case of online games and quizzes (80% of the Hungarian and 78% of the international students answered in favour). As one of the students participating in the survey expressed:

*"We play a quiz game called Kahoot, it's an online system where the teacher chooses quizzes already made by others or they can make their own and students guess the correct answer on their phone whilst the quiz is on the board, it is very fast paced and fun."*



Quoting another participant from the survey, who highlighted the practical use of Quizlet even outside the classroom:

*“Quizlet and games which made it easier to learn between the classes and on the way to and from home. It’s timesaving and enhances the learning of new vocabularies quicker.”*

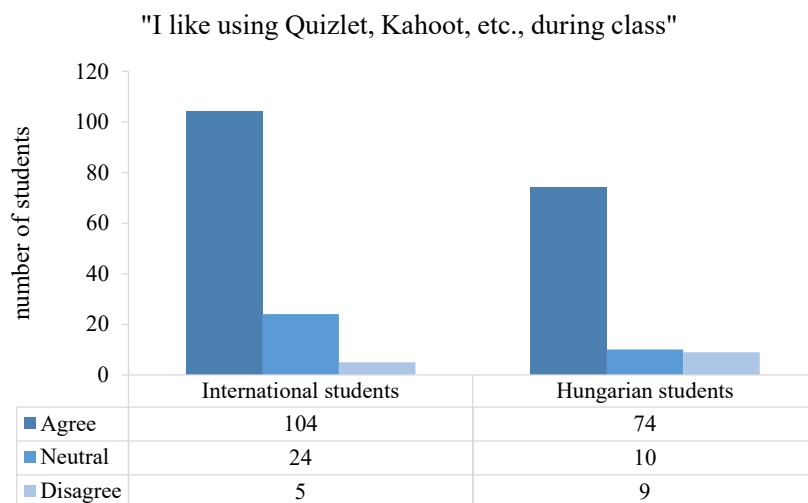


Figure 1: Gamification elements during classes

An immense portion was noted regarding gamification elements and tasks during classes. The questionnaire used two of these online quizzes as examples in this question (Quizlet and Kahoot), as most students were familiar with them. As depicted in Figure 1, and as formerly mentioned above, 80% of the Hungarian students and 78% of their international peers expressed their preference and fondness in support of these online platforms. One of the international students wrote:

*“[...] making an exercise fun doesn’t necessary mean that we don’t take it seriously. In my opinion, being a little bit playful while studying can help memorize otherwise boring topics.”*

The competitive nature of these quizzes may also motivate students. As one Hungarian student expressed in the survey:

*“There’s a matching game at Quizlet. And it’s a competition. Guess what? I always play until I’m on the top of the leaderboard...”*

However, not all students need to actually “win” to enjoy the competition and participate willingly in these activities. As one of the students wrote:

*“[I like] Kahoot- I’m always the last one, but I really like it.”*

## 4 Discussion

As digital natives, both Hungarian and international students seemingly profit from the use of technologies and gamification elements for educational purposes, and this factor overarches all cultural and national differences. There were two online platforms mentioned in the questionnaire: Quizlet and Kahoot, which were immensely popular among the students. These two platforms were the ones used most frequently, mostly to develop and practice vocabulary. The findings of this research are



supported by the results of a survey conducted by Csongor et al. (2017), in which students also responded in favour of using these online tools in the classroom. Although there is a debate among researchers whether technologies offer more benefits than being a simple distraction (Németh & Csongor, 2019), the positive effects of gamification are obvious, if and when used correctly (Dehgazadeh, 2019; Dicheva et al., 2015; Hamari, 2014). Hamari (2014) reported many papers on the topic, which supports the positive effect of gamification regarding motivation, but also suggests that these beneficial results may not have long-term persistence.

Out of the 226 participants, only 13% of the Hungarian and 14% of the international students expressed their concern regarding the use of digital gadgets and games and found them distracting. The vast majority in both student groups preferred to use both their devices as much as possible for educational purposes and to employ quizzes and other game-like tools both in and outside the classroom.

One of the core aspects and benefits of gamification is the positive effect it has on the intrinsic motivation of students, due to which students are more willing to participate and engage in the tasks (Deterding, 2012). Aparicio et al. (2012) listed several other aspects of gamification, which appeal to digital native students: autonomy and competence. Autonomy, in this particular case, refers to the will to participate actively in the task. When students are driven by an inner motivation or personal interest, their sense of autonomy tends to be high. Both student groups participating in the current survey favoured a facilitator-like teacher, a learning environment which supports their autonomy.

Competence refers to the feeling students experience while participating in challenges and receiving positive feedback and results, thus further improving their intrinsic motivation (Aparicio et al., 2012). The type of feedback can be quite colourful, ranging from points contributing to the students' final grades for the course to more abstract rewards, such as taking first place in a leaderboard. The students involved in this survey, for instance, received points for high scores, positively affecting their grades. Additionally, Sailer et al. (2013) claimed, points can also be used in the form of immediate positive feedback. Blohm and Leimeister (2013) summarized the underlying idea of gamification as to induce a desired behaviour implementing the unique motivations regarding the participants. Seaborn and Fels (2015) both concurred, points and badges, as a way of immediate feedback, bear a positive impact upon the depth and time of engagement regarding the participants. Buckley and Doyle (2014) also stated, it is not a necessity to win a game every time, as failure is also an essential part of every game. Failure, however, inspires practice, and through practice, in the end, triumph succeeds. Therefore, students should only see their mistakes as steps towards their goal and mastering the subject, instead of a dead-end with no way out. Rewards for such success, however, are ideally disseminated by the instructor such as grades or points (Buckley & Doyle, 2014).

## 5 Conclusion

It can be stated, despite the obvious differences found in nationality and culture among Hungarian and international students, there were no definite factors wedged between the two student populations. Both groups expressed a need for interactive and immersive classes, group work and cooperation, a desire for autonomy in their learning process, yet still appreciating the guidance of the teacher. Relying on technology was also most welcome between both student groups, since, as digital natives, their gadgets and devices play an important role in their lives.

Gamification elements were also held in high regard, both among the Hungarian and the international students. These game-like features allow the teacher to increase the students' motivation, while still



employing them for the sake of learning. The possibilities of applying games during classes are quite vast, and teachers have the opportunity to select the one which will be most suitable for the group or for the purpose of the teacher. Our findings may be of assistance to ESP teachers in higher education, albeit not exclusively, as gamification elements may be applied successfully throughout all stages of education.

While the positive reception of gamification elements was demonstrated in this study, no control group was involved in the research, which validates the effect of gamification regarding the students' level of motivation. Comparing the data of this research with one collected in a group with no gamification involved will be an interesting topic worthy of future investigation.

## References

- Aparicio, A., Vela, F. L., González-Sánchez, J., & Isla-Montes, J. L. (2012). Analysis and application of gamification. *Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on Interacción Persona-Ordenador*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2379636.2379653>
- Blohm, I., & Leimeister, J. M. (2013). Gamification design of IT-based enhancing services for motivational support and behavioral change. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 5, 275-278. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12599-013-0273-5>
- Buckley, P., & Doyle, E. (2014). Gamification and student motivation. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2014.964263>
- Csongor, A., Marquette, J., & Németh, T. (2017). Online educational tools in support of language development in an intercultural environment. *Intercultural Communicative Competence A Competitive Advantage for Global Employability Conference Proceedings*, 80-85. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340861593\\_Online\\_Educational\\_Tools\\_in\\_Support\\_of\\_Language\\_Development\\_in\\_an\\_Intercultural\\_Environment](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340861593_Online_Educational_Tools_in_Support_of_Language_Development_in_an_Intercultural_Environment)
- Deterding, S., Sicart, M., Nacke, L., O'Hara, K., & Dixon, D. (2011). Gamification: Using game design elements in non-gaming contexts. *Proceedings of the 2011 Annual Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 66, 2425-2428. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1979742.1979575>
- Deterding, S. (2012). Gamification: Designing for motivation. *Interactions*, 19(4), 14-17. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2212877.2212883>
- Dehghanzadeh, H., Fardanesh, H., Hatami, J., Talae, E., & Noroozi, O. (2019). Using gamification to support learning English as a second language: a systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1648298>
- Dicheva, D., Dichev, C., Agre, G., & Angelova, G. (2015). Gamification in education: A systematic mapping study. *Educational Technology and Society*, 18, 75-88. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jeductechsoci.18.3.75>
- Ebben, M., Kivatsky, R., & Panici, D. (2020). *Digital natives\*: Students' perceptions of technology and experiences with wikis in teaching and learning*. <https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/ctel/Digital%20Natives%20-%20Report.pdf>
- Hamari, J., Koivisto, J., & Sarsa, H. (2014). Does Gamification Work? – A Literature Review of Empirical Studies on Gamification. *Proceedings of the 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377>
- Huhn, D., Huber, J., Ippen, F., Eckart, W., Junne, F., Zipfel, S., Herzog, W., & Nikendei, C. (2016). International medical students; expectations and worries at the beginning of their medical education: A qualitative focus group study. *BMC Medical Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-016-0549-9>
- Kiryakova, G., Angelova, N., & Yordanova, L. (2014). Gamification in education. *9th International Balkan Education and Science Conference. Edirne, Turkey*. <https://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/ctel/Documents/Gamification%20in%20education.pdf>

- Marek, E., & Németh, T. (2020). Interkulturális kompetenciák az egészségügyi ellátásban (Intercultural competence in healthcare). *Orvosi Hetilap*, 161, 1322-1330. <https://akjournals.com › journals › article-p1322>
- Mironov, C., & Popovici, A. (2014). An emigrant teachers' excursion in the world of digital native students. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 128, 262–268. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.154>
- Németh, T., & Csongor A. (2019). With or without you: the use of digital tools in teaching languages for specific purposes. *Journal of Languages for Specific Purposes*, 6, 41-49.
- Németh, T., & Kajos, A. (2014). How to develop the intercultural competence of Hungarian students. *PORTA LINGUA 2014*, 155-164.
- Németh, T., & Rébék-Nagy, G. (2015). The importance of intercultural competence within health care. *PORTA LINGUA 2015*, 323-333.
- Németh, T., & Pozsgai, Gy. (2018). The value of local culture at an internationalised university. *UNEECC Forum*, 10, 39-51.
- Németh, T., & Tseligka, T. (2018). Initial results of a virtual exchange project between Greece and Hungary to improve medical students' intercultural and English language competence. *ELTA JOURNAL*, 6, 77-88.
- Organisation For Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2019). *Education at a Glance, OECD Indicators*. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Plochocki, J. (2019). Several ways Generation Z may shape the medical school landscape. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2382120519884325>
- Pozsgai, G., Kajos, A., & Németh, T. (2012). The challenges of a multicultural university environment in the area of crisis. In Komlósi, L. & Keresnyei, K. (eds.). *The proceedings of the UNEECC Forum*, 191-199.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *MCB University Press*, 9(5).
- Rigóczki, C., Andrei, D., & Györgyi-Ambró, K. (2017). Gamification on the edge of educational sciences and pedagogical methodologies. *Journal of Applied Technical and Educational Sciences*, 7(4), 79-88. <https://doi.org/10.24368/jates.v7i4.12>
- Sailer, M., Hense, J., Mandl, H., & Klevers, M. (2013). Psychological perspectives on motivation through gamification. *Interaction Design and Architecture(s) Journal*, 19, 18-37. <https://mediatum.ub.tum.de/doc/1222424/file.pdf>
- Seaborn, K., & Fels, D. I. (2015). Gamification in theory and action: A survey. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 74, 14-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2014.09.006>
- UP (2020). *About the University of Pécs*. Retrieved 18 November, 2020, from [https://international.pte.hu/about\\_university\\_pecs](https://international.pte.hu/about_university_pecs)
- UPMS (2020). *About our foreign language programmes in figures*. Retrieved 18 November, 2020, from <https://aok.pte.hu/en/menupont/468>



## Appendix

### Questionnaire

#### I. Biodata

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your nationality?
4. What is your native language?
5. Which additional languages can you speak?
6. What are you studying at UPMS?
7. What year are you in?

#### II. As a student...

1. I can learn better when the whole class is silent.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
2. We should get homework at the end of every lesson.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
3. I prefer sitting alone/in rows.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
4. I prefer sitting with the others in a circle/in groups.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
5. I like taking notes during class.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
6. I prefer lecture-like classes over practices.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
7. I prefer a strict learning environment over a more relaxed one.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
8. I prefer to use a book/notes/papers over digital materials.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
9. Please share a story about your best/worst classroom experience at university!

#### III. The teacher should...

1. The teacher should be more like a facilitator of learning.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
2. The teacher should use a PowerPoint presentation during every class.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
3. The teacher should not ask questions from the class.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree

4. The teacher should address mistakes immediately and directly.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
5. Students who can't behave should be punished/sent home.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
6. The teacher should share all course materials online.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
7. The teacher should... Please list some ideas which could help making classes more effective in your opinion!

#### IV. Classroom activities and games

1. I prefer group work over working alone.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
2. In my opinion, pair- or group work is distracting.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
3. I don't like tasks where I have to speak in front of the others.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
4. I prefer writing over speaking in class.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
5. Please share a story about an activity you loved/hated the most!
6. Getting homework is important for individual practice.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
7. I prefer just listening during classes.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
8. I prefer practicing on my own/with a friend at home.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
9. Do you prefer written or oral exams?  
Written exams    Oral exams    I have no preference
10. Which is better for you, smaller tests during the semester, or one exam at the end of the course?
  - Smaller tests/oral exams during the semester.
  - One exam (oral or written) at the end of the course.
  - Both smaller tests and end-term exam.
  - I have no preference.
11. I prefer studying with students from my own country/culture.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
12. I prefer working together with students who have the same native language as me.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
13. I like using Quizlet, Kahoot etc. during class.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree



14. Quizlet helps me a lot to practice vocabulary/terms.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
15. I don't like using my phone/tablet/laptop during class, I find it distracting.  
Strongly disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly agree
16. Please share a story about some activities/tasks that helped a lot with your studies!

# Teaching LSP in Higher Education: The Experience of Teaching Terminology to Pre-Service Teachers

*Marina A. Sokolova*

*Moscow Pedagogical State University, Russia, ma.sokolova@mpgu.su*

*Elena A. Nikulina*

*Moscow Pedagogical State University, Russia, ea.nikulina@mpgu.su*

## Abstract

The Department of Phonetics and Lexicology of the English Language of Moscow Pedagogical State University has a long history of teaching terminology. Knowledge of terminology is essential for not only future linguists and translators, but also for students who intend to become teachers. In this regard, the topic of education is central. This article describes the experience of teaching British School Education terminology to third year university students of English in the class environment (within the speech practice classes and classes of English lexicology) with the aim to expand the students' awareness of terminology itself and to interest them in their future scientific work (such as writing course and graduation papers). The article, providing a range of up-to-date terms to illustrate the processes of term-building in modern English, can be useful for designing Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) course syllabuses or those interested in the Russian school of Terminology.

**Keywords:** British School Education terminology, pre-service teacher training, LSP training, Lexicology, dictionary, modern term-formation processes.



## 1 Introduction

Moscow Pedagogical State University (MPGU) was established in 1872 as the first educational institution for women in Russia and was named “Women’s Courses of Higher Education”. By 1918 it had become a university with the permission to do research, where outstanding and distinguished professors and scientists worked. From its foundation, MPGU’s mission has been training specialists. Although the Faculty of Foreign Languages was established only in 1948, the tradition of teaching classical and modern languages dates back to the early days of the University. MPGU continues the tradition of teaching English, German, French, Italian, Greek, Chinese, Spanish, Polish, and Czech.

The Faculty offers various undergraduate and graduate courses in linguistics, translation, and teaching. Those, who study here, learn various aspects of a foreign language, in which they major, for instance, Phonetics, Grammar, Lexicology, Stylistics, and History of the Language. Every subject provides students with the opportunity to master a certain bulk of terms, so the tradition of teaching Language for Special Purposes (LSP) has been enduring and long established. Believing that the knowledge of terminology is essential to careers in either translation or teaching, the Faculty continues to integrate modules on terminology in all courses.

The branch of science known today as LSP, despite its long history and dating back as far as the times of the Roman Empire (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 2009), has been linguistically investigated for a rather short time. Numerous authors have addressed this topic, such as Savory (1953), Swales (1988), and Halliday et al. (1964).

In the post-Soviet countries, this scientific sphere can also be considered one of the most standardized and explored schools of thought. For instance, Rita Temmerman (2000) distinguishes between six acknowledged schools of terminology and research centres: the Vienna school, the Prague school, the Soviet school, the Canadian Centre, the Nordic Centre and UMIST. Larissa A. Manerko states, in the Acknowledgements to the book *Terminology Science in Russia Today*, that:

Russian School of Terminology is one of the oldest among those countries which introduced Terminology science as a separate branch of human activity. It is more than a century ago when this sphere of knowledge became associated with the selection and primary processing of terms and their definitions related to special concepts. (Kalverkamer et al., 2014, p. 16)

In 2004 two outstanding Russian scholars, Sergey D. Shelov and Vladimir M. Leitchik, wrote an article describing the history of the Russian terminology science (Shelov & Leitchik, 2004, p. 15) in which they focused on four main periods in the development of the Russian School of Terminology – the preparatory period (1780 – 1920s), the first period (1930s – 1960s), the second period (1970s – 1990s), and the third period (1990 – the present). In her review of Leitchik and Shelov, Elena Nikulina (2017, p. 141) points out that the study of terms in Russia is not static, that it has been having a new loop – the Cognitive Terminology. Thus, the knowledge and understanding of the historical processes, both in the Russian and Western traditions, help teachers put theory into practice and organize the course of study.

## 2. Speech practice and English lexicology classes

The given article is a review of the authors’ experience of teaching the third year students of English – future translators, linguists, and teachers. One of the main topics, important for all the vocational training and covered within the course of the English Speech Practice, is education. This topic is thoroughly explored on the examples of different systems – those of primary and secondary school, as



well as further and higher education in Great Britain and the United States. As Tchudi and Tchudi (1999, p.11) put it: »More and more it seems clear that English is a learn-by-doing skill, that our most important task as teachers is not telling students about language but encourage them to use it.«

This article focuses on the system of the British School Education. The terms included in this system are studied not only lexically (i.e., students learn the meanings of the terms and how to use them correctly) but also through English Lexicology, a branch of linguistics which studies the form, meaning, and behavior of words, paying special attention to word-formation and the semantics of terms.

## 2.1 The British School education terminology

Based on the results of the faculty's work, several books have been published. One of them, *The English Schooling Essential Handbook* (Nikulina & Peshekhonova, 2003, 2008), is a mini-dictionary of the most important terms on the topic under study. It is compiled of 319 terms, structured thematically. The two most extensive sections, *Schools* and *Assessment*, include 60 and 70 terms respectively, while the least extensive ones much fewer, seven for Learning, six for Academic Year, and four for Parents in Education.

The terms selected for the dictionary are topical and up-to-date. They reflect the modern situation in the British school system and highlight cultural aspects as well. For example, one can find a commentary and expanded explanation to some concepts or notions that have no correlation in the Russian language or are indicative of the UK only: *The Great Nine (the Clarendon Nine)*, *tertiary college*, *Key Stages*, *A-levels*, etc.

Besides amassing a large number of words, a lexical approach requires understanding the ways the terms are built. Therefore, the knowledge of lexicology helps students a lot here.

Firstly, students realize that a term is not necessarily a noun and that it does not always consist of one word only. Among all the 319 terms, 60 (19%) are one-component terms, such as *inspector*, *curriculum*, *syllabus*, *crèche*. However, most terms incorporate two components, as follows:

- Adjective + Noun: *core subject*, *attainment group*, *informal education*;
- Noun + Noun: *community education*, *Key Stages*, *catchment area*;
- Participle + Noun: *maintained school*, *boarding school*, *seen examination*;
- Numeral + Noun: *sixth form*.

Another 35 items (11%) are multi-component terms. They consist mostly of three components, though four or more components may also occur: *Advanced (Supplementary) Level Examination*, *General Certificate of Secondary Education*, *General National Vocational Qualification*, *School Curriculum*, and *Assessment Authority*.

Despite the fact that the majority of the studied terms are nouns, verbs belong with the sphere as well: *to play truant*, *to train*, *to instruct*, *to expel*, *to suspend*, *to opt out*, etc.

Another important factor when studying the terms of the British school system is morphology.

## 2.2 Morphological formation of terms

The most productive way of building terms of School Education is shortening. Mostly, initial shortening, 33 terms are either abbreviated (*GCSE*, *PE*, *IT*, *KS*) or acronymized (*LEAs*, *OFSTED*). Apocope (*exam* instead of *examination*, *pre-prep* instead of *pre-preparatory*) and contracted compounds (*A-Levels*, *GM-school*) are also frequent here.



The second most common way is composition and includes 17 terms, built as follows:

- Neutral simple (*open-book, 11-plus, test-battery, half-term*);
- Derived (*voluntary-aided, computer-assisted, criterion-referenced*);
- Syntactic (*end-of-term*).

Affixation makes up the majority of one-component terms (*schooling, pre-test, misbehavior, instructor*). However, affixation may also include multi-component terms (*co-opted governor, non-denominational schools, co-operative learning*).

### 2.3 Polysemy

The dictionary under analysis is compiled according to the widely acknowledged principle of univocality or the isomorphism principle that presupposes one form for one concept. The purpose for this is to avoid ambiguity and to optimize the mastery of terms.

However, MPGU's Department of Phonetics and Lexicology of the English Language shares the sociocognitive view that polysemy is functional in specialized discourse. It is a consequence of changes over a period of time. The search for more profound understanding and the constant discussion over how to name what one knows and understands and what words mean is in the discourse of a community and is a process in time. Polysemy is the result. Even when there is univocality, polysemy may develop depending on the type of category and how it is understood (Temmerman, 2000, p. 133).

Thus, a few polysemantic terms that have developed two meanings within the sphere of School Education are included in the dictionary (*education, house, school, etc.*). This approach helps to reconceptualize the link between the material of students' study and the reality they will face upon graduation (Chostelidou, 2011). Here are the definitions from one of the contemporary dictionaries, showing the polysemous characteristic of some educational terms:

#### EDUCATION

- 1 the process by which your mind develops through learning at a school, college, or university
- 2 the knowledge and skills that you gain from being taught: a college education (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001)

#### HOUSE

- 1 where you live
- 2 large building
- 3 company
- 4 parliament
- 5 theatre <...> (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001)

#### SCHOOL

- 1 where children learn
- 2 time at school
- 3 university
- 4 one subject
- 5 art
- 6 sea animals <...> (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2001)

A thematic dictionary wholly concerned with English educational terms would certainly raise the students' awareness not only of the terms themselves but of their different concepts when used in various contexts as one cannot deny that a considerable part of each people's culture is realized through its language, and the language in its entire richness is reflected most of all in its dictionary (Vasileva & Dimitrova, 2004). It goes without saying that the lexical units should be practised with the help of texts and contexts to say nothing of the opportunity to recognize the units in a speech while watching films about education. Bryson's (1990) study found the following:

At the time of writing, a television viewer in Britain could in a single evening watch *Neighbours*, an Austrian opera, *Cheers*, an American comedy set in Boston, and *EastEnders*, a British program set among cockneys in London. All of these bring into people's homes in one evening a variety of vocabulary, accents, and other linguistic influences that they would have been unlikely to experience in a single lifetime just two generations ago. (p. 245)

We believe that the contemporary study of terms should include teaching the structural peculiarities and semantics of the terms combined. As only in the combination of the internal and external form, any term can be perceived.

## 2.4 Extra materials

Another important aspect of teaching terminology is through watching films and short videos like advertisements and promo videos of private schools. This activity, besides being entertaining, helps substantiate the students' awareness of the terminological bulk they are to master.

Traditionally, the tasks are subdivided into three sections: pre-watching, while-watching, and post-watching, each aiming at the precise goals.

In the pre-watching, students concentrate upon the terms (usually 10 – 20 in number) that they will find in the forthcoming video, which helps reduce difficulties. They also have to do research on specific notions or phenomena or/and answer related questions.

The second stage includes objective exercises (true/false, multiple choice, gap-fill, matching) for actualizing the students' knowledge of the terminology under study.

The post-watching stage aims to reinforce the obtained knowledge and the students have to translate from Russian into English, comment on the statements, do a project or write an essay.

## 3 Conclusion

The overall experience of teaching terminology in British education proves that a traditional lexically oriented approach can be successfully combined with the methods of English Lexicology. The Department of Phonetics and Lexicology of the English Language tries to encourage our students to build awareness of terminology itself and expand their subject-specific vocabulary because it serves their academic and professional needs through actualizing the interdisciplinary relationships and increasing student interest in their future scientific work.



## References

- Bryson, B. (1990). *The mother tongue*. Perennial.
- Costelidou, D. (2011). Needs-based course design: the impact of general English knowledge on the effectiveness of an ESP teaching intervention. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 15, 403-409.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M.J. (2009). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, M.A., McIntosh, A., & Strevens, P. (1964). *The linguistic sciences and language teaching*. (Longmans Linguistics Library.) Longmans.
- Kalverkamer, H., Baumann, K.-D., & Manerko, L.A. (2014). *Terminology science in Russia today. From the past to the future*. Frank & Timme, Berlin.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2006). Education. In *Longman's collegiate dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., p. 501). Pearson Education Limited.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2006). House. In *Longman's collegiate dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 791-793). Pearson Education Limited.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2006). School. In *Longman's collegiate dictionary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 1466-1467). Pearson Education Limited.
- Nikulina, E.A. (2017). Russian school of terminology. In M. Małachowicz & S. Grucza (Eds.), *Polskie i europejskie nurty terminologiczne* (pp. 140-149). Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Instytutu Komunikacji Specjalistycznej i Interkulturowej, Uniwersytet Warszawski.
- Nikulina, E. A., & Peshekhonova E.S. (2008). *English schooling essential handbook: Supplementary material to the topic "English Schooling"*. Prometheus, MPGU.
- Savory, Th. H. (1953). *The language of science. Its growth, character and usage*. Andre Deutsch.
- Shelov, S. D., & Leitchik, V. M. (2004). Terminology: Where is Russian science today? In S. D. Shelov & V. M. Leitchik (Eds.) together with Picht, H. and Galinski, C. *Russian terminology science (1992-2002)*(pp. 15-48). Termnet Publisher.
- Swales, J. M. (1988). *Episodes in LSP: A Source and reference book on the development of English for science and technology*. Prentice Hall.
- Temmerman, R. (2000). *Towards new ways of terminology description: the sociocognitive approach*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Tchudi, S. J., & Tchudi, S. N. (1999). *The English language arts handbook*. Heinemann.
- Vasileva, N., & Dimitrova, G. (2004). The cultural and linguistic presentation of the world in a thesaurus. In M. Humar (Ed.), *Collected Papers from the Scientific Conference Terminology at the Time of Globalization* (pp. 221-228). Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU. <https://doi.org/10.3986/9789610503262>

# Using Authentic Materials in Developing Maritime English Students' Listening Skills

*Sandra Tominac Coslovich*

*University of Rijeka, Croatia, stominac@pfri.hr*

*Jana Kegalj*

*University of Rijeka, Croatia, kegalj@pfri.hr*

## Abstract

A survey of approximately 30 Maritime English teaching resources shows that activities promoting listening competencies are almost exclusively based on specially prepared listening texts for teaching English for specific purposes and not 'real' instances of spoken language. Although such listening texts serve the essential purpose of providing models for language production, they are often insufficient to equip students with adequate skills to handle authentic or 'real' language they have rarely or never encountered. Therefore, this paper explores the benefits of using authentic listening materials in designing classroom activities that promote listening skills in Maritime English students. Examples of activities are provided based on 64 authentic very high frequency (VHF) recordings. The methodical approach to designing activities is developed according to a simplified four-stage approach to second language acquisition — the comprehension stage, the implanting stage, the developing stage, and the usage stage.

**Keywords:** maritime VHF exchanges, Maritime English, Seaspeak, SMCP, authentic listening materials, listening skills



## 1 Introduction

Maritime English is a specialized variety of English or English for specific purposes (ESP) adopted and recommended to be used by the general maritime community both at sea and in port to achieve effective inter-ship and intra-ship communication and to carry out other jobs and duties associated with all aspects of navigation and shipping (Bocanegra-Valle, 2013; Pritchard, 2011; Trenkner, 1997). “Maritime English subsumes five different subvarieties according to the specific purpose they serve within the maritime context: English for navigation and maritime communications, English for maritime commerce, English for maritime law, English for marine engineering, and English for shipbuilding” (Bocanegra-Valle, 2013, p. 3570). This paper focuses on a particular subset of Maritime English, namely maritime very high frequency (VHF) communication, its specific language features and the benefits of using authentic materials — that is, real VHF recordings and transcripts — to promote maritime students’ listening skills.

## 2 On some features of maritime VHF conversations

The main language features of maritime radiotelephone communications presented in the following paragraphs are based on a corpus of 64 recordings of maritime VHF conversations and their transcripts compiled on two CD-ROMs and published by the Szczecin Maritime University (Plucinska, 2004/2009) and on previous research on the nature of maritime VHF communications (Bocanegra-Valle, 2011; Bocanegra-Valle & De la Campa Portela, 2012; Jurkovič et al., 2019; Pritchard, 2011; Pritchard & Kalogjera, 1999; Witt, 2019).

The main settings where the recordings occurred were ships approaching ports, straits, or fairways. The recordings typically involve an exchange of information between the ship’s captain and the Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) operator or pilot.

The language of maritime VHF communication is a unique variety of specialized English, the linguistic features of which meet the requirements and restrictions of specific communicative situations in navigation, the communicative needs of the specific participants (ships and shore-based stations), and the specific technical requirements related to using VHF radiotelephones in communication. VHF conversations are generally repetitive and formulaic with a high degree of redundancy, making them highly predictable (Pritchard, 2011). Their grammar and vocabulary are also simplified and restricted.

According to the theory of conversation (Johnson, 1982), a VHF conversation develops in three main stages: 1) the making contact stage, 2) message exchange, and 3) the closing stage.

The authors of *Seaspeak* developed a model of basic maritime VHF conversation (shown in Figure 1) consisting of nine steps (Weeks et al., 1984): 1) initial call, 2) response to call, 3) indication of the working channel, 4) agreeing on the working channel, 5) switch-over procedure, 6) message, 7) response to the message, 8) end transmission, and 9) end procedure.

In a maritime VHF conversation, two stations address a topic, ask for information, respond to the information, give/receive a warning, give/receive instructions/advice, and send requests. They can exchange information on a simple topic or a limited number of topics within a conversation. Typically, an exchange (as shown in Figure 2) involves a conversation between two stations on a single topic and consists of at least two turns, that is, one by the calling station and the other by the responding station. Two turns on a single topic constitute a maritime exchange, whereas a single exchange or two or more exchanges on a topic or several topics constitute a maritime VHF conversation.

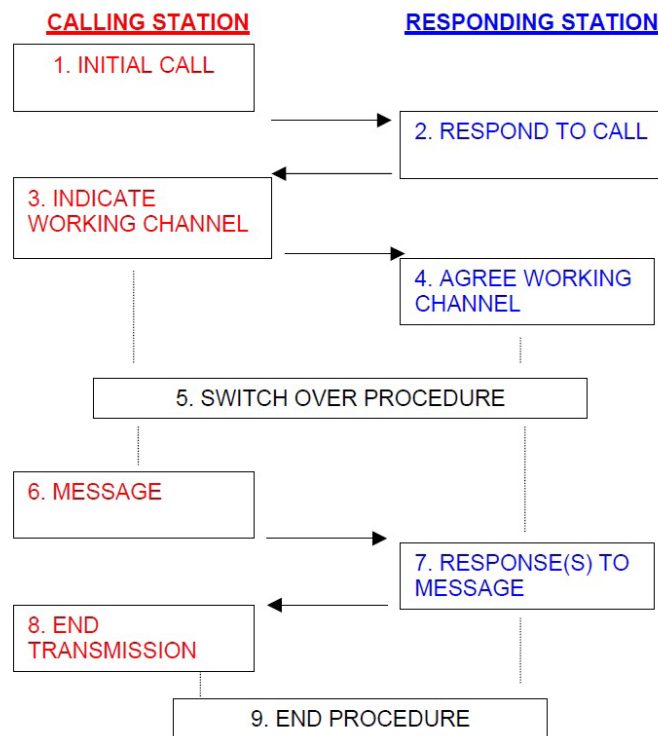


Figure 1: Diagram of nine-step VHF exchange procedure (Pritchard, 2003, p. 27)

C O N T A C T	<p><b>MARLIN:</b> Elbe Pilot, Elbe Pilot. Elbe Pilot. This is Marlin, Marlin. Good evening. Over.</p> <p><b>Elbe Pilot:</b> Marlin. This is Elbe Pilot. Switch to VHF Channel 2-2. Over.</p> <p><b>MARLIN:</b> Elbe Pilot. This is Marlin, Agree: Switching to VHF Channel 2- 2. Over</p> <p style="text-align: center;">..... switch-over procedure .....</p>
M E S S A G E S	<p><b>Elbe Pilot:</b> Marlin. This is Elbe Pilot. Question: What is your position. Over.</p> <p><b>MARLIN:</b> Elbe Pilot, This Is Marlin. Answer: Position: Three miles from Elbe Lightvessel.</p> <p><b>Elbe Pilot:</b> Marlin. This Is Elbe Pilot. Understood. Your position: Three miles from Elbe Lightvessel. Instruction: Rig pilot ladder on the port side, one foot above the water. Information: my position is close to Buoy No. 1. Over.</p> <p><b>MARLIN:</b> Elbe Pilot. This is Marlin. Understood: I shall rig pilot ladder on the port side one foot above the water. Your position is close to Buoy No. 1. Thank you. Over.</p>
E N D	<p><b>Elbe Pilot:</b> Thank you very much indeed, Captain. Stand by on channel 1-6. Over.</p> <p><b>MARLIN:</b> Elbe Pilot. Thank you. Standing by on VHF channel one - six. Out.</p>

Figure 2: Example of a complete standard maritime VHF communication (Pritchard, 2003, p. 28)

However, in real communications, the:

*ideal procedure is subject to deviations and modifications (e.g., shortening of the opening stage and merging the final turn of the message stage (call-offs) with the closing one – closers and farewells). The study of the real-life VHF recordings shows striking differences between real maritime VHF interactions and the standards recommended by the IMO (International Maritime Organization) and, originally, ITU (International Telecommunications Union). These are reflected in the choice of restricted vocabulary, the linguistic forms (phrases and sentences), and the format/template and*



*structure of conversation* (Pritchard, 2011, pp. 48–49).

In the opening stage, the usual adjacency pair address–response is very often omitted. The same happens with addressing and identifying when there is a high degree of redundancy. Other elements often used in maritime VHF conversations that do not follow the IMO and ITU standards are pauses, backchanneling markers such as ‘OK’, rising tone, ‘Roger’ for acceptance and omission of the word ‘over’ at the end of a turn. Information is very often requested and provided with simple syntax and by using ellipsis.

Furthermore, stages 2 and 3 (exchange of messages and closing) often overlap, or some parts of them are merged. Changes in topics are introduced without any linguistic signalling, that is, without the recommended message markers (*question, answer, request, advice, instruction, warning, information, intention*). Therefore, the language instructor should familiarize students with the discrepancies between the recommended standard and real VHF conversations.

### 3 Methodological approach

Based on a set of authentic sample recordings of maritime VHF conversations and their transcripts, we will give examples of classroom activities that promote listening skills in Maritime English students by exposing them to instances of ‘real-life’ maritime VHF exchanges. The methodical approach to designing activities is based on a simplified four-stage approach to second language acquisition — the comprehension stage, the implanting stage, the developing stage, and usage stage — based on De Corte’s (1981) taxonomy of cognitive objectives and Neuner’s (1985) exercise typology.

The ideal sequence of exercises in a good foreign-language lesson should be organized logically and progress from closed to open exercises, from receptive to productive exercises and from predictable to unpredictable use of language. Therefore, based on Neuner et al. (1985), exercises can be classified into four categories.

The first category of exercises (comprehension stage) involves checking and organizing information. The exercises are associated with the stage in which material is presented to the learner and comprehension is checked. The aim is to promote understanding, with the exercises usually created around written text or an authentic listening text. At this point, no production in terms of speaking or writing the target language is required of learners. Instead, the emphasis is placed on recognizing and understanding the material, usually by engaging students in reading or listening activities.

The second category of exercises (implanting stage) includes reproductive, strongly guided, closed and controlled activities aimed at implanting language skills. With these exercises, learners are encouraged to reproduce elements or building blocks of language (sounds, words, grammatical structures, phrases, idioms, functions) in the same context as the one in which they are provided. Typical examples are reciting or copying texts, spelling exercises, translation, matching and the re-production of meaning-directed exercises, such as selecting given words or sentences and using them for gap-filling based on their meaning in the context provided.

The third category of exercises (developing stage) is aimed at developing skills. This category provides guided speaking and writing exercises where students can practice using the building blocks or elements of language from the previous stage. These exercises are less guided, half-open, productive tasks that allow room for variations; that is, the language choices are not as predictable as they are in the previous stage. In this stage, learners are expected to (re)produce the language elements in a different context than previously provided. Typical tasks include finishing sentences or texts,



answering questions about a text, describing or writing what is shown in diagrams, and role plays with information gaps.

The fourth category of exercises (usage stage) refers to unguided, open and productive exercises in which learners use the skills they have learnt in the previous stages. These exercises or tasks are always focused on meaning and are hardly guided or not guided at all, that is, open. At this stage, learners are expected to produce language in a context that has not been predefined. Therefore, lessons are usually centred around a (real-world rather than language-focused) task.

## 4 Samples of activities based on authentic recordings

Although ideal examples of VHF conversations serve the essential purpose of providing models for language production, they are often insufficient to equip students with adequate skills to handle authentic, 'real' language they have rarely or never encountered. Therefore, several examples of activities based on authentic listening materials/recordings are provided below.

In the following paragraphs, a sequence of activities based on authentic recordings is presented in three stages, pre-listening, listening, and post-listening, thus following a simplified four-stage approach to second language acquisition — the comprehension stage, the implanting stage, the developing stage, and the usage stage — based on the taxonomy of cognitive objectives.

### 4.1 Activity examples

#### 4.1.1 Pre-listening stage

The first stage is pre-listening, where, for example, the students brainstorm ideas about the possible information that a shore station may require from a vessel. This type of pre-listening activity sets the scene and helps the students inadvertently anticipate the information they might hear later.

What information does the VTS need about a vessel upon arrival?

- Brainstorming, writing the suggestions randomly
- Arranging the information in the appropriate order
- Eliciting answers and writing down the agreed version

Listening is one of the most critical skills seafarers should possess, as this is one of the primary aspects of communicating with vessels and shore stations. In the onboard environment, seafarers must employ their listening skills to understand, provide, and obtain information. As some research suggests, people remember only 25%–50% of what they hear (Dale, 1947); therefore, improving listening skills on board is crucial for improving the productivity and effectiveness of the crew and for avoiding misunderstandings. Misunderstandings are particularly frequent at sea, as most of the global merchant fleet is manned by multicultural and multilingual crews made up of non-native speakers of English, which places special requirements on their interaction with other non-native speakers (Pritchard, 2011). Therefore, introducing authentic listening materials in class arouses interest in the topic and the genre and places the students in a realistic situation where they become active listeners. The ultimate goal of listening practice is to train the students to feel comfortable within this subset of Maritime English in order to be able to obtain the necessary information and use standard marine communication phrases (SMCPs) accurately.

#### 4.1.2 Listening stage

In the second stage, the students listen to an authentic recording of a maritime VHF conversation



several times. Therefore, the first task within the second stage is listening to a recording to obtain specific information, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Listening for specific information activity sample*

VHF sample conversation (supply the missing details)	
Calling station	
Responding station	
Channel	
Position	
Course and speed	
Type of vessel	
Cargo	
Port of call	
Destination	

### Original tapescript

- *Ushant Traffic Control, Ushant Traffic Control, J8CA2 calling.*
- *Civil station calling Ushant Traffic on 11. Do you read me?*
- *Yes, I read you loud and clear. Good afternoon. This is J8CA2. My ship's name: Orahovac: Oscar, Romeo, Alpha, Hotel, Oscar, Victor, Alpha, Charlie. My position is 076 degrees to Ushant Lighthouse and distance 10 nautical miles. My present course is 040 and speed is about 16 knots. Over.*
- *OK. What type of vessel are you, Sir?*
- *Will you repeat, please?*
- *What kind of vessel are you?*
- *I'm a cargo vessel, cargo vessel, and I have no cargo on board. Over.*
- *Where do you come from and what is your destination?*
- *I'm coming from Algiers, Algiers and my destination is Rouen, France.*
- *OK, Orahovac. Thank you for your call and for your information now and have a good trip and good watch. Bye, bye.*

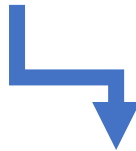
In the second part of the listening stage, the students are asked to observe the structure of the VHF conversation they have just listened to and compare it to the one prescribed by the IMO and the ITU to see where the necessary corrections should be made. It is necessary to notice the use of specific SMCP phrases (or lack of them). Finally, the students listen to the recording again, pausing after each move and transcribing it by introducing the necessary corrections, as shown in the example below (Diagram 1). Ideally, this should be done individually so that each student goes at their own pace.

### Corrected version

- *Ushant Traffic Control, Ushant Traffic Control. This is Orahovac J8CA2. Over.*
- *Orahovac J8CA2. This is Ushant Traffic on 11. How do you read me? Over.*
- *Ushant Traffic Control. This is Orahovac. I read you excellent. Good afternoon. I spell my ship's name: Orahovac Oscar, Romeo, Alpha, Hotel, Oscar, Victor, Alpha, Charlie. Information: My position is 076 degrees to Ushant Lighthouse and distance 10 nautical miles. My present course is 040 and speed is about 16 knots. Over.*

- *Orahovac. This is Ushant Traffic. Message understood. Question: What type of vessel are you? Over.*
- *Ushant Traffic Control. This is Orahovac. Please say again. Over.*
- *Orahovac. This is Ushant Traffic. I say again: What type of vessel are you? Over.*
- *Ushant Traffic Control. This is Orahovac. Answer: I am a cargo vessel, cargo vessel, and I have no cargo on board. Over.*
- *Orahovac. This is Ushant Traffic. Question: What is your last port of call and destination? Over.*
- *Ushant Traffic Control. This is Orahovac. Answer: My last port of call is Algiers, Algiers. My destination is Rouen, France.*
- *Orahovac. This is Ushant Traffic. Thank you for your call. Have a good watch. Out.*

Ushant Traffic Control, Ushant Traffic Control,  
J8CA2 calling.



Ushant Traffic Control, Ushant Traffic Control.  
This is Orahovac J8CA2. Over.

Civil station calling Ushant Traffic on 11.  
Do you read me?



Orahovac J8CA2.  
This is Ushant Traffic on 11.  
How do you read me? Over.

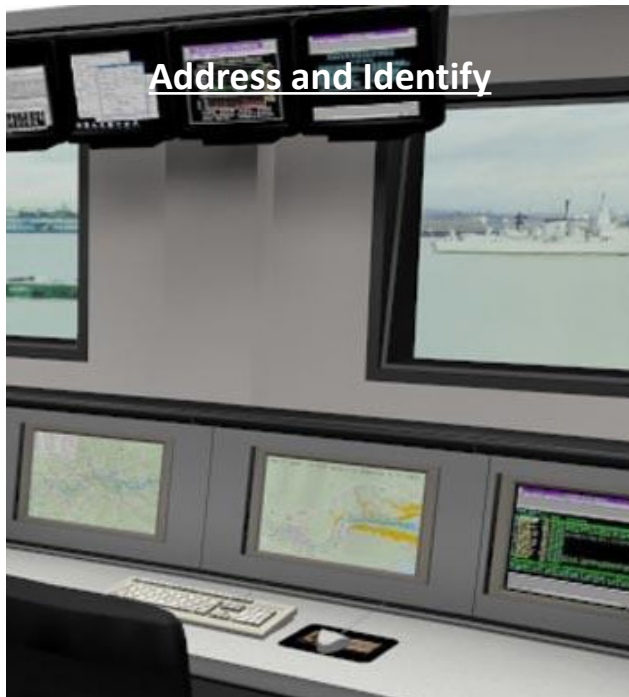
Diagram 1: *The transcribed sequence in a VHF exchange with corrections*

#### 4.1.3. Post-listening stage

Finally, the students are divided into pairs. Each pair gets a role-play task, where one student in the pair is the calling station with a set of information (s)he needs to obtain, and the other is the responding station with information to provide. They need to apply the prescribed and recommended conventions and structures in order to produce an entire conversation. The following role-play example (shown in Figures 3–5) is adapted from Van Kluijven (2007).



### Role play



PORTISHEAD RADIO



M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379

Figure 3: *Example of a making contact stage scenario in a standard maritime VHF conversation*  
*Adapted from Van Kluijven (2007)*

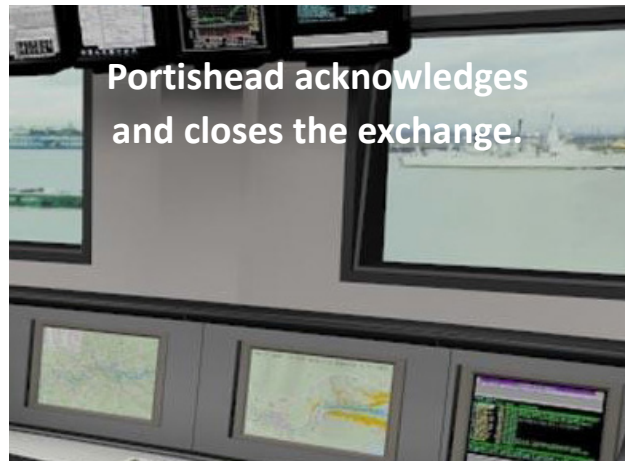


PORTISHEAD RADIO



M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379

Figure 4: *Example of a message exchange scenario in a standard maritime VHF conversation*  
*Adapted from Van Kluijven (2007)*



PORTISHEAD RADIO

Figure 5: *Example of a closing stage scenario in a maritime VHF conversation*  
*Adapted from Van Kluijven (2007)*

At this stage, the students should be able to produce/role-play the following conversation shown in Diagram 2, (with minor variations) based on the scenarios presented above.

**CALLING STATION**

**RESPONDING STATION**

1. M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379 (3X).  
 This is Portishead Radio (3X).  
 Over.

2. Portishead Radio (3X).  
 This is M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379 (3X).  
 Over.

3. M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379.  
 This is Portishead Radio.  
 Switch to channel ... Over.

4. Portishead Radio.  
 This is M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379.  
 Agree channel ... Over.

5. SWITCH-OVER PROCEDURE

6. M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379.  
 This is Portishead Radio.  
 Warning: You are not complying with the TSS. Instruction:  
 Alter course to 064 degrees. Over.

7. Portishead. This is M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379.  
 Understood: I will alter course to 064 degrees. Over.

8. END TRANSMISSION  
 M.V. STELLA MARIS - UB6379. This is Portishead Radio.  
 Thank you. Nothing more. Out.

Diagram 2: *Example of a complete standard maritime VHF conversation*



## 5 Conclusion

Although various IMO and ITU recommendations regarding maritime VHF voice communication standards have been in use for decades, the study of a corpus of 64 samples of authentic maritime VHF conversations shows surprising differences between real maritime VHF interactions and the ideal procedure. Furthermore, it quickly becomes apparent that the standardized model of VHF interactions is subject to deviations and modifications, such as the tendency to simplify and shorten the procedure.

To help nautical students cope with the discrepancy between the language they are taught to produce and what they will encounter while communicating with vessels or shore stations, we must expose them to instances of authentic language. Therefore, the authors of this paper presented a sequence of activities based on actual VHF recordings. The sequence is presented in three stages — the pre-listening stage, the listening stage, and the post-listening stage. The activities are based on a simplified four-stage approach to second language acquisition — the comprehension stage, the implanting stage, the developing stage, and the usage stage.

## References

- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (2011). The language of seafaring: Standardized conventions and discursive features in speech communications. *International Journal of English Studies*, 11(1), 35–53.
- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (2013). Maritime English. In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bocanegra-Valle, A., & De la Campa Portela, R. M. (2012). Compilation of a corpus of spoken maritime communications in English with pedagogical and researching purposes. In M. L. Carrió, J. Contreras, F. Olmo, H. Skorczynska, I. Tamarit, & D. Westall (Eds.), *La investigación y la enseñanza aplicadas a las lenguas de especialidad y a la tecnología* (pp. 309–317). Editorial Universidad Politécnica de Valencia.
- Dale, E. (1947). *Audio-visual methods in teaching*. The Dryden Press.
- De Corte, E., Geerligs, C. T., Lagerweij, N. A. J., Peters, J. J., & Vandenberghe, R. (1981). *Beknopte didactologie* (5th ed). Wolters-Noordhoff.
- International Maritime Organization (2002). *Standard marine communication phrases*. IMO.
- Johnson, E. (1982). *The Seaspeak research strategy and the computer*. Unpublished paper. Wolfson College, University of Cambridge.
- Jurkovič, V., John, P., & Suban, V. (2019). Ship-shore voice communication upon ship's port entry: A case-based analysis of compliance with existing communication standards. *Proceedings of the International Maritime English Conference IMEC 31, Åland University of Applied Science*, 90–110.
- Neuner, G., Krüger, M., & Grewer, U. (1985). *Übungstypologie zum kommunikativen Deutschunterricht*. Langenscheidt.
- Plucinska, E. (2004/2009). *Original VHF messages for teaching SMCP*. Maritime University of Szczecin.
- Pritchard, B. (2003). *Maritime communications and IMO SMCP 2001* (draft version). Faculty of Maritime Studies, University of Rijeka. [https://www.pfri.uniri.hr/bopri/documents/MaritimeCommunication-sandSMCP\\_002.pdf#page=29&zoom=auto,-82,640](https://www.pfri.uniri.hr/bopri/documents/MaritimeCommunication-sandSMCP_002.pdf#page=29&zoom=auto,-82,640)
- Pritchard, B. (2011). Nature of maritime VHF communications and prospects for new research. In L. Vengehuchten, W. v. Parys, & A. Noble (Eds.), *Communications for maritime purposes – An international and interdisciplinary issue* (pp. 43–56). University of Antwerp.
- Pritchard, B., & Kalogjera, D. (1999). On some features of conversation in maritime VHF communications. In M. Coulthard et al. (Eds.), *Dialogue analysis VII: Working with dialogue* (pp. 185–196). Max Niemeyer Verlag.

- Trenkner, P. (1997, June 1-4). *The IMO standard marine communication phrases as adopted by IMO-MSC 68* [Conference presentation]. WOME 9, Malmo, Sweden.
- Van Kluijven, P. (2007). *International maritime language programme*. Alkmaar Alk and Heijnen Publishers.
- Weeks, F., Glover, A., Johnson, E., & Strevens, P. (1984). *Seaspeak – Reference manual*. Pergamon Press.
- Witt, U. M. (2019). My practice: Using tailor-made exercise sequences provided online to improve, practice and consolidate the use of the SMCP at VTS and MRC and port control centres. *Proceedings of the International Maritime English Conference IMEC 31, Åland University of Applied Science*, 214–220.