KULTURA SPOŁECZEŃSTWO EDUKACJA

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Raising student bilingualism through foreign language (English) teacher professional involvement

KEYWORDS

bilingualism, foreign language teachers, learners, linguistic/didactic abilities and competences of language teachers, matriculation examination, teacher-student interdependence

ABSTRACT

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The bilingual process is widely observed among many people and many cultures. Out of the many different forms of bilingualism, the form of bilingualism that most often appears is the subsequent one, being the result of learning a second language in school settings. When developing this type of bilingualism, both the language competences of language teachers and the quality of their teaching talent are very important. In order to assess this type of interdependence, a study that focuses on the teachers' skills and competences, on the one hand, and the impact L2 teachers have on students, on the other hand, was designed. The study involved 50 teachers and 100 students taught by them, all of them attending vocational secondary schools in southern Poland. All participants of the study (i.e. both the teachers and the students) were to answer six verification questions included in the Matura exam 2018. The results obtained during the research indicate the existence of an interdependence between the actual level of proficiency of foreign language (FL) teachers and the final

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level of L2 proficiency presented by their students. Generally, the students led by language teachers with a higher overall level of communicative competence showed an overall better command of English in the survey.

1. Introduction

It is currently a common practice that people from all over the world speak more than one language; such people are referred to as being bilingual (or even multilingual). But are they actually aware of what it means to be a bilingual person? Or how to make a person bilingual? For that reason, we want to discuss the most important aspects connected with the processes of becoming bilingual, mostly these ones which are directly connected with the secondary (i.e. high school) education. Additionally, in order to explain the reasons for the research described below, it is also important to discuss the attitude foreign language teachers have towards helping their learners make their bilingualism stronger, more profound and better orientated. We would like to measure the impact FL teachers perform on their learners, what makes this impact stronger (or weaker), as well as what professional features FL teachers have developed in themselves which may be considered to be more student-friendly and more bilingualism-stimulating.

Following CEFR (Common Educational Framework of References for Languages), all secondary school learners are expected to obtain the level indicated there as B2 (what means they should be able to function as lower advanced communicative users of the selected language). The evidence for obtaining the level of L_2 proficiency specified above is to be assessed at the language section of the Matura exam, to be obligatorily taken at the end of the secondary school education. The CEFR system specifies that people using a foreign language at this (i.e. B2) level need to show that they /1/ understand "[…] the importance of the main threads contained in complex statements on specific and abstract topics, including substantive discussions in the field of their specialty"; /2/ are able to "[…] communicate fluently and spontaneously to conduct a conversation with a native speaker of a given language, without any special effort of any of the parties"; and /3/ can formulate "[…] clear, detailed statements while explaining their point of view on a given topic and considering the advantages and disadvantages of different options". At the same time, the main assumptions of the L_2 core-curriculum in respect to secondary education indicate that the B2 level needs to be

attained as a result of the learners' /1/ ability to use modern ICT (information and communication technologies) tools in different language learning/using processes (both oral and written); /2/ creating intercultural projects (e.g. exchanging electronic and live correspondence with young people from other countries, using multimedia resources, using a multimedia dictionary etc.); /3/ ability to learn and understand the environment perceived as a way to satisfy the natural curiosity of the world: /4/ readiness to prepare for further education; or /5/ skillfulness in the learners' work with a dictionary and/or other educational materials. As one can see, neither the CEFR indications nor these, found in the core-curriculum, propose straightforward directions concerning the ways possibly undertaken by language teachers to help their learners arrive at the level of language proficiency defined as using the L_2 at the lower advanced level.

According to Baumgartner (2008), the process of one's bilingualism can be assessed from three different points of view, proposed by the scholar: recognizing a person to be a coordinate bilingual, subordinate bilingual or incipient bilingual. The first kind of bilingualism results from a situation when the two languages are being encountered at the same time; a coordinately bilingual person remains fluent in each of the two languages and it is difficult to establish which of them can be recognized as L_1 and which one as L_2. The second kind of bilingualism, recognized as subordinate bilingualism is characteristic for a person who remains more fluent in their L_1 only, whereas the second language is always much weaker; a situation like this results from the fact that such people began learning their second language after they had learnt the first one. Finally, the third type of bilingualism is the incipient one, which is a less developed variant of coordinate bilingualism; in this instance, the mother tongue is mostly the only fluent language, whereas the second language is only partly developed. As the second language started to be discovered when attending the school, such bilinguals did not usually have enough time (or teachers demanding enough) to help them quickly progress with their second language. It is difficult to specify which kind of bilingualism is preferred, although it is commonly believed that a bilingual person is able to communicate easily in each of the two languages they speak.

Technically, as it seems, the processes concerning the shaping of learners' subordinate bilingualism largely depend on the ways L_2 teachers both understand and perform the idea of classroom communication. On the one hand, these issues seem to have been explicitly presented by Richards & Rodgers (2001); on the other, however, many misunderstandings concerning the very notion of communication still exist. Szpotowicz & Szulc-Kurpaska (2013), for example, strongly underline the fact that all classroom communication, beginning from the one delivered

to preschoolers, ought to be given with the help of the target language. At the same time, many examples that this recommendation is not generally acclaimed among many teachers in Poland, still can be observed. One of the key explanations here is that many copy-books and other officially accepted L_2 advisory materials, when instructing the users on the scope of activities to be done, use Polish as the key language with English being added afterwards. But this situation is not the only illustration of the problem. In her very interesting research Strykowska-Nowakowska (2017, p. 327) observes that the very process of "[…] classroom communication is generally recognized as a possibility to transfer knowledge and information", what means that a situation in which the amount of teacher talking time (TTT) largely outweighs the one expected to belong to students (STT). In this way, it is possible to claim that in many situations L_2 teachers tend to offer different kinds of explanations rather than urge their learners to participate in communication excelling interactions. Apart from that, the research results presented by Webster et al. (2000) clearly indicate that the number of [British] teachers recognizing their learners as partners in the process of education does not exceed 35% of their research poll. The claim that L_2 learners need to be taught (i.e. equipped with knowledge rather than everyday communication abilities) seems to prevail in many Polish schools. Additionally, when it comes to L_2 teachers, Nowicki (1991, in Sygulla, 2010) claims that a teacher is not only a person expected to demonstrate a very high level of their competences, but also someone who transmits knowledge along with their experience and real-life values. Following this approach, Sygulla (2010, pp. 34–37) describes a [language] teacher as someone who should be "[…] able to shape not only their learners' attitude, but also their character and personality". A teacher, while being aware that every learner is different, should be prepared for every situation. It is important to remember that learning is a constant process and in order to achieve some intended goals, we have to learn systematically. Likewise, if learners are to develop correctly, they need to be given some form of well-organized guidance, and in this case, apart from their parents, it should be a thoughtful, impartial and honest teacher. Teachers should also trust their learners and respect them and, most importantly, they should be educated enough in order to transfer knowledge properly and be able to help their learners in their L_2 development. While performing each of the seven roles ascribed to FL teachers by Keller (2011), they must never forget that in each of the functions to be currently performed in the classroom, what initially matters is a smooth connection of the linguistic knowledge and the didactic requirements they have to meet while becoming a genuine and trustful helper of their L_2 learners' work.

One of the key issues that needs to be considered is the process of L_2 teacher's classroom behavior and their approach to the scope of information aimed to be delivered to the learners. Following the assertion given by Malamah-Thomas (1988, p. vii), "[…] it is the interaction of the classroom, the assumption and assignment of different kinds of participant role, which mediates between teaching and learning". It is the L_2 teacher who is principally responsible for the creation of the conditions mentioned above. The process of L_2 education cannot be correctly organized when there does not occur genuine interaction between the L_2 teacher on the one hand and the learners on the other. Regardless of the type of classroom materials to be discussed and analyzed in the classroom, it is the L_2 teacher who is largely responsible for the creation of the conditions in which diverse activities may not only motivate the learners to get involved deeper in the problems, but also to begin presenting their own opinions on the topics signaled there. One needs to remember that the structure of a course-book is the one in which its testing character has been strongly installed. The acceptance of such course-book construction means that any language lesson ought to be principally designed by the teacher and, instead of being rested on the issues suggested by the course-book author/s/, it should propose live topics with the selected course-book check-up activities, being offered to the learners at its very end. Malamah-Thomas (1988) openly stresses that the only form of L_2 classroom education that matters, is the one based upon three forms of interaction: /1/ between the teacher and the classroom; /2/ between the teacher and a selected student; and /3/ between the students themselves. What is more, the nature of classroom interaction, especially when more linguistically advanced learners are concerned, should not be limited to situational repetitions of expressions that need to be memorized, but it should move further, i.e. up to the phases where the learners could present their own opinions on the topics dealt with during the lessons. Naturally, the creation of such communication conditions requires the application of L_2 teacher's professional competences, their L_2 proficiency included. It is a common truth that not all L_2 teachers, especially those with long teaching seniority and visible negligence to upgrade their L_2 abilities, can meet the external requirements of such conditions. Even if their characteristic teaching manner is of assertive nature (Strykowska-Nowakowska, 2017), the fact that they do not recognize the necessity of the development of the learners' higher order thinking skills (HOTS), postulated by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), makes their L_2 teaching activities less beneficial for their learners. Such a situation must raise questions concerning the effectiveness of L_2 teaching in the light of L_2 teachers' educational procedures applied by them when designing

their language lessons. What needs to be examined are the following three issues: /1/ What educational (mostly didactic) bonds can be traced between L_2 teachers and their learners during mandatory FL lessons? /2/ Is it possible to claim that there exists a form of interdependence between the actual level of the foreign language (FL) teacher's proficiency and the final level of L_2 proficiency presented by their learners (i.e. could the quality of the language input be directly responsible for the formulation of the language output)? /3/ Could different FL teaching techniques, voluntarily selected by L_2 teachers, directly influence the quality of FL classroom education (and thus the learners' L_2 proficiency level represented during the Matura examination)?

2. Research Methods and Materials

2.1. Research design

The principal thesis of the research was based upon an assumption that - while not taking into account the so-called talent for teaching, normally observed in a limited number of teachers - there is always a clear and easy-to-trace connection between the level of a FL teacher's proficiency and the amount of knowledge (as well as the level of bilingual proficiency) possessed by their learners. In other words, the key idea of this research is an assumption, found in quite many opinions of numerous (both native and foreign) researchers, that a language learner, studying the language in classroom conditions exclusively and being fully dependent on the ways, techniques, procedures and/or forms of L_2 activity offered to them by their L_2 teachers, would never represent a higher proficiency level than their teacher currently had. The type of the research was quantitative, because of the structure of ready-made tests and the reason for conducting such tests. The method used in the research was based on test copies, which were later given to specific groups of people.

For that reason, copies of the English Matura exam tests were distributed among non-native teachers of English. Later, the achievements and the scores obtained by the teachers were compared with similar results obtained by the learners they had taught one year earlier; the tests were anonymous and all participants were requested to do the tests individually. The whole experiment aimed to examine the level of FL competence of both the teachers and their learners, as well as the correlation of the competences between them. Likewise, we were going to compare our research results with those gathered in the official report on the Matura exam 2018.

2.2. Research instruments

2.2.1. Questionnaires/Tests

In order to carry out the research, ready-made tests were distributed to English language teachers and then to their learners. The tests prepared for teachers and learners were English Matura exams, which checked the level of bilingualism and the competences connected with the English language. The chosen Matura copies were the ones answered in the year 2018. The tests given to both the teachers and their students did not entail listening and writing parts, which means that the test segments checked only reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary. Six original tasks were specially selected by us to carry out the research. The purpose was to focus on close questions only, in order to compare teachers' and learners' competencies, to draw appropriate conclusions.

There were six purposefully selected tasks that had been included into the Matura 2018 examination sheets. The first task was a text, which had to be studied carefully and completed with six sentences given to the Matura participants, with a request to insert each of them into the six gaps. In order to make the exercise a little bit more demanding two more dummy sentences were offered.

In the second task the Matura participants had to decide on the main idea of the text (three small paragraphs), analyze the context of three summative sentences and indicate the particular information in the text. Similar requirements were given to the L_2 learners in task three. The only difference between the two tasks was the number of possible conclusive variants that had to be used while analyzing each of the two texts.

Task four was a little bit more demanding, the Matura takers had to select appropriate sentence that could link particular fragments of longer paragraphs. To make the task more difficult, two more dummy statements were offered.

The fifth task looked as follows: the examination takers had to read the text carefully and circle these sentences listed below which, in their opinion, used appropriate grammatical forms.

Finally, in task six, the test takers had to do the following: from given possibilities (A-C), in three separate exercises, they had to choose the one which was the best (closest) translation of the fragment given in the brackets. Obviously, they had to circle one of the letters: A, B or C.

2.2.2. Participants of the research

The participants of the research were 50 English language teachers, as well as their 100 current secondary school learners. Both the learners and the teachers

were selected randomly from the high schools (predominantly technical schools) functioning in the cities in southern Poland (Bielsko-Biała, Żywiec, Cieszyn and a few others). The level of the learners' language proficiency varied, mostly because of the diverse choice of teachers (most of them taught English in technical schools). Firstly, we distributed the Matura exam copies among the teachers, and after collecting their responses, we gave the same copies to their current (i.e. 2021) learners, attending the final semesters of their (mostly technical) schools . Neither the learners, nor the teachers knew that the same copies would be completed by the two groups of research participants. Due to the COVID pandemic conditions, both the teachers and the learners did the Matura tests online. Additionally, the time limits given to the two groups varied; the teachers were given forty five minutes to do the tests, whereas the learners were allowed to complete the tests during the time period customarily given to Matura test takers, i.e. two clock hours. As it usually happens, people able to complete such tests earlier were allowed to do that and send the ready test back to us right after completion.

3. The results

The results obtained in each of the tasks show that generally the amounts of knowledge of the learners and their teachers correspond in relation to each of the tasks taken into account in the research (Table 1). Regardless of the tasks, both the teachers and their learners *in extenso* indicated the same correct answers. Obviously, whereas the answers given by the teachers by far focused on one correct answer, the answers given by their learners, although still mostly indicating the correct possibilities, were not that certain. In task one, for example, while deciding upon the statement suiting the second gap, only 42% of the learners did it correctly (with the 98% correctness of their teachers). A similar situation can be found in the translation exercises: the first possibility was correctly indicated by 100% of teachers, but only 50% of their learners, and in the last question in task five, where less than 45% of correct learners' answers can be found, with a 100% result in the teachers' answers. Generally, however, the leading results given by the learners follow these given by the teachers. What might be considered puzzling is that in each of the tasks all the possibilities given by the learners appeared, with only a few situations where the teachers' answers did not equal 100%. Such results might indicate strong tendency of teaching mixed abilities classes by the teachers and the existence of a process in which the teachers do not always have enough time to focus on the weaker learners in their classes.

Table 1. Results of Task One

TEACHERS						STUDENTS					
A	B	C	D	E	F	A	B	C	D	E	F
4.1						4.1					
	100,0					10,0	64,0	3,0	7,0	6,0	10,0
4.2						4.2					
98,0		2,0				42,0	7,0	20,0	8,0	4,0	9,0
4.3						4.3					
				100,0		9,0	7,0	6,0	4,0	70,0	4,0
4.4						4.4					
			100,0			5,0	4,0	27,0	49,0	4,0	11,0

Source: Own elaboration.

It is easy to notice that the teachers' answers are in most cases correct, the only exception being a little bit more contextually demanding option found in exercise 4.2. Although 98% of teachers provided the correct answer here, a very little number of them opted for a situation which was evidently false, when considered from what the context was informing about. Exactly the same situation can be observed in students' answers; here again as many as 20% of the Matura takers decided to circle the same option, as if confirming their teachers' doubts. As the exercise task was to offer a brief one sentence long summary of a text, and the second excerpt contained a description of a policeperson, the possibility to decide which option out of the offered ones suited the text was not easy to notice. It was clearly easier to complete similar activities in all the remaining options, found in this exercise.

The average number of correct answers (in %) in the group of researched teachers was 99,50% and in the group of the Matura examination takers: 56.25%; the ratio of correct answers of the two groups turned out to be 1.75, what means that the scope of knowledge of Matura examination takers in relation to this task was almost twice worse than this possessed by their teachers. Assuming that the ideal ratio of the knowledge of teachers and learners tested here should be 1.0, such a result suggests that the researched teachers were not fully able to transfer the knowledge necessary to do this task onto their learners.

The claim presented above results from our conviction that the average level of L_2 knowledge of the teachers investigated by us should not be lower than C1, according to the estimations presented by CEFR (*Common European Framework for Reference for Languages*). At the same time, again according to CEFR, the average level of L_2 knowledge of the Matura examination takers should approximate the level of B1. This suggests that C1 level teachers should not only easily handle

the B1 topics of the Matura examination, coming up with the ratio of 1 (meaning 100% correct answers), but also know how to help their learners approximate the B1 level and prove they have reached that level at the Matura examination. Any situation not consistent with those indicated above will demonstrate the learners' inability to reach the B1 level, on the one hand and the teachers' inability to help them reach that level, on the other. The numerical indication of the existence of such inconsistency in the learners will be the ratio higher than 1, calculated as the average of all the correct answers, in all the examples of a given task divided by the number of the examples in a task. Following the assumptions presented above, the higher the ratio, the larger average distance of the investigated students from the expected B1 level.

This exercise (Table 2) required the test takers to read an excerpt and select an option that suited its context, in this way being its briefest possible sum-up. The task appeared to be a little bit tough for both the teachers and the students, as in most cases both groups were not able to circle 100% correct answers. It seems the answers given by students were mostly given in a haphazard way, as if most of them did not fully understand the text context. What is true is that the excerpts were taken from newspapers and contained many examples of casual language, which is not often dealt with during the lessons; but still it was possible to follow them and decide which option, out of the three given, describes the story. The text 5,3 was evidently easier to follow because it was based upon a dialog; such a structure resulted in much better answers given by both the teachers and the students.

Table 2. Results of Task Two

TEACHERS			STUDENTS		
A	B	C	A	B	C
5.1			5.1		
2,0	96,0	2,0	21,0	56,0	23,0
5.2			5.2		
	2,0	98,0	20,0	24,0	56,0
5.3			5.3		
100,0			68,0	23,0	9,0

Source: Own elaboration.

As for the average amount of correct answers in respect to each of the two researched groups, the teachers scored 98%, whereas the learners: 33% only; the ratio between these two results reached 2.97, what suggests that the discrepancy between the knowledge of the task contents of the teachers and their learners was

almost three times worse in respect to the abilities indicated by the learners. A result like this is alarming, as it tells us that either the teachers did not know how to help their learners gain necessary practice when concluding a story, or that they simply disregarded the importance of the possession of such linguistic abilities. As such processes require the use of higher order thinking skills, many learners simply showed that they did not know how to do that when dealing with a text in the language different from their mother tongue. When analyzing the results obtained in all the tasks, this one was evidently the worst one. Such a situation is puzzling and needs further research to find out what makes so many L2 learners become unable (or not fully able) to analyze correctly the texts they have red or listened to.

Table 3. Results of Task Three

TEACHERS				STUDENTS			
A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
6.1				6.1			
	100,0			6,0	63,0	25,0	6,0
6.2				6.2			
98,0			2,0	53,0	10,0	27,0	10,0
6.3				6.3			
		100,0		9,0	19,0	60,0	12,0
6.4				6.4			
	2,0		98,0	27,0	12,0	53,0	8,0
6.5				6.5			
			100,0	10,0	19,0	19,0	53,0

Source: Own elaboration.

This task (Table 3) was a classical text comprehension exercise; the testees were to read the text and answer a number of factual options in the form of a multiple choice exercise. Following the rules of a multiple choice test, two out of the four options are usually semantically close to each other and the testee's responsibility is to indicate the correct option. The task answers look much better in the teachers' case, mostly because of their much higher level of proficiency; however, the learners' answers raise many doubts and forces their analytics to suggest possible, not too pleasant, hypotheses. One of them is that the learners are not able to study such a text in a methodical, comprehension-requiring way. Any process like this expects from its performers both text-directed attention and appropriate structure recognition. The high order thinking skills necessary here need to be trained and require many similar examples to follow. Unfortunately, the fact that the Matura

takers demonstrated their inability here, lets us believe that such exercises were not a common activity during the testees' lessons. A typical example can be observed in exercise 6.5; although more than a half (53%) of the testees selected the correct answer, the remaining number of testees either did not fully understand the text or were unable to discover correctly its particular segments. The results are easy to be found; quite high numbers of students 'tried their luck' and circled the options that did not match the required context at all.

When comparing average amounts of knowledge revealed by the teachers (99,2%) and their students (56,4%), it can be found that the calculated ratio of Task Three is 1.76 here. This result indicates that the training processes concerning reading comprehension were not paid attention to by many teachers and that the students sitting to their Matura examinations did not feel certain of this kind of activity. One more time the processes including high order thinking skills turned out to be of weak quality and did not fully respond to the minimal potential level expected from the learners involved in these types of tasks.

Table 4. Results of Task Four

TEACHERS					STUDENTS				
A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E
7.1					7.1				
	100,0				8,0	75,0	5,0	5,0	7,0
7.2					7.2				
				100,0	21,0	7,0	13,0	8,0	52,0
7.3					7.3				
		100,0			9,0	3,0	63,0	15,0	6,0

Source: Own elaboration.

This task (Table 4) is a classical text completion exercise; a testee has to read the whole text and decide which of the sentences placed below has to be placed in an appropriate empty slot within the text. Although the teachers' attempts were perfect here, the same activities of the learners did not look that optimistic. As a matter of fact, although in each case more than 50% of the test takers did it correctly – at the same time – quite many of them failed, not always being able to show that they understand the text and know how to complete it with its correct fragments, even though the text structure has been built upon a dialog. A situation like this shows the lack of the testees' experience in doing such exercises. The text context completing with the indications could make it more complete and easier to follow. The results calculated here showed that this task was the easiest for the

Matura examination takers as the ratio between the scope of knowledge of the teachers and the students was 1.57; thus, the researched learners were only 0.57 worse than their teachers. Could that mean that the Matura examination takers had been practicing such exercises before and knew how to deal with tasks of this type? Or, perhaps, it was just a stroke of luck here?

Table 5. Results of Task Five

TEACHERS			STUDENTS		
A	B	C	A	B	C
8.1			8.1		
	96,0	4,0	30,0	54,0	16,0
8.2			8.2		
		100,0	26,0	11,0	63,0
8.3			8.3		
98,0	2,0		54,0	19,0	27,0
8.4			8.4		
98,0		2,0	67,0	17,0	16,0
8.5			8.5		
	100,0		23,0	45,0	22,0

Source: Own elaboration.

This exercise (Table 5) checks one's level of grammar and/or structure skillfulness. A testee is expected to complete some blank places with the either grammatical or structural forms specified below the text. Although it is difficult to doubt that such exercise were not practiced during the lessons, even here the answers given by the Matura takers contain many inappropriate indications. What is more (and this is what must surprise us), even when the blank to be filled up is of clear grammatical nature, the percentage of inappropriate answers is not much lower. Although it is really difficult to believe that the learners did not practice the use of tenses in English, the results of this task should convince one that they did not (or that the intensity of practice in this field was not high enough). If so many of the Matura takers show serious problems with the use of tenses, what can one think about their average level of language fluency?

The dilemma verbalized above has been additionally underlined by the calculations showing the amounts of knowledge possessed by both the researched teachers and their students. The average teachers' score was 98.40 % and students'– 56,60% only. At the same time the ratio between the two groups reached 1.74 what indicated that the students were almost twice worse than the teachers. As this

task focused on the use of grammar, and this particular skill of English is generally highly practiced by students during their English learning process, a result like this may be recognized as slightly puzzling. It provides evidence that these elements of the language which are being paid attention to, are not always being effectively internalized, as well as standardized and used when necessary. Quite the contrary, anything that expects some necessary work, should also be given context-related ground to help L_2 learners experience the ways of practical use of the phrases.

Table 6. Results of Task Six

TEACHERS			STUDENTS		
A	B	C	A	B	C
9.1			9.1		
		100,0	36,0	14,0	50,0
9.2			9.2		
2,0	94,0	4,0	13,0	70,0	17,0
9.3			9.3		
		100,0	25,0	10,0	65,0
9.4			9.4		
	100,0		27,0	62,0	11,0
9.5			9.5		
98,0		2,0	56,0	22,0	22,0

Source: Own elaboration.

The final task (Task Six) measured by us is the classical multiple test exercise, where the learners have to offer correct translations of their Polish versions (Table 6). In the task, in each case there was a sentence, part of it written in Polish, and three possibilities of the translation . What a testee was to do was to circle the correct answer of the translated structure. Similarly to the results observed in the previous task, the answers given by the testees appeared to be much more varied and the level of correctness differed in respect to both the teachers' and the students' answers. Naturally, many of the answers given by the learners looked strange and showed that the process of discrimination of the expressions in the two languages was not successfully completed. Regardless of whether the object of translation was a demonstrative pronoun, a prefabricated expression, or a commonly used casual structure, similar problems with its translation by the Matura takers appeared. None of the examples to be found in this task reached a higher number than 70% by the Matura takers, and in two instances it reached a little bit more

than 50% only. As for the results obtained here, the average teachers' result was 98,40%, whereas the students' – 60,60% only. The ratio between the two groups was 1.62, what suggests that the translation exercise was not easy for the students, as many of them signalized problems here.

Such results should make one seriously annoyed, as something unwelcome can be spotted here. Theoretically, the process of foreign language education is expected to be smooth and deprived of as many stressful situations as possible. Practically, however, many unexpected problems come out, which show how different the processes of L_2 teaching are when approached from the [globally understood] perspective of language learning. As its seems in many cases, the materials that the Matura takers are requested to complete, do not fully illustrate the activities carried out by them during mandatory L_2 lessons. The learners have evident problems with text understanding, context comprehension and its summing-up, grammar application and even selected forms of phrase translation. Sadly, the link between what the teachers know and what their students should know when they take their Matura examination does not seem clear. Our research investigated a small section of various tasks that are normally included into an exam like the Matura only, but even here we were able to discover serious discrepancies as far as the knowledge possessed by the teachers is considered and their attempts aimed at the transfer of the knowledge onto the students. While looking at the results of the exercises/tasks measured by us, we were able to find that our preliminary thesis that there should exist a form of common sense dependence between the ways of use of the specialist knowledge between L_2 teachers and L_2 learners, may not be correct. What ought to be taken into account here is not only the very knowledge the teachers might have, but the way it is effectively transmitted onto the L_2 learners. As it seems, the approach taken by many L_2 teachers may not always be appropriate and correctly resonate in the quality of feedback to be observed in the L_2 students' reactions.

Following the claims raised by Richards and Rogers (2001), any appropriate approach ought to contain two important groups of assets - the one containing the theory of the nature of the language and the one connected with the theory of the nature of language teaching. As the first group of necessary knowledge normally embraces the teachers' opinions on what it means to be a target language proficient user and/or what (and how many) issues are important when analyzing the language delivered to the learners, the second one is far more complicated. Apart from the teacher's specialist knowledge on both the psycholinguistic/sociolinguistic and cognitive processes that are normally involved in language learning, what has to be attentively remembered about during the whole process of L2 classroom education are the teacher's assumptions that could let one successfully apply any

of the processes mentioned above. In other words, any L_2 teacher should either rely on having spotted conditions fortunate enough that should effectively make/befriend the learners with any of the language topics found in either the core curriculum or own syllabus, or design a well-planned attempt to elaborate them. As the first condition specified above does not sound very realistic, what remains is the situation mentioned in the latter part.

This is exactly why Richards and Rodgers (2001) devote so much time to one of the components introduced by them into their theory, i.e. design. While discussing the nature of a language lesson design they mention, among others, such important issues as: the function performed by L_2 teachers in the deliverance of the language; the degree of the teacher's influence on the learning content (stressing mainly the steps leading towards the L_2 teacher's predispositions to perform the function of so-called creative doer); and the mutual teacher-learner conditions observed during any L_2 learning process. In this way, Richards & Rodgers want to underline their deep belief that the quality of any L_2 lesson is a result of its design done by a language teacher. However, because such a design comes out as the end product of a L_2 teacher's approach to the process of their individual understanding of what it means to teach a foreign language, as well as the amount of awareness of the fact that everything that learners could acquire during the lesson should help them in their further L_2 development. Not all language lessons can be labeled as didactically correct; the conditions that let such a lesson be effectively delivered are obviously of various types. But it is ultimately these conditions that usually influence the development of the learners' knowledge and their attempts to reach the CEFR postulated level of B1 to be officially evidenced during their Matura examination.

4. Conclusions

The principal assumption of the study was to find out whether a claim that there exist some forms of mutual knowledge-related dependence between L_2 teachers and their students is correct and, on the assumption that such forms exist, whether there is a possibility to establish some level of mutual interdependence. In other words, we wanted to find out whether the so-called 'better teaching' can be amply illustrated by the final results of their learners, that could be the evidence of their levels of proficiency and/or fluency. In case such a correlation could be found, it should define the type [volume] of interdependence between the teacher - student connection described by the results elaborated by us.

Quite many studies underline the fact that the elaborated form of teaching (language teaching included) has some level of influence upon the learners, and this level of mutual interdependence can be measured with the help of specific instruments measuring the amount of learner involvement in the L_2 lessons. Selinker (1992), for example, stresses the fact that one's current level of interlanguage (i.e. the growth of the individual learner's language, dependent upon the learner's involvement in the development of their language) depends primarily on the scope of one's positively motivated approach into the whole process of one's L_2 internalization. In this way, following the definition given by Nordquist (2020), one's individual level of proficiency is always conditioned by quite many internal components owned by L_2 learners. A similar opinion can also be found in Iluk (2000), who additionally remarks that a learner's bilingualism is mostly shaped by their language teacher and springs out from a set of well-organized glottodidactic procedures, whose principal aim is always to stimulate such an amount of positive motivation that should be able to push the learner towards more effective work over the language. Also Nunan (1996), while defining the issue of a syllabus, remarks that the process of teaching must always be perceived as naturally occurring constant competition between the two components taking part in such a process: a teacher and the learners; the more motivating a syllabus is, the more motivated can be the end products of such mutual intellectual cooperation, i.e. the learners. Finally, Maley (2015), when discussing the positive influence of creativity on the level of a learner's foreign language, also stresses the positive role of the notion of creativity on the functions ascribed to both the learners and their teachers. A similar approach is also demonstrated by Stepanek (2015), who not only notices the positive involvement of the issue of creativity on L_2 learners, but also stresses the fact that the more L_2 learners are immersed in a language lesson, the better level of their proficiency can be estimated. Thus, the existence of some common line between the notion of creativity and the level of learners' proficiency has been established by the scholar and, up to a point, researched. All these examples signal the existence of sets of language upgrading activities which have to be, however, appropriately developed in the design of lesson by topic-aware L_2 teachers. Additionally, all these scholars (and many other) indicate the existence of various forms of teacher/s/-learner/s/ cooperation, where the planned work of L_2 teachers positively (or negatively) influences the growth of language proficiency among their learners. It is believed the results of a Matura examination ought to be recognized as a form of information on the current level of L_2 proficiency of all the examination takers. If so, the results given by the NEC (National Examination Committee) can thus be confronted with the results noted by us and some form of correlation can thus be calculated.

As mentioned above the principal goal of the research was to establish the types of abilities and competences of L_2 teachers, as well as their assumed impact on their learners' L_2 education. The results described in our paper show that investigated L_2 teachers were not always able to shape positively the levels of proficiency of their students. The measured ratio of mutual language abilities showed that in many situations their learners had problems with the correct estimations of the expected answers. Generally, the forms of education proposed by L_2 teachers did not fully correspond to the expectations of the Matura examination designers as in many situations their learners either did not fully understand the general idea of a task or, in case they did know what to do, the quality of knowledge they had did not correspond with the level of knowledge necessary to answer a given task successfully. The results obtained indicate that in almost all situations the difference between the level of L_2 proficiency between the researched teachers and their learners was twice, or even three times lower. A situation like this may be alarming as it indicates that many language teachers may not fully understand the sense of a language lesson and – what has been evidenced by the contents of the Matura examination tasks – instead of teaching how to communicate they expect their learners to store fragmented pieces of knowledge and, additionally, they do not direct the learners onto the platform of its practical application in everyday communication-yielding conditions.

Limitations

Obviously, this research has got a number of limitations. The first of them is a very small number of the research participants, what can raise well-grounded objections as to its final results. That is why the need to repeat the same, or similar research with a much larger group of research participants appears. The second limitation is the way the research was performed. Due to the existing COVID conditions, the only possible form of research was with the application of different ICT tools, what obviously was not the most required form of research here. Certainly, the research carried out in the classical offline atmosphere would provide us with more exact results, mostly due to the fact we could have been able to supervise the process of the data collection.

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