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A Country in Focus

Research on foreign language teaching in Poland 2000–2006

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This is an overview of research on foreign language (FL) teaching published by Polish researchers in the years of 2000–2006. We begin with an outline of the history and the current sociopolitical situation of FL teaching in Poland, which prepares the ground for further discussion. Next, we focus on studies concerned with the evaluation of the recent teaching methodology. The analysis of bilingual programmes and multilingual competence is discussed in 'Bilingual education and multilingualism', the process of learning different aspects of language competence is explored in 'FL learning and second language acquisition', and cultural issues under a separate heading, 'Cultural awareness'. In 'The language learner', we review studies investigating learner variables which have an important impact on language learning. With new educational directives from the Ministry of Education, emphasising the need for a more reliable assessment, new concepts and studies evaluating them are discussed in 'Testing and evaluation'. The availability of computers has produced studies assessing various uses of computers in fostering language learning, presented in 'Application of new technologies'. Finally, in 'Teacher education', we report on studies related to FL teacher development.

1. Background to foreign language teaching in Poland

Our contribution on language teaching research is intended to provide an insight into the state of the art of glottodidactics in a country whose language is not so widely known. Unlike in other countries, where language didactics is a subdomain of applied linguistics, glottodidactics in Poland has attempted to establish and develop as an autonomous empirical academic discipline since the late 1960s. In his overview of the origins and developments in applied linguistics in Poland, Grucza (2001: 55) posits that the history of Polish applied linguistics is much longer and begins with Jan Baudoin de Courtenay (1845–1929). Influenced by the natural sciences, de Courtenay advocated a division of linguistics into pure and applied (de Courtenay 1871). The ideas underlying this division were later developed by other Polish researchers (see Koerner & Szwedek 2001). However, the practice of foreign language (FL) teaching in Poland precedes the emergence of both those disciplines. Foreign languages have always had a high status among educated people in Poland, and Polish language didactics

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has achieved much in this respect. For example, teaching languages for special purposes at the academic level as a compulsory component of an educational curriculum has a very long tradition, diploma papers and Ph.D. dissertations related to modern languages are usually written in the language that the researcher specialises in, assessment of an FL level is a compulsory component of a matriculation examination at the end of the secondary school (Polish *liceum*), and the expected Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) exit levels are B1 for ordinary programmes and B2 for advanced programmes.

Adam Mickiewicz University in the city of Poznań is commonly recognised as the birthplace of Polish glottodidactics, which became an autonomous research discipline through the efforts of Ludwik Zabrocki, later continued by his disciples in various academic centres in Poland – Franciszek Grucza in Warsaw University, Aleksander Szulc in Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Jerzy Bańczerowski and Waldemar Pfeiffer in Adam Mickiewicz University, supported by many other researchers working in language teaching theory and practice, e.g. Waldemar Marton, Hanna Komorowska, Janina Smólska, Antoni Prejbisz, Jan Rusiecki, and Tomasz Krzeszowski, to mention just a few. A collective volume of papers in Grucza (1979b) identifies the scope of research in Polish general glottodidactics in the years 1945–1975.

The term GLOTTODIDACTICA, coined from two Greek words by a classicist Jan Wikariak, appeared for the first time in 1966 as the title of a periodical issued by the Poznań University section of Applied Linguistics, hence its subtitle: *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. The first relatively independent academic unit in Poland representing this domain was the Department of Glottodidactics within the Institute of Applied Linguistics in Warsaw University, which started publishing a journal under the name *Glottodidactic Review*. Franciszek Grucza defined FL didactics as a relatively autonomous academic discipline with its subject matter, represented as a communicative system of distinct specificity, and with its pure – descriptive and explanatory, as well as applied levels, which is not to be confused with applied linguistics (Grucza 1978a, b). Since then the constituents of the system have been a subject of much debate among researchers. Pfeiffer (2001) articulates his views and conceptions in a coherent whole in a monograph. He argues that glottodidactics, as a fairly independent discipline, has its own research domain which cannot be reduced to other disciplines, although it is of an interdisciplinary character at the same time. It has strong links with linguistics and general pedagogy, disciplines which have a much longer tradition. As an academic field of enquiry it has a complex internal structure with a meta-theoretical level – either of a general or language-specific (e.g. English as a foreign language (EFL)) character on the one hand – and an applied level, again either general or language-specific on the other. Both types of theories benefit from observation of classroom practices, affecting them in turn. The teleological character of glottodidactics is its important feature. Another important feature is the openness and dynamic character of the glottodidactic system. Pfeiffer enumerates and discusses extensively the constituents of the system: the learner, the teacher, language, FL TEACHING MATERIALS, FLL(earning)/FL TEACHING METHODS, teaching context and objective reality, by which he means social and school environments and educational policy. He speaks in favour of a holistic (global) approach to language teaching research as opposed to the predominantly selected focus on disciplines such as second language acquisition research. However, he notes that it is often the educational policy and not research that exerts a strong impact on the effectiveness of language teaching.

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Dakowska (2003) also identifies FL didactics as an autonomous academic field among other language disciplines and sees its strong focus first on the empirical phenomena of language use as verbal communication, in which the activity of the subject is a constitutive property, and, second, on the right to cognitive autonomy of modelling and investigating FLL/FL teaching phenomena without the obligatory mediation of other disciplines. She focuses on such topics as the field's encounter with science, L2/FL language use and learning as a cognitive phenomenon, verbal communication in a social context, language form and the language learner, the status of error in FL teaching, and the meaning of 'FL teaching'.

It could be argued that, as is the case more generally, the link between theory and research on the one hand, and language pedagogy on the other, is a tenuous one. On the whole, teachers are not familiar with the latest research findings and research-based recommendations, because new ideas are not always successfully disseminated and are often viewed as inapplicable to classroom practice. Therefore, theory and research as such have not caused dramatic changes in classroom practice. However, intensive research in glottodidactics, as a result of its being assigned an independent status by Polish applied linguists (Grucza 1978a, b, 1979a), along with the sociopolitical changes after 1989, have brought about a lot of educational innovations, which in turn have further motivated related research.

One of the changes deals with language(s) policy. The change in Poland from a totalitarian to a democratic political system resulted, among other things, in giving more autonomy to schools and learners as regards language choice, syllabus, the development of teaching materials and introducing new ways of assessment. The changes made a more effective language teaching system a must, as there was a growing need for teachers of languages other than Russian, a language whose status in the school curriculum has been changed from obligatory to optional. This has imposed a radical change in the system of language teacher education and resulted in state-funded universities offering more vocational teacher training within institutes of language-specific philology or applied linguistics at the BA and MA levels, and in establishing new bodies, namely language teacher training colleges and new universities, both private and state-funded, offering programmes at the BA level (Siek-Piskozub 1999a). University and college educators often further pursue their studies by joining university Ph.D. programmes and carrying out research projects or writing monographs.

FL teachers are among a rare group of school teachers to have founded professional associations. Polskie Towarzystwo Neofilologiczne (the Modern Language Association of Poland) – one of the founding fathers of the Fédération Internationale de Professeurs de Langues Vivantes/World Federation of Modern Language Associations – is the oldest among them, as its beginnings can be traced back to 1929. It suspended its operations for some years after World War Two but resumed in 1969 (Siek-Piskozub 1999b). Later, language- or domain-specific associations joined in organising conferences and publishing journals.

Higher education institutions, professional organisations and academic conferences encourage research and its subsequent publications. Selected presentations given during these events are published either in thematic volumes or in journals. Drawing from these rich resources, our review article will focus on research conducted in Poland since 2000 within both traditional and alternative research paradigms, and will highlight research that is specific/unique to Poland as well as studies which have implications for the broader field of language teaching and learning.

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2. FL teaching methods, classroom studies and educational policy issues

2.1 Shift in FL teaching approach

Since the end of the 1980s there has been a shift in FL teaching approaches from predominantly form-focused instruction to more communication-oriented classroom practices in Poland. A report on the present state and consequences of the new approach in EFL teaching in Polish high school education was prepared by Korpaczewska (2000). In her research, she was motivated by Komorowska's (1978) study, which aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of the form-focused approach in Poland. Korpaczewska wanted to find out if Polish EFL teachers followed the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which she tried to estimate through teacher questionnaires administered to 111 secondary school teachers from one region, and what possible bearing this might have on their learners' EFL competence evaluated by a series of tests. From her report one can conclude that Polish teachers are in a stage of transition from a form-focused approach to a communicative-orientation, as all the respondents pointed to communicative objectives of EFL classrooms, while acknowledging equal importance of meeting the accuracy principle in communication. When asked about the categories of goals specified in their lesson plans, over 70% emphasised communication objectives, almost 60% grammar categories, and a little above 50% language functions. Much less attention was paid to notional categories and even less to cognitive or affective objectives. When asked about pedagogic discourse used in routine situations, around 60% claimed to use the L2, whereas others claimed to use both the L1 and L2. The questionnaires revealed that group work was not a favoured mode of arranging communicative activities, with less than half of the respondents claiming to use it often. Pair-work was much more popular, as almost all respondents claimed to organise such activities either for each lesson or 'often'. A limitation of this study is that it relies solely on what teachers reported doing rather than what they actually did in the classroom. Only systematic observation of a large number of teachers over a longer period of time could help researchers determine whether the shift mentioned is a real one, and what its scope might be. In fact, as evident even from this study, many teachers only appear to give lip service to CLT but fail to sufficiently implement its principles.

Although Korpaczewska herself did not confront levels of learner achievement with the data from Komorowska's (1978) study, this was carried out by Siek-Piskozub (2002a). Both researchers studied comparable populations, i.e. a representative sample of secondary school learners in the year of their matriculation exam (*matura*) in one of the Polish regions. The change in the approach, even if not fully consistent, resulted in improved oral communication skills, whereas grammar accuracy seemed to be unaffected. Both researchers reported on the degree of failure in the populations studied. The level of accuracy was low among the subjects in both studies, as both researchers reported a 52% failure in a simple oral task. A marked improvement in results was observed in pronunciation and a smaller one, not statistically significant, in fluency and vocabulary use. Although in her concluding remarks Korpaczewska claims that more emphasis should be put on grammar instruction in the FL classroom, it does not seem to be justified by the results of the above comparison. It is rather the consistency in applying corrective feedback that might result in more visible improvements.

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Turewicz (2000) seeks a solution to the problem of bridging the gap between linguistic concepts and FL teaching pedagogy. Since, according to the author, none of the available theory-based approaches towards pedagogical grammars seems adequate to the requirements of FL teacher education, she turns to Cognitive Grammar (CG) as a framework to provide insightful explanations to the issues concerning teacher-oriented pedagogical grammar. Within CG, formulated by Ronald Langacker (1987), language is viewed as inseparable from other human cognitive abilities, such as entrenchment, schematisation, making categorising judgements, and making associations. Moreover, CG assumes that all language structure is symbolic. These and other relevant facets of the CG framework make it capable of providing the 'missing link' between the theory of language and the area of its practical application in teacher education. In this way, Turewicz's work offers a new perspective for viewing the processes of learning and teaching an FL. Throughout her book, she presents an explanation of different aspects of selected structures of English provided through the analytic devices of CG, regarding this procedure as the first step towards the, as she calls it, 'Cognitive Reference Grammar for the Teacher of English' (Turewicz 2000: 244), which sets a new direction for prospective investigation. However, the idea of joining CG and language teaching need to be empirically verified.

Recent FL teaching has also been influenced by humanistic psychology. For example, ludic techniques, i.e. originating from leisure activities, have been advocated by Siek-Piskozub and her associates since the mid-1990s as ones which promote learner independence and involvement in classroom language learning tasks. The effectiveness of various language learning/teaching techniques such as role-play, simulation, song and music, and vocabulary games has been experimentally verified in MA and Ph.D. classroom research projects and confirmed by teachers and/or learners in accompanying surveys (Siek-Piskozub 2001, 2002b). Popular English songs may become a source of vocabulary not only when learners' attention is focused on them by the teacher (Wach 2005) but when used as background music during language classes (Siek-Piskozub & Wach 2006). It remains to be seen if songs in languages other than English will have an equally powerful effect, bearing in mind the differences in popularity of pop-music from different cultures.

Following a careful study of the effectiveness of narrative role-playing games, Surdyk (2004) sees in them an opportunity to introduce more learner autonomy at the tertiary FL teaching level. He pinpointed overlaps between ideas expressed by proponents of cognitive constructivism, social constructionism, the language learner autonomy approach, and role playing (Surdyk 2006). Guttfeld (2006) explained how a literary text could be exploited for role-playing games. After a brief analysis of three distinct approaches that masters of the game and/or players may apply (i.e. gamist approach, simulationist approach, dramatist approach), she drew on the potential of Henry James's works for role-playing.

2.2 Classroom interaction and educational discourse

Enquiries into Polish FL classroom interaction and discourse shed more light on FL teaching practices. Majer (2003) addressed issues connected with classroom interaction, focusing specifically on the nature of pedagogic discourse in different instructional

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arrangements: traditional form-focused and teacher-centred EFL classrooms and learner-centred communication-oriented classrooms with group-managed tasks, providing a multi-faceted record of the state of the art. After a thorough analysis of the theoretical approaches to classroom discourse analysis and insights from studies of various acquisition-related phenomena (e.g. Allwright 1988; Celce-Murcia & Olshtain 2000), he applied an ethnographic approach to the analyses of interactive interlanguage discourse in EFL classrooms in Poland. The data, collected over a period of the previous two decades by the author himself or his associates, were recorded via various procedures and transcribed and annotated with observational reports. He successfully used these data to exemplify theoretical claims by researchers in SLA (e.g. Ellis 1992; Langford 1994), but also systematised his observations in presenting, on the basis of his analysis, types of interactive patterns which emerged in classroom discourse, feedback patterns, planned discourse, formulaic language and pragmatic patterns, and, finally, L1 patterns in classroom interaction. The analysis of the various interaction patterns led him to make recommendations for language teaching, pre-service and in-service teacher education, as well as for further research. A very interesting observation concerned the use of the L1 in both form-focused and communication-oriented EFL classrooms in Poland. Majer insists that if nothing else, this phenomenon speaks in favour of treating English as a second language (ESL) and EFL classroom studies as separate contexts, a view shared by Niżegorodcew (2006). In the EFL context, the L1 is extensively used by teachers, also in situations where language level or task difficulty do not justify this. He views the widespread use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom to be 'one of the overriding determinants of the perceived inauthenticity of the communication patterns there' (Majer 2003: 13f.). Majer insists on making interaction in the target language a strategic goal of language teaching and thinks that 'modern language methodology should take even greater account of the importance of learner independence and learner-focused activities' (ibid.: 433). In teaching speaking, what is of importance is the structure of a conversation and not verbosity, which seems to be overlooked both by Polish teachers and learners. He suggests combining the implementation of the lesson plan with effective classroom management through expert use of teacher talk. This calls for research on in-service teacher education. Research into pedagogic discourse can become a powerful tool for teacher trainers but also for language researchers interested in the process of language teaching.

Different aspects of classroom discourse were also investigated by Pawlak (2004a) during English language lessons conducted in Polish high schools by ten experienced Polish teachers and ten American Peace Corps volunteers with limited teaching experience. The author examined the impact of the teachers' linguistic background and teaching experience on the extent to which interactive processes in the language classroom mirror those found in non-educational settings. The study explored the following process variables: turn-taking and initiative, the resultant discourse structure and interaction types, teachers' questioning behaviour, students' communication strategies, the incidence and effectiveness of group work, the use of the learners' mother tongue, and repair. In order to get a comprehensive view of the phenomena under investigation, methods of data collection such as audio recordings, questionnaires and direct observation were used. 842 students participated in the lessons within the project, and 547 of them filled out questionnaires. The results of the study indicated that the teacher's linguistic background and teaching experience exerted little influence on

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the occurrence of interactional modifications, student reliance on strategic competence, the incidence of group work, and the type and forms of repair. As for the native speakers, their pedagogic interactions with students were more akin to those found in naturalistic settings. Moreover, their students received less explicit corrective feedback and were expected to answer more referential than display questions. However, it was the experienced Polish teachers who proved to be more likely than their American counterparts to follow up on their students' ideas and were less likely to provide corrective feedback on grammatical errors. Also, students self-initiated their utterances more frequently and produced longer and more linguistically complex turns in the lessons conducted by the Polish teachers. The author concludes that replicating the features of general conversation in the FL classroom does not necessarily promote language development and that it might be detrimental to strictly adhere to the principles of communicative language teaching in the Polish secondary school context. He suggests that teachers should preferably aim at a combination of meaning- and form-focused instruction, which means providing students with communicative skills and language functions together with explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback.

Niżegorodcew (2006) applied relevance theory (RT; Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995) to the analysis of verbal input for instructed FL learners, by which she meant 'the language intentionally presented to the learners by the teacher or other learners in order to facilitate the process of L2 learning/acquisition' (Niżegorodcew 2006: x). RT is a theory of interpretation of incoming messages. According to Sperber & Wilson, input is relevant when it results in enough contextual effect for the least processing effort. RT claims that all human beings automatically aim for the most efficient information processing, i.e. every act of overt communication creates in the receiver the expectation of relevance. Niżegorodcew saw a value in applying Sperber & Wilson's principles to the analysis of the data collected by her MA seminar students in seven EFL classroom research projects in high schools to gain more knowledge about language use and learning. She observed considerable tensions in the FL context resulting from implementing a communicative orientation in Polish schools. Those tensions involved apparent conflicts between a focus on fluency and a focus on accuracy, and a tension between L2 and L1 use. She suggests that L2 instructional input plays an important role in classroom discourse because, through change in the expected levels of relevance, it indicates to the learners how they should interpret it, whether as fluency practice, as accuracy practice or as a combination of both. In the latter case much more learner processing effort is required as the learner needs to focus simultaneously on accuracy and on fluency. She observes that if the whole of L2 teaching has one dominating focus, it is very difficult for the teachers to persuade their students to suspend their automatic focus on either accuracy or fluency and put more effort into a dual focus. Niżegorodcew (2006: 149) concludes that for instructional input to be facilitating, it 'must be recognised by the learners as serving both functions: communication of real meanings and providing corrective information'. She has also observed that learners who are more language aware and more active in enquiring about unknown forms are also more able to recognise the above two functions. In the monolingual L1 context, in the absence of the teacher's monitoring and corrective feedback, learners are more likely than in multilingual contexts to code-switch to the L1 in their communicative exchanges. However, mere monitoring without feedback, either implicit (recast) or explicit, is not enough. If teachers do not make L2 learners pay attention to L2 formal correctness, they may undermine their

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trust in the teachers' role as L2 experts and instructors, which in consequence may lead to ignoring the communicative goals as well, and to the development of superficial fluency. A similar observation was made by Majer (2003).

Tomczyk-Popińska (2000) presented the results of a contrastive statistical analysis of the syntax of colloquial spoken conversation in German in its spontaneous, literary and FL teaching course-book variants. The analysis concerned frequency of usage of subject and adjunct determiners. The results showed that the frequency varied with regard to forms of the determiners in the above-mentioned types of conversations. According to the results of this analysis, there is a greater similarity between the course-book and literary conversations than between the course-book and spontaneous ones. The analysis shows that conversation in course-book materials for teaching German as an FL should be verified with regard to the usage of determiners to be more in accordance with spontaneously produced texts.

2.3 Experimenting with school organisation

The educational reform has introduced changes in the system of education, resulting not only in the shift in FL methodology but in major changes in school organisation. Ferensztajn (2004) reports on the ten-year experience of one Polish secondary school which has broken with the traditional class-lesson organisation of a school year and introduced a unit-credit system for courses into which students can enrol for a given trimester. The school curriculum is subdivided into 60-hour modules for each subject offered at two levels (basic and advanced). All the courses are briefly described and coded in a catalogue so that students can decide which they want to sign up for. Basic level courses are offered in the first year and need to be completed by all students. Two to three advanced courses are chosen in the following two years; however, subjects which are to be examined during the new matriculation examination are continued untill the end of the third year. In the third year students can choose two optional courses. During the three years students choose two foreign languages. Additionally, students can choose six advanced courses at an advanced level for one of the languages. Such courses differ not only in terms of level but also in terms of specialised content; their focus can be either different skills or language as a system. Unlike in the traditional programme, where a teacher continues to work with their group from the first to the final year, a student works with different teachers during their studies. Teachers do not decide on the course syllabus individually but as a team. Moreover, there is more opportunity for teacher–student interaction in that they meet five days a week. The analysis of the effectiveness of the new arrangement shows that learning is facilitated and better organised, as teachers use more varied teaching materials and techniques, and there are fewer dropouts. The attitudes of both students and teachers are also very positive.

3. Bilingual education and multilingualism

One of the recent innovations in language teaching in Poland is the emergence of bilingual programmes. The first bilingual education programme at the high school level, although limited in scope due to the lack of content teachers with a good command of foreign languages, dates back to the 1960s. However, bilingual education was then supported with intensive FL

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courses (10 hours a week in contrast to 4 hours of regular courses). As the programmes were formally positively evaluated, intensive FL courses were introduced in many secondary schools, particularly in big cities. Bilingual education proper was introduced in the early 1990s. It still awaits formal evaluation although some reports are already available.

The problems faced by bilingual content teaching in Poland were discussed by Iluk (2002), who admitted that problems were caused by the lack of clear procedures concerning a valid selection of content areas which may be taught bilingually. Sciences tend to be taught bilingually more often than arts and humanities which, in the opinion of the author, may be a mistake, since subject selection criteria should take into account a variety of factors, such as the age and language level of the students, the type of school, and the aims of bilingual instruction. The selection and level of difficulty of teaching materials pose another serious problem, as the readability levels of some of the textbooks used in Polish schools seem to be too high. Another problem discussed by Iluk deals with the lack of specific methodology of bilingual teaching. In light of all these problems, there is an urgent need to revise the present model of bilingual content teaching in Poland. Some of the factors which need to be reconsidered include the aims of bilingual teaching, the number of subjects undergoing bilingual instruction, the principles of selecting the teaching content, assessment criteria, and the ways of monitoring the implementation of bilingual teaching.

Another problem which largely influences the scope of bilingual instruction in Poland is the question of teacher qualifications. Niżegorodcew (2006: 167) has reanalysed EFL interactional classroom discourse between non-native content-teachers and their learners, collected by her MA seminar student, and notes, '[m]ost non-native teachers of L2 content courses provide only L2 specialist vocabulary, while L1 remains the language of classroom communication'. In order to be able to conduct bilingual content instruction, teachers need to possess a very good knowledge of the content area, high levels of proficiency in both the L2 and the learners' L1, as well as solid didactic preparation (Dudek 2002). Until 2004 there was no higher education institution in Poland which would prepare teachers for such a challenge since teacher education focused on providing specialists only in one content subject. However, the education law of 2004 specifying qualifications of teachers has changed this limitation, so that eligible teachers will now have to be qualified in two content subjects and their FL proficiency needs to be at least at B2 (CEFR) level.

It remains to be evaluated how effective the bilingual programmes are for the development of language competence. Będkowska-Obłąk (2003) compared the results of various language programmes against the results obtained by students studying the first year of German philology. Her focus was grammar accuracy as measured by three types of tasks: marking an incorrect sentence, pointing to the error and making a comment on its type or providing a rule for the correct use, and, finally, correcting the error. The results from the bilingual groups (three groups from different schools – 90 subjects) and the philology students (50 subjects) on the three tasks were comparable and much above the level of the students from the high school intensive courses (40 subjects from two high schools). Nevertheless, both bilingual and philology students lacked meta-language in providing explanations, although the level of declarative knowledge of the philology students was higher. However, procedural experience resulted in developing language sensitivity and helped the bilingual students to overcome the gap in the declarative knowledge.

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An evaluative report prepared by Gajo (2005) presents the state of the French bilingual section. It was compiled by agreement between the French Embassy and the Polish Ministry of National Education, in collaboration with the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre. The data were both quantitative and qualitative. In general, teachers and students from bilingual sections are satisfied with teaching and its results. The observations of lessons confirm keen interest in this type of education, which is supported by special resources. As with other FLs, there is a need for teacher training to restructure and standardise the methods used in bilingual education and to tighten the cooperation between teachers of an FL and those of content subjects. It is also essential that the threshold level of French for teaching content subjects be defined. Finally, bilingual education would benefit from collaboration between the bilingual sections in Poland and abroad.

A number of studies have a bilingual or trilingual mental lexicon as their focus. The aim of Cieślicka's (2000) study was to demonstrate that L1 and L2 vocabulary learning strategies are important determiners for bilingual lexical processing. The study was conducted on three groups of Polish–English bilinguals. Group A consisted of non-fluent bilinguals (high school students) who used translation as their basic vocabulary learning strategy; Groups B and C consisted of fluent bilinguals – English philology students. The 17 subjects in group B used a strategy based on semantic sets (e.g. *white–black*), and the six subjects in group C used paired associates (e.g. *dyskotekowa/disco–music*) as their strategy. In the experimental session, all subjects were supposed to react to translation pairs and associate pairs. The results point to the significance of the type of prime-target relation (established in the learners' minds through strategy use) on their reaction time. It may be concluded that L2 learning strategy influences the strength of connections in bilingual lexical networks.

A trilingual mental lexicon is the scope of Arabski's (2002) study, which investigated the relationships between L1, L2 and L3 in learning new lexical items. It aimed at eliciting information on how such vocabulary was learnt and memorised, and investigated what learning strategies were employed by the learners to memorise them. The aim was to see how those strategies differed from language to language. 60 students of English (native speakers of Polish) participated in the study. More than half of the group took German as their minor subject (L3). A list of 21 lexical items (seven for each language) was administered to the group. The lexical items represented the three languages which the subjects were familiar with, albeit to a different degree in the case of each one. The results showed that the subjects used the following memory strategies: key word, imagery, sound representation in memory and new words contextualising. They also revealed that the most common type of memory strategy in deliberate vocabulary learning situations was the key word strategy. The other strategies were marginal in the study since they were used in only 12% of the subjects' strategies descriptions. The researcher pointed out that the lexical items without obvious, intensively associated key words were less likely to be memorised than the ones with intensively used and obvious key words. The study hints at the fact that since there is no obvious L1 dominance in the choice of key words, there may be a common lexical store in bilingual or multilingual subjects. However, the study might be criticised for its far-fetched cause-and-effect attribution, as it may be inadvisable to hypothesise about the structure of the trilingual lexicon and the links between lexical items in the three languages relying solely on the learners' deliberate mnemonic strategy application. Online methods (see e.g. Schneider,

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Eschman & Zuccolotto 2002) of investigating the structure of mental lexicon might falsify this claim and show the complexity of the issue more effectively.

Gabryś-Barker (2005) reported on five separate projects, all related to the phenomenon of multilingualism as investigated in the context of formal language instruction. The overall objective of the study was to research the ways multilingual language users store, process and retrieve vocabulary in their L1, L2 and L3. The results were intended to show the cross-linguistic influences between languages (interlingual transfer) at the level of lexis and to determine factors which contributed to this interaction. The studies were discussed from a psycholinguistic perspective, taking into account not only linguistic (e.g. language typology, similarities and differences between languages) and cognitive variables (e.g. the use of different strategies by the subjects tested), but also variables related to the subjects' prior learning experience and their affective characteristics. The subjects in all the projects were multilingual language users – all university students in Poland and Portugal with advanced competence in English (L2) and with a pre-intermediate level of German (L3). The methods used in the projects ranged from association tests and chains (lexical storage projects), simultaneous introspection and verbal protocols (language processing, language of thought, individual differences) to retrospective comments in the form of questionnaires (focus on metacognitive and cognitive awareness). The results of the study demonstrate the complexity of multilingualism at the level of lexis and the impossibility of establishing a model for a multilingual mental lexicon. However, they show certain tendencies in the way that multilinguals organise their storage of words in different languages depending on language distance and language competence. They also show the linguistic characteristics of individual lexical items and how individuals learn them (transfer of learning and transfer of training). The didactic implications of the study point to the need for the development of language awareness in an explicit way to facilitate transfer of training, i.e. using multilinguals' previous L2 learning experience to learn yet another FL (L3, L*n*).

Widła (2005) focused on the number and nature of errors made by trilingual learners. The study was conducted on a group of Polish learners who already knew English at intermediate level and were starting to learn French. The study results showed that at initial stages of learning the L3, the most frequently made errors were lexical ones, such as false friends. Grammatical interference was not observed due to the fact that the learners knew very simple structures. At later stages of learning, the proportion between lexical and grammatical errors was reversed. The subjects made a considerable number of intralingual errors, which may be explained by their tendency to overgeneralise as a result of their limited range of available structures and vocabulary items.

4. FL learning and second language acquisition

Due to the reported change in the FL teaching approach (see section 2.1), the area which has attracted much attention of the researchers over the past years is language learning/acquisition processes resulting from different instructional paradigms.

A number of studies analysed the effects of deliberate learning on language acquisition pointing to the importance of language and/or learning awareness. Piechurska (2001)

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investigated the relevance of form-focused instruction for intentional language processing. The subjects of the study were 62 Polish high school students at upper-intermediate level, divided into four groups: one control group (CG) and three experimental ones (EG). Each of the EGs received a different kind of training before the data were collected: language awareness training in English, language awareness training in Polish (both focused on the process of learning grammar – English articles – involving cross-linguistic comparisons), and traditional form-focused instruction. Quantitative data were collected through tests measuring the subjects' knowledge of English articles, while qualitative data were obtained through think-aloud protocols collected while the subjects were working on the tasks. The results of the study point to the fact that the two groups which had undergone language awareness training used the largest number of justifications. Thus, it may be concluded that the training influenced the subjects' declarative knowledge, which also led to the development of their procedural knowledge. Form-focused instruction which focuses on both the product and the process of forming grammatical structures appears to have the most beneficial effects on learners' performance.

Pawlak (2006a) offers a comprehensive account of form-focused instruction as part of teaching EFL. An extensive theoretical background concerning the place of grammar teaching is presented in the book (Doughty & Williams 1998; Hinkel & Fotos 2002; Ellis 2006), as well as the findings of two studies conducted on Polish high school learners. The first study, carried out on a group of 33 subjects, aimed to show the effects of a combination of three different implicit teaching techniques (input enhancement, recasting and output enhancement) on the acquisition of the simple past tense and the passive voice. The findings showed that the implicit grammar instruction turned out to be helpful and led the subjects to use the target structures more frequently, accurately and appropriately, both soon after the treatment and on a delayed post-test. However, the treatment proved to be more beneficial in the case of simple past than the passive voice, especially in the oral test, which points to the relevance of the complexity of the structure and its status in the learner's interlanguage, and not only the kind of instruction. The second study was conducted on a sample of 72 learners and aimed to verify the effectiveness of implicit teaching techniques (such as input flooding and input enhancement) combined with more explicit ones (dictogloss tasks and consciousness-raising) in the acquisition of the present perfect tense. Significant gains were recorded on the written post-test due to the subjects' increase in explicit knowledge, as well as an improvement on a spontaneous communication task. A greater awareness of the target structure was observed, together with enhanced self-monitoring on the part of the learners. Both studies pointed to the beneficial effects of form-focused instruction in the classroom.

The question of deliberate learning, but in relation to the construction of the phonological system of an FL learner, was addressed by Wrembel's (2005) study. Its aim was to observe how the learners' linguistic metacompetence was developed as a result of training in English phonetics. The experiment was conducted on a group of 33 advanced Polish learners of English, students of an FL teacher training college. It lasted for 15 weeks, encompassing 50 hours of training in English phonetics. Perception and production pre- and post-test results confirmed the significance of explicit training of the learners' phonetic awareness. The EG, equipped with declarative knowledge, scored significantly higher than the CG, operating merely on their procedural knowledge gained through practical phonetics training.

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Piątkowska (2005) discussed the ways of explaining the notion of preposition from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective and reported outcomes, based on a small-scale experimental study conducted on 20 primary school Polish learners of English at pre-intermediate level. In the CG the target prepositions (*with*, *for*, *over*) were presented through a list of expressions containing them, together with the Polish translations, while in the EG the cognitive structures of the three prepositions were presented. The presentation included a discussion on the spatial meanings and uses of the prepositions, with the subjects' attention drawn to the prototypical members of the categories. Schematic drawings were used to illustrate the target area. Generally, the EG scored higher on the post- and follow-up tests. The results pointed to semantic motivation facilitating the learning process and to semantic information positively influencing the learner's ability to predict the distribution of prepositions. However, the concepts based on different conceptual metaphors in the L1 and L2 did not prove to have prolonged retention in either group, and were forgotten after the post-test, especially in the EG. Piątkowska concludes that a holistic approach, combining the traditional descriptive and the cognitive approaches to teaching prepositions might bring better effects. This area, however, still needs to be further investigated, especially since the study revealed individual variations in the scores for both groups.

Nijakowska (2004) focused on learners with developmental dyslexia facing difficulties in learning English. The aim was to prove that teaching problematical sound–letter relations and spelling rules with the use of an indirect multisensory structural method and special aids could improve the dyslexics' reading and writing skills at the word level. Three groups of high school learners, one EG and two CGs, participated in the research. Dyslexics constituted the EG and one of the CGs. The other CG consisted of learners who were not diagnosed as dyslexic. The EG was provided with training which was supposed to facilitate the acquisition of selected spelling rules and sound–letter relations. It was expected to improve the reading and writing skills at the word level. All the groups went through a set of reading and writing tests at the word level before the training and twice afterwards. Apart from that, the EG underwent fourteen tests measuring progress in the acquisition of the material presented during the training. The results showed that after the training, the reading and writing of English words significantly improved in the EG. It was considerably better than before the training and than in the two CGs. The research results demonstrate that teaching sound–letter relationships may constitute a valuable help for teachers who look for effective solutions in teaching learners with developmental dyslexia.

Nowacka (2006) believes that FL learning of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may be facilitated by making them conscious of the processes of learning and communication. From her experience it seems that class management is of paramount importance, and avoidance of excessive stimulation is recommended, though background music may prove effective. She finds three phases of communication training helpful to ADHD learners: awareness-raising, communicative performance and reflection. In the first phase, the learners are instructed about the rules of interpersonal communication both verbal and non-verbal, and are provided with patterns of conversation. They are made aware of a wide range of strategies used in interpersonal communication to facilitate the interpretation of messages and help negotiate meaning. In the next phase the ADHD learners are taught conversational skills of turn-taking, topic-nomination and topic maintenance.

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Through involvement in short, varied, situation-oriented communication activities, they develop social, interactional and strategic competences. To attract the learners' attention, these activities are often accompanied by drawing, painting, modelling and cutting out, and include the element of novelty or surprise. In the final phase, the teacher helps the learners to analyse their performance by focusing on essential information practised through dialogues and other language-oriented tasks and providing feedback. Nowacka has observed that such training may also enhance the learners' self-esteem.

Some studies looked at the processes involved in dealing with a written text. The influence of metacognitive strategy training on metacognition, metacognitive strategies and on the effectiveness of reading in English was investigated by Kusiak (2001). Upper-intermediate level high school learners participated in the study. In order to gather the data, the following research tools were used: tests, questionnaires, reports on the use of the applied strategies and learners' notebooks. The results were obtained after quantitative and qualitative analysis. The training influenced metacognitive knowledge of the EG, e.g. the learners' conceptions of the reading process changed. Moreover, the effectiveness of their self-evaluation increased significantly, whereas in the CG the difference was not statistically significant. Analysis of the reading test results revealed marked improvement of reading effectiveness in the EG. It is worth mentioning that the training had a greater impact on the reading skill of learners with lower proficiency level. The experiment stresses the role of metacognition in the process of learning and teaching of reading in an FL, and the effectiveness of providing strategy training.

Karpińska-Szaj (2005a) promotes the idea of developing reading comprehension skills to enhance the learner's general language learning competence. The recognition of the learning functions of reading makes this a vital component of a learner's cognitive development. The suggested model of reading skills development is geared towards perfecting the learner's ability to understand written language, as well as towards contributing to the development of their communicative competence. Reading skills enhancement may help the learner overcome specific difficulties in overall language acquisition. The proposed pedagogical solutions are intended to compensate for particular language deficits; however, their application can be wider. For example, they may be used to cater for a variety of learner learning styles. Reading processes were also the focus of Piasecka's (2001) study, which aimed to verify the relationship between readers' background knowledge and their reading comprehension in EFL. Two groups of 16-year-old students of English at intermediate and upper-intermediate level (27 subjects) took part in this small-scale study. In the first part of the research, their background knowledge about particular topics was checked in a free-associations task. Next, the students read four texts thematically related to these topics and wrote what the texts were about, concentrating on the most important information. The study results show that background knowledge plays a certain role in text comprehension, but the extent depends on the reader's language proficiency. Less proficient students did not make direct references to their background knowledge when processing the reading text. The more advanced group seemed to handle both their background knowledge and the text information with ease, which contributed to their fuller understanding of the text and to organising the new information in a logical manner. Apparently, the strategies applied by those groups of subjects differed.

Chodkiewicz (2000) investigated the effectiveness of using context in vocabulary acquisition, and the relationship between reading comprehension tasks and incidental vocabulary learning. The study was conducted on 222 advanced learners of English.

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The study tools entailed a vocabulary pre- and post-test (covering 60 target items, each tested through four questions contextualising its meaning), reading tasks conducted on three different texts and a comprehension test, consisting of 18 open-ended questions (six questions related to each text). The main finding of the study was that reading had a significant effect on the acquisition of word meanings. Partial knowledge of some items was increased, though at the same time misconceptions about other items were seen. Lower-proficiency learners achieved lower gains than higher-proficiency ones. Vocabulary gains were affected by the length of the word, its importance for understanding the text and word difficulty, but not by the part of speech, the type of context or the morphological structure of the word.

Lexical richness in written assignments of English philology students was analysed by Jaglińska (2005). She attempted to find a correlation between the increase in the learners' lexical repertoire and the ability to differentiate vocabulary in active use. The results demonstrated that after a year of intensive studying, students showed a decrease in the amount of basic words used, which ran parallel to an increase in advanced vocabulary items. This indicates that the rate of lexical richness, perceived as a proportion of words used frequently to the ones used rarely, increases in the development of active lexical resources in an FL, which constitutes an important part of the development of overall linguistic competence. Therefore, the lexical profile may serve not only as an index of active vocabulary richness but also as an index of a general proficiency level. Furthermore, the data show that students did not make any progress in the ability to differentiate vocabulary, which signifies that a rich lexical repertoire does not go hand in hand with the ability to differentiate effectively and appropriately.

Three Polish researchers aimed at a critical evaluation of 'Lingua Franca Core' (LFC), a new pronunciation model for non-native speakers of English (Jenkins 2000), which supposedly responds to the role English currently fulfils based on communication patterns observed, i.e. the use of English by non-native speakers primarily in communicating with other non-native speakers. In three empirical studies, Janicka (2005) investigated the tenets of the LFC with respect to the goal of pronunciation instruction, the two native models of pronunciation, i.e. received pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA), and the role of English stress-timing in guaranteeing intelligibility. The results showed that the assumptions of the LFC about the goal of pronunciation instruction can be questioned. The findings also revealed that – contrary to the LFC assumptions – RP and GA do not pose difficulty for the learners. Finally, English stress-timing (ignored by the LFC) turned out to be crucial for the intelligibility of English by its FL learners. Finally, the rhythmic patterns proposed in the LFC can be challenged. Similar results were obtained by Bryła (2006), who attempted to verify the main ideological assumptions of the model. 70 non-native European speakers of English expressed their opinion on the importance of native-like pronunciation and accent preferences by filling in the questionnaire. Their responses questioned the very idea of creating an artificial accent and undermining the position of native speakers in international communication. Data analysis revealed weaknesses of the ideological foundations of the LFC, and hinted at the fact that looking for alternatives to native standards does not prove necessary or justified in the European context. Much in the same vein, Komorowska (2006) believes that LFC recommendations need to be treated with great caution in teaching EFL in the school system, where developing intercultural competence is of special importance. These recommendations may be better suited to the needs of adult language education, especially in teaching English for specific purposes.

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5. Cultural awareness

Raising intercultural competence of FL learners has become a prominent issue recently, and a number of studies have been conducted to see how this component is incorporated into the teaching process.

Orchowska (2005) investigated the possibility of intercultural competence development in an institutional, exolingual context, including formative evaluation of the competence in all its aspects, i.e. cognitive, affective, functional and metacognitive. The author defined intercultural communication from a learner's perspective and introduced the concept of personal intercultural competence development. Prospective FL teachers were introduced to intercultural self-development through formative evaluation. The action research has revealed that the formative evaluation of intercultural competence is conducive to intercultural development if learners are prepared to make an effort to co-operate with the teacher within the project. Introducing formative evaluation contributed to a deeper integration of learners' intercultural competence with their personal communicative competence development.

Bandura (2005) aimed to analyse factors influencing teenagers' intercultural education by investigating the quality of course-books and FL teachers' attitudes in high schools. In the first stage of the research, the author evaluated 15 main and supplementary course-books for teaching EFL. In the second stage, 49 teachers expressed their opinions and attitudes towards integrated language and culture teaching. The results showed that the course-books examined complied with the guidelines of an intercultural approach and allowed for the development of learners' intercultural competence. However, the declared teachers' support for the guidelines of an intercultural approach differs significantly from their practice. The author concludes that there is a need to familiarise teachers with the principles of the intercultural approach during vocational training.

The focus of Pieklarz's (2005) research was on the relationship between cultural stereotyping and affective processes involved in FL education aiming to develop intercultural communication competence. The author attempted to determine the factors influencing stereotyping. Possible correlations were shown between a stereotype and a field of studies, visits to the country of the target language, age, attitude/motivation/interest, and intercultural competence. The results revealed that students who deliberately and intensively dealt with the stereotype category were characterised by keen interest, strong motivation and a positive attitude towards the language, culture, and speakers of the target language. Furthermore, those who were flexible distanced themselves from stereotypes and showed numerous skills specific to intercultural competence. The research points to the significance and complexity of a stereotype from the glottodidactic point of view. It emphasises that the representation of a stereotype is conditioned affectively and depends on many factors.

6. The language learner

6.1 Young learners

The Polish educational reform has resulted in a considerable lowering of the age of FL learners, most recently to the first year of compulsory education. Since research on children's

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FL learning in a formal context is still scarce despite the general tendency to lower the starting age of learning an FL, there is a growing need for studies that focus on young learners.

Rokita (2005) aimed to find out how much and what content very young children (1–4 years of age) were able to learn in a formal setting. Five children learning English following Helen Doron's method (Sip 2003; www.helendoron.com; accessed 20/10/2007) and two children learning English in bilingual families were involved in a longitudinal study. The results of the research clearly showed that in such early foreign/second language acquisition the most significant role is played by the quality and quantity of linguistic input, as well as by its provision by parents. Moreover, beginning with a two-word stage in the L1, children from bilingual families reached the communicative level within two years, whereas children learning English in a formal setting acquired 200 words, which turned out to be insufficient to go into the multi-word-expression stage. It was also revealed that older children learning English for a longer period of time learnt more words at a faster rate than younger children. These findings call into question the role of implicit speech development mechanisms when FL acquisition takes place in a formal context. Rather, they provide an argument against a very early start in FLL that runs parallel to L1 acquisition.

Szpotowicz (2003) investigated the acquisition of vocabulary by 7/8-year-old children. The study consisted of eight case studies and a quasi-experiment. The author analysed the process of learning, remembering and recalling vocabulary items after a given period of time, and defined the factors that have an influence on vocabulary acquisition, e.g. teachers' skills and personality, learners' concentration during the presentation of the lexical input, emotional attitude to a word, and ease of pronouncing a word. Significant superiority of the ability to recognise over the ability to recall was confirmed in the study. The author concluded that the role of the teacher was crucial, namely how their personality and pedagogical skills influenced children's involvement in the learning process and contributed to a more effective vocabulary acquisition.

The efficiency of a lexically driven multisensory syllabus for young learners was the scope of a study conducted by Zawodniak (2005). The syllabus aimed at ensuring the children a functional, informative start to FL learning, and activating the whole language learner. The research consisted of a formal experiment and a differential case study. The formal experiment was based on the comparison between EGs' and CGs' post-test performance, the former having surpassed the latter. The case study enquired into the effect on the experimental 8/9-year-olds' classroom performance of global development factors (i.e. thinking, feeling and acting) displayed in high inference behaviour patterns. The syllabus appeared to be better suited to 8-year-olds' intra-individual learning style. 8-year-olds benefited more than 9-year-olds from a silent phase of instruction. The research highlights the importance of planning L2 classes for 8- and 9-year-olds separately so as not to underestimate the latter's need for a wider range of interpersonal, competitively-organised activities.

The process of teaching an FL to 7–10-year-old learners inspired Grywaczewska (2006) to subject the process to close scrutiny. Particular attention was paid to the organisation and structure of classroom activities, taking into account the fact that there might be various factors responsible for either success or failure of teaching at this stage. The data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire filled in by the teacher and by non-participant observations of the lessons carried out by ten randomly chosen teachers of English (non-native

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speakers). Surprisingly, the results revealed sporadic use of play and game-like activities in an average classroom (constituting 40% of the activities examined in the course of the study). It also brought to light a significant gap between the goal from the teacher's point of view and from that of the child. The goal in the teacher's understanding meant the acquisition of a particular language item by the child, which was seen as a part of the long-term process of acquiring an FL. The children, on the contrary, found it difficult to identify with such motives as they were focused on short-term goals. Such a mismatch often led to undesirable behaviour (e.g. disruptive actions or simply abandoning the activity). The motives, most frequently observed and mentioned by the teachers, were a sense of victory when winning a competition and an opportunity to present the outcome of one's efforts to others. Motives also seemed to co-occur with increased participation in the activity. However, it was hard to establish a strong relationship between the two factors as there were activities characterised by a high degree of participation and the lack of a motive.

The value of strategy training in teaching an FL to primary school learners was the focus of Szulc-Kurpaska's (2001) study. Children between 7 and 11 years of age were the subjects of a longitudinal study which lasted five years. The experimental group was provided with learning strategy training in the third year of learning EFL. The effects of the training were examined on the basis of two pre- and three post-tests. The most significant impact of learning strategy training was observed half a year after the completion of the training, when the learners had gone through the period of sensitisation to the FL and had started more systematic learning in the fourth grade. Further research should investigate on which linguistic aspect such training has the greatest effect.

One of the new proposals gaining popularity is integrating child FL learning with content subjects, as it is believed that the children's FL learning will become more effective thereby. Olpińska (2000) evaluated the effectiveness of content-and-language integrated learning in kindergartens and offered didactic solutions adjusted to the Polish education system. The objects of her study were bilingual education programmes and didactic materials, as well as learners involved in the bilingual programmes. The author gathered the data by means of participant and non-participant observation and the analysis of syllabi and didactic materials. She concludes that bilingual programmes for kindergarten children can be successfully implemented in Polish education. They not only support a child's cognitive development but also promote positive attitudes towards FLs and cultures. However, their introduction on a wide scale may face many problems, such as teacher training and access to appropriate didactic materials, which is congruent with observations concerning bilingual programmes in general (see section 3 above). Olpińska suggests that the most desirable form of bilingual education for kindergarten children is early total immersion, where the second language forms the only basis for communication, or early partial immersion, where the second language is gradually introduced and coexists with children's mother tongue. This seems to be in line with Pamuła's (2003) research on the integration of French language learning, music and art activities in the first year of the primary school. As in Olpińska'a study, the emphasis is put on the holistic development of the child. This model of integrated learning lays great emphasis on musical activities, such as listening and repetition of rhythm patterns and knowledge of pitch and dynamics. It reinforces pupils' phonological awareness, motivates them to learn FLs, and encourages their developing linguistic skills. Such integration calls

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for a change in the early FL teacher education curriculum to enrich it with arts and music components.

Recognising the role of musical input in language development in young learners, Zwierzycka-Raulinajtys (2007) was interested in finding out if songs included in two popular course-books designed for EFL teaching to 6-year-old children were appropriate for their musical level. She evaluated all the songs in the two books on the basis of two criteria: the level of difficulty of the melody and the level of rhythmic difficulty. The songs were first evaluated by five musical experts and then, after the lessons where the songs were used, by the language teacher who made field-notes on learners' involvement in singing a particular song and individual recordings of song-singing by each child in the three age groups in question. The learners were also grouped according to their educational profile – general or musical. It turned out that most of the songs from both course-books were too difficult for six-year-olds, and that even the eight-year-olds with additional music education could sing only four out of nine songs. This calls for a need to evaluate the FL course materials for young learners not only from a linguistic point of view but by musical experts as well, if lyrics are to serve as language input.

6.2 Learner factors

Due to the shift from language-centred to learner-centred instruction, learner factors have become subject to careful scrutiny. Bielska (2006) looked into the complex relationships between three sets of variables among 60 Polish final-grade high school learners: the dimensions of psychological type, which combine elements of individual and cognitive preferences; language learning strategy choice and frequency of use; and EFL learning outcomes. The author, following the theory of psychological type (Myers & McCaulley 1985), differentiated between two mental processes (perceiving and judging) and their contrasting functions (sensing/intuition and thinking/feeling), respectively. She observed four different kinds of personality resulting from the combination of different ways of perceiving and judging: sensing with thinking, sensing with feeling, intuition with feeling, and intuition with thinking. The results reveal statistically significant correlations between gender and strategy use, psychological type and strategy use, strategy use and learning outcomes, and psychological type and learning outcomes. As far as psychological type is concerned, the combination of sensing and judgement, together with introversion, was clearly over-represented among the language learners with good and very good course grades. The study showed that learners who could concentrate for long periods (introverts), focus on details (sensing), and organise their learning (judging), were the most likely to be high-achievers.

Bogusławska-Tafelska (2006) studied the defective character of the instrumental motivation in first-year English philology students and analysed motivational profiles of the subjects to identify the so called 'minimal learner', i.e. one aiming at certificates and positive grades rather than competence. The problems observed were grouped, following Maruszewski & Ścigała (1998), around three categories: cognitive (referring to low linguistic and metalinguistic competence), motivational (referring to instrumental motivation), and emotive (alexithymic symptoms denoting both lowered emotional competence, and defective cognitive processing

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in general). The research was carried out during a two-semester course in academic writing which provided learners with a considerable amount of classroom instruction and guided writing. The tasks requiring creative behaviour and a certain cognitive flexibility intensified a cognitive/emotional chaos related to alexithymic symptoms, as observed in the decelerated dynamics of the subjects mental/cognitive coding, recoding and decoding processes, and in group psychology. Although only some learners were initially identified as minimal learners, the group – initially functioning as a collection of individuals – soon started to compose a group mind, fulfilling the minimal profile. The study points to the necessity of identifying psycholinguistic deficits in order to rehabilitate and not to isolate minimal learners. It also stresses the importance of introducing teacher–student dyads to facilitate learning.

Anxiety has generally been acknowledged as an affective factor that plays a significant role in language learning. Zybert (2006a) studied the occurrence of anxiety in the Polish language classroom and considered its role in FL learning among middle-school (*gimnazjum*) learners. In his study, 187 learners aged 15–16 years at pre-intermediate EFL level completed a questionnaire to report on how they experienced and perceived the presence of anxiety in FLL and how they defined its influence on their own learning. The majority had an indifferent attitude towards language classes at school, and less than a fifth considered them as pleasant. Language anxiety was reported by slightly more than a quarter of the respondents. Although among those who experienced anxiety were students who had negative, positive or indifferent attitudes, all the students with a negative reaction reported experiencing anxiety. The overall anxiety level reported by the majority of the respondents with anxiety problems was either moderate (43%) or weak (35%). The most often quoted causes were speaking in front of their classmates, the need to respond to the teacher in FL, difficulty in expressing intended meanings, and doubts about accuracy. In their opinion, the best way to eliminate anxiety is collaborative work and using the L1, e.g. pair-work and small-group activities (76%), doing homework with friends (63%), having the right to use the L1 in lessons, and translating (36%). Zybert concluded that teachers should pay more attention to the problem as many students might not be aware of their anxiety due to the fact that some of his respondents did not admit to experiencing it and yet they did enumerate typical class situations in which they might do so. In another study, Zybert (2006b) saw how anxiety, together with low self-esteem and low readiness to take risk, correlated with high levels of demotivation among high school learners. A limitation of both studies is that they are based solely on introspection, and self-reports are not always a reliable means of evaluation. Systematic observations of on-task performance might shed more light on the phenomena in question.

Michońska-Stadnik (2006) investigated the correlation between the learners' attribution profiles (their perceived reasons for success or failure in learning) and the following factors: the subjects' home environment, their gender, and their level of success in learning English. The study was conducted on two groups of learners: 53 college students and 56 high school students. The school and the subjects' age proved to be important factors. Among college students, village and small town dwellers appeared to represent high levels of internal attribution (i.e. they believed that their ability, and not external factors such as luck or task difficulty, led to success), while in the high school group city dwellers showed the highest level of this kind of attribution. As regards gender differences, in both groups female subjects had higher levels of internal attributions than their male peers, although their social environment

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played a role here as well. Among college students, weaker ones showed higher internal attributions than stronger ones, which the author of the study finds surprising. However, the situation was reversed in the school group. According to Michońska-Stadnik, while high school students represented more typical opinions, since more average children belonged to that group, college students were in principle more ambitious and motivated to work harder for success. The study shows that the subjects' attribution profile appears to provide useful information in the exploration of a variety of individual differences in FL learning.

The aim of Baran's (2004) study was to identify the relationship between field independence (FI) and aptitude for FL pronunciation learning and/or acquisition. The research was conducted among 96 first-year students of an FL teacher training college. Their pronunciation was evaluated twice with the use of various instruments – before and after a course of phonetics. The results demonstrated that the learner's degree of FI was positively correlated with their level of acquired FL pronunciation. However, FI was not the sole predictor of success in pronunciation learning. The research data also supported the effectiveness and importance of formal instruction and systematic controlled pronunciation practice, without which many learners (e.g. those with little degree of FI) would master this skill more slowly, reaching significantly lower levels of proficiency.

Rysiewicz (2004) investigated the relationship between two learner variables – aptitude and intelligence (verbal and non-verbal) – on the achievement of 7th-grade learners in the context of non-intensive instruction. Two measures of aptitude, one of intelligence and a proficiency test, were used to generate data for the study. The data were analysed using two statistical tools: factor analysis (to uncover the structure of general as well as specific cognitive abilities) and multiple regression (to isolate the best predictors of FL achievement). The results of the study show that language proficiency is clearly independent of both intelligence and aptitude. The following factors were found to be the best predictors of FLL success: size of native vocabulary, lexical processing ability, inductive language ability and memory for text.

6.3 Learner autonomy

The constructivist philosophy has influenced many social sciences such as sociology, cognitive psychology and also language education. The multifaceted influence of constructivism on the latter was analysed by Siek-Piskozub (2006). One of the trends emerging from constructivism is interest in language learner autonomy. Ways of enhancing autonomy have attracted much attention; experiences and research findings have been presented through conferences and/or in collective volumes (e.g. Wilczyńska 2002; Pawlak 2004b).

Since the mid-1990s Michońska-Stadnik has been involved in research on learner autonomy and language learning strategies use. In an evaluative article she discusses the possibility of promoting autonomy in the Polish education context (Michońska-Stadnik 2004). Following Benson & Voller (1997), she analysed three types of autonomy, namely technical (referring to the ability to use computer software and the internet in self-study), psychological (individual meaning-making in a given social context), and political (adjusting to the socio-political situation of the instructional context), in order to explain why it is difficult to implement them in the Polish context. The study's findings revealed that, despite

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declarations of readiness to accept autonomy in their classroom, only one of the five teachers observed was implementing elements of autonomy in their classes. Moreover, students were not expected to take charge of their learning or to make their own decisions as to the choice of course-books. Michońska-Stadnik emphasised that teachers' own experience of learning was more important to them than the education they received during their methodology courses. The political type of autonomy, according to the author, has little chance of success. Although teachers are formally granted a certain degree of autonomy in choosing the syllabus or the course-book, they are often restricted by external regulations. Despite the generally pessimistic view emerging from the findings, Michońska-Stadnik believes that it is possible and necessary to develop learner autonomy as it is not only important for school success but success in general.

The view that teachers do not always value autonomy in their classes is also shared by Wiśniewska (2003). The subjects of her study were extramural student-teachers enrolled for MA studies. During the eight-month study the teachers gained some knowledge of ways of enhancing autonomy, at both a theoretical and a practical level. At the end of the study the teachers admitted that learning about autonomy was a valuable experience, but they were not very willing to apply it in their classroom. Their attitude to autonomy was shaped by the following factors: teachers' beliefs about teaching/learning held before the training in exercising autonomy and those formulated in the course of the study, teachers' understanding of the concept, problems they encountered in teaching, institutional requirements (curricula, course-books, grades, etc.), a short training period, and the lack of a supportive environment. Further research is necessary, mainly into successful teacher education for developing learner autonomy.

Drożdział-Szelest (2004) perceives language learning strategies as the key to learner autonomy and emphasises the value of strategy training. She addresses the question to what degree it refers to FL teaching within the Polish education system. In her opinion, the majority of learners are not aware of their learning abilities and are unable to use the acquired skills and determine their needs in terms of an FL or evaluate their own progress. The research conducted in the Polish context revealed the learners' adherence to the traditional model of teaching and their choice of learning strategies emerging from it. Therefore, procedural knowledge concerning strategy training, as well as practical training in the appropriate use of materials, should become an integral part of teacher development programmes.

Krulak-Kempisty (2004) and Chudak (2005) aimed at determining which of the selected course-books for teaching German as an FL introduce learners to self-study and what the teachers' and learners' opinions and expectations of the FL course-books were. The data were obtained by analysing selected teaching materials with reference to the established criteria (i.e., the course-book supporting autonomy activated the learner; it was transparent and open to the learner's interests and capabilities; it assisted and objectified assessment of the learner's proficiency), as well as on the basis of a questionnaire directed to teachers and learners. The results of both studies indicated that not all of the selected course-books supported learner autonomy to the same extent. Chudak suggested autonomy could be enhanced by the creation of a methodological guidebook for learners, which would lead to a new generation of FL course-books. Krulak-Kempisty emphasised the fact that a modern FL course-book should

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facilitate self-study at every stage of education and gradate the knowledge in this field with the growth of linguistic competence, as well as with the learner's maturity.

Wilczyńska (2002), with a team of young researchers, undertook a large-scale project to analyse the influence of teaching in a semi-autonomous context on developing certain aspects of communicative competence, personal learning and communicative styles. Her purpose was to determine the possibilities of remodelling the traditional learner–teacher relationship and define the cooperative model oriented at developing learner autonomy. The research team consisted of 11 participants who worked in tandem representing two different FLs. Each participant worked both on their tandem projects and on common, theoretical and cross-sectional issues. There were 18 groups involved in the research, each consisting of approximately 15 students learning FLs at the university. The results of the project defined the tenets of learning in semi-autonomous context as a process based on construing learner self-awareness, learning from positive communicative and learning experiences, and developing learning techniques and self-knowledge in learning. Teaching/learning the spoken FL at advanced levels comprises the social, communicative and individual dimensions. Prototypical, conventional, socio-cultural communicative practices in FL (defined in the research as role and relation, genre, discourse type and intention) need to be individually appropriated by each learner to develop a personal communicative style and competence in an FL. This is further enhanced by self-monitoring, self-evaluation and communicative and strategic self-awareness, while L1-based attitudes are found to hinder the development of personal communicative competence. The research revealed a positive correlation between the learners' perceiving the communication task as authentic and the development of personal communicative competence. It also showed that the development of students' learning and communicative self-awareness positively influenced their involvement in learning and communicative actions.

Aleksandrzak (2006) defined the role of metacognitive knowledge in the context of developing learner autonomy. In an action research project, she observed changes in the structure of metacognitive awareness and strategies as applied by a group of learners studying applied linguistics and at an advanced level of L3 English. An initial state of meta-awareness was described with the use of typologies proposed by Oxford (1990) and O'Malley & Chamot (1990). In the following couple of months learners worked towards developing greater metacognitive awareness (group discussions on the learning problems, peer- and self-evaluation, project work) during their EFL classes. An attempt to note changes in the knowledge structure was made via self-evaluating interviews with the participants. Learners generally expressed positive opinions concerning their level of language competence. Their self-diagnosis was reliable as it was confirmed by external evaluation. The subjects managed to choose appropriate strategies for the difficulties they encountered, specific to their learning preferences. Some forms of self-reflection and self-analysis (e.g. recordings and analysis of their speech for subsequent self-correction) appeared to be appreciated by all participants. They were also able to set individual goals in learning related to their present state of knowledge and anticipated needs. The researcher concluded that an attempt to involve learners in metacognitive activities brought about an important change in learner awareness and independence, which are important factors for developing learner autonomy and creativity.

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In a qualitative study Górecka (2003) evaluated the impact of introducing academic discourse analysis during MA seminars on the acquisition of argumentative competence by French philology students. The researcher identified the main types of intellectual activities which students were involved in, together with teachers' expectations of students' attitudes and of their communicative and learning actions. She also discussed the problems which students encountered while participating in academic discussions and proposed a list of skills, in the field of critical thinking, which were indispensable for a valuable contribution to seminar discussions. Major difficulties resulted from students' passive approach to learning, dependence on the teacher, and their preference for fact-collecting knowledge with a weak narrative slant and for the traditional model of teaching/learning. The author suggests that introduction to academic discourse should become a subject in itself in the context of Polish university studies. Its aim would be to focus on the development of argumentative skills, particularly in oral communication, and on competence typical of critical thinking.

7. Testing and evaluation

Resulting from the educational reform, new undertakings in assessment involved teachers and learners in designing subject-specific systems of evaluation within the school system. Krzyżanowska & Pezacka (2005) reported on action research with an aim of designing an in-school system of evaluating EFL. All EFL teachers and their learners in one of the Polish high schools were involved in developing and/or discussing assessment criteria (based on the CEFR), techniques and tools (e.g. learner and class observation charts, self-evaluation charts, task-evaluation charts). A year after the implementation the system was evaluated by the teachers and the learners. 94% of the learners approved of the new system as better suited to their needs and abilities. The teachers were of the opinion that the new tools of assessment gave them a better insight into the effectiveness of EFL teaching and learning.

Komorowska (2002) offers a fully comprehensive account of issues related to the practice of language assessment in the Polish school context. Typologies of language tests, test preparation procedures, and ways of testing all aspects of language in all age groups are discussed, as well as the concept and examples of integrative testing to assess communicative competence. Also included is a detailed presentation of alternative assessment techniques involving projects, self-evaluation, descriptive assessment following the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio (ELP). As regards the current situation of the ELP in Poland, teams of experts based at the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre in Warsaw have prepared its Polish versions for particular age groups. At present, there are ELPs for learners aged 3–6, 6–10 and 10–15, and for high school students, language learners in institutions of tertiary education and adults. All Polish versions of the ELP received the accreditation of the Council of Europe.

Wajda (2004) analysed the advantages of using the assessment system suggested by the ELP as an alternative to traditional evaluation in the form of grades. Working with the ELP allows learners to develop their self-evaluation skills, which may provide an important step towards taking responsibility for their own learning. The teacher's role within the ELP is thus shifted from being the only 'controller' of the learner's progress to becoming a 'facilitator' of the new evaluation tool. This alternative kind of evaluation differs from the traditional grades in many ways. It is the learner's autonomous self-evaluation, which does not have to be shown to the

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teacher or compared with those of other learners. It is dynamic and qualitative – showing the learner's improved or added skills over the years. It concentrates on the positive, highlighting what the learner can do in order to communicate; the notion of error does not exist in this form of evaluation. It encompasses the whole learning process, including learning styles and strategies. The advantages of the evaluation model provided in the ELP thus include, among other things, its high informative value, its awareness-raising potential and the potential for fostering the learner's motivation to further improve their language skills. Two pilot studies reported by Pawlak (2006b) aimed to provide the authors of 'ELP for Senior High School Students and Language Learners in Institutions of Higher Education' (see Pawlak et al. 2005) with feedback from potential users of the document that would enable them to prepare its final version and facilitate its future implementation. The two research projects involved over 1500 high-school- and university-based language learners from across Poland and over 60 teachers. The data were collected by means of questionnaires, teachers' reports on how the Portfolio was implemented, as well as the copies of the document actually used by the learners. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data showed that the document was well-received by the targeted group and enabled the introduction of substantial changes into the two pilot versions, particularly in the case of the checklists intended for self-assessment of language skills. However, the results also revealed,that the success of the ELP hinges to a large extent on teachers' readiness to adopt it and the quality of their guidance, which points to the need for comprehensive and extensive teacher training in this area, as well as for further research projects investigating the implementation of the document and longer-term benefits of its use.

A team of experienced FL teachers and researchers have designed the ELP for children aged 6–10 years (Bajorek et al. 2006). The compiled materials are addressed to children who represent A1, A2 and B1 (on the CEFR) proficiency levels and learn different FLs in various contexts. The document is aimed at preparing learners for self-evaluation and greater autonomy, at enhancing their motivation to FL learning, and at promoting multilingualism and cultural variety. It also enables them to define their linguistic skills and cultural awareness. Pamuła (2006) reported on the results of the pilot study, which involved 43 teachers and 1229 primary school learners from across Poland from grades 0–3. The goals were to investigate whether, and to what extent, the intended aims were fulfilled and to seek out teachers' opinions and learners' evaluation of the materials. The data were obtained by means of a questionnaire filled in by the teachers, their reports on the lessons with the use of the document, video recordings, cards filled in by the children, and a comparison of their evaluations of particular exercises. The results indicated that the document met with teachers' approval and learners' interest. It made the teachers reflect on the role of self-evaluation in the learning process and inspired them to prepare lessons that would facilitate the introduction of different cultures. It also enabled the learners to discover the phenomenon of multilingualism and drew their attention to learning strategies. The pilot study helped the authors of the document to evaluate the materials and determine ways to implement it.

8. Application of new technologies

Piasecka (2006) was interested in the extent and purpose for which Polish middle-school learners use computers and what possible relationship there might be between using the

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Internet and their L1 and L2 reading skills. A population of 315 respondents from eight schools in their final year completed a questionnaire and took two reading tests, one for each language. It seems that the Internet has become an important aid in learner development. When answering a question concerning spending their free time, 210 respondents (66.9%) mentioned the Internet. However, it was television that was mentioned most often (243 – 77.4%), then meeting friends (239 – 76.1%) and reading (222 – 70.7%). Motivated by the research of Taylor & Nikolova (2004), Piasecka also wanted to see if gender played any role in the way adolescents spend their free time. She discovered that new technologies (TV and the Internet) were more popular with boys, while 'meeting friends' and 'reading' interested girls more. Almost all the respondents made some use of the Internet (94.6%), most of them at home (69.9%) and/or at school (41.53%). Only 4.7%, of which girls constituted the majority, had no access to the Internet. The researcher compared free time use of Internet with the results on the two reading tests. High results on both reading tests were achieved by learners who used the Internet for information related to school tasks or individual interests, and by those who read in their leisure time. It seems that searching the Internet for information may assist the development of reading skills. The respondents who used e-mail obtained high results on the L2 reading test, while participating in chats developed L1 reading skills. Interestingly, however, it was those who spent less than an hour on the computer or used the Internet irregularly who had higher scores on L2 reading. The researcher hypothesises that using Internet puts a heavy demand on reading skills and less proficient L2 learners need more time on a task. However, another explanation may be that those who spend so much time at the computer search for music or computer games and not for verbal information.

Krajka (2001) discusses the role of the Internet as a self-study resource in light of the changing roles and the shifting responsibilities of the teacher and the learners in the preparation for the new matriculation examination. While in the previous format of the exam the responsibility was primarily on the teacher, it should now be shared equally by the teacher and the learners. The learner's oral presentation on a selected topic, which is now an important part of the oral exam, requires the learner to present it thoroughly, but at the same time involves the teacher as he or she helps with the topic area, monitors the learner's work and creates appropriate conditions for the accomplishment of the project. Krajka concludes that the Internet, with its search engines, official sites of organisations and universities, and countless other resources and databases may greatly contribute to the process of preparing the presentation in an FL and thus foster learner autonomy.

In a small-scale study Wiazowski (2002) researched the question whether computers and related applied methodology could become a means for improving the teaching of English to blind learners. The research addressed blind learners' motivation to learn English together with their constraints, and how this impinged on instruction. Eight blind learners, between the ages of 15 and 20, participated in the study which investigated communication services offered by local and widespread networks. In view of the small number of subjects and the significant difference in variables (learner factors and different networks), observation of learners' behaviour was used to collect the data. The study confirmed that computer-assisted language learning could lead to beneficial outcomes. The final test administered among the subjects showed that the learners significantly improved their linguistic and communicative skills due to the communication services offered by local networks.

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Students of one of the Polish FL teacher training colleges participated in an international online education exchange project (DEEP – Democracy Education Exchange Project: www.crf-usa.org/DEEP/DEEP_home.html; accessed 21/10/2007) designed by Emily Abbott, aimed at developing intercultural competence and awareness of democracy. The participants joined two discussion forums: on human rights and on social life. Owczarek (2004) evaluated the impact of the project on the Polish students' intercultural competence. These prospective teachers noted the development of their own cultural awareness as a result of the programme and also appreciated the chance to communicate with peers from different cultures. Regarding the motivation which made them join the project, the students could be placed in two different groups – those whose aim was to further develop their language skills (instrumental motivation) and those who were interested in the intercultural content of the project (integrative motivation). The analysis of the discourse produced as a result of participation in the two forums revealed some cultural differences which could be related to the differences of the educational systems. American students were eager to introduce themselves, they used humour and paid more attention to the letter form of the online exchange; on the other hand, the Polish and Lithuanian students attended more to the topic under discussion and depersonalised the content. They were also less active in provoking the discussion, assuming a listening role. However, the researcher observed some changes in the attitudes as the project progressed: the writing styles of Poles and Americans were becoming more similar to each other. However, some differences persisted: Poles and Lithuanians refused to use humour, and Poles were more open to asking critical questions. Asked to judge their participation in the project from the point of view of the communicative competence they had developed, the Polish students – despite naming many benefits of the project – gave a rather low estimate, as they put participation in it in the fourth place, after direct interaction with a native speaker, conversation with the Polish EFL teacher, and reading the press and literature.

Gorzelańczyk (2000), a biologist and a medical doctor himself, calls for an interdisciplinary approach to language acquisition studies in which such diverse fields as molecular biology, physiology, neurology, evolutionary theory, psychology, psycholinguistics, and linguistics are brought closer together. After a careful analysis of the issue of memory from various perspectives, in which the molecular basis of the phenomenon in question is of paramount importance, he proposed his own theory of the evolutionary origin of language based on its biological foundations and its close relationship with the development of memory and consciousness, in opposition to the theory of linguistic poligenesis, and dated the initial process of language evolution in the pre-Homo-Sapiens period. He believes that the common evolutionary connections provoke some general considerations in devising teaching systems that would optimise the vocabulary learning process. Along with this, he presents a model of two variables of long-term memory, making it possible to calculate optimal intervals between repetitions. Gorzelańczyk includes technical and medical terminology, but the fact that his concepts have been implemented in a computer programme designed to assist L2 vocabulary learning makes it useful for FL teaching.

The use of language corpora in teaching English is advocated by Bączkowska (2003). She sees value in using these resources as a basis for deliberate, active, autonomous and inductive learning. For the non-native teacher, who may have doubts concerning actual contemporary

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language use, language corpora are a rich source of linguistic knowledge. Bączkowska suggests two main techniques for applying these resources in learning and teaching. In the probabilistic technique, a lot of concordances with the same language problem lead to the formulation of generalisations and rules, while in the restrictive technique, the teacher first identifies the rules in a number of concordances and allows the learners to analyse them.

9. Teacher education

In order to become an FL teacher in Poland, formal qualifications are needed. Teacher education is based on standards, and is offered in the FL. However, there are opinions that the standards are declining due to heavy demand for FL teachers. For example, due to the recent enormous demand for EFL teachers, teachers of other subjects who have a Cambridge Advanced English (CAE) certificate are temporarily allowed to teach EFL. Most FL teachers, however, are graduates from FL teacher training colleges or from FL institutes at universities. Although the curriculum tries to maintain a balance between vocational education and training (educational psychology, general pedagogy and language-specific pedagogy) and area-specific education (linguistics, literature and culture), some researchers are concerned with the extent to which it is successful.

In order to find out about the level of professional qualifications, teachers' professional development and self-evaluation in Poland, Wysocka (2003) administered a questionnaire study to 352 subjects, along with observations of lessons conducted by 40 teachers. The questionnaire findings showed that 57% of the subjects were teachers with a BA or MA in English philology. As much as 22% of the sample, however, was constituted by teachers with no formal qualifications. The questionnaire findings, together with lesson observations, led the researcher to conclude that the level of professional qualifications and self-development was not adequate. The majority of subjects appeared to lack creative, conscious, self-reflexive professional development skills.

In her book, Zawadzka (2004) analysed the socio-political situation in Europe and presented a number of FL teacher training models in different European countries, on the basis of which she came to the conclusion that a traditional teacher education system will no longer prove effective in preparing modern teachers. She stressed the variety of new roles that teachers have to take on to educate critically-thinking, open-minded, autonomous students. Therefore, as she concluded, teacher education and development programmes must include a broader perspective, not only concentrating on training practical teaching skills. Similarly, Siek-Piskozub (2005) notes that recently recommended approaches to FL teaching in Poland demand a modern educator to be an autonomous and creative person because only then can creative and autonomous learners be developed. It is a truism to say that potential teachers are, to a large extent, influenced by the way they are taught. As Jankowska (2003) has observed, academics often become role models for prospective teachers. The techniques used in lecture rooms are thus frequently imported to FL classrooms, where teachers are constantly challenged by aims and objectives generated by educational reforms.

Kębłowska (2006) probed possible reasons for students' inability to transfer the knowledge they received and the skills they practised during ELT methodology courses to the English

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language classroom. Having observed numerous lessons conducted by trainees, the author states that the problems they encounter in their teacher training practice can be divided into general (referring to the trainees' attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning) and specific (related to teaching particular language skills and components). Furthermore, the majority of the observed lessons were run in the learners' native language and resembled the grammar-translation method, which adds to the seriousness of the problem. In seeking concrete solutions, Kębłowska designed a questionnaire to investigate the trainees' attitudes to ELT methodology before and after the course and to the teaching career before and after the teacher training practice, as well as their awareness of the appropriate teaching techniques. The results indicated that the trainees generally showed a positive attitude towards studying ELT methodology and teacher training practice. The majority of them perceived it as necessary and proved to have learnt a lot by giving many examples of useful teaching techniques. However, they found the methodology course itself too theoretical. That might be the reason for their reluctance to transfer theory to the classrooms, as they prefer to implement the 'practice' they know or are used to from their own learning experience. To the learners' detriment, this practice still seems to be based on translation, teacher dominance and learner dependence. Finally, the study suggests that methodology instructors should try to make the course more practical by providing a lot of micro-teaching tasks, setting exercises in a very specific context, tightening the bond between what the trainees are learning in the methodology course and what they are teaching at schools, and creating a reflective attitude in student trainees.

Musiał (2003) investigated teacher trainees' personal opinions of the processes of ELT, acting on the assumption that their personal theories could influence the way they interpret school events and various situations involving students. Teacher trainees were asked to fill out a questionnaire concerning their beliefs about teaching and their perception of their own pedagogical experience. The responses were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed in order to select categories referring to various aspects of the didactic process and to define the frequency of their appearance. The study confirmed the existence of numerous preconceptions about FL teaching and learning processes and their significant impact on the perception of one's own pedagogical experience. The results indicate that the teacher training process should lay great emphasis on the trainees' discovery of implicit, and often mutually exclusive, beliefs concerning teaching and the teacher's and learner's roles.

The aim of Trepczyńska's (2005) research was to investigate whether, and how, English philology students' attitude towards self-evaluation and peer-evaluation (both given and received) would change after training in evaluation methods. Students evaluated their argumentative essays according to the following criteria: text content, text structure and language appropriacy. Each criterion was tagged with a list of questions drawn up by the teacher and students, which were supposed to facilitate the evaluation process. The results showed that a positive attitude towards self-evaluation decreased in the course of training, while a positive attitude increased towards received peer evaluation, and remained constant and positive towards given peer-evaluation. In their feedback, the majority of trainees gave priority to language matters, followed by content, and very few dealt with structure. Students maintain that text structure is the easiest criterion to evaluate because there are strict rules. However, language appropriacy and the quality of argumentation are the most difficult to

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evaluate. The researcher concluded that students mainly benefited from peer-evaluation. They not only learnt how others perceived their texts but also recognised this form of evaluation as valuable training for their future profession as FL teachers.

One of the competencies that a modern teacher should address is the use of modern technology. Gajek (2003) presents the standards set by the Council of Computer Science and Media Education (a Polish government body), which regulate teachers' preparation in information technology (IT). Sufficient teacher preparation in this field enables them, in turn, to equip learners with the ability to use electronic media appropriately. Therefore, the curriculum highlights that each teacher should be able to use IT in their research and teaching, and this ability constitutes a qualification standard for every university graduate. Thus, the FL teacher should know basic IT terminology, be able to use basic IT equipment and software, and know how to apply them effectively in their professional development, research and classroom lessons. Gajek further concludes that the ministerial standards should be treated as guidelines to show language teachers and language education institutions the directions and possibilities of development. Teachers' competence in new technologies needs to be empirically verified.

The aim of Łęska-Drajerczak's (2000) project was to investigate the perceptions of Polish EFL teachers of their job motivation and career satisfaction, and to identify and examine what Polish EFL teachers considered to be the major motivational influences in the course of their professional careers. These influences comprised factors from the micro- and macro-context of teaching and included components of both intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation. It was also investigated whether and to what extent the teachers' career stage, professional education and type of workplace impacted on their perception of job motivation, career satisfaction and professional development. The research instruments included a questionnaire survey consisting of 38 mainly open-ended questions carried out on 150 respondents and supported by nine open-ended semi-structured interviews. The results of the analysis showed that Polish EFL teachers perceived intrinsic motivational factors, i.e. satisfaction from a well-done job, performing a job characterised by variable dynamics and constant intellectual challenge, learners' respect, the sense of autonomy, lifelong learning and professional development, as the major positive motivational influences in the course of their careers. Among the extrinsic motivational factors the following were perceived as exerting a negative influence on the teachers' job motivation and career satisfaction: inadequate pay and career structure, poor working conditions and insufficient support on the part of the school authorities. Despite the expressed reservations, the majority of teachers reported an overall high level of satisfaction with their career choice and a significantly high level of job motivation.

10. Final comments

We appreciate the opportunity to introduce this overview of Polish research to an international reader. We hope that we have provided a representative selection of works and authors despite the fact that such a large number of works were published in the period covered. Most of the FL institutes in universities have their own journals, although unfortunately they are not always available in other universities. In our choice, we were primarily motivated by

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research topics. We wanted to present the most popular research issues, choosing a few of the works dealing with them. Our second criterion was to introduce, through presentation of some of their studies, a variety of academic centres – not only the most prominent ones. Although English is the most widely taught L2 also in Poland, German and French are often available as an L3; therefore, we included a few reviews of articles and Ph.D. dissertations describing research into learning and teaching these languages. Whenever results of the research conducted within Ph.D. projects were published in the form of a book or an article, we referred to the publication rather than the dissertation. We also wanted to include the work of the most prominent Polish FL teaching researchers, which turned out to be the most difficult task, as often their most exciting empirical research was in the earlier periods, and the more recent thematic books were either mainly theoretical or were teaching manuals.

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Appendix

For the convenience of readers who would like to learn more about the Polish academic societies which organise their annual conferences and publish their proceedings or journals, the following list should prove helpful (all websites accessed 2/9/2006):

Modern Language Association of Poland [Polskie Towarzystwo Neofilologiczne (PTN)]
http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~ptnwil/

IATEFL-Poland
http://www.iatefl.org.pl

Polish Association of Applied Linguistics
http://www.aila.info/members/affiliates/index.htm#PL

Polish Association for the Study of English
http://www.pase.edu.pl

International Conferences on Foreign/Second Language Acquisition (Szczyrk)
http://uranos.cto.us.edu.pl/~icfsla/present.htm

Association académique des romanistes polonais 'Plejada'
http://www.romanisci-plejada.pl/

Cracow Tertium Society for the Promotion of Language Studies
http://www.filg.uj.edu.pl/tertium/english/aboutus.html

Stowarzyszenie Germanistów Polskich [Association of Polish German Scholars]
http://nauka.opi.org.pl/raporty/opisy/instyt/14000/i14155.htm

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Polskie Stowarzyszenie Nauczycieli Języka Niemieckiego/Polnischer Deutschlehrerverband [Polish Association of German-Language Teachers]
http://www.deutsch.info.pl

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Because of space limitations, titles are given in the original language(s) only. Readers interested in their English translations should contact the authors at aniazwierzycka@interia.pl.

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