Simon Borg (Kozina, Slovenia),

Alan Davis, Melissa Oldfield-Mariano, Anna Soltyska, Beatriz Friedel Ablanedo & Paula Salas Fernández (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Professional Inquiry as a Strategy for Language Teacher Development: Three projects at the University Language Centre at Ruhr-Universität Bochum (2022-2023)

Professional Inquiry als eine Strategie für die Weiterbildung von Sprachlehrkräften: Drei Projekte am Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung der Ruhr-Universität Bochum (2022-2023)

Abstract: Between October 2022 and March 2023, the University Language Centre (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung: ZFA) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum organised a professional inquiry programme for its teachers. This introductory article introduces professional inquiry as a strategy for teacher development and describes the principles behind it and the ZFA project. An overview of the three professional inquiry projects completed by teachers at ZFA is also included here, together with comments on the both the benefits of the project for the teachers as well as challenges they faced. Following this opening piece, the full reports written by the participating teachers are presented. These reports show how systematic pedagogical classroom investigations by teachers can support their understandings of teaching and learning. Based on the experiences of this project at ZFA, professional inquiry is recommended as a feasible approach to the development of university language teachers.

Keywords: Professional Inquiry, professional development, foreign language teaching, university language centres

Abstract: Von Oktober 2022 bis März 2023 führte das Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung (ZFA) der Ruhr-Universität Bochum ein Programm zur beruflichen Weiterbildung seiner Lehrkräfte durch. Dieser einleitende Artikel stellt Professional Inquiry als eine Strategie für die Sprachlehrkräfteentwicklung vor und beschreibt die Prinzipien, die ihr und dem ZFA-Projekt zugrunde liegen. Außerdem werden ein Überblick über die drei von den Lehrkräften am ZFA durchgeführten Projekte gegeben und der Nutzen des Projekts für die Lehrkräfte sowie die Herausforderungen, mit denen sie konfrontiert waren, kommentiert. Im Anschluss an diesen einleitenden Teil werden die vollständigen Berichte der teilnehmenden Sprachlehrkräfte vorgestellt. Diese Berichte zeigen, wie systematische pädagogische Untersuchungen von Lehrenden ihr Verständnis von Lehren und Lernen unterstützen können. Auf der Grundlage der Erfahrungen dieses Projekts am ZFA wird Professional Inquiry als praktikabler Ansatz für die Entwicklung von Sprachlehrkräften an Universitäten empfohlen.

Keywords: Professional Inquiry, berufliche Entwicklung, Fremdsprachenunterricht, universitäre Sprachenzentren

Simon Borg

Benefits and Challenges of Professional Inquiry as a Strategy for Language Teacher Development: An Introduction

1. Introduction

Professional development is the process through which practitioners – in our case, teachers - continue to improve their knowledge and skills throughout their career. It can take many forms, but, for teachers around the world, professional development often consists of events through which they receive input from individuals recognised as being more expert. Typical examples of such events are training courses, workshops and seminars, talks and webinars, and conferences. By engaging in such activities, teachers can gain rapid access to new ideas and extend their knowledge of education, teaching and language teaching. Approaches to professional development that rely on external input do, though, have certain limitations. Firstly, they are periodic rather than ongoing; teachers can only attend a limited number of such events each year, and reliance on them as a source of professional development means that this will be a periodic and perhaps infrequent activity for teachers. Secondly, such professional development is often short-term, rather than extended (teachers may attend a half-day workshop or a three-day conference, for example). But we know that professional development is more effective when it is ongoing and extended. Thirdly, teachers typically play a passive role in these forms of professional development; they have little or no involvement in decisions about what and how they will learn. A final limitation of short-term professional development that relies on periodic external input is that it may not filter down into what happens in the classroom. One reason for this is that teachers are more likely to make changes to their pedagogical practices when ongoing support for the process is made available. Typically, though, teachers may return from a conference, for example, with many new ideas they are keen to explore, but without a structured and supportive framework in which to do so, change may never occur.

I am not suggesting that conventional training courses, conferences and similar input-based forms of professional development are not valuable. It is, though, important to consider alternatives that can address the kinds of limitations I have noted. In other words, teachers also need access to professional development opportunities that are:

- extended – processes that unfold over time rather than shorter events
- teacher-driven – so that teachers can make decisions about what and how to study

- school-based – so that professional development is integrated into what happens in classrooms
- evidence-based – so that pedagogical decisions are based on the careful analysis of data from real learning settings
- pedagogically-focused – to ensure that professional development leads to better understandings of and positive changes in teaching and learning.

There is increasing support internationally for the value of approaches to teacher professional development that embody such features. For example, OECD (2019: 44) noted that 'even though traditional training in the form of courses or seminars can be an effective tool … school-embedded professional development … tends to have a larger impact on teaching practices'. Analyses of the kinds of professional development that are most effective also highlight the importance of extended opportunities for teacher learning, content that teachers find relevant and classroom-based inquiry and reflection driven by the needs of students (Weston/Hindly 2019). The value of collaboration among teachers in professional development has also been repeatedly noted in the literature (for example, Darling-Hammond, 2013); this does not deny the value of individual professional development but acknowledges the added value that collaboration can often bring to the process.

One approach to teacher development that meets many of these criteria is professional inquiry. It is part of a group of related strategies that are described in the literature under labels such as practitioner inquiry, practitioner research, teacher research and action research. Specific differences amongst these terms do exist (for example, some refer specifically to teachers while others apply to professionals generally) but they share a common commitment to the idea that teachers can develop their understandings of teaching and learning by studying what happens in their own classrooms. I have been an advocate for such approaches to language teacher professional development for over 20 years and while in the past *teacher research* has been my chosen term (for example, Borg 2017) more recently I have preferred to use professional inquiry as it highlights two key elements of the process – professional growth and systematic study (i.e. inquiry) – without any of the ambiguities, expectations and concerns that the word *research* often creates among teachers. In the field of language teaching, and in education generally, an extensive literature is available that supports the value of professionally-oriented systematic investigation by teachers of what happens in their classrooms (see, for example, Borg 2013; Burns et al. 2022; Burton/Bartlett 2005; Feldman et al. 2018; Gilchrist 2018).

Professional inquiry involves the systematic study of teaching and learning, and in that respect, it is a form of research. However, the purposes of professional inquiry are – as the name implies – professional rather than academic. Its primary goal, then, is to generate evidence-based understandings that can support informed localised pedagogical decision-making. Professional inquiry is a reflective activity in the sense that teachers study their own work (their courses, teaching and students) but formalises the process in the way that goes beyond routine reflection (i.e. simply thinking about our work and how we might improve it). Another principle for professional inquiry is that it should support rather than disrupt teaching and learning; for example, the scale of inquiry should be feasible given teachers' other responsibilities, the focus should be related to what teachers routinely do (i.e. the courses they currently teach) and data collection should be integrated into regular teaching and learning processes as smoothly as possible. Professional inquiry does not call upon teachers to make radical changes to what they normally do; rather, it provides a framework that allows teachers to develop a better understanding of what they do, to identify adjustments that can be made, and to consider the effectiveness of these adjustments. In assessing the quality of professional inquiry, conventional concerns such as validity are relevant (for example, the conclusions teachers reach should be supported by the evidence available) but it is inappropriate for such work to be evaluated only against standard academic criteria. Other outcomes, such as the pedagogical impact of the inquiry and the changes it has stimulated in teachers' understandings of their work and of their students, in their awareness of what works and can be improved and in their attitudes to professional development are also fundamental.

It is important for teachers to disseminate the outcomes of professional inquiry (for example, to allow other teachers to consider its relevance to different contexts) but formal written reports are not a requirement and many teachers will prefer to share their work through oral presentations and less formal and shorter written summaries (including through blogs).

In 2020, I was invited by the University Language Centre (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung (ZFA)) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum to run a one-day workshop for their teachers on the theme of teacher research. ZFA was interested in exploring alternative approaches to professional development for teachers and as a result of the workshop we continued discussions of how to create a supportive structure in which interested teachers would be able conduct systematic studies of teaching and learning in their own classrooms. COVID-19 meant that plans were put on hold for a couple of years, but in mid-2022, ZFA launched its first Professional Inquiry project. The idea was that a small group of volunteer teachers would, with my support and over several months, go through the process of planning, doing and reporting a professional inquiry project. Five teachers enrolled

(two pairs and one individual), resulting in three projects that were completed between October 2022 and March 2023. My role was to structure the process (for example, by breaking the work into phases – planning, implementation, analysis, dissemination), to provide teachers with feedback and advice (for example, on their plans and data collection tools) and to review outputs such as presentations and draft reports. I also invited teachers to complete a mid-point progress review and a final project evaluation.

The teachers presented their work orally at an event held at the ZFA at the end of March[1] and also produced the written reports that are included in this issue of *Fremdsprachen und Hochschule*. An overview of each article is provided below.

In the first paper, Alan Davis and Melissa Oldfield-Mariano describe how they engaged with the concept of 'mediation' in an English for Computer Science course. They had been experimenting with mediation – which can be defined as 'when a learner/user acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning'[2] for some time but decided to deepen their understanding of it by systematically studying how they designed and used mediation tasks as well as their students' reactions to them. Through the study, which drew on the teachers' observations of their own lessons and oral and written feedback from learners, Alan and Melissa became more aware of which kinds of mediation tasks worked more and less effectively and what it was that students liked and liked less about them. By reviewing the mediation tasks they were using every two weeks, the teachers were able to put what they were learning from professional inquiry to immediate practical use, as each subsequent set of tasks was refined using insights emerging from those before it. This integration of systematic study and pedagogy is a key feature of professional inquiry. As a result of their project, Alan and Melissa understood how they could improve the design and implementation of their own mediation tasks and also provided suggestions for using such tasks that are of more general interest to university language teachers.

The second paper, by Anna Soltyska, explored students' attitudes towards and reported use of three digital writing tools: the spell checker, DeepL and Grammarly. Over 10 weeks, she introduced students to these tools and examined their reactions to them through writing tasks, surveys, written reflections and interviews. The teacher also kept her own reflective diary during the process. Following an initial survey in which students were asked about a range of writing tools, Grammarly and DeepL were chosen (along with the spell checker) as the focus of the project because they were neither widely known nor frequently used. This in

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[1] For a report, see: https://www.aks-sprachen.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/AKS-NL-33_neu.pdf
[2] See: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/664965-mediation-what-it-is-how-to-teach-it-and-how-to-assess-it.pdf

itself was an important insight, as it is easy for teachers to assume that university students today are all very familiar with a wide range of online study tools. As a result of interventions during the study, through which students were introduced to these new tools and given opportunities to use them and to reflect on their use, students reported not only increased familiarity with them but also the intention to continue using them. There was also evidence in students' reflections that they were able to critically evaluate the tools they were using and to recognise not only their strengths but also their limitations. Overall, this study highlights the importance of exposing students to online study tools and giving them opportunities to use them and to reflect on the results of doing so.

The final paper by Beatriz Friedel Ablanedo and Paula Salas Fernández explored the theme of flipped learning in the context of Spanish courses for university students. Each teacher taught a different course; one was an Intensive course for A1-B1 level students while the other was a regular (i.e. not Intensive) course at B2. Both courses adopted a flipped classroom approach – i.e. students were required to complete tasks individually and in groups before class, then the relevant content was clarified and explored further during lessons. However, the Intensive course used a new textbook not designed for a flipped approach (so the teacher had to adapt it) while the B2 course had an older textbook which had been designed for a flipped approach (no teacher adaptation required). Students on both courses provided feedback on the flipped approach adopted by the teachers at four points; the first two rounds of feedback were more qualitative (such as in-class discussions) while the final two rounds used more quantitative surveys. Overall, across the two courses, students' reactions to flipped learning varied. Many valued the added autonomy it gave them and it was also widely acknowledged that, as a result of the pre-class tasks, students felt more confident to contribute during lessons. However, students also felt that having to prepare tasks in advance added to their workload and put them under pressure, especially where group work was required. Opinions about the effectiveness of flipped learning also varied and were less positive in the B1 course than in the Intensive course. This study again highlights the value of developing a better understanding of what students value and find less positive during university language courses. While it is not always possible to adapt courses in ways that keep everyone happy, knowing, for example, that too many preparatory group tasks can create negative reactions to flipped learning, allows teachers to consider ways of adjusting the design of courses and activities. The practical insights emerging from this study will inform how the authors implement flipped learning moving forward and provide ideas for teachers who are interested in flipped learning to consider.

These projects embody several key characteristics of professional inquiry. Teachers focused on an issue that was meaningful to their courses, important for

their students' learning and of broader interest to colleagues with their language centre and potentially elsewhere. In all projects, too, the teachers mapped their inquiry onto their regular teaching (without disrupting courses) and used insights from their projects to make formative adjustments to what they what they were doing. Another common feature of these projects was that a range of data collection strategies was used (such as self-observation and teacher diaries). In particular, getting feedback from students (through surveys and oral and written feedback) was a central feature of all three studies.

Collectively, these three studies illustrate the value of professional inquiry as a strategy that allows teachers to use their routine pedagogical practices as the basis for teacher development. Through their projects, the teachers developed better understandings of specific areas of language teaching and, in particular, deeper insight into students' perceptions of language learning. Of course, the challenges of professional inquiry for teachers must also be acknowledged. Even when projects are well-integrated into regular teaching, additional time is need for planning, implementation, data analysis and reporting. Where teachers collaborate on a project, this allows the work to be shared, but at the same time creates additional demands as efforts need to be co-ordinated and regular meetings must be scheduled. Concerns about excessive workload often deter teachers from engaging in professional inquiry, and it is important, therefore, to set up projects in a way (i.e. small-scale and focused) that ensures the demands on teachers are realistic. The encouragement and appreciation of managers and colleagues can also motivate teachers' efforts, while the availability of a facilitator or mentor who advises teachers along the way also plays a critical role in successful professional inquiry. Teacher commitment is another vital ingredient. As our experiences at ZFA illustrate, when the right conditions are in place, very positive outcomes can be achieved through professional inquiry.

2. Literature

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Simon Borg has been involved in language teaching for 35 year and has worked as a teacher, teacher educator, lecturer, researcher and consultant in many countries. Following 15 years at the University of Leeds, UK, for the last 10 years he has worked as an educational consultant with a focus on the design, delivery, and evaluation of language teacher development projects. He has published widely in the field of language teacher education and development and details of his work and writing are available (along with his blog) at https://simon-borg.co.uk/.

Email: *s.borg@simon-borg.co.uk*

Alan Davis & Melissa Oldfield-Mariano (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Enhancing ESAP Mediation Tasks for Students of Computer Science at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Überarbeitung von ESAP-Vermittlungsaufgaben für Informatikstudenten an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Introduction

As part of our professional development as university language teachers, we decided to participate in a project offered by the University Language Centre (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung: ZFA) of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, which ran from August 2022-February 2023. The project, called "Professional Inquiry", involved systematic, mentored classroom inquiry to support teaching and learning.

ZFA language courses must be competence and skills-based, in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). One particular aspect of this framework we have focused on in Computer Sciences courses is mediation as defined in the Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020: 90). A definition is provided in section 2 of this article. In 2019, the ZFA organised an international conference dedicated to the topic of mediation in English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). The ZFA has hosted four professional development workshops about mediation, led by experts in the field, and most recently a working group has been established to provide language centre teachers with a platform to discuss current research on the subject, share and reflect on classroom practice, and explore further forms of mediation.

2. English for Computer Science at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum

In 2019 the English team at the ZFA was commissioned by the Centre for Computer Science (now the Faculty of Computer Science) to implement two language modules (four English language courses) for the undergraduate students of the new bilingual (English/German) Computer Science bachelor's degree program. Each language course comprises two contact hours per week. The titles of the modules and courses can be seen below:

1st Module: English for Computer Science I (ECS I)

- ECS I: Reading Skills (offered in the Winter Semester)
- ECS I: Listening Skills (offered in the Summer Semester)

2nd Module: English for Computer Science II (ECS II)

- ECS II: Presenting in English (offered in the Winter Semester)
- ECS II: Writing in English (offered in the Summer Semester)

Successful completion of these courses is compulsory for all bachelor students of Computer Science. In practice, this means organising competence-oriented courses for up to 200 students per semester. The maximum number of participants in a group is 25, so we have to offer parallel groups of the same course each semester. These parallel groups are divided into two different levels: Upper-Intermediate B2 & B2/C1 and Advanced C1 & C1/C2 & C2. The ZFA uses a compulsory online C-Test to place students according to their level.

3. First attempts at creating mediation tasks for English for Computer Science I: Reading Skills

Initially we designed two different types of text mediation tasks, based on the following topics, which form part of the students' degree syllabus: Introduction to Computer Science; Operations on Bits; Computer Architecture; Networks; and Programming Languages. The major reason for introducing mediation into the syllabus was the traditional nature of the course book used on the course, and its lack of authentic speaking activities.

The first task type ("Mediation Task A") was completed in class. This task combined reception (reading) with production (speaking and occasionally writing). For example, students were given short excerpts from computer science textbooks and asked to convey the salient information, or they received infographics and were asked to describe and discuss them. The second task type ("Mediation Task B") required students to select a text (journal/newspaper article, blog entry etc.) autonomously, read it in advance, and present it to their fellow students during the following session. The first iteration of ECS I took place online due to the pandemic.

We became increasingly aware of the fact that it was difficult to gauge the students' reactions to and engagement with the mediation tasks we had developed. We felt that this was in large part due to the online teaching setting. A further indicator was that some students appeared to be underprepared or even unprepared, and we felt the term mediation, as understood by language teaching practitioners, did not help the students understand the purpose of the task. The course teachers concluded that it should be a priority to revisit the mediation tasks on return to onsite teaching.

4. Project Description

The professional inquiry project was thus the ideal opportunity for us to examine the mediation tasks more closely. Our investigation was guided by two questions:

1. In what ways do the mediation tasks in the ECS I Reading Skills course benefit students?

2. What changes to the design and delivery of these tasks would allow them to promote mediation more effectively?

We carried out the professional inquiry project in two advanced level parallel groups of the ECS I: Reading Skills course in the Winter Semester 2022-23. One of these groups (with 12 students) was taught by Alan Davis, the second group (with 11 students) was taught by Melissa Oldfield-Mariano. As well as teaching these groups, we were also responsible for coordinating the whole course, which involved eight parallel groups and five different teachers. In addition, the other teachers were relying on us to provide the teaching materials on a week-to-week basis. In order to work effectively, we established a routine whereby we met every Tuesday afternoon to discuss and rework the mediation tasks for the following week. The teaching team met every two weeks on Friday to discuss the new materials and receive instructions on how to use them. While the other teachers reported back to us that the revised tasks were user friendly and worked well in the classroom, our investigation focussed solely on the two groups that we taught.

Our investigation was divided into the following phases:

1. Understanding the extent and meaning of mediation
2. Revising the original mediation tasks
3. Documenting our class observations and students' feedback on the tasks
4. Feeding our observations into the design of subsequent mediation tasks
5. Carrying out an end-of-semester student survey.

Phase 1: Understanding the extent and meaning of mediation

In the initial stage of the project, we referred to the CEFR Companion Volume to familiarise ourselves with the definition of mediation:

"In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes across modalities (e.g., from spoken to signed or vice versa, in cross-modal communication) and sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation). The focus is on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new

meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form. The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional." (Council of Europe 2020: 90)

Furthermore, the overview of mediation activities and strategies in the Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020: 90) showed us what mediation can involve and the overall mediation scales for B2 and C1 in the volume informed our understanding of what students can do at these levels.

Phase 2: Revising the original mediation tasks

Firstly we renamed the tasks. We wanted to remove the term 'mediation', because students are not familiar with it or misunderstand it. At the time of writing this report, we decided to further revise the task names, as in Figure 1 below.

WiSe 2021-22
Original names:
Mediation Task A
Mediation Task B

→

WiSe 2022-23
Revised names:
Reading Society
Reading into
Speaking

→

SoSe 2023
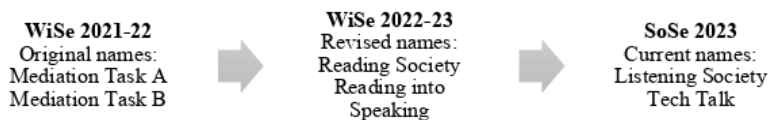Current names:
Listening Society
Tech Talk

Figure 1: Revision of mediation task names

Further reasons for revising the tasks during the Professional Inquiry project in Wise 2022-23 were:

The tasks had to be adapted to a 90-minute on-site class meeting. Typical online class meetings were approximately 60 mins.

6. Students were often unsure how to complete the tasks and asked many questions.
7. Some students came un-/underprepared.
8. The growing realisation that we were not using mediation to its full potential. North's list of 'Features of Promising Mediation Tasks' (North 2022: 332) proved to be crucial in this process:

- Several phases: reception, interaction, mediation
- The above plus co- production of an artefact
- Authenticity/ credibility of scenario (selves or role enaction – not role-play)
- Authenticity of materials
- Collaboration: mediation of concepts and/ or communication
- Reflection phase.

In addition to North's list, we also referred to the mediation activities and strategies as presented in the Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020: 90). The markings in Figure 2 below show the activities and strategies which we sought to incorporate in the revised tasks.
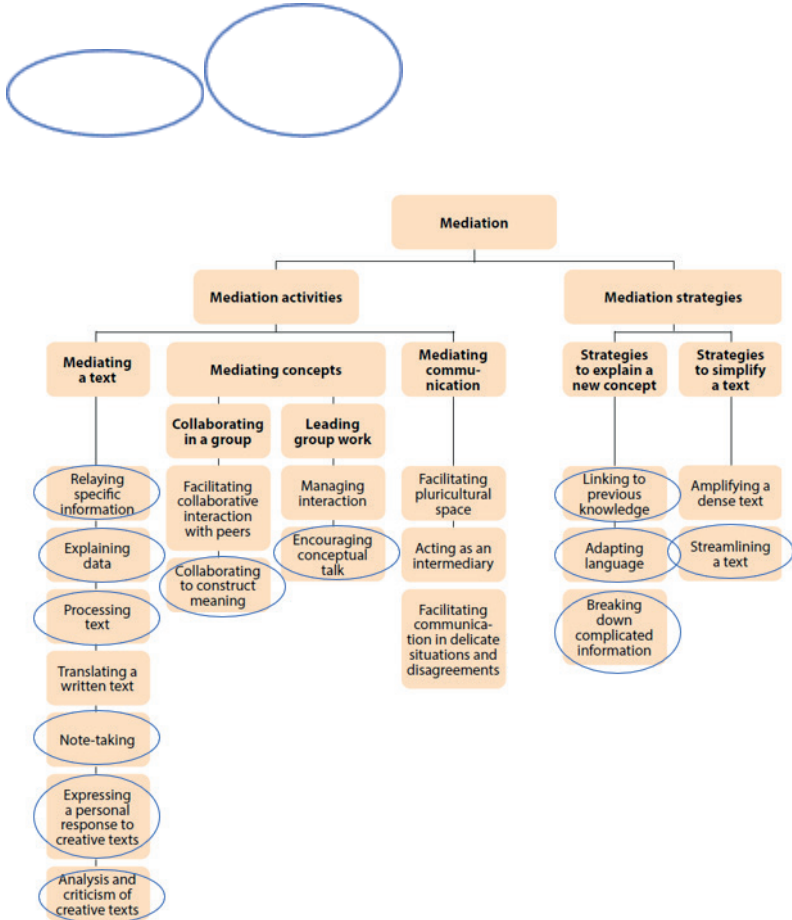

Figure 2: Mediation activities and strategies (Council of Europe 2020: 90); elements we incorporated into the revised tasks

We are satisfied that the tasks incorporate almost all criteria relating to text mediation and enable students to relay text content to a fellow learner who did not read the same text in preparation for the task (Council of Europe 2020: 91). The texts

that students selected (see Appendix 2 for examples), were in English, therefore no translation was necessary. The mediation tasks have a "transactional focus" (North 2022: 321) and they also "encourage language awareness and an element of cultural mediation" (North 2022: 321). Learners gain language awareness by observing the use of terminology and conventions of various genres within their field and they acquire knowledge about the culture of their subject of study.

A useful insight gained from studying the Companion Volume in closer detail showed us that it is unfeasible to incorporate **mediating communication** (Council of Europe 2020: 91) within the confines of a 2-hour ESAP course, due to the homogenous nature of the learner groups: learners are in the same first-year cohort of the Computer Science degree programme, they have similar academic interests, they are a similar age, they are grouped into similar levels of English language proficiency (advanced), and last but not least, English is the de facto lingua franca of international communication in computer science.

As far as the activity **mediating concepts** is concerned, students managed their group discussions autonomously e.g., in terms of time-keeping and speaking order, although this could be improved in future iterations of the course. However, it can be claimed that students did facilitate "access to knowledge and concepts" (Council of Europe 2020: 91) e.g., by explaining computer science terms and abbreviations such as ARM (Advanced RISC Machines), logic gates, transistors.

Phase 3: Documenting our class observations and students' feedback on both tasks

Every two weeks, we documented our observations of how the students completed the tasks. Once we had collated and analysed our observations, we grouped them into four categories, as summarised below.

Preparation for class
Some students were underprepared or not prepared; some used digital notes rather than on paper; the length of student notes varied substantially.

Time management in the classroom
Students often ran out of time; some tasks took longer than expected; some students ignored their timer and kept speaking; some students finished before the allocated time and were unsure what to do next.

Task completion
Some students did not follow instructions. Some students asked questions that indicated that information was missing or unclear from the task sheet.

Group work/Interaction
A variety of personalities and characters; students often looked at their screens which disrupted communication.

Phase 4: Feeding our observations into the design of subsequent mediation tasks

Appendix 1 shows the *before* (Mediation Task B) and *after* version of the Reading Society task.

Phase 5: Carrying out an end-of-semester student survey

Towards the end of the semester, after all mediation tasks had been completed, we conducted an anonymous online survey entitled "Student Feedback on Reading Society & Reading into Speaking tasks", using the Moodle Plugin "Feedback". We had a total of 19 respondents.

5. Key Insights
The results of the online survey carried out at the end of the semester indicate that both mediation tasks contributed towards a positive classroom atmosphere and effective teamwork, which are important for mediation. The role of emotional intelligence and empathy in mediation tasks were not within the scope of the project and would need to be investigated separately. However, two recurring situations in the classroom that did have this characteristic were, firstly, students speaking for longer than their allotted time (thus taking away time from other group members) and secondly, students coming unprepared to class. Our observations led us to conclude that some students were annoyed by this (judging by their body language and a sense of tension), but at the same time, tried to conceal this fact. This resulted in delicate situations that students tried to defuse themselves and, in doing so, we believe they displayed empathy towards fellow students because they were putting themselves into the other person's position (Council of Europe 2020: 91).

6. Survey results
Of the 23 students enrolled in both groups, 19 students responded to the end-of-course survey, providing valuable insights into their perceptions of the tasks. Key results are visualised below and these indicate that (a) reported enjoyment was higher on the in-class reading into speaking tasks than on the pre-class reading society tasks (b) reading, speaking and vocabulary were the main areas of lan-

guage students felt the tasks contributed to and (c) students identified a range of further benefits of the tasks, including communication skills, disciplinary knowledge and teamwork. Regarding the first of these findings, we believe that the students found the Reading into Speaking task to be more enjoyable because it was different every class meeting and it was completed wholly in class, with no preparations at home required.

1. How enjoyable do you find the READING SOCIETY tasks (= analysis before class of a text you choose)?

3 Not at all enjoyable

8 Slightly enjoyable

6 Moderately enjoyable

2 Very enjoyable

2. How enjoyable do you find the READING INTO SPEAKING tasks (= provided by your instructor in class)?

0 Not at all enjoyable

2 Slightly enjoyable

12 Moderately enjoyable

5 Very enjoyable

3. Which areas of your English do you feel the Reading Society & Reading into Speaking tasks help you improve (you can choose more than one)

10 My reading skills

13 My speaking skills

2 My listening skills

2 My writing skills

14 My vocabulary

4. What other benefits do you feel the Reading Society & Reading into Speaking tasks provide (you can choose more than one)

14 The tasks develop my communication skills

14 The tasks develop my knowledge of computer science

7 The tasks boost my confidence when using English

13 The tasks foster teamwork between students on this course

Students were also invited to make open comments on the how the tasks could be improved and these examples illustrate the range of issues mentioned:

- *"one thing I am sure of, is that not every time one student was telling the rest about his text, the rest were listening."*
- *"longer discussions less focus on (analysis of) the texts"*

- *"perhaps you can give us a rough tutorial on finding good texts."*
- *"the content (of the text) is more important for the following semesters then the "analysis" of the texts' title, structure, authors opinion etc."*
- *"finding good online sources for computer science information"*
- *"helped me to organize and restrict my time better when doing a task"*
- *"nice idea to share links to the texts on Moodle for everyone to see:"*

7. Practical suggestions for other language teachers

We would like to pass on the following advice to language teaching colleagues who are interested in using mediation tasks:

Time management in the classroom
• Plan timing for tasks realistically and generously (e.g., allowing for questions, discussion, immediate feedback). • Suggest roles for group work so that responsibilities are clear – allocate / allow students to choose. • Make tasks available on Moodle shortly before they begin (to ensure students are not looking at the materials before they should).
Developing tasks / task sheets
• Name tasks to reflect their purpose. • Provide clear wording of task . descriptions. • Ensure that texts are suitable for the task at hand (i.e., density). • Provide a list of criteria and/or an FAQ to avoid common mistakes in group work. • Design tasks in such a way that students can facilitate and manage group work with minimal teacher intervention.
Managing group work
• Use a variety of methods for organising groups (= empathy). • Plan timing for group work generously, especially for groups of varying sizes. • Instruct students to manage the timing of their group work. • Provide guidance on how to manage delicate situations, (such as students: coming to class unprepared, dominating discussions, not participating, making obvious errors, not paying attention).

8. Our reflections on mediation

During the project we learned that a crucial feature of mediation is that ideally the mediator should address the needs of the listener. The mediator is thus less concerned with *their* own needs and more concerned with the needs of their partner(s). A further realisation was that classrooms should be constructed so as to be as authentic, collaborative and free as possible e.g., so that delicate situations can occur and be dealt with spontaneously (students may benefit from soft skills training to manage such situations).

9. Our reflections on Professional Inquiry

We conclude with some reflections on the process of professional inquiry:

1. Effective time management was essential as we tried to incorporate the project into an already busy workload.
2. Access to external support from a mentor was invaluable.
3. Sharing a project has its pros and cons e.g., we were able to share the workload and provide moral support and motivation. However, making time to meet regularly was challenging.
4. Setting up shared folders and files would have allowed us to collaborate more efficiently than having our own individual documents did.
5. Teacher's perceptions of what happens in class and how students feel can be misleading, so it is important investigate such issues rather than to make assumptions.

10. Literature

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Alan Davis teaches English for General and Specific Academic Purposes at the University Language Centre (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. His teaching responsibilities include English for Students of Medicine, Sport Science, European Culture and Economics, and he coordinates the C1/UNIcert® III exams.

Email: *alan.davis@rub.de*

Melissa Oldfield-Mariano teaches English for General and Specific Academic Purposes at the University Language Centre (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung) at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Her teaching responsibilities include English for Physics and Astronomy, and Computer Science. She coordinates the Computer Science English language courses and is particularly interested in mediation and all aspects of feedback in language teaching and learning.

Email: *melissa.oldfield-mariano@rub.de*

Appendix 1

Original task (WiSe 2021-22): Mediation Task B

Unit 2 – Operations on Bits

Mediation Meeting Task Sheet

You will read one extract from a university textbook on Computer Science about mass storage devices. Please follow these instructions:

A. Reading
You have *10 minutes* to read the text which has been assigned to you. You may use internet resources to help you understand words and phrases which you do not know or are not sure about.

B. Collecting key information
With a student who read the same text as you, decide what are the 10 most important pieces of information in your text. Note them down in bullet-point form in a separate document. You may **NOT** copy and paste complete sentences from the extract. You have *10 minutes* for this step.

C. Mediating key information
Close the document with your extract. Join students who read the other extracts. Tell them the most important information about your mass storage device. You have a total of *10 minutes* for this task.

D. Follow-up discussion
When you have finished, the instructor will mix up the groups again and together you should answer the questions below using the information from your texts and your own knowledge. You have a further *10 minutes* for this task.

1. What is gained by increasing the rotation speed of a disk or CD?

2. When recording data on a multiple-disk storage system, should we fill a complete disk surface before starting on another surface, or should we first fill an entire cylinder before starting on another cylinder?

3. Why should the data in a reservation system that is constantly being updated be stored on a magnetic disk instead of a CD or DVD?

4. What factors allow CD, DVD, and Blu-ray disks all to be read by the same drive?

5. What advantage do flash drives have over mass storage systems introduced in this section?

6. What advantages continue to make magnetic hard disk drives competitive?

7. What is your preferred device for data storage?

8. What would you recommend to the general computer user (e.g. your course instructor)?

Revised task (WiSe 2022-23): Reading Society

English for Computer Science I
Reading Society
UNIT 3: Computer Architecture

ZFA
ZENTRUM FÜR
FREMDSPRACHENAUSBILDUNG

Purpose:
To learn more and speak about the topic of computer architecture.
To increase your computer science-related vocabulary.

Preparation (at home):
Before your next class meeting, you should:

1. Set yourself a limit of 30 minutes in which to find a suitable text related in some way to the topic of **Computer Architecture**.
2. You should be able to read and understand your text in no more than 30 minutes.
3. While reading your text, make notes on each question on the cheat sheet (on the following page).

Your text could be an article from a newspaper, a magazine or a journal; an extract from a book; a blog entry etc. You may choose any kind of text in English (factual; informative; instructional; persuasive; entertaining).

In class:
In small groups, do the following:

- Take turns to speak. Set a timer to 8 minutes when it is your turn to speak.

- Tell your peers about the text you read. Focus on the information you think is most relevant to them.

- While listening to your peers, consider at least one question for the speaker about an aspect you would like to know more about / understand better.

- Each speaker has 2 minutes to answer questions.

Follow up:
Share the link to your text in the forum provided on Moodle.

1

English for Computer Science I
Reading Society
UNIT 3: Computer Architecture

ZFA
ZENTRUM FÜR
FREMDSPRACHENAUSBILDUNG

Cheat Sheet

1. Where did you find this resource?

2. Why did you decide to read it?

   1. Does it have a catchy title?
   2. Did you come across it by chance or have you used it before?
   3. Were you familiar with the author?
   4. Was the topic interesting or relevant to you?

3. What are the main ideas in the text?

4. Who is the anticipated reader of the text? Does the author attempt to relate to the audience?

5. Does the topic and/or author's argument develop logically?

6. Does the text provide any examples? If so, are they clear?

7. Does the author appear to be prejudiced?

8. Is the evidence presented reliable? Does it contradict your own experience and common sense?

9. What did you learn from it, i.e., any new language/facts/advice?

10. What is your own point of view? Do you agree with the writer?

2

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Appendix 2

Examples of sources that students used in the Reading Society tasks:

Texts on "Introduction to Computer Science"

Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "New computing architecture: Deep learning with light: A new method uses optics to accelerate machine-learning computations on smart speakers and other low-power connected devices." *ScienceDaily*, 20 October 2022. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2022/10/221020140609.htm

DAMICO, T. M. 2009. Cyber Attack Prevention for the Home User: How to Prevent a Cyber Attack. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* [Online], 1. http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=47

Skeet, J. 2016. Tracking down a performance hit. https://codeblog.jonskeet.uk/2016/06/09/tracking-down-a-performance-hit/

Texts on "Operation on Bits"

Garg, P. Basics of Bit Manipulation. https://www.hackerearth.com/practice/basic-programming/bit-manipulation/basics-of-bit-manipulation/tutorial/

Stacey-Brown, K. 2019. Metabolomes: A new way to store data in little space. https://www.futurity.org/metabolomes-store-data-2098912-2/

Anna Soltyska (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

The use of online writing support tools in heterogeneous learner groups. Report from a Professional Inquiry Project

Der Einsatz von Online-Schreibhilfsmitteln in heterogenen Lernendengruppen. Bericht über ein *Professional Inquiry* Projekt.

Introduction

The use of technology for language learning and teaching is not a recent development and various computer-, internet- and AI-based solutions have been available to language learners and teachers for some time (e.g. Groves/Mundt 2015, O'Neill 2016, Zhang 2021). However, increasing access (including cost and ease of use) to tools such as automated machine translators (e.g. DeepL or Google Translate), automated writing correction and feedback tools (e.g. Grammarly or Criterion) and generative pretrained transformers (ChatGPT) has understandably boosted stakeholders' interest in their use and at the same time encouraged reflection about their efficiency and reliability.

In particular, lecturers of academic English are keen to explore such language support tools and possibly apply them in their teaching practice to the benefit of all stakeholders (Klimova et al. 2022, Birdsell 2021, Henshaw 2020, Groves/Mundt 2015). However, it is essential to analyse students' and teachers' attitudes towards the use of the tools due to heterogenous nature of the studentship, various internal and external frameworks language teachers in higher education are constrained by, and standards of academic integrity they have to observe. This knowledge might shape future classroom practices in a more informed way and assist practitioners in designing activities relevant and beneficial for their students.

Several authors (Klimova et al. 2022, Perrin et al. 2022, Henshaw 2020, Briggs 2018) point at the research gap that exists with regard to the use of the tools in foreign language education at various levels of schooling and as perceived by various stakeholders. Results from recent studies, conducted among others within German higher education (e.g. Behrent/Wolf 2023 and Soltyska et al. 2022) and beyond (Perrin et al. 2022), confirm the need for further research in this area. Accordingly, the present study aimed to understand students' and teacher's practices and attitudes in relation to the use of online tools for language learning. Three tools were selected and analysed in depth: a spell checker, the machine translator DeepL and the automated writing feedback tool Grammarly.

In short, a spell checker is a software feature of, for example, a word processor such as Microsoft Word which identifies and automatically corrects or suggests possible corrections of misspelt words. Automated writing correction and feed-

back tools are typically capable of identifying and highlighting errors in written texts and giving prompts for correct wording (Shadiev/Feng 2023) which go beyond spelling and basic grammar issues. Neural machine translators (NMT) are based on artificial neural networks trained on huge databases of previously translated texts, and are able to process unknown input texts fed by users and translate them based on earlier studied language data patterns (Klimova et al. 2022).

2. Project Description

The project in question was a professional inquiry bearing typical characteristics of teacher research (Borg 2017): it was a systematic and self-reflective investigation with the purpose of understanding and enhancing my own teaching practices; at the same time, it sought to produce insights, which might be of interest within my institution more generally and to language teachers elsewhere.

3. Questions

The project addressed two categories of questions. The first group of questions should shed light on the overall level of students' familiarity with those tools. Moreover, it aimed to determine whether the students use the tools at all, and if so how and what for students use the tools. It also examined if there is a connection between students' language proficiency levels and degree of familiarity with and frequency of using the tools. The second group of questions referred to how students feel about using the tools in learning and assessment contexts as well as how satisfied they are with the tools. What is more, the teacher's opinion about using the tools in learning and assessment contexts was considered and analysed.

4. Course

The project was conducted in the course "English for International Standardised Tests and beyond (B2-C1)" taught at the University Language Centre of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum which was primarily targeted at students who wish to prepare for tests such as TOEFL or IELTS, or plan to study abroad. This English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) course is an elective, credit-bearing and a semi-intensive[3] one offered in a blended learning format, whereby in-person classroom sessions with the teacher are accompanied by self-study phases during which the participants complete various asynchronous tasks via the Learning Management System used by the language centre (Moodle).

Prior to the course, most participants sat an in-house, calibrated online place-

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[3] Typically, the courses at the University Language Centre are either extensive courses (Germ. semesterbegleitende Kurse) offered throughout the semester for about 13 weeks with the weekly contact time (in person or online) of two or four hours, or intensive courses (Germ. kompakt Kurse) which are offered for one or two weeks with several hours of contact time per day.

ment test (C-Test) and were placed at one of the following levels: B2, B2/C1 or C1. Alternatively, some of them had completed an English course (B1/B2, B2 or B2/C1) at the University Language Centre within the last two semesters or had already taken a standardised language test which proves they have reached the level required to participate in the course (between B2 and C1).

5. Participants

Typically, about 20 to 25 students would attend this course in each term. However, as it was offered for the first time under the new title and in the above-mentioned semi-intensive format, there were only nine students, all of whom participated in the project and whose data contributed to the quantitative and qualitative analysis. All students consented to having their data processed anonymously and analysed for the purposes of the inquiry, though one of them did not consent to having their responses quoted directly in the project report. The small class size was ultimately an advantage, as it allowed for a thorough examination of students' practices and attitudes.

6. Stages and evidence collected

The course lasted ten weeks during which students attended eight weekly class meetings in person. In weeks 5 and 8 the self-study phases took place, when students completed several online tasks independently and at their own pace. Table 1 summarises the details of the project including the scheduling, classroom activities and data collected. Teachers' reflections on the process were written throughout the project.

Weeks	Classroom activities/interventions and source of data
1	• Consent form • Students' introductions • Entry survey
2	*Intervention: Introduction to spell checkers*
3	• Essay 1 (a scanned or photographed handwritten text and a text typed and checked with a spellchecker) • Reflection form
4	*Intervention: Introduction to DeepL* *A classroom writing and translation activity*[4][2]
5	*No session in class – students work independently on Essay 2*
6	• Essay 2 (an independently written text and a text improved with DeepL) • Reflection form

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[4] In this activity students' sentences in their first languages and their translations into English were synchronously collected via Moodle Etherpad. Other students were invited to write their comments and feedback on the accuracy of the English versions. For details see section 3.3 below.

7	*Intervention: Introduction to Grammarly*
8	*No session in class – students work independently on Essay 3*
9	• Essay 3 (an independently written text and a text improved with Grammarly) • Reflective text
10	• Essay 4 • Exit survey
post-course	• Structured interviews with volunteering participants

Table 1: Overview of the project timescale, interventions and data collected

At the beginning and the end of the course (in weeks 1 and 10) the students were asked to complete anonymous online surveys via Moodle. The entry survey provided information on students' acquaintance with the tools as well as purposes of and satisfaction with their use prior to the course. The exit survey focused on students' satisfaction with the specific three tools presented in the course and their possible future application beyond the course.

This data was complemented with the information on students' background (degree programmes as well as first and further languages spoken) and reasons for attending the course, which was obtained during the first classroom session (week 1).

The interventions took place in weeks 2, 4 and 7 when three online tools (see section 1 above) were introduced during the classroom sessions. Subsequently, three essay writing tasks were set to be accomplished by the students with and without the use of the tools. Together with short written reflections (in a standardised form for essays 1 and 2 and freely composed for essay 3) these texts were submitted via Moodle.

In addition, I kept a teacher's reflective diary on a regular basis which included information about my thoughts on the use of the tools as well as on the course overall. Accordingly, it provided a sound basis for an ongoing reassessment of the project.

Finally, following the completion of the course and announcement of course grades, the students were invited to participate in structured interviews via Zoom. Five students, all of whom intend to take a standardised international English test, were interviewed by the course teacher about the use of online tools for exam preparation.

7. Data analysis
Both online surveys were designed in line with recommendations by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) and Dewaele (2018) and included closed items, most to be an-

swered with a four-point Likert scale. The results were input into Microsoft Excel and analysed using descriptive statistics.

Students' essays and reflections were collected via Moodle. The two respective drafts of each essay (1-3) were compared and commented on in the teacher's diary. In particular, I wanted to confirm whether the errors which appeared in first drafts (written by the students independently) were accurately identified and corrected when using the specific tool to prepare second drafts. Essay 4 submissions were compared with previously submitted, second drafts of Essays 1-3. Here again, my analysis focused on possible discrepancies between the errors made when writing independently (Essay 4) and with the tools. Students' reflections were analysed, and common themes and recurring trends summarised in the teacher's diary, too.

Each structured interview (Dörnyei 2007) followed a set pattern with seven questions. All interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded with participants' permission. Subsequently, the responses were automatically transcribed by means of the Microsoft 365 package and then thematically coded and analysed. The transcribed answers (n=5) were pasted into separate documents (one document for each question), key topics identified and grouped into broader categories.

All students (n=9) engaged in nearly all course activities as most of the tasks were mandatory and prerequisite to complete the course and qualify for the credit points. The data collection through both online surveys proved efficient and provided a detailed snapshot of students' views at two points in time. With regard to written reflections, be it pre-structured in reflective forms or freely composed, it could be observed that some participants demonstrated a significantly greater depth of reflection or eagerness to share their thoughts on the use of the tools.

8. Key Findings

The large body of data collected throughout the project enabled thorough analysis and offered interesting insights into the use of the online tools within the course environment. Apart from being relevant to my own course, these insights may be of relevance to other language teaching and learning settings within higher education and beyond.

1. Students' acquaintance with and application of the tools

The participants appeared to be a highly heterogenous group with regard to their proficiency levels (four students at level C1, three students – B2/C1 and two students – B2), degree programmes (Master's level: two students, Bachelor's level: seven students of whom three were international students) and languages spoken (apart from German five other languages were named as first languages (L1) of the participants; altogether ten further languages were spoken by the participants with Spanish and German being the most frequently named ones). This

heterogeneity was manifested also in the self-declared purpose of attending the course: while most students aimed to improve their academic English skills overall, six of them intended to sit a standardised English test in future for which they wanted to prepare, and four each either planned to study abroad (most likely on an English-taught degree programme) or wanted to obtain credit points for the course.

There seemed to be no relation between the students' proficiency levels and their familiarity with the selected online tools at the start of the course. While Google Translate (GT) was the most-known tool of those mentioned in the survey (monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, translators such as DeepL and GT, Linguee and Reverso, and Grammarly), several tools were barely known to the students. Furthermore, only a few students used the tools regularly (every day to once a week). Although most well-known, GT was not used very often. Grammarly and DeepL, which were chosen to serve as the focus of this project, were neither widely known nor frequently used. When asked about the purpose of using the tools, students explained that they used them to translate single words (mostly into their L1, less often into further languages) and less often to translate sentences or text passages into their L1 and to check synonyms in a foreign language.

2. Students' feelings about the use of the tools

According to the data collected via the entry survey i.e. prior to the interventions, the students were "quite satisfied" but not "very satisfied" with the tools they use. Interestingly, the option "very satisfied" was selected only by the most proficient students (C1). The self-reported level of satisfaction with the quality of results delivered by the tools and time efficiency related to using them were comparable and relatively high, with only insignificant differences.

Results of the quantitative analysis

When surveyed at the end of the course, i.e. after the interventions, the majority of students found Grammarly to be the most useful tool. It is worth noting that at the beginning of the course only three respondents said they were very familiar or quite familiar with this tool.
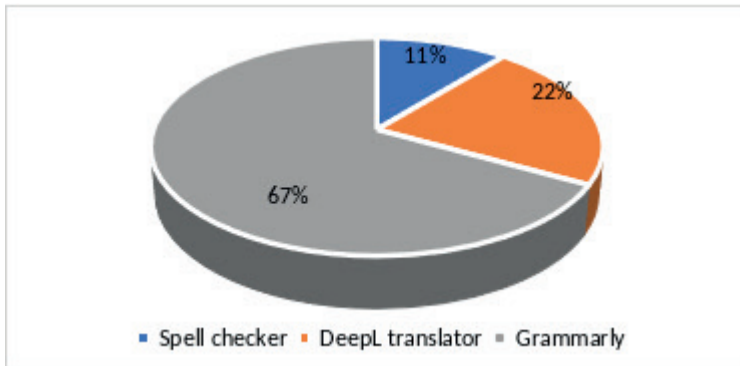
Figure 1: Results of the exit survey: which of the three tools used in the course did you find most useful?

When analysing students' satisfaction with individual tools as measured after the interventions it can be noticed that DeepL and Grammarly are valued higher than spell checkers (see Figure 2). In fact, on a four-point scale with one being the lowest and four the highest score, on average the first two tools scored equally high (3.33) with the spell checker scoring 2.67.

Figure 2: Results of the exit survey: How satisfied were you with the use of a given tool to improve your writing in English overall?

When it comes to the post-course use of the tools for general improvement and

exam preparation (Figure 3), all students said they intend to continue using Grammarly for both purposes, whereas fewer planned to continue using a spell checker and DeepL, especially in exam preparation contexts. This can be explained by the opinion voiced by one of the interviewees: "Using online tools for exam preparation is more artificial (whereas) using them for real life is more authentic" among others because "situations you prepare for the exam are more standardised and not so complex". In other words, students tend to resort to the tools e.g. to translate unknown words when they encounter unexpected challenges in everyday situations rather than in predictable and learnable exam contexts, where the use of the tools is prohibited nonetheless.
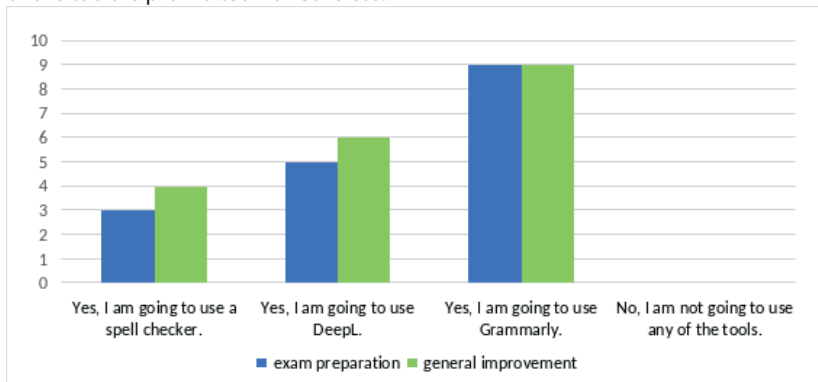

Figure 3: Results of the exit survey: Will you use the tools after this course and if so, what for?

Results of the qualitative analysis

Interestingly, the analysis of students' reflections and submitted essays brought more diverse and inconclusive results.

With regard to spell checkers, on the one hand the intervention made the students realise several deficits in their spelling, some of which can be attributed to certain participant groups. For example, students for whom both English and German are foreign languages observed frequent mistakes in relatively simple words whose spelling is seemingly similar in both languages such as Polish-*polnisch* efficient-*effizient* or specific-*spezifisch*. The same group of respondents, as well as the students whose L1 is German, noticed frequent mistakes related to missing or unnecessary capitalisations (as in German different words are capitalised than in English – for example all nouns – and vice versa – for example adjectives denoting languages and nationalities are not capitalised in German), for example *russian, *roman empire,*Participants, *Tolerance. Another type of mistake common for this group irrespective of the proficiency level referred to writing compound words together (as single or hyphenated words), for example *time

consuming, *labour intensive, *there fore or even *can not. Here, however, the spell checker often failed to spot such inaccurate spelling and did not flag it to students' surprise. Several students realised that in fact they make more spelling and punctuation mistakes than they previously thought, especially with regard to comma usage, which turned out to be almost everybody's weakness regardless of the proficiency level. On the other hand, as one student noticed "a spell checker usually corrects the words I misspell quicker than I notice", which aptly summarises why relying on spell checkers might be disadvantageous in language learning. On a different note, some students in fact approved of being asked to write by hand in the exam preparation process for a more focused and conscious practice of spelling, which might prove beneficial for analog, paper-based examinations.

As far as using DeepL is concerned, students' reflections were the main source of information which allows some insight into what kind of lexical items were most frequently searched for. The words that more proficient students sought to translate into English included relatively precise and specific items and often compound words (e.g. mould growth, country/district court, load-bearing capacity, soil sealing - Germ. *Bodenversiegelung*), whereas lower level students searched for more common words they simply did not know (e.g. old-fashioned, ancestor, construction, demolition, townhouse) or which simply "slipped their mind". Even though on the whole students at all proficiency levels were satisfied with the time efficiency and overall quality of translations, some of them noticed that translating single words without their context often brings unsatisfactory results which later need to be verified (e.g. by reverse translation into L1 in DeepL, in a bilingual dictionary Leo.dict or in a monolingual dictionary such as Cambridge or Pons). Some lower level students relied on their intuition and admitted that they "did not check the correctness of translations as they sounded right". However, this approach did not prove successful throughout as corroborated by my analysis of students' essays. Finally, referring to their experience with other online translators and online tools, students observed that "Google Translate has a wider range of languages it is available for" and that a feature that enables listening to a given word or phrase to learn its pronunciation could be a valuable addition to DeepL. There were also some critical voices as to the possible impact of NMT as "maybe in the long run, translation tools could change the way we speak (in a foreign language), (…) some unfashionable words might be lost if the algorithm was not fed with them". Such opinions show that adult foreign language learners are capable of critical assessment of various AI-based tools available on the market and aware of ethical implications of their use both in the academic context and beyond.

As regards Grammarly, the errors flagged by the tool, even though often without elaborate suggestions concerning the kind of mistake and how to correct it, made the students realise what types of mistakes they frequently make and ac-

cordingly what aspects of language use they need to improve. Most commonly, these would be punctuation mistakes (especially concerning the use of commas), incorrect use of articles and prepositions as well as missing subject-verb agreement in case of weaker students. While students openly complained that paying a monthly fee for the full version (currently 12€) is beyond their means, most of them were satisfied with just hints at "something being wrong" without further suggestions for improvement or indications of the type of the mistake which are available in the paid version of the programme. In a similar vein, free versions of tools like Grammarly are seen as a financially accessible way of receiving individualised feedback on students' writing as "some students maybe do not have enough money to have a private teacher" or cannot afford professional proofreading services. Nevertheless, some interviewees also highly value human feedback: "If I am talking to a teacher, they can notice what mistakes I often make and (tell me) how I can improve it efficiently (…), they can recommend grammar I have to revise…". All that said, the comparisons of two drafts of the same essay and oftentimes far-from-perfect quality of the improved drafts show that students need to be made aware of likely deficiencies of automated writing correction and feedback tools and should be reminded to always proofread their final drafts before submission.

On the whole, students' attitudes towards the use of the three selected online tools were quite positive, though critically reflective. The tools convinced them with their accessibility, ease of use and more than satisfactory quality of output, even though they do not produce error-free texts. Combining self-reflection, feedback from a human (teacher) and AI-based support seems to be a preferred choice of the participants in the project.

3. Teacher's feelings and observations about the use of the tools
As the results of the entry survey showed that the students are not familiar with most of the tools I intended to use in the course, more time during the classroom sessions had to be devoted to presenting and experimenting with the tools. Furthermore, the order of working with the tools was reversed (first DeepL and then Grammarly) to give the students more time to familiarise themselves and experiment with the tool they knew least (DeepL).

Learning about students' proficiency levels as per the placement test and following their first writing exercises via Moodle resulted in a form (Figure 4) which the students were encouraged to use for their reflections on using a spell checker and online translator. This change was hoped to guide and in fact facilitate the reflection process, especially for students at lower proficiency levels. Originally, the students were meant to write a 100-word reflective passage with no pre-defined structure and no guiding questions.

Your reflections after using (online) spellcheckers for the essay writing task

Student's name:

What did you notice about your spelling and punctuation?

I general, I did not have much problems in spelling. More often, I had problems in deciding if the word I wanted to write is written as a whole one or in two parts instead. And sometimes I had problems in using lower or upper case letters.

What surprised you about using the spellchecker?

I was surprised in wrong set punctuation marks.

How do you think you can use this experience to improve your writing (both for exam situation and beyond)?

For the future I could imagine using spell checks to check my set punctuation marks. For a better focus while writing, I could also imagine writing by hand more often.

If there is anything else you would like to share about using spellcheckers to improve your spelling and punctuation, please write it below.

Figure 4: A sample reflection form on the use of spell checkers for Essay 1.

To let the students maximise their focus on the topic of online tools within the course the exam task (Essay 4) was chosen accordingly and it required writing an essay on the following topic:

"Some people see the emergence of online translation and text improvement tools as a threat to proper language education and teaching profession, whereas others believe this development is beneficial for numerous stakeholders: language users,

businesses and organisations worldwide. Discuss. Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge and experience."

On completing this task, the students could build on their experiences with various tools collected throughout the course and felt confident and well-prepared in terms of arguments and examples.

Based on teacher's observations with regard to using two of the tools (Grammarly and DeepL), time efficiency is only a seeming advantage as the critical analysis of suggested translations or corrections and verifying them through other sources (dictionaries, thesauri or corpora) might cost a lot of time if it is to lead to satisfactory and accurate results. All students irrespective of their proficiency level should be made aware of this, whereas especially students at lower levels need to be advised how to critically analyse and validate the results provided by any tool. More research into efficiency of using DeepL for translating single words/short phrases and sentences/texts seems to be needed to better guide students' use of this tool. With regard to automated correction tools such as Grammarly, a more rigorous analysis of students' drafts pre- and post-feedback including proposed improvements and how students reacted to them would be needed to formulate more informed guidelines for learning and teaching with Grammarly. As I have had no access to the actual suggestions for improvement prompted by the tool and had to rely on students' reflections, it is impossible to judge whether the still-not-perfect quality of second (improved) drafts was due to the imperfect tool or students' resistance to accept its advice.

Another observation was that to be meaningful and implemented with ease, using a translation tool as a part of the teaching process should be justified by an authentic context of their use. For example, in the course students discussed various aspects of travelling in their local contexts (countries or regions they come from) and in the Ruhr area. Having collected some ideas on the topic in L1, they were encouraged to first formulate sentences in L1, then use DeepL to translate them into English and subsequently comment on the accuracy of the English version (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5: A screenshot of a Moodle Etherpad activity based on using DeepL for translating sentences from L1 into English.

Overall, responding to numerous questions about affordances of the tools and flexibly reacting to students' divergent needs with regard to the didactic implementation of the tools entails not only flexibility and willingness on the part of the teacher but also a high degree of digital competence and staying up-to-date with new developments in this area. Teacher's positive demeanour, openness and readiness to accept a new – oftentimes challenging – role of a "digital guide" seem instrumental for students' success and overall satisfaction.

8. Implications

The key lesson from this project that could inform incorporating online tools in foreign language courses in future is to begin with establishing the level of familiarity with and frequency and purposes of using the tools. No familiarity with the tools typically means not using them regularly. In turn, unless the tools are used, one cannot judge whether they are employed in an efficient way.

In spite of perceived omnipresence and popularity of various online tools one should not assume that all language learners are (equally) acquainted with them and use them on regular basis both for study and private purposes (in contrast to what by Behrent & Wolf 2023 suggest). Furthermore, as the self-reported level of familiarity with the tools does not always go hand in hand with the frequency of use, it seems unwise to assume that students who know the tools do apply them on a regular basis and benefit from their support. Low familiarity indicators combined with low frequency of use might indicate the need for training and awareness raising strategies to be included in the course syllabus. As one of the interviewees in the projects said "the topic we had in class about advantages and disadvantages (of online tools) was an opportunity to create the awareness (of the tools) and how one can improve oneself, but also how the tools can affect your

language learning in a negative way" if one relies too much on them.

However, as confirmed by Behrent and Wolf (2023), students rarely use online translators to translate complete texts but rather for single words, so there seems little reason to worry they will rely too much on the tools for submitting assessed work, the concern expressed by many respondents in Soltyska's studies (Soltyska et al. 2022 and Soltyska 2022). Further, students' overall attitude to the current and future use of the tools seems positive, a finding which is reflected in Behrent and Wolf's (ibid.) observation that positive feelings (of increased self-confidence and progress in learning vocabulary) outweigh negative feelings (insecurity, guilt about doing something forbidden). The majority of their respondents would like the topic to be included in the course syllabus, the recommendation which is central to this project as well.

Interestingly, judging by the self-reported levels of satisfaction with the tools, the most common response "quite satisfied" but not "very satisfied" might be interpreted as a sign of critical reflection with the outcomes delivered. Alternatively, it could be linked to insufficient quality of translation and search results in low-resource languages (e.g. Kurdish). If applicable, especially the latter conclusion should be taken into consideration when planning to incorporate language tools in linguistically heterogenous groups.

Seen from the teachers' perspective, as survey results presented by Soltyska et al. (2022) show, most teachers allow their students the use of such tools in class if needed, whereas barely a third of respondents in fact use them didactically in their courses. This teacher-reported discrepancy, coupled with the encouraging insights from this project, prove there is room and need for more educated implementation of selected online tools in language learning classes at university level. Accordingly, as pointed out by Groves and Mundt (2015:113) long before the development and widespread use of DeepL, Grammarly and ChatGPT, a language teacher's role should involve being "a guide to reliable online resources" and to "stay abreast of recent developments" seems to be an inherent part of teachers' professional responsibility. This approach, if universally accepted, might drive future developments within various language learning settings, university language centres including but not limited to, and shape language teaching profession in the years to come.

Several limitations of this study need to be noted: the group I studied was a small sample of relatively proficient students on a specific course and, while many of the insights emerging here are of general relevance, teachers do need to conduct their own inquiries in their specific contexts. Furthermore, as only the freely available version of Grammarly was used to guarantee equal access for all participants, no features of the paid version were tried and analysed, which might have affected some views on its usefulness. Still, even to use the non-paid version of

the software, all users have to create an account, which might be seen as a disadvantage if they do not want to share their data with the tool provider. These constraints might apply to other tools as well. Finally, the heterogeneity of the group proved to have both advantages and disadvantages: while the very current and relevant nature of the topic of online tools proved cognitively challenging and thus positively affected the motivation of students with higher language proficiency levels to engage in the discussions and reflections, those with weaker language skills struggled to express themselves with a desired degree of precision (even with the help of the tools) both in writing and in oral discussions. Accordingly, to obtain more reliable and comprehensive information, it is worth encouraging reflection on the use of the tools in the language that students feel most confident in.

9. Conclusions

In line with Brigg's suggestion to develop "lessons geared towards helping (students) use these tools effectively and appropriately" (2018:18), this project suggests that incorporating online tools into course syllabi for foreign learners at university would be a welcome change and in need of being introduced soon, though in a carefully designed way. This could be implemented, though possibly to a limited extent, in regular foreign language courses for academic purposes, or in greater detail in those courses focused on writing. Alternatively, a separate skills-focused course (e.g. "Online tools for academic study") could be designed for students of various languages and levels. Still, further research is needed to study what types of activities are most efficient and could serve its pedagogical purpose for specific target audiences (e.g. students at various levels of language proficiency or learners with various L1s). Furthermore, it would be worth investigating what new online and AI-based tools which are constantly emerging might prove particularly beneficial for specific contexts of use in foreign language classrooms. Teachers are well placed to examine these issues using the professional inquiry model of professional development followed here.

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Anna Soltyska is a member of academic staff at the Ruhr-University in Bochum where she coordinates the English programme at the University Language Centre. Her current research interests include the teaching and testing of languages for academic and specific purposes, the impact of AI-based tools on institutionalised foreign language learning and assessment, and various aspects of ssessment-related malpractice.

Email: *anna.soltyska@ruhr-uni-bochum.de*

Beatriz Friedel Ablanedo & Paula Salas Fernández (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

¿ES DIVERTIDA LA CLASE INVERTIDA?
(*IS THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM FUN?*)
Experiences with the flipped classroom approach based on data from intensive and B1 Spanish courses.

1. Introduction

We teach Spanish at the University Language Centre (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung (ZFA)) of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum and in this professional inquiry project, our goal was to understand how our students felt about the use of the flipped classroom approach. We worked with two groups of students at different levels and using two different coursebooks - 'Campus Sur' and 'Estudiantes.ELE'. One course was an intensive course (Estudiantes.ELE) covering A1/A2 and A2/B1 levels and the other was a B1 course (Campus Sur).

The terms "flipped classroom", "flipped learning", "aula invertida" and "aprendizaje invertido" are often used interchangeably but there are different perspectives in defining them which are sometimes contradictory and blurred. In this paper, the flipped classroom is considered a pedagogical model or approach rather than a teaching method or a methodology. The terms "flipped classroom" and "flipped learning" are used here to describe an approach to teaching in which the usual activities inside and outside the classroom are reversed. According to the definition by Bergmann and Sams (2012), quoted by Lee (2023), "flipped learning is an instructional strategy where work that was traditionally done in the class is now done at home, and what was traditionally homework is now completed in class". In other words, learners autonomously acquire content anywhere and at any time outside the classroom (at home, alone, with friends, on the train, etc.). An essential condition for reverse learning is that the acquisition of content is done before the classroom session takes place. This content can be provided by the teacher but does not have to be. The teachers, who function as guides, can indicate the sources or preparatory tasks to be performed in order to reach certain learning goals. The face-to-face event then serves to consolidate what has been learned and, if necessary, to work with the learners to correct misunderstandings.

This implies that what is revolutionary in the flipped classroom, then, is the change in the rhythm of teaching and learning, i.e. the reversal of the learning processes in time and environment. Technology very often plays a central role in the flipped classroom approach, but its presence is not a requirement and reverse learning would also work, for example, in an analogue library or in the street, with fieldwork and surveys, without Internet or digital support. In other words, despite its importance, the digitisation of content is, as we refer to flipped learning, an op-

tion rather than a requirement.

We would also like to make a distinction between different kinds of flipped learning. One approach, which can be called deferred learning, occurs when the teacher video records a frontal lecture, asks students to view this before class, and then completes and reviews this content with information in the classroom. Here the emphasis during pre-class work remains on input provided by the teacher. More narrowly, though, we argue here for an approach to flipped learning that is defined not only by the presence of pre-class work but also by its nature. In other words, we believe that it is important for students to engage in collaborative pre-class tasks that activate learning more deeply and in ways that go beyond listening to recorded lectures. This more specific view of flipped learning that we embrace is informed by key educational theories including constructivism, problem-based learning, social learning (i.e. through group work) and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (see Moll 1990).

Within this more specific view of flipped learning, the phase of small group work outside the classroom is critical, because without this intermediate space of small groups, the system proposed here does not work. This can be explained from the point of view of constructivism, according to which in learning there is a space for the reconstruction of content and a space for the reproduction of content. In the Intensive language course we discuss here, the reconstruction space is the phase in which students first work alone. Then, in small groups, they can complete this first phase and move on to the reproduction phase with the help of more able peers, following Vygotsky's ideas about the Zone of Proximal Development. In the face-to-face class, these two phases would be clarified and reinforced.

To summarise, the flipped classroom approach calls for a new way of planning and organising learning which requires teachers and students to adopt new roles. In 2018, the Spanish language department we work at decided to start using the flipped classroom approach, and we, the teacher researchers of this project, valued the effectiveness of the approach. However, we noticed divided opinions among other teachers and students, particularly regarding those using "Campus Sur." This sparked our interest in investigating the approach and the book. We also found that attitudes towards the flipped classroom approach differed according to the level of the course. For example, lower level students and many of their teachers were much more critical while B1 level students and teachers were in general much more satisfied. Our goal in this study was to analyse student perceptions of flipped learning in a more systematic way.

We wanted to answer three specific questions:
1) How satisfied are the students with the flipped classroom approach used in the Intensive and B1 courses?

2) How satisfied are the students with the books "Campus Sur" and "Estudiantes. ELE"? 3) What do students like and dislike about them?

2. Project description

The project involved two courses that had very different characteristics. The first course was an intensive course (with 13 students at the end of the semester) that combined A1/A2 and A2/B1 levels and was taught by Beatriz Friedel. She used a new book called "Estudiantes.ELE" that was not designed for the flipped classroom approach but was adaptable to it. The effectiveness of the approach was observed in this course.

To adapt the Estudiantes.ELE book to the flipped classroom approach, she identified target lexical or grammatical content, devised pre-class tasks (individual and small group) that addressed it, and planned lessons in order to review and reinforce this same content.

In the intensive course, it was important for students to do preparatory work outside the classroom both individually and in groups. This was because two semesters were covered in only one, making it a fast-paced course. Mini groups typically consisted of three students: a green student with no prior knowledge of Spanish, an orange student with knowledge of other Romance languages but no prior knowledge of Spanish, and red students who had studied Spanish for a maximum of 2-3 months before. The red students were responsible for supporting the green and orange students both inside and outside the classroom and helping them adjust to the pace of the course. Without this colour system, the green students would struggle to keep up with the course. At the same time, the red students were able to review and reinforce old and new knowledge.

The second course, B1 with 11 students at the end of the semester, was taught by Paula Salas and used the book "Campus Sur", which was designed for the flipped classroom approach and included preparatory activities called "Prepárate". This course was delivered following the procedures recommended by the book. In the B1 course, students worked individually and in groups on preparatory tasks for the next lesson, including new grammatical content. In the face-to-face session, the teacher answered students' questions and reinforced the new content.

Stages of the project

The project consisted of three phases. Phase 1 was the planning stage; we clarified our goals for the project, identified how to collect the evidence we needed to evaluate the flipped classroom approach on each course, and set up a timetable for the work.

During Phase 2, which lasted from November 2022 until January 2023, we taught our courses and collected feedback from the students at four different

points (see appendix for survey questions).

Survey 1: Beginning of November
Survey 2: End of November
Survey 3: December
Survey 4: January

Each time, we asked students to tell us how they felt about the flipped classroom approach and we experimented with different ways of getting this feedback. For Survey 1, students were divided into different groups to discuss the feedback questions, and we then discussed their opinions in a plenary session. With Survey 2, students discussed the questions in groups and wrote their conclusions on paper. With Survey 3, students individually wrote their thoughts by completing a survey. For the Survey 4 at the end of the semester, students also wrote their responses individually. While our approach for the first two surveys allowed for discussion, we found that it took much longer and so we collected more conventional written survey responses later in the course.

In Phase 3 we analysed the data we obtained and explored their implications for the future. The first two surveys involved group discussions among students, and we analysed the data descriptively and qualitatively. Conversely, we analysed the data quantitatively in surveys 3 and 4, which students completed individually by filling out questionnaires. We used the surveys to conduct a final evaluation of the books and the flipped classroom approach.

After collecting data from each survey, we reflected on the results both individually and as a team during our meetings. We discussed what needed improvement, both in the lessons in the future and in how we collected data, as well as our impressions of how students were responding to flipped learning. Our collaborative reflections were an important part of the project.

Like any process, there are always aspects that one is satisfied with in terms of how they were executed. For instance, the communication between us was consistently supportive, and our coordination in setting deadlines for carrying out surveys, as well as our subsequent exchange of opinions, facilitated a smooth and positive flow of the project. On the other hand, we realize that there were areas for improvement. For instance, we could have digitalized the surveys to expedite the data analysis and interpretation process, instead of relying on paper forms. Additionally, we faced a significant challenge in managing the multiple languages involved in the project: German, English, and Spanish. While Spanish is our mother tongue and the language of our courses, but we predominantly use German for work communication, and only occasionally use English (which was the working language for the project in order to communicate with the facilitator who sup-

ported us throughout).

3. Key-Insights

We will now summarise the key findings for each course in turn, starting with the Intensive course (this was the course where the book was not designed for flipped learning and had been adapted by the teacher).

Intensive-course

Survey 1

These were the key results from Survey 1.

- Some students said they feel lonely when they work on tasks alone at home and have little interaction with others, while for others this was not a problem because they were accustomed to working independently.
- Students found working in small groups to be highly effective.
- They requested that grammar be reviewed in shorter units.
- They appreciated the opportunity to work independently.
- They said they are not afraid to speak in class because they feel better prepared.
- Scheduling small group meetings among students for the pre-class tasks was a challenge.
- Their initial reactions to flipped learning were positive but at that early stage they were unsure about its effectiveness and wanted to observe its evolution throughout the course.
- They felt that lessons had a positive effect by reinforcing knowledge studied out of class.

Illustrative comments made by Intensive students in Week 3 of the course:

"I feel that I have more autonomy with this type of learning. Learning method very good! You learn to learn. Also very good for the future."
"We are still not quite sure, not all know this method and do not know how it will develop."

Survey 2

These were the key results from Survey 2.

- Most students did not feel alone thanks to their WhatsApp-group support.
- They felt that the flipped classroom approach promotes autonomy.

- They suggested that time could be optimized by distributing tasks among the group.
- Students appreciated the preparation in mini groups for various reasons: direct correction of mistakes, less inhibition when speaking in class, encouragement of discussion within the group (positive pressure), and motivation through the exchange of ideas.
- They felt that lessons should only focus on content they need to clarify (rather than reviewing all the pre-class tasks).
- Some tasks were not seen to be suitable for group work.
- They felt it is important to consolidate grammar in class.

Illustrative comments made by Intensive students in Week 6 of the course:

"Group work is good because mistakes are corrected directly, but [doing] all tasks in groups is too time-consuming."
"Tasks can be divided up (different days) -> time benefit."
"Not every task is well coordinated for group work (e.g. when writing a text)."

Survey 3
These were the key results from Survey 3.
-
- 40% of the students did not feel lonely when working autonomously before lessons, while 53% felt lonely to some extent.
- More than 80% of the students believed that they have more autonomy with the flipped classroom approach.
- Approximately 73% of the students felt less fearful when speaking in class.
- 33% of the students preferred to work alone rather than in groups, 40% preferred to work in groups, and the rest were neutral. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the difficulty of finding a common date for pre-class group tasks.
- Less than half of the class (47%) agreed that they learn better with this approach, while 40% think that they learn Spanish better to some extent. Only 13% disagreed with the approach.
- 73% of the class enjoyed being able to connect the knowledge acquired in class with their previous knowledge.
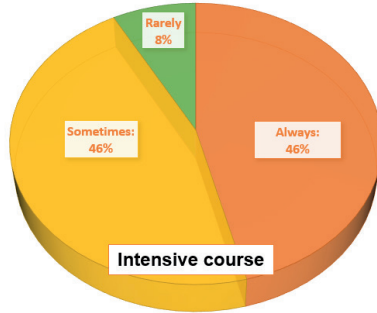
Figure 1: Course preparation

- As Figure 1 shows, 46% of the class said they always prepare for the content of the next class, while another 46% reported preparing sometimes. Preparation is necessary for the intensive course flipped classroom approach; otherwise, following the course would be impossible. Hence, the students of the intensive course felt a lot of pressure since they cannot afford to fail to prepare for the lessons; otherwise, they would fail the course.

Survey 4
These were the key results from Survey 4.

- The book "Estudiantes.ELE" received positive feedback from the students for its good structure and content. However, they expressed some dissatisfaction with the grammar explanations. The vocabulary and cultural content were highly appreciated, and the layout was also well-liked. Overall, the students were satisfied with the textbook.
-
- Regarding the flipped classroom approach, students acknowledged that it requires more discipline and effort than the traditional approach, but they also recognized that it is more effective. However, this does not necessarily mean that they prefer it to the traditional approach.

Course B1
The B1 course used a textbook that was designed for flipped learning. Students again provided feedback at four points in the course, qualitatively in weeks 1 and 2 and quantitatively in the final two surveys.

Survey 1
These were the key results from Survey 1.

- Some students felt disoriented when working on tasks outside the classroom and felt that they lack control over specific topics, which made it challenging for them to reflect on new content. However, others appreciated this preparation time before class, as they felt it made their in-class work much more productive.
- Most students acknowledged that the flipped classroom approach gave them greater autonomy to complete tasks at their own pace. They even mentioned that during this process, they could use additional resources, such as YouTube, to facilitate their learning. On the other hand, some students did not enjoy this autonomy as it called for more discipline. With the frontal approach, they felt more externally motivated, which they valued positively.
- Most students admitted that they were less afraid to speak in class, as there has been previous work at home. However, some students confessed that if they have not prepared the session with the corresponding tasks, they are more apprehensive to speak in class (because this will show their lack of preparation).
- Most students preferred to work individually as they found it challenging to schedule appointments for group work.
- In terms of whether they learn better with this flipped classroom approach, answers varied, as these comments illustrate:

"No, because self-study is more appropriate after class"
"Yes, a mixture (of the two approaches) would be good. Some preparation helps, of course"
"I get further (higher workload) in the whole course. But I may have gaps in detail".

Survey 2
These were the key results from Survey 2.

- There were not many changes in students' responses between survey 1 and 2, but we noticed a change in opinion regarding autonomy, and whether students believe they learn better with this approach.
- Regarding autonomy, we only received positive feedback this time

around. Students felt that they can decide the duration and scope of their preparation, organize, and control their own time and pace of work, determine the pace of learning themselves, and regulate their learning effort. They felt independent in deciding how to approach their work."

- Regarding the inverted approach, we received comments that are more positive this time around, although students recognised that this approach requires a certain level of discipline that they sometimes struggle with when working autonomously. As one student explained, "You can learn more efficiently with this approach and cover more content at the same time, but for this you need to stay disciplined and motivated during the whole semester, which most of the time is not the case".

Further illustrative comments made by B1 students in Week 4 of the course:

"More autonomy through flexible times"
"(Autonomy) increased through internet use (e.g. YouTube)."
"Very dependent on own discipline, in frontal (teaching) one is more externally determined."

Survey 3
These were the key results from Survey 3.

-
- 50% of the students felt isolated or partially isolated when they prepare the content of the next lesson on their own.
- Around 60% of the students felt that they have more autonomy with the flipped classroom approach.
- A majority (60%) of the students felt less anxious when speaking in class.
- There was a clear preference for individual work over group work, with most students finding it challenging to coordinate schedules for pre-class tasks in groups.
- The class was divided, with 47% not agreeing that they learn Spanish better with this approach, and the other 53% agreeing that they do.
- Only 12% of the class reported always preparing for the next class before attending, which poses a problem for the flipped classroom approach.
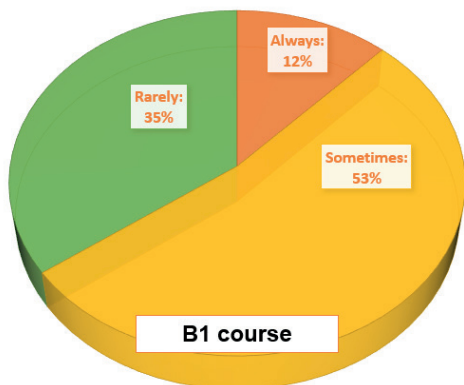
Figure 2: Completion of pre-class tasks

Illustrative comments made by B1 students in Week 7 of the course:
"It is not always easy to find a common appointment (for group work)."
"You can learn more efficiently through this method (flipped classroom) and get through more content in the time, but for that you need to stay disciplined and motivated throughout the semester, which most of the time is not the case."

Survey 4
These were the key results from Survey 4.

- Students' overall opinion of the book "Campus Sur" was very positive. The content was the most highly rated aspect of the book, while the lexis and structure of the book were the least rated aspects.
- The students also rated positively aspects such as communication with the teacher, access to learning materials that help understand the content, autonomy, and ability to present achievements in class.
- However, most students admitted that they learn less effectively with the flipped classroom approach. Additionally, they acknowledge that this approach requires much more discipline and a higher workload outside the classroom.

Figure 3 compares the mean responses on Survey 4 (end of course) for the two courses. Responses were on a scale of 1 (lack of agreement) to 6 (strong agreement).
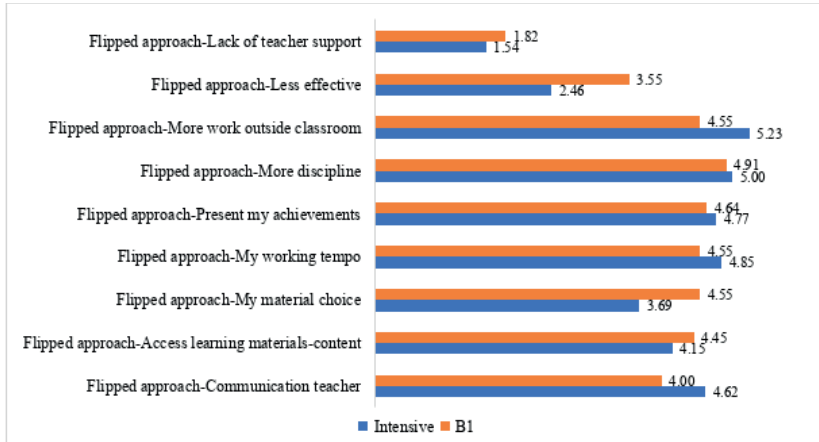
Figure 3: Evaluation

On both courses:

- Discipline and autonomy are key elements of the flipped classroom approach, but not all students responded positively to them. While some appreciated the approach effectiveness and efficiency in achieving learning outcomes, others found it demanding due to the extra effort required. Accommodating these different perspectives poses didactic challenges for teachers.
- Students on both courses faced difficulties in scheduling group meetings for the pre-class tasks.

On the Intensive Course:

Several students dislike the flipped classroom approach because they felt overwhelmed by the pressure it put on them. They felt compelled continually to prepare for lessons, as failing to do so could result in them failing the course.

On the B1 course:

- The approach & flexibility in terms of time and place was highly valued.
- Having gained knowledge from previous courses, some students felt that it was sufficient for them to participate without prior preparation in the next class, which leads to a more relaxed attitude.

4. Implication

This professional inquiry project has helped us identify the following practical suggestions for using the flipped classroom approach with different levels of students.

Intensive course (A2/B1 level)

- It is important to emphasize the importance of scheduling appointments to work
- together outside of class. Before working in mini groups, students should complete individual assignments.
- Mini groups tasks should last no more than 20 minutes.
- The roles of different students within groups should be defined more clearly.
- It is feasible to continue using "Estudiantes.ELE" (modified for flipped learning) and to examine further students' feelings about the presentation of grammar in the book.

B1 course

- In the interest of providing a unified and economically viable solution that also takes into account some of our results here, we will adopt the new book, "Estudiantes.ELE" on the B1 course too. If students are still dissatisfied with the flipped classroom approach, we can consider adaptations that also allow space for more traditional teaching approaches.
- Instead of assigning group work outside of class, we will incorporate it into our face-to-face sessions.
- We will rename the assignments to be done outside the classroom to make them more attractive; we will call them "Prepárate y fija", which translates to "Get ready and set" (the content).

Based on our experiences we can also make further some practical suggestions for using the flipped classroom approach with different levels of students:

- Preparation tasks need to be clear to students.
- When designing the course, it is important to keep in mind the amount of time students need to prepare the assignments both individually and in groups both in and out of the classroom.
- If you want to adapt a book to the flipped classroom approach, you should select the tasks related to an input (either lexical or grammatical

content), think about which exercises are suitable to be done individually or in small groups, and then prepare the class to reinforce and review the content. Depending on the book used, the adaptation task may be more or less demanding for the teacher.

- If you want to use the flipped classroom approach, student self-discipline is key, and they will need more support in the learning process.

5. Conclusions

One particular challenge we faced (and which is not typical of professional inquiry projects of this kind) is that we had to operate in three languages: Spanish to communicate with each other, German to communicate with the students and English to carry out the project and communicate with our mentor. Despite this challenge, we did learn a lot during the whole project, since it was very enriching and beneficial for us to work in pairs and the collaborative reflection process was deeper than when we worked alone. Overall, we can say that the whole process of professional inquiry was very positive and made us examine on our teaching and look more critically at flipped learning, even though it is an approach we are committed to. As a result, we have a better understanding of how to adapt the flipped classroom approach to our students' needs. Time pressures were an ongoing issue, especially towards the end of the project as we had to combine it with our regular duties, but the support of our facilitator throughout was much appreciated.

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Beatriz Friedel Ablanedo holds a degree in Philosophy and Educational Sciences from the University of Oviedo, where she also studied Psychology. She subsequently completed a postgraduate course on *Deutsch als Fremdsprache: Deutschunterricht im Ausland* (in English, German as a foreign language: German lessons abroad) and has since worked as a German teacher at the EOI (in English, *Official Language School*) in Gijón and Avilés, as well as teaching German and Italian at the Music Conservatory in Gijón. Since 2002, she has been working continuously as a Spanish teacher, initially at the study "Language Teaching Research" (Sprachlehrforschung), and after 2006 at the Language Learning Centre (ZFA) of the RUB. Between 2012 and 2020, she also coordinated teacher training within the ZFA. Over the years, she has served as an examiner for UNIcert® I and II and is currently an examiner for all DELE levels. She teaches courses at all levels up to B2 and focuses on tandem language learning and intensive language training in her field of work. Recently, she has been involved in the "Philippinen Studies" project, collaborating with Prof. Roger Friedlein in the Department of Romance Philology at the RUB.

Email: *Beatriz.Friedel@rub.de*

Paula Salas Fernández began her academic journey at the University of Málaga (UMA), where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation, with Spanish, English, and German as her working languages. Later, she completed a master's degree in Education in Foreign Languages (first language, English) at the same university and underwent training to become a teacher of Spanish as a foreign language. With a passion for teaching and cultural exchange, Paula moved to Germany and worked as a language assistant at a Gymnasium for two years. This experience allowed her to acquire pedagogical skills and gain an international perspective in teaching Spanish. Since 2016, Paula has dedicated herself to teaching Spanish as a foreign language at universities in Germany, including Magdeburg (OvGU) and Greifswald. In 2021, she began working at the Language Learning Centre (ZFA) of the RUB, where she also serves as a coordinator for levels A1 to B1. Additionally, she is also an examiner for DELE, DAAD, and UNIcert® exams.

Email: *Paula.SalasFernandez@rub.de*

Appendix

Student Surveys

Surveys 1 and 2

1. I feel lonely when I must discover and understand new content outside the classroom before class.

I agree (disagree) because....
I partially (dis)agree because....

2. I feel that I have more autonomy with this type of learning.
I (dis)agree because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

3. I feel that I am less afraid to speak in class because I have prepared it beforehand on my own and in small groups.

I (dis)agree, because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

4. I prefer to prepare homework individually rather than in groups outside the classroom.
 I (dis)agree, because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

5. I feel that I learn better with the flipped method.

I (dis)agree, because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

Survey 3

1. I feel lonely when I must discover and understand new content outside the classroom before class.

I agree (disagree) because....
I partially (dis)agree because....

2. I feel that I have more autonomy with this type of learning.
I (dis)agree because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

3. I feel that I am less afraid to speak in class because I have prepared it beforehand on my own and in small groups.
I (dis)agree, because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

4. I prefer to prepare homework individually rather than in groups outside the classroom.
 I (dis)agree, because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

5. I feel that I learn better with the flipped classroom approach.
I (dis)agree, because....
I partially (dis)agree, because....

6. The feeling of discovering the new content myself, I (don't) like it because....

7. I (don't) like the feeling of discovering the new content with the small group because....

8. I (don't) like the feeling of participating in class not "from zero", but with some prior knowledge because of my preparation, because…

9. I enjoy listening to the teacher's explanation in class because I have prepared and already have knowledge.
Please mark with a cross where applicable
a) Always: 100% (...)
b) Sometimes: 50 - 75% (...)
c) Rarely: 25 -50% (...)
d) (Almost) never: below 25% (...)

Further comments
....

Survey 4

THE BOOK

I have used the book ◯ **Campus Sur** ◯ **Estudiantes.ELE**.

On a scale of 1 to 6, evaluate the following aspects of the book (1 = very poor; 6 = very good)

Structure	1	2	3	4	5	6
Content	1	2	3	4	5	6
Explanation and presentation of grammar	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lexicon	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cultural contents	1	2	3	4	5	6
Layout	1	2	3	4	5	6

Further comments

....

THE FLIPPED-CLASSROOM APPROACH

1 = I do not agree; 6 = I absolutely agree

I find it easier to communicate with the teacher using this teaching approach.
I have better access to learning materials and content.
I can choose the sort of materials that best suit my way of learning.
I have more opportunities to work in my own pace with this method.
I have more opportunities to present what I have learned in class.
The flipped classroom approach requires more discipline from me.
The flipped classroom approach requires more out-of-class work than the traditional method.

and I find that positive because

....

and I don't find that so good because

....

I feel that I learn with this approach in a less effective way than with the traditional method.

1   2   3   4   5   6

because

....

I feel that I do not get enough support from the teacher

1   2   3   4   5   6

Further comments