Marja-Liisa Julkunen (ed.)

LANGUAGES WITH NO BORDERS II

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FOREWORD

The cooperation between Karelian State Pedagogical University and University of Joensuu started more than 15 years ago. During the first years cooperation was mainly teacher exchange: teachers from the University of Joensuu visited Petrosavodsk and taught for instance Finnish, English or how to make a traditional Karelian wooden musical instrument, kantele. Research cooperation begun first in the area of youth research: a joint international conference on youth problems has already been organised five times. The second important area where research cooperation has been active is science education: science teachers from both sides of the border work together almost every year.

One of our teachers, Kyösti Julkunen was very active in the field of foreign language teaching with the Karelian State Pedagogical University. During various visits Elena Borzova and Kyösti Julkunen planned also research cooperation. The joint research on English language learning motivation in Joensuu and Petrozavodsk was published in 1997. After that researchers on both sides of the border started to plan a scientific symposium concentrating on questions of language learning and teaching. Finally the first meeting was held in Sortavala in 2003. Unfortunately Kyösti Julkunen was already too ill to participate in that symposium himself, so I took care of the Finnish part of the organization.

In the first symposium we had 12 speakers, six from both sides of the Finnish Russian border. The experience was good and the discussions were fruitful for the participants and especially for the language teachers in the Sortavala area. The next symposium was held also in Sortavala in 2005. That was a closed meeting with 10 speakers, seven from Petrozavodsk and three from Joensuu. During those two days we decided to begin to call the symposium Kyösti Julkunen’s memorial symposium. Some of the papers of that symposium are in the Part I of this volume.

The next meeting was held in Joensuu in spring 2007. 12 speakers were invited to present their papers and discuss important questions concerning foreign language teaching and learning. Some of the papers presented are published in part II of this volume.
This will probably be the last volume which concentrates solely on language teaching and learning, because in the future the Faculty of Education of the University of Joensuu will organize symposia on language and science together with JULIS. JULIS is the University of Joensuu conference for learning and instruction, which is organized every second year. The purpose of JULIS has been to give our post-graduate students a possibility to take part in an English language scientific conference at home so that after that first experience they are ready and more confident to present their theses also outside Joensuu. The conference has already been organized five times.

I hope that language researchers on both sides of the border will find the context of the JULIS conference convenient to discuss questions concerning language teaching and learning. The other possibility to meet is to take part in the Youth Conference, which will be organized in Joensuu in the year 2010. These discussions started already in Autumn 2006, when there was a separate session for languages at the Youth Conference organized in Petrozavodsk.

As we all know languages build bridges across borders and therefore they should not be forgotten in research cooperation.

Marja-Liisa Julkunen
PART I
The key words of modern foreign language (FL) education reform in Russia are:

- **the learner** (his/her needs, values, intellectual and emotional spheres, personal experience);
- **the learner’s activity** (motives, competences, strategies, skills);
- **communication** (interaction with other learners, with the teacher, with the authors of texts, with authentic materials);
- **the dialogue of cultures** (cultures of different countries and cultures of personalities).

The most important and challenging question that arises is how to organize teaching and learning in order to put these guidelines into practice. We assume that one of the basic technological principles that could be an answer to this question is “diversity of students – diversity of materials and tasks”. It is partly based on the “information gap technique”.

In this article, there are a few considerations on why, what and how can be diversified to meet the standards mentioned above.

**What are some common stereotypes concerning foreign language teaching?**

In many cases, the students’ interaction in the FL classroom develops around one single text (or rarely two or three) When everybody reads one text and does the same task, students are trained to use the same number of language units. Then they are tested on how well they can use the same amount of knowledge. It is believed that the content of FL teaching can be presented in some fixed and final set of facts, vocabulary units and models which must be acquired by every learner. That is often the case with many school subjects, such as history, chemistry, geography, etc.
But it does not work in case of FL teaching because the essence of language acquisition is not to memorize a predetermined list of facts or words or formulas of building sentences. The FL is supposed to become an effective tool in the learner’s real life meaningful activities. Competences and skills which matter here can’t be passed on or memorized.

**Why should we vary materials and tasks?**

Nowadays high school students in Russia have very high expectations and requirements concerning FL learning and teaching. For many of them it is one of the “doors” to a better education and higher living standards. As our research shows, they expect from FL classes and textbooks “interest, progress and challenge”. They are willing to use the FL in meaningful communication. But classroom practices and FL textbooks often discourage them. In their questionnaires, conducted in 1999-2003 in Petrozavodsk, high school students express their dissatisfaction about

a) boring textbooks which are not related to their problems and interests,
b) absence of new information,
c) long texts written in long sentences with a lot of unknown words,
d) no diversity in the classroom.

In their critical remarks, FL teachers mention

a) shortage of texts and activities,
b) lack of up-dated materials,
c) abstract content which doesn’t meet the students’ interests,
d) no diversity of tasks.

One of the biggest difficulties they face is the necessity to teach students with different levels of achievement seated in the same classroom. Really, our class consists of, at least, 10 students who are different personalities and have their own life experience, views, needs, abilities. We can’t expect them to be equally interested in learning FL, in reading the same text or doing the same task. It is obvious that one of the ways to deal with the listed problems is to vary materials and tasks offered to different students with a view of their personalities. It can lead to more possibilities for further students’ interactions and for their higher involvement.
Moreover, diverse tasks and materials allow every student to reveal their potential and talents which can remain hidden in case they do the same tasks or work with the same material. If a student deals with a task or material within his/her capacity, there are more chances for him/her to succeed and feel more confident. Therefore, it is really essential to modify materials in order to tailor them to particular learners.

Another assumption is that the world around is so diverse, that it does not make sense to limit ourselves to one single aspect/opinion, etc. The more materials are offered, the broader the picture of the world our students get. They gradually become aware of the fact that our life is much richer than it may seem at first sight, that people often think differently and have different outlooks and they are not always wrong in that.

When our students work with different materials and tasks in order to later share what each of them has learned and what each of them thinks in this respect, their motive changes radically: It is not so much the grade the teacher will give them, it is not so much to report to the teacher that they have done the task and can retell the text for no communicative purpose. They become more concerned about how their fellow-students will understand them and react to what they say. They focus more on the content and on the desire to be understood by their listeners.

More than that. A variety of texts, situations, problems united by the same topic under study, allows to demonstrate and use the related language units flexibly and to practice language functions (negotiating, explaining, describing, assessing, etc.) across multiple content areas.

Thus, in teaching FL from the perspective of the learner-centered and communicative approaches, the textbook and the studied topic serve as a frame for interpersonal discourse of the learners in the classroom. Every given situation, text, problem, task receives each time a new interpretation, a new development depending on specific learners, their experiences and values. That is why it is not always easy to foresee what situations will emerge in the classroom, to predetermine the content of the students’ utterances. But due to this, the classroom situation becomes similar to real life usage of the FL.

Finally, diversifying materials, we can employ the Internet resources, materials from different textbooks that appeal to us, media articles, but which often are left behind the classroom door because “they are not in the textbook, or there is no time, or we must cover the materials prescribed by the textbook authors”. When FL teachers are guided by such argu-
ments, they deprive their students of the opportunity to grasp the world in its diversity and richness and narrow its picture to the story offered by the textbook writer whose choices can be subjective and aimed at some abstract learner.

**What can FL teachers diversify?**

There are three main aspects in the classroom arrangement, which can be diversified:

**MATERIALS:** texts (stories, articles, opinions, results of different polls, statistics, ads, recommendations, letters, proverbs, lyrics, etc.); situations, problems, questions, games, pictures, names of (hobbies, celebrities, professions, names, etc.); aids (key words/sentence starters, substitution tables, outlines, etc.).

**TASKS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the student(s) who will share info/ react to initiate interaction:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>what they hear:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facts/opinions and react:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listen and: take notes/choose/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>list/collect/compare/rank/sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combine/ guess/ comment upon/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solve/advise/characterize/agree or disagree/express your opinion/sum up…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| For the student(s) |
| collect the information |
| /come up with their ideas |
| or opinions/ask questions: |
| make up a read and: |
| tell your classmates/comment upon/ out/add/ |
| advertise/advise/make a presentation/ explain/ fill out/ |
| criticize/describe/instruct/complain/ act out/negotiate/ask/find out … |

**MODE OF INTERACTION:**

Every student/half the students in the class/one third of them… - have a specific material and some task to do (the same to all or to a group of students). Then they interact:
- in stable pairs;
- in rotating pairs;
- in a circle (clockwise);
- in groups (of three or more);
- various combinations of those mentioned above:
  first in two big groups (for example – working out questionnaires), then in stable pairs (questioning each other) and after that returning to the original groups (discussing the answers and summarizing them).

**What are some rules of diversifying materials and tasks?**

In order to make this principle work effectively in the classroom, it is advisable to follow some rules.
- prepare your students for independent interaction: help them to plan their presentations, to express themselves clearly and observe their listener's reactions, to explain and listen, to try to understand other points of view,
- to collect and preserve information.
- choose those materials which can evoke response and get your students think, analyze, react (contradictory facts or opinions, funny or surprising stories, etc.).
- take into account the students’ proficiency level: those with a low level get shorter and easier materials, can have more time for preparation, additional prompts and before interacting with the other students report what they have done to the teacher.

The more activities related to one material can be offered to the students, the higher its teaching and learning potentials are.

The follow-up activities always include whole class discussion and further student-generated writing (either summarizing or reflecting on the problem from one's own point of view) which can be done at the end of the lesson or at home. It is not expected to be a long essay.

**What does our experience show?**

Having used this technique for more than 15 years, we can definitely conclude that it allows to address different learners’ interests, abilities,
needs; to involve everybody into meaningful communication and in this way to enrich their personal experiences and expand the picture of the world; to encourage every student to express oneself and try to understand their fellow-students; to avoid time losses, monotony and boredom; to let everybody feel independent, responsible, confident and successful; to keep on top of the fast changes taking place in the world by regular updating materials and discussing what really matters.
Inna Kreneva

PECULIARITIES
OF THE INTEGRATED LEARNING
OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

The notion of integration characterizes all the aspects of our life (political, economic, scientific and the like) and is widely introduced into education. European pedagogical community is trying to solve the task of educating and socializing the citizen of the world, capable of personality and social adjustment in the joined Europe. In this respect one of the aims of teaching a foreign language is not only the development of communicative competence, but acquisition of the rich European culture.

This aim may be accomplished through the integrated courses (IC). IC has evident advantages:

- within one time unit children get complex knowledge in several subjects, which allows us to avoid their overloading;
- they stimulate motivation and learning interest of the children to the subject;
- they enable us to switch the children’s attention to various types of activity, which decreases their tiredness;
- they develop the memory, imagination, attention, thinking and creative potential of the children.

To illustrate our position, we would like to refer to the IC “Home reading in a foreign language and elements of the world culture”, developed by us for the elementary school children. This course will be instrumental in achieving the following objectives:

- development of speaking and language competence of the children;
- development of the interest to other cultures;
- development of the respect to the representatives of other cultures and to their peculiarities;
- development of the creative and intellectual abilities of the children.
This IC offers to use authentic edited fairy tales, as this literary genre, on the one hand is close to the elementary school children, on the other hand – a fairy tale is the part of the cultural heritage of the people.

While working with the text of a fairy tale, we can identify the following stages:

- teacher’s brief introduction of the information on the authors and the preliminary elimination of the difficulties;
- reading for detailed comprehension, translation of difficult paragraphs;
- phonetic exercises with the active vocabulary;
- training of these words in practice and communicative activities, use of the vocabulary in situations based on the fairy tale plot;
- children’s illustration of the episodes from the fairy tale plot;
- staging of the fairy tale;
- presentation of the theoretical material from the course on the World culture (of the specific peculiarities and functions of the European fairy tales, their main features);
- use of this theoretical knowledge while analyzing a concrete fairy tale text.

Thus, this IC helps to integrate the communicative activity in a foreign language and elementary knowledge of the world culture. This will be instrumental in the cultural development of elementary school children through the study of the culture and literature of the European peoples.
Tatiana Paltseva

USING VIDEO IN THE COURSE OF METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Students of Primary Education Department, whose second major is English, have a year-long course of methods of teaching foreign languages. The aim of this course is to impart basic theoretical knowledge of the most important methodological problems: to get the students to understand the goals and objectives of language teaching, a specific nature of English as a school subject and how it affects our approach to teaching it at school, the importance of developing speech mechanisms and skills vs. memorizing some number of words, grammar rules and oral topics, maintaining the balance between communicative and cognitive aspects of teaching English at school etc.

Lectures and seminars are organized in big blocks which are centered round big topics, e.g. teaching grammar or teaching writing, so very often they remain in students’ minds as separate and complete texts which are not connected to each other. The same is the case with most textbooks on methods as well. Even the most systematic presentation of the theoretical material does not give the students the overall picture of the teaching process as a whole. So when the students face the problem of writing lesson plans during their school practice they are sometimes helpless. It is difficult for them to see the connections between different parts of the lesson, to be able to formulate the goals and objectives of the lesson, to understand its logical sequence, etc.

So it becomes apparent that some professional qualities and skill must be developed before students go to their first practice as English teachers:

To help develop the students’ professional skills they are given additional course (so-called “specialized course”): “Theory and practice of education”, - which lasts one term (45 hours). We concentrate on three objectives:
• to help the students familiarize themselves with the format of an English lessons, its goals and its structure,
• to give the students the idea of the format and structure of a modern English textbook and the requirements it should meet, and
• to develop the students’ critical thinking, make them observe, compare, get them to understand that there are no set formulae for writing a lesson plan, but there are general rules, principles, approaches, techniques which help if you know how to put them all to good use.

During the first part of this course which centers on lesson preparation students watch several video lessons (Ahrens and Solovova 2000). The use of video lessons in class has many advantages over just talking about how to write a lesson plan:

• the teacher can use the video as many times as s/he wants (not necessarily the whole film but what fragments s/he considers worth going over again);
• students see a real lesson, they can see how pupils in class react to different tasks, what is difficult for them, what is interesting for them (or not), what language the teacher uses with pupils of different ages;
• students can concentrate on different aspects of the lesson: the activity of the teacher, the activity of the schoolchildren, the theme and the purpose of the lesson, the beginning of the lesson (how it affects the dynamics if the whole lesson), the end of the lesson (were the goals of the lesson reached), etc.
• video lessons can be used as models for writing similar lesson plans, or objects of criticism to improve upon.

For video lessons to become useful it is necessary to give students specific questions and tasks focused on various aspects of the lesson preparation. It is a fact that we learn better when we watch other people do something and understand what is being done and why, that’s why the students’ activity will follow the following stages: watching others give lessons – analyzing them to better understand the scheme of the lesson – preparing own lesson plans using that understanding.
So when the students watch a whole lesson their activity will be organized in the following way:

- **before** watching the students learn what they have to look for when they watch, they study the questions they have to answer after watching; (e.g. *What are the goals and objectives of this lesson? Does the teacher explain them to the pupils? At what point? Did the pupils understand the goals and objectives? Did they understand what they were doing and why? Prove your point. In your lesson plans would you define the goals and objectives using the same vocabulary or word it differently? Why? Does the teacher practice teacher-oriented or pupil-oriented approach in class? Does it manifest itself in the way she presents the goals and objectives to the class?*)
- in smaller groups the students discuss their answers and prepare presentations for the whole group, the routine may vary: the smaller groups get *the same task* or they are given *different tasks*;
- students prepare the analyses of the lesson: they have to study how the teacher observes the requirements of the lesson – the goals and objectives, the contents of the lesson, the activity of the pupils, building up motivation and the variety of stimuli used by the teacher,
- the students turn the lesson they watched into a written plan, the task may again differ: *to reconstruct the plan* as the teacher could have written it with comments (goals of the lesson, stages of the lesson, objectives of each exercise, patterns of the pupils interaction, the conclusion of the lesson) or to *revise the plan and improve upon it* (different order of activities, different activities altogether, etc.);
- presentations of the lesson plans to the whole group which are then discussed and analyzed;

When performing these tasks the students learn to do very important things: they learn to think about the overall structure of the lesson where all elements are interdependent, they learn to see the arrangement of the elements of the lesson and understand the logics of their sequence, they see how important it is to organize interaction of the pupils not only with the
teacher but among their peers. The students learn to talk about it (which is not always easy and takes more than one video lesson to watch and discuss), they develop their critical thinking (they learn to prove their way of thinking) and they develop their creative thinking (they learn to improve on various activities they did not quite like). All this is preparation for their project work (working out their own lesson plans using the material of school textbook). This activity is independent group activity which follows the following steps:

Step 1. The students form groups, each group chooses the topic of their lesson, they distribute the tasks within the group and work out the schedule of their work.

Step 2. The students work for a week or two, they report to the teacher of their progress.

Step 3. Presentation of the lesson plans. While one group makes their presentation the other students are given tasks to analyze different aspects of their lessons, in this way active participation of all students in the following discussion is insured.

At this point the students are surer of themselves than in the beginning, they can explain what they wanted to do in class and how, why they chose these activities and organized them this way, they are also able to analyze each others’ lessons, see the drawbacks and offer ways to improve upon them. At the discussion that follows the students usually say that using video lessons not just make the seminars livelier, they make a real difference because they show how to be a teacher. Thus the work organized with and around video lessons is a very important part of students’ preparation for their school practice and of teacher training process in general.

Reference
Vadim Pavlov

TEACHING PREDICATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS TO THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

English Grammar course for students of English at Karelian State Pedagogical University has two objections:

- to provide students with general terminology and basic grammar rules to build correct sentences;
- to give them skills to teach grammar at secondary and high-school levels.

The syllabus for third-year students of English requires the study of the ‘so-called’ non-finite forms of the verb (i.e. the gerund, the participle and the infinitive). One of the difficulties that the students meet is the difference in terminology that English grammar books published in Russia display (see References). Kobrina et al. (1985) and Kaushanskaya et al. (1973) use both the terms ‘non-finite forms’. Gordon and Krilova (1973) use the term ‘verbals’. Besides that Gordon and Krilova (1973) tend to follow the model of authentic English grammars which do not differentiate between the gerund and participle-I relating them as the Ing-form. This makes it impossible to recommend this book to students as the morphological indicator -ing may mark not only the gerund and the participle but the verbal noun as well (not to mention adjectives like interesting). But for the purpose of teaching such differentiation is very important (see the Table).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gerund</th>
<th>Participle</th>
<th>Verbal noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>may be preceded by a preposition, e.g. on coming home</td>
<td>unlike the other two cannot be the Subject or the Object of a sentence</td>
<td>may be defined by the article The painting of a building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>takes a direct object, e.g. He stopped reading books</td>
<td>may be used in plural paintings, buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>may be modified by an adverb, Reading, even occasionally, enlarges your vocabulary</td>
<td>may be modified by an adjective, e.g. a good painting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My experience of teaching non-finite forms of the verb shows that there is sense in starting with participle-I, then proceed to gerund and finish with the infinitive. Why teach them in the following succession? First of all, there is participle in Russian, which students know well from school. Participle in English and participle in Russian have much in common and that helps students psychologically. Then comes gerund which has no analogue in Russian but possesses the same four forms as participle that students have learned by now. The infinitive has six forms which makes it the most ‘frightening’ verbal for the students especially compared to Russian infinitive that has just one form.

One of the most difficult parts of the material to study is the unit on predicative construction that all the non-finite forms can constitute. What’s a predicative construction? The term construction is applied because it contains two elements – nominal and verbal. Nominal element may be expressed by a Noun or a Pronoun. Verbal component is expressed by a non-finite form of the verb. They are related in the same way as Subject and Predicate of the sentence relate which is the ground for calling such a construction predicative. E.g.: Mary saw John (him) crossing the street. There are two subject-predicate units in this sentence: Mary saw and John was crossing. But the second one is a predicative construction with participle as a part of complex object.
There are several main problems the students face in dealing with predicative constructions:

- 8 constructions to study (4 participial, 3 infinitive and 1 gerundial)
- some of the constructions have no analogues in Russian
- ‘too sophisticated’ terminology
- some students do not ‘see’ the construction
- some students have difficulties with defining the syntactical function of a construction

To illustrate the mentioned above 4 participial constructions existing in English are given below (the construction itself is in bold type):

- The objective participial construction
  Mary saw John crossing the street.
- The subjective participial construction
  John was seen crossing the street.
- The nominative absolute participial construction
  Mary left the room, her heart beating fast.
- The prepositional absolute participial construction
  Mary left the room, with her heart beating fast.

There is no other way to practice the predicative construction with non-finite forms of the verb as by training them in different exercises. Some typical exercise patterns are given below:

I. Use one of the verbals instead of the word in brackets:
The hunters expected (pay) by the foot for the snakes they caught. This meant (take) the snakes out of the sack and (measure) them. They seemed (expect) me (do) it; but I wasn’t particularly anxious (be) the first (die) of snakebite.

II. Say whether the Ing-form is the gerund, the participle or the verbal noun:
In descending the steps he noticed that they wanted painting. Old Jolyon’s glance was fixed on her with the penetrating gaze from which it was difficult to hide.
III. Point out the non-finite form or a construction with it and define their syntactical function:
I would see me being single and living in some apartment building and driving off to work each day in a little sports car. Mitzie cut him off then, her mind raging. She waited for the man to say something.

References
Kobrina N.A. et al. (1985) An English Grammar. – М.: Просвещение. Грамматика английского языка: Учебное пособие \ под ред. А.Л. Резникова, П
Kaija Perho

WHY START STUDYING RUSSIAN AT AN EARLY AGE IN FINLAND?

This paper deals with the appropriate starting age of the Russian language studies. Firstly, the question of the right starting age for foreign language studies will be discussed in general. Secondly, some arguments for choosing the Russian language in Finnish schools will be provided.

Why start foreign language studies at an early age

We can discuss the right starting age of language studies and find out that any age can be considered the right one. According to various studies cited by Sajavaara (1999, 82) the ability to learn languages does not depend on the age of the learner. However, to reach the native speaker level in pronunciation an early starting age would be recommended. Young learners would also seem to acquire a native level intuition of syntax more easily. In the 1950’s the age of early teens, 9-12 years, was regarded the critical age for starting the studies of a foreign language. Nowadays the critical age is considered to be earlier, at the age of six years (Long 1993).

There has been some research on the best language learners (Kasper & Rose 2003, 278-283) but it is too early to say whether girls, boys, men or women are the most successful. More research on this topic is needed. According to some studies good motivation guarantees better learning results. Larger surveys in different countries show considerable individual differences in language learning. It seems that the younger the child is when he/she moves to a new country, the faster he/she learns to ask for something or apologize correctly. The amount of contacts along with the quality of hobbies and motivation has an influence on learning. The research shows that adult learners may have such a small variety of opportunities for conversation that only a restricted code is learned.

In the 1980’s it was very popular among Finnish parents to send their children to a kindergarten with early language immersion. English kindergartens were the most popular ones at that time and there were only five
Russian kindergartens in Finland. In 1981 we organized a kindergarten with Russian language immersion in Joensuu and were very pleased with the children’s learning results. The greatest benefit of the early starting age is the authentic pronunciation acquired due to the critical period of the child’s little muscles. The tales, children’s plays, songs and rhymes were, of course, learnt in Russian. Even though the children, unfortunately, forgot the Russian poetry later their pronunciation skills still remained throughout their later school years.

According to our experience the warm atmosphere of the kindergarten with language immersion is the best guarantee of the child’s further interest in any foreign languages. Furthermore, competence in more than one language gives a person a new viewpoint on his/her own language and culture, too. In other words, a broad linguistic awareness is a condition for success in mother tongue studies.

At Finnish comprehensive schools the first experiments in an early start in foreign language teaching were carried out already at the end of the 1950’s. Nowadays many seven-year-old first-graders start their career as foreign language learners with “language showers”, but still most of the schoolchildren start to study a foreign language two years later in the 3rd grade. It is encouraging to see how the 1st – 3rd graders are anxious to learn foreign languages. They seem literally to swallow the vocabulary, songs and games we use with them on language classes.

Learning of languages is not only a linguistic phenomenon. The psychological and social factors have their effect on the motivation of the learner (Sajavaara 1999, 76). The language teacher together with the whole school and the children’s homes plays a crucial role in creating and constantly supporting the motivation for language learning. We have noticed how important it is for the teacher to love his/her students, to master the language and the methodology of teaching it to the age group in question.

When it comes to choosing the first foreign language the social pressure of peers can be decisive. English is regarded a lingua franca and it is studied all around the world but taking other languages is sometimes difficult to motivate. For example, in Finland it is widely believed that Russian is a far more difficult language than English. When choosing between English and other languages we should remember that professor of English Kari Sajavaara (1993) has stated that all the languages are equally difficult.
If foreign language and culture acquisition begins at an early age, the formation of prejudices can be avoided. In other words, early language teaching is a form of early intercultural education. If children study a foreign language for 10-12 years at school, they have many possibilities to get in contact with native speakers either in Finland or abroad. Their understanding of the culture grows during the school years. Motivated graduates of comprehensive or upper secondary school with 7-12 years of previous language studies and an understanding of culture are ready to continue their vocationally oriented language studies at universities and polytechnics.

Why study Russian in Finland?

Unfortunately, the current number of Russian learners at Finnish schools is extremely small. According to the national School Board of Finland (Opetushallitus 2004) 90,5% of schoolchildren at comprehensive schools studied English as their first foreign language (A1). The other proportions of the compulsory 1st foreign language (A1) were German – 1,6%, French – 0,9% and Russian only 0,2% of all 3rd graders. The proportions of German (7,9%) and French (6,6%) grow on grades 8-9 when pupils take their optional languages. Only 0,7% of pupils choose Russian as an optional language. In 2004 the number of all comprehensive school pupils studying Russian was altogether 2,987 of the total of 575,500 pupils.

Table 1. First foreign language studies in Comprehensive schools in Finland 2004. (Opetushallitus 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 (A1 language)</td>
<td>90,5</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>1,6</td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>0,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9 (B2)</td>
<td>0,1</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>7,9</td>
<td>6,6</td>
<td>0,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Both Finnish and Swedish are the national languages in Finland. Due to this, Swedish is compulsory for all Finnish-speaking pupils and, correspondingly, all Swedish-speaking pupils study Finnish in all comprehensive schools in Finland.
The situation with the Russian language in the Finnish upper secondary school is, unfortunately, not much better. In 2004 only 729 students, i.e. 2.1% of upper secondary school graduates, had completed their A (compulsory) or B2/B3 (optional) courses of Russian (Opetushallitus 2004).

We will now discuss the reasons for promoting Russian language to Finnish schoolchildren and for increasing the number of students studying Russian. The number of adult Finns with some command of Russian is only 5%. We want to show that all fields of the Finnish society need professionals with a command of the Russian language.

1. Cross-border contacts

Learning and knowing the languages of the neighboring countries is considered important in the EU. During the last decade several projects devoted to border districts and promoting studies of the languages of the neighboring countries have been carried out. In 1999 a conference devoted to such projects was organized in Lappeenranta, Finland (Finnish EU Presidency Conference, Language Learning and Cross-border Cooperation 8.-12.9.1999). The active promoter of cross-border cooperation is Professor Raasch from Austria (Fremdsprache Deutsch, Heft 28, 2003). According to Raasch (1999, 23) it is best to organize the language policy within a country considering the basis for a European coexistence. He stands for the idea of two foreign languages for each pupil: a common lingua franca for world wide cooperation and a neighbor language for contacts with nearest neighbors. We argue that the natural choice for the first foreign language (A1) for Finnish children living near the border of Russia is, of course, the Russian language. Knowing Russian is essential to enhance the cross-border co-operation with Russia at all levels. Swedish, on the other hand, would better fit the curriculum of schools in Western Finland. English, of course, must be studied by everyone, but it can be started later.

2. Language needs of business

In 1999 a wide national survey on language needs of the companies called Prolang was completed (Huhta 1999). According to its results, Eng-
lish was by far the most often required language in Finnish companies. Russian was reported to be a supplementary language on priority three. In 2001-2002 a local survey (Airola 2004) was carried out among companies in the district of Northern Carelia concerning their needs of language proficiency. English was again reported to be the most important foreign language. Interestingly, 31,9% of the companies stated Russian to be the second most important language while 30,8% regarded German as language number two.

The Confederation of Finnish Industries EK is the leading business organization in Finland. It has recently stated its visions of education policy concerning language teaching and learning as follows:

- it is important to increase the learning of Swedish, Russian and German in the Finnish comprehensive schools
- the learning of foreign languages must be started earlier and the variety of languages provided should be wider
- the studies of Swedish, Russian and German in upper secondary school should be increased. (Osaamistarveluotain 2004.)

In 2005 the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK conducted a survey among its members to chart the employers’ views on the development of the needs for competence and education of their future employees (Työelämän murros heijastuu osaamistarpeisiin 2005). According to the results of the survey English, Swedish and German are still the most important languages required of employees but Russian has become more and more popular. When in 2004 30 % of the companies reported that they would recruit new employees with Russian skills, in 2005 already 40% of businesses needed Russian speaking employees (ibid. 2005, 29). The representatives of the employers felt that the schools ought to provide teaching of a variety of languages. The Confederation of Finnish Industries EK believes the learning of languages is most efficient when it is started early; immersion and bilingual education should therefore be increased (ibid. 2005, 30).

Finland’s economic strategy (SITRA: From trade to Partnership. Finland’s Russia strategy 2005) was drawn up with the contributions of 34 Finnish experts on Russia. They have proposed several practical measures to achieve the target state for the economic relations between the two countries. Of these measures for action the following concern the Finnish schools directly:
- The teaching of Russian language, culture, geography and history is to be increased.
- The student exchange between Finland and Russia should be activated (ibid 2005, 40).

During the year 2005 the import and export between Finland and Russia have extremely grown and Russia has become the first country in trade in Finland in 2005 (Rossi 2005). The importance of good command of Russian for Finns is repeatedly underlined in many publications. Sitra’s (SITRA 2005, 40) new program also presupposes that the schools take responsibility for giving adequate information about Russia and for teaching the students Russian language and culture.

3. Needs of tourism and immigrants

In 2005 Finland received about 5 million foreign tourists. The largest countries by the number of travelers were Russia (1.7 million visitors) and Sweden. In the course of 2005 the foreign travelers left a total of nearly EUR 1.4 in Finland. Total spending by Russians was one quarter of all amount of money brought by foreigners. (see: http://www.mek.fi/web/stats/Publish.nsf/c7d25333c6dcef4ec2225694200206da5/da7b18a484c5c315c22571910068c721/$FILE/A150%20RAJA_osai8_Koko%20vuosi%202005.pdf).

The number of Russian tourists staying in Finnish hotels in 2005 was 497 979, which means a growth of 11.4 % from the previous year (see: http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_liikenne.html).

The most important official border station in Northern Carelia is Niirala in Värsilä. During the ten years between 1991-2001 the number of crossings has grown nine times (105 244 / 890 615). The proportion of Russian travellers has grown from 15 % to 40 % of all the crossings. The growing number of Russian travellers in Joensuu can be seen in shops especially on weekends. The local newspaper Karjalainen published recently a report on different shops and business firms complaining the difficulty of finding Russian-speaking personal because of the low interest of the students towards the Russian language (Ruotsalainen 2006).

There were 24 626 Russian immigrants living in Finland in 2004 (see: http://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_liikenne.html). Most of the Rus-
sian immigrants live in Helsinki where 9% of the inhabitants are Russians. During the 1990’s the growth of the number of Russians has been rapid in Joensuu. In 1981 there were only 22 Russian dwellers in the city. Nowadays the most of the foreign immigrants in eastern Finland are Russians. There are now about 900 Russian-speaking inhabitants living in Joensuu, i.e. 2% of the population. (Helsingin Sanomat 16.10.2005)

The range of Russian residents is very wide and the level of their Finnish skills varies. Many former Soviet citizens of Finnish origin, the so-called re-emigrants, need to be taken care of in the old people’s homes or hospitals. We need many doctors and nurses for their wellbeing. There are now more than 9,000 Russian-speaking job seekers in Finland. The flexibility of the society requires more Russian-speaking Finnish workers in every field.

The Russian-speaking grandchildren of the immigrants and re-emigrants go to kindergartens or schools. The status of a recently moved pupil at school is low, especially if nobody knows his/her mother tongue. It would be pleasant for him/her, if the new teachers and schoolmates could speak with him/her in his/her mother tongue. If Russian is studied as a foreign language at that school or even in a school club, the new pupil has an advantage. He/she can have success in Russian lessons.

4. Attitudes and resolutions

A survey of attitudes of Europeans towards foreigners was completed a year ago and published in Helsingin Sanomat on October 11, 2004. This survey shows that Finns of all the European nations gave Russians the lowest grades. During 10 years, the attitudes of Finns towards Russians have changed from the second last position to the last. No other nation has such a low regard for Russians as the Finns. Even Finnish slang has new words with negative meaning connected with the word Russian: the verb ‘raysia’ means “to steal” or “to fail”. Whenever laughing at failures is needed - even in an official speech - the example is taken from a Soviet firm or a Soviet car.

The Russians have had a possibility to get acquainted with the Finnish reality in IZVESTIJA (April 28th 2006). The article written by Yelena Schesternina describes the gloomy attitudes of schoolmates of two Finnish boys, sons of a Russian mother.
A more analytic view on Russia shows a recent study on relations between Finland, the EU and Russia (Ikkunat auki maailmaan. 2006). The common opinion of Russia seems to be a country which is complex, many sided and difficult to understand but useful for Finns to have contacts with (ibid. 2006, 9). The attitudes towards Russia seem to be getting gradually warmer (ibid. 2006, 55).

In recent times the authorities have repeatedly encouraged the citizens to more active studies of Russian language and culture. President of Finland Tarja Halonen recommended on October 16, 2004 that the Finns should study more Russian.

The Professor of English at the University of Jyväskylä Kari Sajavaara (2004) has complained about the small amount of students attending the matriculation examination in Russian or studying Russian in comprehensive schools (Sajavaara 2006).

The Minister of Foreign Trade Paula Lehtomäki (Helsingin Sanomat - NYT 42/2004) stated: ”I am happy that I started to study Russian in the 8th grade.”

These complains have had no impact on the amount of students starting their foreign language studies in compulsory schools. The economical colleges seem to have succeeded better in learner encouragement.

**Conclusion**

If Russian trade will grow as rapidly as it has grown during the last years, there will be no difficulties in promoting Russian. Every economist knows that the seller must speak the buyer’s language. The working life underlines a strong command of foreign languages. The employers underline the ability of creating a profound interaction and mutual trust between the language users as a part of language skills. (Osaavaa henkilöstöä yrityksiin 2005, 30). We strongly believe that this can be properly reached only by starting the language studies in a young age.

The choice of the first foreign language during the first school years is a strongly political question. The former candidate for President of Finland Sauli Niinistö (June 18th 2006) discusses the status of Finland as a neighbor of Russia and sees the influence of Russian energy extremely important. Mr Niinistö, the vice president of European Investment Bank, encourages all Finns to become Russia specialists.
References


In teaching text interpretation one of the most important concepts for our students to understand is that writers make conscious choices about how to use words, phrases, and sentences to communicate the message and effect produced on the readers.

Our Fiction Interpretation classes are also meant to acquaint the students who major in French, Finnish or German with the best samples of English and American literature, to develop taste for analytical reading. Sure, teaching this subject is challenging, as English for the students is their second foreign language and the text analysis requires advanced comprehensive language skills. The fact that the curriculum includes lecture on Literature Style and the course of analytical reading in their major language makes our task easier, as they are aware of the mail goals and objectives. We have to help them to apply their knowledge to the English Interpreting fiction class.

Providing students with a literary vocabulary we enable them to articulate their own ideas about a sample of fiction. At this stage we focus on recognizing and analyzing how basic devices and techniques are used in the literary works they are studying and then how all literary devices work together to express tone and theme.

Talking about the structure (plot, composition, conflict etc.) and narrative types in order to avoid “technical” approach we try to combine the questions “What did the author want to tell you?” and “How did he/she convey the message to the reader?” This helps develop critical thinking skills as well.

Finding key-words and phrases enables students to understand the main idea better. To illustrate this we’d like to offer you a workshop demonstrating “key-words techniques” in analytical reading class (the texts are provided at the end of the article).
1) In the extract taken from ‘The Nightingale and the Rose’ by Oscar Wilde (group work) you have to look for the descriptions of a) Nightingale’s manner of singing; b) the message of her songs; c) the color of the rose and, finding the key-words and phrases describing that, to make a graph showing the development. This is how we’ll be able to find the culmination point in the narrative and to see the main stylistic device (gradation) employed by Oscar Wilde. The groups present their findings and graphs and then we make a joint graph to illustrate parallel actions development (the Rose being born and coming alive and the Nightingale giving birth to the Rose and dying).

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

by Oscar Wilde

And when the moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang, with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the topmost spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river - pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. ‘Press closer, little Nightingale,’ cried the Tree, ‘or the Day will come before the rose is finished.’
So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose’s heart remained white, for only a Nightingale’s heart’s blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. ‘Press closer, little Nightingale, cried the Tree, ‘or the Day will come before the rose is finished.

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvelous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale’s voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

‘Look, look!’ cried the Tree, the rose is finished now;’ but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

2) In the extract taken from Kate Chopin’s The Story of an Hour through the key-words we will focus on the characterization of the inner state of Louise Mallard, the stages she goes through recognizing her feelings of new-found freedom. So, having found the key-words in every passage you have to name the emotional state. Thus, we’ll be able to see the development of the main character’s inner conflict.
THE STORY OF AN HOUR by Kate Chopin

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will - as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “Free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

Such classroom activity is aimed at helping students become more involved in their reading and to give them the a way to interpreting fiction, as examining the text carefully and paying attention to the words used, students are able to determine the intent of the writer.
Elena Saastamoinen

EXPERIENCES ON TESTING AND TEACHING RUSSIAN PRONUNCIATION IN THE FINNISH-RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF EASTERN FINLAND

The subject of this paper is how the pupils learn the Russian pronunciation during the first year of study at the Finnish-Russian School of Eastern Finland. The presentation is based on the results of the licentiate thesis, which was defended at the Chair of Foreign Languages of the University of Joensuu in 2001.

The outline of this paper is as follows. First some words about the significance of the teaching oral speech in foreign language in general, and specifically on the studying of oral speech in Russian as a foreign language in Finland. Then brief information about the School of Eastern Finland is given. After that the research set-up and some of the results are introduced. Finally the conclusions are presented.

The significance of mastering the foreign speech and a good pronunciation has been given much attention lately and in different contexts. According to Sauli Takala (1998), a good command of oral language and intercultural communication are very important in teaching a foreign language nowadays.

Already in the beginning of the last century a famous Russian phonetician Lev Shcherba wrote: those mistakes that make the mutual understanding difficult during communication are more serious than grammar mistakes, and in pronunciation in particular one can make mistakes that make communication more difficult. These words of Shcherba are as vital today as before.

The importance of a good command of oral language skills has been lately growing in teaching foreign languages not only in Finland, but in the whole Europe too. For example, the skills of oral speech, including pronunciation, in a foreign language will be tested at the matriculation exams at high schools. The general European level system of oral speech
will be applied for skills evaluation. According to the scale, a graduate of ninth class should pronounce distinctly sounds and intonations of the foreign language, although a foreign accent and some mistakes in pronunciation which change the meaning of the expression are allowed (level 2.1. – language starting from the third class, 2-3 hours per week).

What about the oral speech in Russian as a foreign language and the researches in this field in Finland? Isoherranen (1997, 31-18), who made a review on Master theses on learning and teaching Russian, one concluded that in Finland the Russian oral speech has been studied insufficiently, although in practical teaching and in textbooks one can find plenty of examples of difficulties in pronunciation in Russian (for instance, Mäkilä and de Silva 1996, Perho 1997). The first contrastive studies on the phonetic bases of the Russian and Finnish languages based on pronunciation by university students were made by Lyubimova in 1988. Later, in 1999 the similar research was made by de Silva at the University of Jyväskylä. Both the results indicated that the Finns make mistakes in pronunciation of soft (that is palatalized) and voiced consonants, as well as of all affricates and sibilants. The negative interference of the mother Finnish language especially reveals in incorrect pronunciation of the Russian interrogative constructions without an interrogative word. In 2003, Kuosmainen and de Silva started the research of the difficulties that the Finnish students meet in pronunciation of the Russian interrogative intonation.

All the above mentioned studies were made on the basis of the language material of university students in Finland. The first research on the Russian pronunciation based on the language material of the Finnish schoolchildren was completed in 2001 (Kuikka). The research was carried out at the Imatra unit of the School of Eastern Finland in the town of Imatra.

**The School of Eastern Finland**

The School of Eastern Finland (further ISK) was founded in 1997 on the decision of the Ministry of Education of Finland with the aim to develop study of the Russian language and culture in Eastern Finland. The School of Eastern Finland is the only language school located outside the capital of Finland. The school is situated in three towns close to the Russian border: in Lappeenranta, Imatra and Joensuu.
There are five classes of secondary school (from 5th to 9th) and three classes of high school (lukio) in the ISK. To the 5th class of the school those schoolchildren are admitted who have studied during four years in another Finnish or Russian school. Those who enter the ISK are divided into the following groups: the 1st group – Finnish schoolchildren; the 2nd group – schoolchildren-immigrants from Russia and the former USSR; the 3rd group – children whose home language is Russian but who were born in Finland, and the 4th group – children from mixed (Finnish-Russian) families.

The objective of the ISK is working bilingualism (Finnish-Russian) after graduation of secondary school. On the example of the 1st group, or Finnish schoolchildren, this means that during five years of study (from the fifth to the ninth class) a pupil’s Russian language (both written and oral) should develop from the zero level over the level of extended language (A-language). A pupil should also have a good command of one’s own mother language.

At the School of Eastern Finland the Finnish and Russian languages are taught as a mother and a foreign language. In addition the Finns study also English. Besides a Russian lesson there is one more lesson on the Russian topic once a week in every class from the fifth to the ninth. The topics for each class are chosen according to the plan. For example, the fifth class pupils study the sights of Saint Petersburg; the ninth class pupils study the sights of Moscow. Pupils in Russian-Finnish pairs make wallpapers about cities in the Russian language. They present them to the class preferably in Russian. There is also a practice of teaching some subjects in Russian as a foreign language, for example, at biology lessons in the fifth class teaching some of the material is given in Russian for 10-15 minutes.

The purpose and the outline of the study

At the moment of entering the ISK the Finnish schoolchildren do not know any Russian. As mentioned the oral Russian speech of Finnish primary school pupils had not been studied until the research done at the Imatra unit of the ISK.

The purpose of the study was to investigate how the Russian pronunciation of the fifth class pupils, who start learning Russian at the ISK from the zero level, develops during the first year. By pronunciation is implied a command of sibilants and affricates.
The major objectives of the study were the following.
1. How the pupils learn to pronounce the sibilants and affricates?
2. What are difficulties they face with at that?
3. How the obtained results could be applied in planning and development of teaching the Russian language to Finns?

The study material was collected at the aforementioned school in three fifth classes at the Russian lessons during the following school-years: 1997-1998 (n = 22), 1998-1999 (n = 11) and 1999-2000 (n = 13). Six oral tests (two in each class) were carried out in the beginning and at the end of each school-year.

The theoretical basis of the study consists of the general description of the sound and intonation system of the Russian language, interference of the Finnish language, and the theory of foreign language teaching: motor theory, theory of distinctive differences. The major empirical study problem was the development of pronunciation of the Russian language sounds and interrogative intonations, which in most case do not occur in the Finnish language. For estimating the difficulties in pronunciation a percentage of mistakes was calculated, and on its basis the test material was classified according to the level of difficulty.

Some results

The study indicated that for the Finnish fifth-class pupils the main difficulty is the articulation place of the Russian sibilants and affricates, and their voiceness/voicelessness. For example, front-palate sibilants and were often pronounced as dental sibilants and . The inverse replacement of dental consonants by front-palate consonants occurred much more seldom. Under the influence of the negative interference of the mother Finnish language the pupils pronounced the Russian cacuminal sibilants and dorsal sibilants as apical ones.

The place of articulation of the dental affricate for the pupils was easier than of the affricate . The additional difficulty, that is palatalization, may be the reason of mispronunciation of . Since palatalization implies that the middle of the tongue is raised so that the tongue is moved forward in the mouth. This proves correct the results of de Silva’s study and points out that it is extremely important to pay attention to the place of
articulation of these consonants in teaching the Russian pronunciation for adult Finns.

The opposition of consonants to voiced and unvoiced and soft and hard ones is a distinctive feature in the Russian language. Pupils often mispronounced the voiced ж (живешь) and з (зовут) as unvoiced ш and с. Sometimes an unvoiced consonant was substituted for a voiced one, for example, in the word смотрю. The research made by Lyubimova showed that adult Finns pronounce the unvoiced Russian consonants as if making them partly voiced. This is explained by the fact that consonants in the Finnish language are mainly half voiced.

Hard consonants were pronounced as soft and vice versa. For example, under the influence of the Russian spelling pupils pronounced the last hard consonant ж in the word говоришь as soft с or и. The inverse mixing was noticed when soft affricate ч (очень) was pronounced as hard ц. The results of this study indicated that the way of articulation does not cause problems for Finnish schoolchildren. The sibilants were not substituted for affricates; no vice verse substitution occurred. Thus, according to the results of the study, on the segmental level the place of articulation of consonants and their opposition to voiced and unvoiced are specific difficulties for Finns.

Besides articulation interference of the Finnish language, the surrounding of this or that sound is the reason of mispronunciation. If several difficult sounds occur one after another in the same sentence, more mistakes are made for each of them than if they occurred in short sentences and were the only difficult in their way. In this case we face with a serious pedagogical challenge. Traditionally, sibilants are taught in minimum pairs like жар/шар, when a pupil can focus on pronunciation of one difficult sound. From the viewpoint of communication frequency of this kind of pairs in everyday communication of schoolchildren is rare. Today the importance of communicative aspect is emphasized and this is right, but from our point of view at the same time this makes teaching pronunciation more difficult. From the very beginning of learning schoolchildren have to pronounce sentences which are interesting from the viewpoint of communication, but difficult for pronunciation, for example like Где ты живешь?

During the first year of study in the fifth class phonetic exercises are necessary in the beginning of every lesson. Imitation of a teacher is not efficient since there is no communicative sense of purpose. Teaching in a
linguaphone studio would be more effective, but it was not possible to use it in Imatra because there is no such class. A pupil should not only pronounce, but also listen to and compare own phonetic records with the original. By comparing a pupil learns to recognise and distinguish the Russian sounds and intonations. And this affects positively in development of pronunciation.

In the conclusion, one can emphasize that at the School of Eastern Finland the aim of teaching pronunciation at the early stage is teaching of such pronunciation, which later would not make difficult communication of a pupil who speaks Russian as a foreign language. From that point of view, a pupil’s Finnish accent may remain as long as it does not interfere with communication.

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Zhanna Voinova

TEACHING ENGLISH TO ADULT LEARNERS
AS A MEANS OF THEIR INTEGRATION
ON THE GLOBAL SOCIETY

The present article sums up the experience of teaching English to non-English secondary school teachers at the Department of Post-Diploma Education at Karelian State Pedagogical University during the period of January 2002–March 2004. Non-English secondary school teachers were retrained to be qualified to teach English at elementary and comprehensive schools or/and interpret for specific purposes. This is the first-time experience of teaching English to such a category of language learners in the Republic of Karelia by means of an on-job language-learning program.

The target group included 20 secondary school teachers (two groups 10 people in each group) of elementary school, the Russian Language and Literature, Math, Chemistry and Biology from Petrozavodsk and its suburbs. Professor Pekka Zaikov, the Head of the Karelian Language Department at Petrozavodsk State University, the Chairperson of National Policy Committee of the Republic of Karelia; Professor Ludmila Vласова, The Dean of the Preschool Education Department at Karelian State Pedagogical University; Svetlana Glants, the education development center methodologist also participated in this course as language students. The age of learners in this language group varied from 26 to 53.

A two- year and half on-job the English language-learning program included learning different aspects of English such as grammar, phonetics, conversation, English and American Literature, British and American Studies, the English Language Teaching Methodology and Linguistics. The highly qualified English Language Department instructors (professors and docents) conducted teaching. The curriculum based on the English Language Department program and adapted for this particular category of learners offered practical classes (10 hours a week), lectures and seminars in theoretical courses (2 hours a week respectively). At the end of each
term, students wrote term papers and took oral English exam. At the end of the training course students had student teaching for a month, and presented graduation paper in the English Language Methodology.

Let me describe in a more detailed way the English language course teaching methods, principles and techniques used, and some conclusions I arrived at teaching a practical course of English conversation and writing.

Apart from English textbooks for university language students published in Russia, and a large amount of our own materials as handouts I also used such textbooks as:

- Prodromou L. Grammar and Vocabulary for First Certificate, Longman, 1999
- Wellman G. The Heinemann English Word builder, Heinemann, 1990

The majority of learners admitted to the program had some prior experience of learning English either at school or at the university. However, in the course of our teaching I made sure that neither learners’ major and their age nor their prior knowledge of English is the main factors of their language learning progress. At this stage language learning motivation, regular language practice, academic attendance, class participation and such personal qualities as communicativeness, initiative, hard work and persistence are of more importance. Just mentioned personal qualities form language teacher professional competence.

Prior to the course of English conversation and writing, I introduced a corrective course of practical phonetics aimed at building learners’ stable phonetic and intonation skills as important elements of language knowledge. I see a lot of sense in arranging an introductory phonetic course as even learners having some prior knowledge of English, evaluated it as extremely low. Moreover, their future work as English teachers requires their having stable phonetic skills and their competence of teaching such skills to their schools students and correction of typically Russian pronunciation mistakes. English reading (pronunciation) rules present great difficulties for Russian learners as well. Our students got an opportunity to practice reading English words a lot during an introductory course. The Introductory Phonetic Course serves to solve these methodological tasks.
The methodological peculiarity of an Introductory Phonetic Course for this category of learners was that apart from introducing and practicing English sounds, I introduced and practiced basic speech patterns showing different communicative intentions. Then I suggested using practiced speech patterns in their own dialogs, which they later presented in small groups. I also encouraged students to practice conversational formulas (clichés), which they first acted out in open pairs and then made up their own dialogs inserting their own remarks in suggested cliché dialogs. Thus, by involuntary learning of these cliché-dials even at the beginning stage students learn major patterns of conventional verbal and nonverbal behavior in common situations in the target culture and get better prepared to communicate with native speakers and handle the everyday situations they are likely to encounter in the target culture/during outside the language—classroom communication.

Such an organization of English conversation and writing course at the early stage helped us to not only preserve language-learning motivation and avoid classes’ monotony, but also to show language learners the possibility of using the language as a means of communication even at a very early stage of its learning or teaching.

The course of English conversation and writing for non–English teachers is aimed at:

- Building and enforcing language skills contributing to the development of communicative and cross-cultural competences helping the language learner to understand and feel more confident in the target culture and language;
- Providing opportunities to learn and practice integrated skills, pronunciation and intonation, bodily language with a variety of activities based on task—orientated approach to language teaching.
- Building students’ cultural awareness that includes, namely: awareness of one’s own and of others’ culturally induced behavior and ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint,

By the end of the training course students’ active vocabulary was supposed to be about 5,000 vocabulary items.

The range of topics selected for discussion is divided into two blocks “The World Around Us” and “Human Beings and their Surroundings”
and implies discussions from “In our own culture” perspective versus “in the target cultures” perspective. The list of topics includes:

- “Personal Information. Family and Marriage”;
- “Appearance and Character. Interpersonal relations”.
- “Daily Routine. Weekends. Vacations”
- “Apartment”.
- “National holidays. Customs and traditions of different cultures”.
- “Food and dieting. Eating habits of people in different cultures. Eating out.”
- “Shopping”.
- “Health and a healthy way of life”.
- “Sports”.
- “Hobbies: Reading, Music, Theater, Cinema TV, Painting”
- “School education in Russia. Teaching as a career. The school I am working at. My professional duties”.
- “Weather and Climate”.
- “Traveling. Getting about the city”
- “English speaking countries and their contacts with Russia and Karelia”
- “Youth in changing societies. Youth problems.”
- “Every day English. Introduction to business English”

The topics enumerated above are included into the language curricular and language textbooks for all types of secondary schools in Russia. Thus, I set the task of building learners’ language skills within the range of these topics. Their further professional activity as language teachers implies their ability not only to teach target language and culture, but also to perform cross-cultural communication acts discussing professional problems with their foreign colleagues. Evidently, by arranging this language course in such a way I achieve its professional orientation.

Teaching each of the discussion topics includes:

- Introducing topical vocabulary and grammar;
• Doing vocabulary exercises aimed at enlarging language learners’ topical vocabulary and developing their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target culture and thus building and enforcing their vocabulary skills. Keys supplied to each set of exercises serve to develop students’ language mechanisms. Vocabulary practice in the language classroom arranged as either small group or pair work or as an individual work provides maximum students’ activity and involvement.

• Discussing topical texts of different types: texts referring to the learners’ own culture, texts referring to target cultures, and texts describing both types of cultures. The set of discussion exercises based on each type of the text has been worked out. Such exercises are meant to help students in enlarging target culture related information, knowledge, vocabulary items; examining patterns of everyday life, cultural behavior and verbal and non-verbal communication, analyzing and comparing students’ own and target culture developing ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about their own and target culture. Going through different sets of pre-text, while reading the text, and post-text discussion exercises learners get deeper understanding of the target language and culture and their own culture.

• Developing and enforcing monological and dialogical skills (mixed ability grouping, small group, individual and pair work).

• Making presentations and projects (mixed ability grouping, small group, individual and pair work).

• Final oral and written topical tests.

As mentioned above, vocabulary practice and oral discussions of the material in the language classroom arranged as either small group or pair work or as an individual work provided maximum students’ activity and involvement.

Teaching this group of language learners, I stuck to the following teaching principles:
• Communicative approach to language teaching;
• Functional and structural organization of language material in speech patterns;
• Professional orientation of every language class;
• Regular revision and systematization of language material through new tasks, speech situations, new combinations of used language items, new speech contents.
• Teaching integrated language skills;
• Learners’ intensive interaction in pairs or groups;
• Using learners’ personal experiences in language teaching;
• Cross cultural comparison (learners’ own culture versus target culture)
• Referring to learners’ emotions, intellect and professional activity in language teaching (expressing and exchanging emotions and opinions; problem stating /discussing/ solving; summing up opinions and facts; analyzing and comparing cultures).
• Language teaching individualization.

In the course of our teaching, I concluded that language-learning effectiveness increases if:

• Students’ language learning motivation is stimulated and a positive learning environment is created;
• Easier tasks and language warm-up exercises are suggested at the beginning of each class;
• Visual aids, language reminders, tables, schemes and keys to exercises are applied in language teaching; learners are supplied with effective language learning tips and techniques.
• Target culture related speech situations of different types are used in language teaching;
• The students get a chance to use the language themselves, acting as “teachers” in class—involving in such activities as making up vocabulary cards, asking questions, searching additional information. Giving the students every opportunity to play the roles of native speakers as often as possible is also desirable.
• Opportunities to learn and practice integrated skills, pronunciation and intonation, bodily language with a variety of activities based on task-oriented approach to teaching are provided;
• Learners’ utterances are productive and meaningful;
• Correction of mistakes is of instructive character;
• Teachers resort to mixed ability grouping, small group, individual and pair work.
• The individual approach to every student is used- encouraging advanced learners’ progress and helping slow learners.

Students’ academic performance and their language progress proved the effectiveness of teaching methods and techniques applied. The majority of learners in the target group showed excellent and good results in their academic oral and written tests and oral exams. Only four out of twenty people had satisfactory results in their final exams (January 2004).

Students used long and extended sentences in their speech, making use of vocabulary items and grammar structures appropriately. They limited and focused the topic, remained focused on the topic throughout, maintained a consistent point of view, and sequenced ideas in a logical manner. Their utterances were productive and meaningful and bore personal connotations. Evidently, students showed a stable interest in topics suggested for discussion as they are connected with their interests and a field of activities. That provided maximum students’ involvement, made their class communication more natural, stimulated language-learning motivation and created a positive learning environment. No doubt, material discussed in class and target culture and language knowledge received in class discussions can form the basis of real life cross-cultural communication, so in-class discussions help learners feel more confident in the target culture and language. It is noticed that possessing language confidence becomes extremely important for adult language learners already working as school-teachers determining their further success as language teachers.

Situational language teaching showed itself as an effective teaching tool for this category of adult learners. Target culture related speech situations of different types used in class appeared to be an effective tool for recognizing cultural images and symbols through sounds, words, songs, pictures, places and customs; examining patterns of everyday life, cultural behavior and verbal and non-verbal communication; exploring values and attitudes, extending cultural experiences.
The experimental teaching results prove that teaching methods and techniques applied helped such a category of language learners not only to achieve rather a high level of foreign language proficiency and communicative competence, but also contributed to the development of their cross-cultural competence and different cross-cultural skills necessary for both successful language teaching and cross-cultural interaction (language learners’ socialization) with foreign partners from sister-schools, thus finally leading to their integration in global society.

It is evident that teaching methods and techniques and specially adapted for this particular category of learners and applied in this group of non-English school teachers proved their effectiveness and are worth further trying with similar categories of language learners.
PART II
Language education at universities of applied sciences

One of the most important educational reforms of the 1990s in Finland was the establishment of universities of applied sciences (former polytechnics). Universities of applied sciences are multi-sector institutes of higher education which were formed by merging the specialized institutions offering vocational education. As a result of the reform process, the Finnish higher education system now consists of two parallel sectors: universities and universities of applied sciences. The main aim of universities of applied sciences is to offer Bachelor-level higher education degrees specifically designed to be responsive to the demands and developmental needs of working life.

From the beginning of the short history of the Finnish universities of applied sciences, professional language proficiency has been required as a part of the degree (see Asetus ammattikorkeakoulupiirin from 256/1995 and Valtioneuvoston asetus ammattikorkeakoulusta 352/2003). The objective of language studies in all degree programmes is to support the student’s other studies and to provide him/her with abilities and skills to perform future tasks in (a) foreign language(s). The basis of language studies at universities of applied sciences, according to decree 352/2003 8 §, is the following: the student must either in his/her studies at universities of applied sciences or by other means show to have acquired 1) proficiency in either Finnish or Swedish which, according to the law (424/2003), is required of civil servants and which is necessary for practising the profession and for further professional development, and 2) proficiency in one or two other languages needed for practising the profession and for further professional development.
The above mentioned decree (352/2003) on language studies determines the official national aim of proficiency for language education at Finnish universities of applied sciences. The requirements for language proficiency are in accordance with the European language policy: each European should have competence in at least two European languages in addition to his/her mother tongue (White Paper on education and training, teaching and learning – Towards the learning society 1996).

English studies at universities of applied sciences represent a typical example of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and Vocationally Oriented Language Learning (VOLL). LSP refers to the teaching of English for some clearly utilitarian purpose. The purpose may be some occupational requirement, vocational training or professional studies (Mackay & Mountford 1978, Strevens 1988, Dudley-Evans & St John 2004). The content, themes and vocabulary deal with some specific area. Frequently, depending on the aim of the course, LSP may be restricted to some specific language skill, e.g. speaking or writing. Thus, LSP has a strongly instrumental role; students need LSP to cope with professional situations (see e.g. Mackay & Mountford 1978, Hutchinson & Waters 1987). In many cases, as in business studies, LSP students are young adults whose English is being learnt at the same time as they are receiving their occupational education. In professionally oriented foreign language teaching the foundation of language education is to understand language studies as a professional skill and to scaffold personal and professional growth (see Bologna Process and Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences 2007, Jaatinen 2007). Due to international professional and vocational mobility, VOLL and LSP have been the fastest growing sector in language teaching and learning throughout Europe and all over the world during the last couple of decades (Egloff & Fitzpatrick 1997).

The aims of language education at universities of applied sciences are in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2003), according to which the aim of language learning and teaching at the individual’s level is plurilingualism. The plurilingual approach “builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which language interrelates and interacts” (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages 2003). Thus, the aim is to develop the individual’s linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have an opportunity to interact. Instead of a deep linguistic knowledge, different communication and cultural skills
– oral, written, informal, demanding and mechanical – are needed in various situations in working life.

**Business English (BE)**

Business English (BE) is a common and widely used term, particularly in vocational education. In the early 1960s and 70s, instead of the term ‘business’, the term ‘commerce’ was dominant, which referred primarily to written communication. Since then, there has been a shift from written to spoken communication (St John 1996). An often quoted definition for business English is one by Ellis and Johnson (1994, 3): “Business English differs from other varieties of ESP in that it is often a mix of specific content (relating to a particular job area or industry), and general content (relating to general ability to communicate more effectively, albeit in business situations)”. Linguistic thinking in the 1960s concentrated on the differences between specialised texts and everyday English, but today important similarities are found in business English and general English. Business people are not limited only to meetings and negotiations, but they must manage in everyday communication, too.

Situations in which business personnel needs oral English include interpersonal communication performed face-to-face, by telephone, or video or computer conferencing, and public speaking, e.g. speeches and presentations. All the situations mentioned include oral communication, but many of them include other language skills, such as reading and/or writing. Table 1 presents in more detail the business situations in which oral skills are needed according to Ellis and Johnson (1994), St John (1996) and three Finnish sources (Mehtäläinen 1987, Huhta 1997, Prolang 1999). As Table 1 demonstrates, there appears to be a consensus on the key oral situations in international and Finnish studies.
### TABLE 1. Situations in which oral business English skills are needed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance areas</th>
<th>Business situations</th>
<th>Business situations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting and one's job discussions</td>
<td>Telephoning</td>
<td>Talking about oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving information</td>
<td>Socialising</td>
<td>Travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephoning introductions,</td>
<td>Taking part in meetings</td>
<td>Social situations, e.g. small talk, eating,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialising</td>
<td>Giving presentations</td>
<td>Telephoning, e.g. taking messages, answering inquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiations</td>
<td>Hosting visitors/ Participating in visits</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explaining a process or a working method</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussions concerning deliveries, installations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tutoring a new employee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Giving presentations and speeches, e.g. company profile, product presentations, fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings and negotiations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common situations in all the five studies in Table 1 are socialising, telephoning, and meetings. Socialising is included in business English as an essential part of international business. The role of general English is emphasized in the area of socialising. According to Ellis and Johnson (1994), there
are three distinct types of situations where socialising is needed: transactional situations, rituals and conversational English. In transactional situations the speaker has a specific aim, e.g. ordering a meal, dealing with taxi drivers, asking the way, etc. Rituals refer to, for example, greetings, introductions and expressing gratitude, whereas conversational English refers to situations where speakers interact with each other, e.g. to get to know each other better. Dudley-Evans and St John (2004) use here the term ‘building relationships’ since the term, in their opinion, expresses better the real purpose of business interactions.

Speaking over the telephone is to be considered an area of its own as many words and expressions are used only on the telephone. It is an area needed by almost all business people. The stress on the spoken word is greater than in any other interactive situation as no visual support (graphs, figures, non-verbal communication) can be used. (Ellis & Johnson 1994.) The area of meetings is very broad, covering formal and informal meetings, negotiations, and discussions. Oral skills are important, but another essential skill involved in successful participation is listening. Besides a good knowledge of English, participants should be aware of the cultural aspects involved in international meetings.

Several needs analyses on language requirements have been conducted in Finland (e.g. Sinkkonen 1998, Prolang 1999, Sajavaara 2000, Airola 2004, Sjöberg 2004, Airola & Piironen 2005, Karjalainen & Lehtonen 2005). The aim of needs analyses has been to obtain information for educational purposes and information on possible changes in working life, e.g. for curriculum development. Needs analyses in languages were carried out in different fields in the 1970s and particularly in the 1980s. Rapid internationalisation in the 1990s created new dimensions for language needs. There has been no change in the most important languages over 30 years in Finland. English has the strongest position of all languages, and then come Swedish, German and Russian. The findings of different language audits show that the most important language skills are oral skills, with emphasis on communicativeness, i.e. getting the message across and coping with the situation despite grammatical and lexical errors, for example. Meetings, telephoning and presentations represent the most demanding oral situations in business English for Finnish employees. (See e.g. Loppela & Paaso 1990, Prolang 1999, Penttinen 2002, Airola & Piironen 2005.)
Oral proficiency

The prevailing approach in language teaching and testing during the last forty years has been communicative competence. Particularly the research by Hymes (1972) and the theory by Canale and Swain (1980) on communicative competence have created an excellent basis for further research on communicative competence. Hymes (1972) as well as Canale and Swain (1980) used the term communicative competence precisely in the same way: Communicative competence covers both knowledge and ability for use. The models of Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980) have been the basis for the well-known model by Bachman and Palmer (1996). Being a language tester himself Bachman has not only developed his model of communicative competence for language use, but also for language assessment. According to the Bachman and Palmer model of 1996, the ability to use language knowledge effectively depends on many different factors. These include the student’s language knowledge, general knowledge of the world, personality and emotional experiences, all of which have been included in the Bachman and Palmer model (Figure 1). For the first time, the role of affective factors in language use is included in the model of communicative competence. As the model is so far the most extensive and diverse, it can be recommended to be used as the framework for oral assessment.

Figure 1. Language ability by Bachman and Palmer (1996, 63)
Personal characteristics are not, strictly speaking, part of language ability but nevertheless have an influence on language use. Topical knowledge, which is involved in all language use, refers to knowledge structures in long-term memory (Bachman & Palmer 1996, 65). When business English is concerned, topical knowledge might refer to the business knowledge possessed by students. Affective schemata determine students’ affective responses to language tasks. The challenge of the affective domain is “to design the characteristics of the test tasks so as to promote feelings of comfort and safety in test takers that will in turn facilitate flexibility of response on their part” (Bachman & Palmer 1996, 66). Language knowledge includes two main categories: organizational knowledge (grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge) and pragmatic knowledge (functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge (Bachman & Palmer 1996). Different skills are united by a common factor, i.e. strategic competence. Strategic competence, conceptualised as a set of metacognitive strategies, is the component linking other components (topical knowledge, language knowledge, personal characteristics and affect) within the individual. Thus, strategic competence is more an ability or capability than an area of knowledge “referring to the ability to process language data in real time and under the constraints of a limited short-term memory” (Kohonen 1992, 20).

Designing oral tests

Oral practice should be a natural part of all English teaching at universities of applied sciences. For example, fluency and conversational management as well as the particular features of oral business English, for example, questioning, listening, and turn-taking, can only be improved by practising. If oral skills are practised, they should be tested as well. The aim of this paper is to describe how English oral skills are tested in business studies at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences.

Testing oral proficiency is a natural part of oral proficiency teaching. Assessment plays an important role in the instructional programme of any school. In the late 1960s, language assessment received an enormous impetus with the spread of the notion of communicative competence. The cognitive approach to learning, which emphasised the role of learning processes, learning strategies, learning styles, problem solving, monitoring of
one’s own learning and self-assessment, had its impacts on assessment, too. The cognitive approach prompted testers to move from discrete-point to integrative testing, focusing on the total communicative effect of an utterance rather than on its discrete linguistic components. Practical suggestions for communicative testing, e.g. by Spolsky (1968), Cooper (1968) and Clark (1972) have survived in discussions of testing communicative competence for more than thirty years. It was noticed that mechanical assessment could not be adapted to assessing oral proficiency because there are many ways of expressing the same thing. Gradually, oral proficiency was included in international language tests as language as a whole cannot be assessed without assessing oral proficiency.

Testing methods
One of the most persistent problems in language testing is defining language knowledge in such a way that the test methods used will elicit students’ language knowledge that is characteristic in non-test situations. Students’ total performance cannot be observed. Thus, the performance to be measured is a sample of students’ total performance. (Bachman 1990.) Tests should resemble real-life tasks, i.e. tasks in which students need oral proficiency outside the classroom. Students should be given a possibility to show what they can do with language (Kohonen 1985). The most common testing methods in oral testing can be divided into the categories of interactional and non-interactional methods.

When interactional testing methods are used, interaction is either between students or between a student and a tester. One of the most popular interactional testing methods is an oral interview, the advantage of which is natural interaction. The method is time-consuming if there is a large group of students (Weir 1988). Huhta (1993) questions an oral interview as the best method to test oral proficiency because the conversation in oral interviews is not natural: The tester asks and the testee answers. Thus, the tester has too much power in the testing situation, but on the other hand, the tester can help students with poor oral skills to proceed with the conversation. In a controlled interview, in turn, the interview is planned in advance. Students are asked the same questions, which makes comparisons between students easier than in an oral interview. Paired or group interactions represent the learner-centred approach to testing. According to Berry (1997), these methods have the advantage of reducing, not perhaps removing, some of the disadvantages related to the traditional
dyad of interviewer – interviewee. In a role-play, in which students are given some role to play, interaction is between a student and a tester, or two or three students can interact with each other. If more than one student can be tested at the same time, it has practical advantages, because it reduces the time to test a large group. Performance testing of spoken language through a role-play has become increasingly common with occupational proficiency assessment (McNamara 1996). Other possible interactional methods for testing oral proficiency are, e.g. group conversation, meeting, negotiation, debate, and panel discussion.

In non-interactional methods, an oral presentation is the most common method in international oral language tests. Students prepare an oral presentation either at home or before the test, e.g. the presentation of some company. The disadvantage of oral presentations is, according to Weir (1988), that students can learn the presentation by heart. Pictures and cartoons can also be used in testing oral proficiency. Students may also be given a task to describe some event or object. Moreover, summarising an article is a non-interactional testing method. It is a method not much described in international literature, though mentioned, however, in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2003). According to this method, two students are given an article in Finnish and they have about ten minutes to work with the text. After that they summarise the article to the tester. According to language teachers’ experiences at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, the method reveals the level of the students’ fluency, grammatical structures, pronunciation and particularly the knowledge of vocabulary.

In international language tests, two to four methods, different from each other, are used, usually including a presentation and an interview. The third common method is a role-play between students. (Huhta & Suontausta 1993.) To make the test valid and reliable, both non-interactional and interactional methods should be used. If only one method is used in testing, it might favour some students and disadvantage others.

When designing tests for business students, the starting points are the nature of spoken language and the concept of communicative competence. Attention is paid to the authenticity of tests in order to fulfil Bachman’s two requirements for a good language test (1990, 356-357): 1) the degree to which the test tasks resemble “real life” language use tasks and 2) the degree to which test tasks resemble communicative language use. The attempt is to involve the students in the language use that they
would probably encounter in discussions with foreign people in working life. Therefore, tests in the language laboratory are not usually considered; instead, a face-to-face situation is seen necessary for natural interaction. An oral test carried out in a language laboratory has many advantages compared to an interview test. For example, in an oral interview test, an exactly same input cannot be provided for each student nor can the tester treat each student equally. Furthermore, in a language laboratory test some features, for example, students’ appearance has no influence on assessment (Saleva 1997). A language laboratory test is also more effective; a large group of students can be tested at the same time. In addition, a language laboratory test is flexible allowing for a greater variety of test formats. A language laboratory test, however, lacks the feature which is of great importance in an oral interview test – human interaction. The disadvantage of a language laboratory test is also the lack of non-verbal communication.

Assessment criteria
According to the current view, oral proficiency can be assessed only through oral testing. A decision must be made whether to use holistic or analytic assessment. In the holistic assessment, common in oral tests, oral proficiency is assessed as a whole, whereas in the analytic assessment oral proficiency is divided into parts to be assessed separately. Thus, the holistic assessment is quicker compared to the analytic assessment (Huhta 1993). According to the research by Callaway (1980), the results based on the holistic and analytic assessment are the same, which speaks in favour of the use of the holistic assessment. However, if the analytic assessment is used, students’ language knowledge will be studied more carefully and thus it is easier to discover the students’ strengths and weaknesses of language proficiency. In the holistic assessment students are given one grade, either a numerical or descriptive grade. In the analytic assessment testers first assess sub-skills after which the global grade may be counted, while some testers prefer to give only analytic grades. The number of proficiency levels is between three and ten in international oral tests. In the European countries the levels from A1 to C2 are used today in assessment as recommended in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2003).

If the analytic assessment is used, it has to be decided about assessment criteria. Grammatical structures, fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary are
the most common assessment criteria in international tests. Bachman argues (1985, 12) that all too frequently students’ performance is assessed solely in terms of the traditional criteria. Thus, aspects of discourse competence, such as cohesion and rhetorical organization, or of sociolinguistic competence, such as appropriateness of register, are not assessed sufficiently. The most common assessment criteria, i.e. pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, and fluency, will be shortly discussed below, together with the criterion of conversational management.

One of the traditional assessment criteria in oral language tests is grammatical competence, which includes competences involved in language usage, such as knowledge of syntax and morphology. Grammatical structures can be assessed in various ways; one of the most common ones is to assess the accuracy of grammar. Grammatical structures play an important role in improving communicative competence. In order to be able to communicate effectively, grammatical structures should be known well enough to convey meaning (Takala 1997). Thus, grammatical structures are to be considered essential also in the era of communicative competence (Jaakkola 1997). According to Jaakkola’s study (1997), mastery of a foreign language includes the command of the forms and structures of the language. Understanding the structure of the target language helps language learning. As to fluency, it is regarded as one of the most central and complex assessment criteria. The overall goal of a language learner is to be able to produce fluent speech. However, the notion of fluency is difficult to pin down. Compared to grammar, there are no rules for fluency. Various aspects are included in fluency according to testers, e.g. according to Sajavaara (1980), fluency does not mean that speech should be unbroken and grammatically accurate in all situations. A good language learner has to learn to hesitate, be quiet, correct him/herself, interrupt other speakers, to complete his/her expressions and interrupt his/her speech in an accepted way.

Traditionally in pronunciation, the production of separate utterances has been tested, that is whether or not the utterance is pronounced right or wrong. It is more and more common to include suprasegmental features, like intonation, rhythm, and stress, in pronunciation. According to Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (2003) an objective is that the learner can actively participate in a dialogue using natural and fluent pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Students may communicate fluently and accurately even though they, when speaking
English, “sound Finnish”. As to vocabulary, extensive and accurate vocabulary is necessary in effective communication. It is difficult to communicate effectively without the mastery of grammatical structures, but, on the other hand, without the mastery of vocabulary there is no communication (Takala 1997). The criterion of vocabulary usually refers to the adequacy of vocabulary, i.e. whether students master the vocabulary of a certain area.

The content of conversational management partly overlaps with fluency and appropriateness of language. Therefore these concepts may be rather different in various language tests. According to Huhta (1993), conversational management refers to the mastering of “rules” in a foreign conversation. Bygate (1987) describes conversational management (management of interaction in his words) with the following arguments: 1) the ability to start, maintain and end a conversation, 2) the ability to develop a topic and to bring up new topics, 3) the ability to take a turn and to let another speaker to have a turn and 4) the ability to signal that one wishes to speak.

**Oral testing at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences**

English oral testing in business studies at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences has proved rather successful during the last ten years. Both holistic and analytic assessments are used in oral testing. The aim is to test each business student by the analytic assessment once during his/her studies at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences. The students’ performances are assessed holistically immediately after the oral test and the analytic assessment, including the criteria of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical structures, fluency, and conversational management, is based on videotapes. For the instrument of assessment, oral tests are designed including two sub-tests; improvising a role-play from interactional methods and summarising an article from non-interactional methods. An oral interview is used because of its authenticity instead of an oral test carried out in a language laboratory. Furthermore, oral testing is a part of other English courses, too. In these tests, a holistic grade is usually given and different testing methods are used depending on the course. In assessing oral skills, qualitative judgements are used. There is no counting of mistakes; instead, attention is paid to the total impression of the language area under assessment. For example, in assessing the areas of grammatical structures, pronunciation, and vocabulary it is possible to count the mista-
kes made by students and points for mistakes are taken away out of maximum points (Brown & Yule 1983). According to Morrow (1994, 65), if the communicative movement is to develop further, qualitative descriptions are much more useful than qualitative listings of mistakes made.

**Conclusion**

Oral practice should be a natural part of English teaching at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences. The students should be encouraged to speak and above all, they should be provided with opportunities for speaking. The students should be provided with good communication skills to meet the requirements for participation in business situations. If oral skills are practised, they should be tested as well. The oral tests in business studies at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences have proved rather successful and suggest that oral testing is worth continuing. The characteristic features of spoken language, such as pronunciation, fluency and conversational management, cannot be tested with a written test. The provision of feedback on students’ performances in the test has proved effective in developing a positive response toward oral testing, as recommended by Bachman and Palmer (1996, 32). In sum, a systematic approach is needed in teaching and testing in order to develop students’ oral proficiency in business studies (Airola 2000). Working around the concepts of communicative competence and oral proficiency, encouraging students to speak and arranging oral tests and paying attention to the validity and reliability of oral tests are major challenges in business English teaching. Good assessment skills require expertise. Theory gives the tester good foundation, whereas practical experience increases skills and understanding.

**References**


Laws (L) and Decrees (A):

A424/2003 Laki julkisyhteisöjen henkilöstöstä vaadittavasta kielitaidosta (Law on the Knowledge of Languages Required of Personnel in Public Bodies)

A256/1995 Asetus ammattikorkeakouluiopinnoista (Decree on Polytechnic Studies)

A352/2003 A Valtioneuvoston asetus ammattikorkeakoulukouluiista (Government Act on Polytechnics)
There is no teacher who would deny the importance of the development of the students’ thinking skills. There is no curriculum that does not emphasize the importance of thinking in learning. There are no textbook writers who would not accept this goal. Nevertheless, there are lots of lessons and tasks that require of the students only reproduction of what they have learned or read about. Both teachers and students readily accept the situation that learning implies memorization of a certain set of facts. Psychologists distinguish:

* **reproductive thinking** “which requires nothing more than reproducing what we have learned “ (Krech et al. 1969, 402);
* **logical thinking** which is fulfilled by applying logical operations and observing the rules of logic, a particular mode, chain of reasoning;
* **creative thinking** aimed at creating some novel product for the individual. Creative thinking includes lateral (problem) thinking and critical thinking (analyzing diverse options, evaluating one’s own way of thinking) aimed at seeking the most effective solutions of a problem.

“If the problem is trivial, the particular method used in thinking is unimportant. For more crucial matters, however, mature adults require a reasoned means of decision making based on accurate evidence” (Freeley 1996, 2). If we want to find the best solution, we have to be concentrated and task-oriented and try to avoid bias and unreasoned conclusions.

There are many factors that encourage us to think critically. It may meet our needs for security, for reassurance of worth, for self-esteem and self-actualization. When we engage in critical thinking, we can have the following intentions:
to make a decision/a choice,
to overcome a contradiction/a conflict,
to sort out facts,
to predict what to expect,
to draw a reasonable conclusion,
to get a better understanding of a situation and evaluate facts,
actions, and ideas,
to influence other people (convince, prove, coordinate, come to an agreement, affect their opinion or attitude),
to react to others` opinions, messages, or pressure.

To achieve these goals, we mobilize all our experiences, apply intellectual skills, seek additional information and evidence, test and evaluate them before we arrive at some decision. All this occurs as an inner dialogue and its results may be expressed to others. Critical thinking affects the person involved (what and how s/he feels, thinks and does), the situation (how it changes) and the people (how they react). The benefits critical thinking gives are those in good feelings, prestige, higher self-esteem, and more efficient behaviors.

We can state that critical thinking performs a number of functions:
- orientational;
- directive (self-determination);
- nevaluative;
- developmental and cognitive;
- communicative.

What does one need to be able to think critically?

- the ability to use intellectual skills (analysis, synthesis, comparison, classification, identifying cause and effect, etc.);
- such personal qualities as tolerance, independence, autonomy, striving for a better understanding of the world and of oneself, for self-development and self-realization; open-mindedness, aversion for biased or hasty judgments and unreasoned decision;
- the ability to apply a broad, sound, substantive approach to significant issues, to place oneself into the shoes of the opposing side and see the situation from different angles;
- the ability to articulate one’s ideas clearly and precisely, to understand others; to discuss and debate on the problems with words;
- the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking, words and behavior, see one’s own strengths and weaknesses, correct mistakes and learn from them;
- the ability to act in new situations, carry out varied activities and use one’s experience;
- skills and knowledge in compliance with the situation.

Thinking is interwoven practically into any human behavior. Communication is also inseparable from thinking. The more complex tasks we need to fulfill, the more creative and critical our thinking is. Complex communicative situations and tasks require a high order thinking which in its turn brings about the usage of more varied and sophisticated vocabulary and grammar.

\textit{Standard situations --- Reproductive thinking --- Simple language. Complex situations and tasks --- More complex thoughts (creative and critical thinking) --- More complex language.} Therefore, if we want our students to advance in their language proficiency, then we cannot do without more complicated communicative situations which require critical thinking.

The necessity to understand and express complex thoughts activates the inner speech where students also learn to use the foreign language. When we discuss trivial topics, our inner speech does not work intensively. When the situation forces us to fulfill complex tasks, we get engaged in a dialogue with ourselves and with our perspective partners. We cannot rely on ready-made thoughts. We are expected to come up with new ideas, express them clearly and discuss the results of our thinking with others. If a student is able to use a foreign language as a medium of thinking in his/her inner speech, s/he becomes a real subject of her/his activity.

\textbf{What can prevent learners from critical thinking in the FL classroom?}

Our observations show that there are different factors that can prevent students from critical thinking. Among them:
- boring texts that contain trivial facts or direct moralization and therefore cannot arouse any thoughts or emotions because there is nothing to think or argue about;
- the focus on reproductive thinking and reproduction of ready ideas or facts. Then the students rely on reproductive memory, they do not raise questions, but just repeat the information from the offered texts. In this case teachers offer drills and other tasks based on memorization;
- when the proposed problem is easy to solve and there is no challenge;
- when there is too much focus on the language forms with little attention to the content;
- when students are passive, lazy to think and show no initiative;
- when students are willing to do the task as quickly as possible without thinking twice;
- when students learn for grades, but not for the thrill of learning;
- when the teacher has a vague idea of critical thinking tasks, is content with the activities offered in the textbook and does not want to set out to develop the students thinking abilities;
- when the offered tasks are artificial, too complicated, and meaningless.

What are the characteristics of the subject-matter which can stimulate students to think critically?

It is obvious that the subject-matter is the starting point for critical thinking. It can promote critical thinking provided that:

- it has an intellectual and emotional impact on every student;
- it encourages students to engage in thinking, speaking, and writing, as well as in interacting with other people (critical listening and discussing);
- it activates the students’ personal experiences and urges to expand these experiences (look for new facts and opinions, generate new ideas, determine one’s own point of view and argue in its favor).
A). The amount of information. We will not think much when everything is known and clear. Students should feel that there is a lack of important information in order to search for it. When there are a lot of facts in the basic material, they are inclined just to reproduce them. “Facts can be restrictive. Knowing less, a person can be freer to come up with unusual ideas. On the other hand, thoughts do not spring from an empty mind” (Krech et al. 1969, 418) when there is neither subject-matter for reflection nor prior minimal knowledge.

B). The characteristics of information. We should give preference to the information which arouses doubt, disbelief, or disagreement. A good stimulating effect is produced by contradictory or unexpected information. One generally shared requirement is that the content should be related to the topics that students discuss in their mother-tongue outside the classroom. Of great benefit are the materials related to cultural issues when they reflect on the differences in the native country and the foreign country. We should leave out those materials which contain trivial or moralizing assumptions.

C). The mode of presentation of the content also has a role to play. If it is presented illogically, when the cause and effect are confused and the conclusion is irrelevant and inconsistent with prior reasoning, then there is much to think about.

The key-concepts of the subject-matter should be presented dynamically (with the view of how it has been changing in the course of time). It should reveal diverse links among different groups of people involved, through their diverse activities and in varied contexts with regard to the students’ personal experiences and values.

The more opinions and assessments can arise on the basis of the content, the more premises for critical thinking and discussion there are. In addition, while choosing a material, we need to consider how many related and realistic tasks can be developed on its basis. The more tasks can be offered, the better results concerning the development of the students’ experiences can be achieved. It will not do to bring the materials that have a very limited perspective for task-development. It is clear that a short-term usage of the material cannot guarantee its complete, adequate and long-term acquisition. What the students do and how actually determines what experiences they gain. The content and the task trigger motivation and emotions (or do not) and influence the degree of the students’ involvement and the achieved outcome.
What are some characteristics of the critical thinking tasks?

The aim of the tasks is not to get the students to memorize the information. The subject-matter gives food for thought and serves as a stimulus and base for thinking. We can observe the results of thinking through observing the students’ utterances in the FL. Each task should be focused on a particular critical thinking skill. It enables the students to practice every skill inside (in their inner speech) and express its outcome (orally or in writing) for the others. When a thought is to be expressed with words, we try to be precise because we want our listeners or readers to get it right. In communication with other people, our thoughts are checked, discussed and evaluated. When we hear other people’s reactions, we are driven to further analyze what we have been thinking about.

What we conclude is that every task supposes a combination of a critical thinking operation and the expression of its result by means of the FL. As critical thinking consists of varied operations and skills, we cannot do with a single type of tasks. We need a chain of progressively more complex tasks. This chain must be applied across varied content and gradually the students develop a critical thinking approach to problem-solving and decision-making.

At first we intentionally stretch the process of critical thinking into a sequence of graded stages. Each stage includes a number of tasks which require thinking and expressing oneself. In this process awareness shifts away from remembering language forms towards meaningful self-expression and understanding other students’ thoughts through appropriate application of FL units. The point here is that “many of the specifics are forgotten within a few weeks, but these specifics at the time of learning are extremely important – they are used for the development of ideas which do stay with us. We use these specific facts in our analysis, interpretation, and associations” (Bloom 1971, 142), in our reasoning. They serve as evidence and as logical proof in grounding our conclusions.

Learning to regularly apply this critical thinking chain across varied content areas, the students become more flexible and efficient. In some time they are able to use it more quickly omitting some steps.

This spiral chain is applied to every new topic that the students learn to discuss in the FL. Each topic relies on what has been achieved before and creates premises for further advancement. Through this it facilitates recycling when the students recycle what has been learned, but in new
situations, under new circumstances, in relation to some new subject-matter. Thus, the students work with the same content in different but related ways. Passing on to a new topic, they use similar methods of approaching the content. They inquire into the topic starting with facts, then passing on to connections among these facts and their reasonable evaluations and finally coming up with independent well-grounded solutions.

Let’s look into a set of some critical thinking tasks based on a text.

**Stage 1** presents a guided introduction to the theme of the text. The students discuss what they know and what not, what they would like to know and why, what questions arise in relation to the topic. At this stage we aim to tap the students’ prior knowledge of the subject-matter and ask them to predict the possible outcome. Prediction sets the students’ schema of the subject thereby getting it ready to attach to a new situation. Schema-setting can take the form of a brief review or brain-storming or web-drawing. We can also offer a short quiz or questionnaire that relate to the topic or prediction tasks based on the headline/pictures. Such activities raise the students’ awareness of the topic, activate language and later facilitate a better understanding of the text.

**Outcome**: the students’ personal experience is activated. We also affect their motivation and come up with a preliminary outline of their further work.

**Stage 2** is aimed at understanding the explicit meaning of the text. The students engage in its primary analysis identifying the central issues and deducing meaning from context.

The text serves as a jumping-off point for further inquiry.

Examples of assignments:

- What questions does the author answer? What not?
- Identify the topic of the text and sort out the main facts (Who? What? Where? When? How?).
- Fill out a related table or a spider-web (Group the facts).
- Define the main concepts.
- Write down a few key-words and describe the main facts (events, characters).
- Choose the right answers (a multiple choice task based on the facts).
- Fill out the blanks keeping the facts from the text in mind (a new version of the text is offered).
- Make up a detailed outline of the text.
- Write a short summary of the facts that you have learned.
- Group the sentences from the text according to the principle “facts - opinions”.
- Paraphrase some sentences from the text.
- Come up with a few statements that are not true and address your group-mates.
- Act out an episode from the text, but introduce some changes into the situation. Let your group-mates spot them.
- Create a crossword puzzle/ a quiz based on the facts from the text.
- Decide whether the information in the text is sufficient for further analysis. Is it true or does it arouse doubt or disbelief? Is it possible to identify cause and effect? Can there be any opposite approaches or points of view? What other aspects should we look into?
- Look through the materials studied before: what else do we already know related to this subject-matter?

Outcome: the students become aware of the amount of information at their disposal and decide on the further steps to be taken for a more profound exploration of the situation.

Stage 3 is aimed at further activating the students’ personal experiences, putting their values at work and searching for additional information from varied sources (other people and texts) in regard to the topic under analysis. They are also involved into further reflections concerning the collected information. The students learn to avoid hasty judgments without exploring the problem in depth.

- First read some new texts related to the same subject-matter (the students work with different texts) and get ready to share their content with your group-mates.
- Listen to each other and take notes of the new facts that you hear.
- Fill out a table (or some other graphic organizer).
- Sort out the facts that you know into the most essential ones/less essential / unimportant.
- Make up a detailed outline combining all the facts that you have gathered.
- Compare them / or contrast them.
- Determine some categories and classify the information / come up with diverse groups.
- Think of some related examples from what you know.
- Find out what the situation was like in the past (from your parents, grandparents).
- Identify some possible links / associations among the facts that you have collected.
- Identify the cause and effect relationships among the facts that you know.
- Explain something based on what you know.
- Determine some positive and negative aspects in what you know. Rank them.
- Expand on your lists discussing them with your group-mates.
- Think of some related examples from your personal experience.
- Make your guesses/predictions concerning … and argue in their favor.
- Discuss what the problem is and why it is a problem. Give your grounds.

Outcome: The students identify the problem, recognize its essentials and use the collected data as proof. The level of their involvement and interaction is raised. Offering the tasks, we address the students’ logical thinking.

Stage 4 is aimed at analyzing diverse opinions and solutions from different perspectives and looking for well-grounded arguments. The students explore beyond the given texts, combine and transform the collected data as well as extend the discussion into new areas. They learn to consider multiple points of view, confront clashing opinions and values, justify their ideas with reference to the collected data and personal experiences, generate a series of arguments and put them to test in group discussions.

- Brain-storming: how can this problem be solved? (in pairs, groups, or all together).
- Analyze the proposals and generate arguments both in favor of and against each of them
- Try to predict the possible effects of each proposal.
- Decide which solution you find the most effective one.
- Imagine what could happen if … in regard of each solution (chain stories).
- Share your choices with your group-mates and thoroughly discuss them.
- Compare / contrast your findings.
- Identify the strong and weak sides of every suggestion.
- Define if there is a conflict and why you can draw this conclusion. For this, clearly and accurately articulate the standpoint of each side.
- Analyze whether the conclusions (proposals) are in compliance with the given arguments. Examine them for discrepancies/fallacies.
- Act the situation out. Present the opposite point of view in the dialogue and try to be persuasive.
- Rank all the possible solutions as you see them from the most effective to those which cannot be approved at all. Give your arguments.

**Outcome:** the students generate all kinds of solutions, try to justify them, compare different approaches and weigh their advantages and disadvantages. They also determine the reliability and validity of varied solutions from critical perspective discussing different options with each other. In the end they come up with their preliminary conclusion and evaluation. We address the students’ critical thinking.

**Stage 5** is aimed at forming and generating the students’ final standpoint which includes their well-grounded argumentation in its favor supported with related evidence.

- Draw your final conclusion and support it with well-grounded arguments: use the collected data as evidence, look through all your materials and notes. Reflect on you own thinking from the point of view of its clarity, precision, logic and accuracy of expression (we can offer an instruction for this analysis).
- Make a presentation in front of the group, answer questions and react to comments.
- Listen to each other, take notes and react. Take sides.
- Support your evaluative comments with arguments.
- Try to convince each other …
- Work on a project based on your conclusion (it can be a set of tips, an advertisement, a poster, etc.).
- Identify the importance of this problem in our life.
Sometimes we arrange debates on the issue.

**Outcome:** the students express their final conclusions trying to present it logically and reasonably. They are also involved in self-analysis and reflection in regard of their thinking. Through these tasks their personal experience is expanded. We address the students’ creative thinking.

An important part of using critical thinking tasks is the mode of the students’ interaction in the classroom. All types of their interaction are useful: stable and rotating pairs, small groups, circle work, or class debates. We can either combine different modes (half the class work with the teacher, the other half work in pairs) or use varied sequences of these modes.

Through the stages described above we increase the integration of simple systems into more complex one and facilitate progressive development of the students’ mental growth. “Explicit training can accelerate mental development of a person. The continuous, systematic involvement in critical thinking results in a progressive growth in the complexity of mental structures making them more able to cope effectively with environmental demands” (Krech 1969, 386) and adapt to environmental challenges. Consequently, critical thinking becomes a relatively stable ability we bring in much the same measure to every new problem-solving situation.

**References**


Traditionally professional development of teachers was implemented through external staff development activities, such as in-service training, academic programs, seminars and workshops. The results of our study of teacher evaluation and professional development in Karelia (2003; 2005-2006) show that teachers routinely undergo courses in the Teacher In-service Center once in 5 years. There is little needs assessment prior to the planning of the courses, and as a result courses and workshops sometimes are not tailored to the real professional needs of the teachers. To aggravate the situation, 71% of the schools cannot cover the expenses connected with the in-service or professional development of their faculty in Teacher In-service Center or other resource centers. All this makes it necessary to re-examine the existing evaluation procedures, changing the role and accountability of the teacher, peers, administration and a broader community, including parents, children and other stakeholders.

Under the conditions of modernization of the system of general education, teacher professional qualifications and eligibility criteria are being reviewed. The focus has shifted from the professional knowledge and skills to the professional competences and the subject position of the teacher. More emphasis is given to internal staff development activities, which allows schools to redistribute resources and meet real educational and developmental needs of the faculty. New methods and tools of teacher evaluation and professional development are being introduced to the educational practice, including coaching, mentoring, job rotation, study visits, action research, peer evaluation, professional networks and others. One of the methods of the teacher self-assessment and professional reflection is the use of portfolio. Portfolio enables us to evaluate and develop not only the professional knowledge of teachers but also other components of the professional teacher competence, such as the ability to solve professional problems and to meet current professional requirements.
Portfolio is a systematic and organized collection of artifacts of a teacher’s work, which helps to monitor the professional growth of a teacher both through self-evaluation and external evaluation. Portfolio implements the following functions:

* serves as a method of systematic documentation of the goals, objectives and professional achievements of a teacher;
* allows to translate the goals and tasks into achievable development actions;
* assists in setting priorities in teacher professional development;
* sets the grounds for the developmental discussions with the colleagues and administration.

Using a portfolio for professional development of teachers it is necessary to observe the following basic characteristics:

A portfolio should be systematic, tailored, comprehensive, informative and authentic.

To begin with, using a portfolio for professional development should be a regular process. It means that it is necessary to renew portfolio at least once an academic year, and then to evaluate critically, whether the teacher managed to achieve the planned goals and objectives. Annually it is recommended to evaluate which basic parameters of the portfolio have changed, to which extent and how it affects the professional development.

The second important area of the portfolio is the personal development plan. Basically, portfolio is developed for the personal use of a teacher, who regards it as raw material for the professional growth and setting professional priorities.

The third component of the portfolio is the personal file of the teacher, where he or she keeps the track of all the professional development courses, programs, seminars and conferences, where the teacher participated, and which helps the teacher to update the resume.
In portfolio teachers usually reflect their pedagogical credo, set the priority areas of professional development and independently select the materials, adequately reflecting their professional activity. That is why it is difficult to speak about a certain portfolio format. Depending on concrete conditions of a school, on the teacher experience and on the students’ level, content of the teacher portfolio may vary. We recommend that the content of the teacher portfolio should reflect the process of the development of modern competences of the students. Analysis of the documents, study of the teacher professional programs, and focus groups with teachers allowed us to identify the main components of the portfolio and ways to use it for professional development of teachers of foreign languages. Among the competences of their students the teachers singled out the following: functional, linguistic, intercultural, and strategic. They also agreed that professional discussion of the teacher strengths and weaknesses will be more effective if the portfolio materials are used as illustration and rationale for concrete professional steps.

Such a discussion with peers or administration builds the teacher’s capacity to identify and solve problems. Teachers develop a sense of confidence in their individual and collective ability to make improvements. Together teachers look for resources to make changes within their own school. This is especially important for small-size village schools which are usually located far away from the training centers, universities and libraries.

During focus group teachers of foreign languages of the Republic of Karelia pointed out that it is necessary to develop a high level of trust so that teachers feel free to disclose portfolio information about what they value in the profession, how they teach and what they lack. This repeats the results of our study in 2003, when 25% of the respondents identified their relations with the evaluators as friendly and 8% of the teachers trusted their supervisors.

We also analyzed the general attitude of teachers to their professional evaluation. It turned out, that, unlike the general negative attitude to teacher evaluation described in literature in Russia, 42 % of the Karelian teachers regard evaluation as developmental; one third of the teachers solve their professional problems, and each tenth teacher starts reflecting over their professional activity. This enabled us to introduce a portfolio method to the educational community. After we first started a series of workshops on the portfolio development back in 2004, teachers of Eng-
lish from lyceums 1 and 13 in Petrozavodsk and from Kostomuksha have deliberately created their own portfolios. Actually, they have developed their earlier versions of the portfolio to fit the competence format, as two thirds of the lyceum teachers have been using some form of a portfolio since our earlier research. These teachers have successfully participated in the National Project on Education, and three of them became the winners of the special merit-pay award. Internal and external evaluation of their portfolios has identified the main advantages of this form of professional development: well documented background information about the teacher, comprehensive picture of the professional activity, clear areas of strength and weakness, room for perfection.

Potential – Obstacles = Professional Success (Gallwey 1981) So, the task of the peers and administration while dealing with portfolio for professional development of teachers is to downplay or eliminate the obstacles, preventing a teacher from being successful here and now.

References
The population of the United States has been multicultural from the very beginning. More than that, the status of the world economic power attracts there people from all over the world. Such historical and modern diversity has a significant impact on the work of teachers of the country. Curricula must include examples of heritage, values and contribution of different cultures living in the USA in their development. The consumers of such curricula (i.e. students) must acquire critical understanding and respect both for their own cultural heritage and that of others. They must also observe the principles of common fairness. The curricula must not only emphasize the multicultural composition of the US but also identify class activities for teachers to help them provide students with knowledge and skills necessary for the full-bodied participation in the life of a multiethnic and multiracial society.

Unfortunately, there is no or very little agreement between education specialists in the USA on a very wide range of issues relating to multicultural, bilingual, monolingual education or testing programs.

Problems of culture and language emerge at a very early stage of children’s lives. In a series of interrelated studies, specialists from the Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh have found that some children – especially those from low-income, poorly educated, or minority families – are being diagnosed as language impaired not because of deficits in their fundamental language skills, but rather because of the different knowledge and experiences they bring to the testing situation.

A comprehensive study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley of the University of Kansas showed just how wide the prior knowledge gap is between children of different socioeconomic backgrounds. Hart and Risley found that even the youngest children in professional families hear roughly 2000 words per hour, while children in welfare families hear approximately 600 words per hour. This means that by age three, children at lower socioeconomic levels will have heard 20 million fewer words than children from
more privileged backgrounds. Hart and Risley did not find that preschool children exposed to these lower rates of language experienced clinically-defined language impairments, but the amount of language exposure significantly correlated with scores on language-based tests well into elementary school. The influence of parental educational level on measures of early speech and language has also been examined. A team of experts analyzed spontaneous language samples from 240 three-year-old children. Four variables were analyzed – the mean length of utterances, the number of different words, total number of words, and percentage of consonants spoken correctly. The children were also given a standardized, “knowledge-dependent” vocabulary test. For three of the four variables and the language test, the study showed that the higher the mother’s education level, the higher the child scored. Once again it was shown that socio-demographic factors are related to children’s performance on language tests. (http://www.health.pitt.edu/facets/FALL_01/CSD_F01.pdf)

One other important issue is cultural bias in intelligence testing. It is extremely difficult to develop a test that measures innate intelligence without introducing cultural bias. This has been virtually impossible to achieve. One attempt was to eliminate language and design tests with demonstrations and pictures. Another approach is to realize that culture-free tests are not possible and to design culture-fair tests instead. These tests draw on experiences found in many cultures. Many college students have a middle-class background and may have difficulty appreciating the biases that are part of standardized intelligence tests, because their own background does not disadvantage them for these tests. By doing some intelligence tests which make non-mainstream cultural assumptions, students can come to experience some of the difficulties and issues involved with culturally biased methods of testing intelligence. (Dove 1971.)

In the USA today one can witness the battle of two opposing movements: 1) Multicultural and 2) ProEnglish:

1) A multicultural advocacy group filed suit claiming that the exam Massachusetts’ high school students must pass in order to graduate was unfair to Spanish-speaking students because it was given in English. The Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy Coalition (META) that filed the suit in March, 2004 was demanding that the parts of the exam that evaluated students’ proficiency in subjects such as math and history be given in Spanish. A separate exam would evaluate the students’ fluency in English.
2) ProEnglish executive director K.C. McAlpin said the lawsuit was without merit because “The United States has the same right as any other nation to insure that its high school graduates are fluent in the national language, which is English,” he said. “It’s not in our interest as a nation, to award high school diplomas to people who cannot speak, read, or understand the national language well enough to take tests in it.” (http://www.proenglish.org/news.)

The other reason to reject the lawsuit is fairness. The requirement to take the exam in English is the same for Spanish speakers as it is for native speakers of the 300 plus other languages now spoken in the U.S.

A newly published paper from the Lexington Institute reveals multicultural education as taught in public schools today is a thinly disguised assault on American ideals, including the ideal of a melting pot in which anyone can be an American. A major element in many such multicultural programs is an attack on the idea of maintaining a common language.

Entitled “A Primer on Multicultural Education: Unifying or Divisive Force,” the report identifies two types of multicultural education. One is patterned on the traditional model that has made the United States the most sought after immigrant destination on earth. It stresses traditional American values of personal responsibility, hard work, competition, democracy, and freedom. Its goal is to preserve the United States as a free and prosperous nation. The other kind teaches that all things European are inherently “oppressive”, and therefore rejects assimilation into historic American culture in favor of maintaining separate ethnic, cultural and linguistic identities. It demeans American values and promotes grievances by dividing students according to race and sex into “oppressor” or “oppressed” categories. It then indoctrinates both groups by teaching only the negative aspects of American history. Its goal is to transform the United States into the unexceptional province of a global police state similar to Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World.”

Pushed by organizations like the National Education Union (NEA) and the National Association for Multilingual Education (NAME), the second model has been gaining ascendancy in U.S. public schools during the last forty years according to the report. These groups use their institutional control to rigidly enforce their doctrine throughout the educational system.
Appearing at an Iowa campaign event in the fall of 2006, Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney reiterated his strong stand in favor of English immersion techniques for teaching non-English speaking students: “If you’re going to be successful in America, you have to speak the language of the land.” Gov. Romney is one of the well-known political leaders in the country to back English immersion instead of politically correct “bilingual education” programs that have failed to teach English to non-English speaking students for more than thirty years.

According to K.C. McAlpin: “Taxpayer dollars would be far better spent supporting programs to teach LEP (Little English Proficient) persons English, thereby improving their skills and freeing them of the need for language services for the rest of their lives.” (http://www.proenglish.org/news)

The above mentioned language services include, for instance, the use of interpreters and translators. Most experts agree that children should not be used as interpreters because of the sensitive nature of information transmitted between adults or between children and adults. However, experts vary in terms of which adult interpreter functions are the most technically and ethically appropriate. For example, there is concern regarding the use of family members or family friends because of sensitivity issues, as well as possible violations of confidentiality. Thus, while interpreters may be needed in all the stages of the evaluation or testing process, the issue to consider is who is the most appropriate interpreter, when to use the interpreter, and how to utilize the information provided by the interpreter. On-the-spot translations of standardized tests are considered inappropriate by experts. Alternative assessment strategies such as the use of standardized nonverbal cognitive and translated tests (when available in the target language) are recommended. However, because of the limitations of standardized tests, other assessment strategies such as curriculum-based assessments, test-teach-test, and performance monitoring over time should also be conducted. Debriefing sessions with consultants and evaluation assistants after assessment or consultation sessions are recommended. Additionally, all information gathered during the assessment process with consultants or evaluation assistants should be appropriately noted and used cautiously.

The guidelines for testing programs are specified in the requirements of the Educational Testing Service for all testing materials. To begin with, the Service states that it produces tests and other materials recognizing
the multicultural nature of the society and treating all representatives of the population with respect as well as providing equal access to its products for all customers. For this purpose, the ETS conducts a procedure known as “fairness review”. It is a sensitivity check where all the testing materials, guidelines, publications and others are reviewed for awareness of the contribution of different groups into the society of the United States. The ETS products must also avoid using stereotypes and language, symbols, words, phrases or examples which are racist, sexist or potentially insulting or negative towards a particular group. (Culturally Competent Assessment of English Language Learners.)

The process of the sensitivity review developed in 1970s and was formally adopted in 1980. In 1986 it included all publications including audiovisual materials and works of art and today it applies also to research and statistical reports, computer software and electronic publications. Later on, these recommendations started to include materials potentially insulting towards the elderly, members of religious groups, gays and lesbians. At the same time, there is a requirement that groups not mentioned in the guidelines should be treated as if they were.

The ETS also sticks to the neutral point of view (NPOV) as a means of dealing with conflicting views. The policy requires that, where there are or have been conflicting views, these should be presented fairly. None of the views should be given undue weight or asserted as being the truth, and all significant published points of view are to be presented, not just the most popular one. It should also not be asserted that the most popular view or some sort of intermediate view among the different views is the correct one. Readers are left to form their own opinions. They claim that the neutral point of view is a point of view, not the absence or elimination of viewpoints. It is a point of view that is neutral – that is neither sympathetic nor in opposition to its subject. Some articles might also contain the mutual evaluations of each viewpoint, but studiously refrain from stating which is better. This sort of unbiased writing can be described as the cold, fair, analytical description of all relevant sides of a debate. When bias towards one particular point of view can be detected, the article needs to be fixed.

NPOV requires views to be represented without bias. All editors and all sources have biases. One is said to be biased if one is influenced by one’s biases. A bias could, for example, lead one to accept or not accept the truth of a claim, not because of the strength of the claim itself, but
because it does or does not correspond to one’s own preconceived ideas. Therefore, the ETS specialists believe in some unbiased and undistorted medium (like a testing program) based solely on facts. They sometimes give an alternative formulation of the non-bias policy: assert facts, including facts about opinions — but do not assert the opinions themselves.

By value or opinion, on the other hand, they mean “a piece of information about which there is some dispute.” Here are a few examples from the guidelines: “That stealing is wrong is a value or opinion. That the Beatles were the greatest band in history is a value or opinion. That the United States was wrong to drop the atomic bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki is a value or opinion. Where we might want to state an opinion, we convert that opinion into a fact by attributing the opinion to someone. So, rather than asserting, “The Beatles were the greatest band,” we can say, “Most Americans believe that the Beatles were the greatest band,” which is a fact verifiable by survey results, or “The Beatles had many songs that made the Billboard Hot 100” which is also fact. In the first instance we assert an opinion; in the second and third instances we “convert” that opinion into fact by attributing it to someone.”

But even in presenting an opinion according to these guidelines it is important to bear in mind that there are disagreements about how opinions are best stated; sometimes, it will be necessary to qualify the description of an opinion or to present several formulations, simply to arrive at a solution that fairly represents all the leading views of the situation. But it is not enough just to say that we should state facts and not opinions. When asserting a fact about an opinion, it is important also to assert facts about competing opinions, and to do so without implying that any one of the opinions is correct. It is also generally important to give the facts about the reasons behind the views, and to make it clear who holds them.

Articles about art, artists, and other creative topics (e.g., musicians, actors, books, etc.) have tended toward the effusive. We might not be able to agree that so-and-so is the greatest guitar player in history, but it may be important to describe how some artist or some work has been received by the general public or by prominent experts. For instance, that Shakespeare is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest playwrights of the English language is a bit of knowledge that one should learn from an encyclopedia. However, in the interests of neutrality, one should also learn that a number of scholars argue that there are strong cases being made that the author of much of the work still attributed to Shakespeare was one of
his contemporaries, such as the Earl of Oxford or Christopher Marlowe. Therefore, according to ETS, hardly anyone can be called “great”, “distinguished” or “widely acknowledged” as long as there is the slightest doubt about it. The next step from here is to label Shakespeare and the likes of him “great white dead” and not to read them at all.

There are criteria according to which the fairness review should be conducted. For instance, all publications and testing materials should represent relevant population groups and observe the balance or representation according to sex. This means that no race, ethnic or gender group must be represented at the expense of another one. Serious attention is paid to the tone of the document or material. Elitist, condescending, sarcastic, demeaning or provocative tone is unacceptable. For example, the use of words such as polo or regatta is not permitted since these terms are known only to a particular socio-economic group and are therefore elitist. Mentions of women such as woman lawyer or little woman are condescending and therefore unacceptable because they imply that women are not full-fledged members of society. (Overview: ETS Fairness Review 1998.)

Such requirements, according to their authors pursuing a noble goal of justice and equality, at the same time are akin to censorship of textbooks, books and learning materials.

Language and cultural differences do not only concern teachers and examiners. Language is just one example of the cultural differences people face. Even though the world may be getting smaller due to growing communication possibilities and information transfers, cultural differences don’t just vanish into the air. Some cultural differences may not appear to make sense. But just as some people might wonder why it is improper to show the soles of their shoes in certain countries, others may question the Finnish custom of beating ourselves with a packet of branches in a steam-filled room. A more productive approach is to take time to learn about different cultures in order to offer the best possible solutions. (http://www.forum.nokia.com/main/html_readers/usability_culturally_speaking.html)
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Approaches to learning a foreign language together with its culture and development of the students’ ability to orient in a target language culture are becoming more and more widespread in the practice of teaching foreign languages in Russia and abroad. One of the goals of teaching a foreign language nowadays is the development of intercultural competence of the learners, which implies the ability to compare two cultures (one’s own and the target language culture) on the cultural-contrast basis.

Intercultural competence promotes mutual understanding in the process of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is understood as adequate interaction of two participants belonging to different cultures in the act of communication. Another important goal of teaching a foreign language is the development of the learners, able to participate in intercultural communication. Education in the context of the “dialogue of cultures” enables them to learn the target language culture and through comparison to become aware of the peculiarities of their own culture and panhuman values. Dialogue of cultures includes knowledge of one’s own culture and the foreign culture.

Development of intercultural competence takes place when learners participate in the dialogue of cultures on the basis of mutual respect, tolerance to cultural differences and dealing with cultural barriers. Cultural approach to education is implemented through learning major components of a foreign culture, such as ideas, customs, life style, thinking, national mentality and cultural achievements of certain social strata.

When a cultural component is incorporated in the educational content, certain principals should be taken in consideration, among them:
1) principle of cultural appropriacy, which implies adequacy and importance of the cultural material from the point of view of age peculiarities and communicative and cognitive abilities of the learners;

2) principle of productiveness, which directs education at getting a certain practical product, at developing critical thinking of the learners;

3) multicultural principle, which means that education potentially reflects the culture and creates conditions for the cultural tolerance of the learners;

4) principle of the dialogue of cultures and civilizations, aiming learners at the comparison of two cultures and at the development of such qualities as readiness for communication, socio-cultural tact, tolerance to others.

A modern person, who knows a foreign language, is involved in the process of communication with the representatives of other cultures. In this connection, a learner of a foreign language needs not only to know Grammar, have rich vocabulary and proper pronunciation, but to develop intercultural competence, which implies the ability to set contacts with the representatives of other cultures and the knowledge of their life styles. This competence includes the following components:

1) different skills (to behave properly during the contact with the representatives of other cultures, to interpret their non-verbal messages);

2) versatile knowledge (knowledge of national and cultural peculiarities, value system in one’s native and foreign culture; knowledge of the political, social and economic system, of cultural achievements in the countries of the foreign language);

3) skills of using social expressions and clichés.

Modern methods of teaching foreign languages provide various ways of learning facts of a different culture. One of the time-proven techniques is the use of authentic texts, which contain socio-cultural information about the countries of the language and help to become aware of the peculiarities of a different culture.
As an example of teaching culture through reading we propose the authentic text in German by Rudolf Otto Wiemer “Words - feelings”, which is a great example of concrete poetry, and the corresponding exercises to train intercultural competence. These exercises will enable the learners to enrich their knowledge of the German-speaking countries and their rich culture; to compare their own culture with the foreign one; to identify similarities and differences; to interpret the values, to respect the representatives of the different culture and to be tolerant to them.

Empfindungswörter
Aha die deutschen                     nanu die deutschen
ei die deutschen                      oho die deutschen
hurra die deutschen                   hm die deutschen
pfui die deutschen                    nein die deutschen
ach die deutschen                     ja ja die deutschen

We propose the following tasks to this text:
I. Introductory activities.
1) Read the title of the text. How do you understand the word “feeling”?
2) Try to explain the meaning of the term “Words-feelings”. In which situations do you use the following interjections: aha, ei, hurra, pfui, ach, nanu, oho, hm, ja ja ?
3) The text deals with Germany. What are your associations with the word “Germany”?
4) In your opinion, what could the author write about this country?

II. Main activities.
1) Read the text. What surprised you in this poem?
2) Try to guess the positive or negative coloring of each interjection.
3) Learn the meaning of each interjection. Do you feel the same?
   Aha – surprise                      nanu – surprise
   Hurra – admiration                  oho – admiration
   Pfui – disgust                      hm – agreement
   Ach – regret                        nein – denial
4) Try to guess: Who speaks in the text? To whom? In which situations is it appropriate to react this way?
5) In a situation of your own use each of the interjections.
6) Which events in the history of Germany could you characterize?

III. Post-activities.
1) Which interjections would you use in your culture? Why?
2) Write a similar poem about your culture.

It is obvious that even such a short text enables the learners not only to enlarge their vocabulary, but to learn some certain cultural facts and historical events from their own country and the country of the language they learn.
Nowadays nobody argues the fact that education is more than just a certain amount of information committed to memory. It is also intellectual and emotional development of the learner, acquisition of independent learning skills. All these are part of professional competence of future English teachers.

When students start learning methods of teaching foreign languages they may be (and often are) overwhelmed by the amount of information and facts they have to assimilate. And the amount is sometimes so big many students don't try or they don't know how to process this information, to structure it, to present it as a plan, table or model. So they see the solution in learning everything by heart which does more harm than good because they don't think it over and their mind doesn't take part in the process. Later they have trouble in putting this information to practical use: when they prepare lesson plans, conduct lessons or work with school textbooks.

What I try to do when presenting some new topic to students or asking them to prepare some material for seminars is to teach students to use different sorts of diagrams to break the text they work with into smaller parts and work out how they relate to each other. In other words students have to establish the hierarchy of facts and ideas and present them graphically. The diagrams that I use in the course of teaching methods are mind-maps (or spider-grams) and Venn diagrams.

**Mind maps** are usually used to make a clear and coherent picture of a big complex topic, like *Reading* or *Listening*. The basic technique is to divide a big block of information that represents a topic into smaller components repeatedly till we come to lists of key words which represent the contents of the topic. One has to bear in mind that the dividing process is not random; everything in the diagram must be symmetrical and
balanced. When you go to the next level of division it is necessary to make sure that the smaller components cover the whole contents of the bigger one. When students work on a diagram, they are alternately engaged in such intellectual activities as classifying, ranking, distinguishing, ordering which help them to assess the information critically.

Diagrams are used differently and for different purposes and teaching students to draw diagrams to illustrate some material usually takes several steps or stages. What differentiates the stages from each other is the gradually diminishing role of the teacher and lessening of his/her control and growing autonomy of students in performing the tasks. The students go from viewing (in demonstration) through active participating (in practice) to independently working on projects (in application).

- **Demonstration.**
  Before asking students to do the task the teacher must show them how to do it. Demonstration takes different forms:
  - the teacher presents a diagram and uses it during the lecture/explanation as an illustration,
  - the teacher works on the diagram while giving the lecture. Students may be involved in the process but with the teacher’s instructions and under the teacher’s guidance.
  The main goal of this stage is to give students enough examples and ideas to think over.

- **Practice**
  The most suitable tasks at this stage will be:
  - the teacher organizes the discussion of the topic by the whole group/several smaller groups, students try to determine the hierarchy of the structural elements, make lists of key words, decide which type of diagram is suitable for their presentation (mind-map or Venn diagram), fill in the texts into the diagram with blank boxes prepared and given to students by the teacher; (the teacher determines the format of work and the end product)
The task: fill in the text and develop the diagram further

- the teacher gives the introduction to the topic, draws the central element of the topic on the chalkboard. The students are divided into groups and each group works on a part of the diagram. After the task in groups is done the students again work together, complete the diagram, comment on it, explain their choices, etc., (the teacher determines the format of the starting point of the diagram, then the students work independently, the concluding stage is organized by the teacher but the teacher does not impose his/her opinion on the students),

- the students review the material at home (the text of the lecture, a chapter in the textbook, an article in a journal - it must the same material for everybody), draw diagrams (individually or in groups), in class one group presents their diagram to the whole class and comments on the structure, the teacher organizes the discussion, other groups offer their commentaries, critical remarks, suggestions of better wording and structuring, etc., the teacher asks the students who offer suggestions to always to explain the reason behind their suggestions. After discussing all ideas the class decides on the best one and the diagram may be changed, improved, some elements may be added or removed. Thus the teacher ensures that the diagram is analyzed, different suggestions are compared, criticized, similar ideas are grouped, opposite ideas are contrasted, important facts and ideas are highlighted, in short the information is assessed
and structured in a way it enables the students to use it easily (the students themselves determine the format of the diagram and its structure but they will have to be able to support their ideas with some explanation or convincing reasoning, the teacher’s role at this stage is to conduct the discussion and help determine the best suggestion).

• Application
At this stage students must be well prepared to work on new information independently and draw suitable diagrams. The students make their own decisions. Independent tasks may be used for the following purposes:

- the students prepare reports on new topics, use diagrams as illustration to make the presentation of the material visual,
- the teacher may check the students’ progress by assessing their diagrams, (students’ feedback),
- the students draw diagrams or use the ones they have to prepare for tests/exams.

Venn diagrams are basically the tool of comparison, of determining similarities and differences and making a visual graph to list them systematically. Students may very well learn all about reading and listening but still be unable to say how they are similar and how these similarities could help in teaching both. Very often drawing Venn diagrams is a follow up activity after the students have done mind-mapping on several topics.

Suitable tasks may be:

- compare reading and listening, make a list of similarities and differences and draw a diagram. How can you use them in teaching?
- draw a diagram to show similarities and differences of writing a personal letter and an essay. How will it affect your choice of teaching techniques?

Venn diagrams can be widely used when studying numerous methods and approaches of teaching foreign languages. It is sometimes more important to take methods rather as a group to see the similarities and differences than study them separately. So the diagram can be drawn for two items or more:
- compare *audio-lingual* and *audiovisual* methods. Are there more differences or similarities between them?
- make a list of similarities and differences of *methods based on cognitive approach*. Draw a diagram.

**Conclusion**

- using diagrams in teaching process ensures the students’ participation and involvement,
- drawing diagrams helps mastering the contents of the subject presenting both a whole picture and a hierarchical structure,
- working on a diagram makes the students engage their mental powers to distinguish ideas of different levels of importance, classify and rank them and then arrange them into a system which helps to develop their critical approach to the information they work with,
- using diagrams ensures students’ interaction when they share their ideas working in groups or present and defend their ideas in front of the class.

Graphic presentation of information is useful in many respects: students can use diagrams for preparation for tests, as an instrument of self-assessment, as a form of notes-taking during lectures, but what is even more important here is that making a diagram is not a product-oriented but rather a process-oriented activity: those intellectual skills that students acquire working on methods of teaching will help look for systems any time they work with information.
Higher educational institutions in Russia comprise several types: universities, academies and institutes. They can be both state ones, i.e. established and financed by the Federal Government and non-state or non-governmental. The most common and more widely-spread internationally would be the term university. And although this research covers the students of the Slavonic Institute in Petrozavodsk, the term university will be applied.

The state universities in Russia provide higher education free of charge. Thus, the majority of university applicants prefer to go through entrance exams to enter the university without paying for the education. Non-governmental universities require payment for the educational services they provide. As a result they practically get the students that were unable to show their best at the exams to enter a state university. In most of the cases this means that non-governmental universities get weaker students (that are less motivated to study), which is true for the Slavonic university language majors, as well. Thus, professors and instructors face several problems in teaching at a very early stage.

It is true that whenever, people think of language and language learning, they usually think of mastering the vocabulary – of learning the “words”. This common idea seems to arise from our experience with our own language.

The same thing is true concerning our mastery of the use of the devices which our language uses structurally – the fundamental matters of word-order and the patterns of form. These we learn to use automatically and they are not something that we choose consciously. The ordinary student of mother-tongue finds it extremely difficult to describe what he does in these matters, so thoroughly have they become unconscious habits in early childhood. But in matters of vocabulary the situation is entirely different. The “word” one knows depend upon the experience one has had. A school-child’s experience is much limited in its range. His/her vocabu-
lary is therefore greatly limited. But he/she continually grows in experience and also in the vocabulary that necessarily accompanies new experiences. Knowledge of new words and of new meanings keeps increasing as we grow older and we are often very conscious of this growth and change. Many students of the Slavonic Institute consider vocabulary growth as the main language skill proving the statement by Charles Fries: *It is quite natural, therefore, that the naïve person, thinking about language, should consider only vocabulary mastery, that part of his own language development of which he has been conscious, and ignore the learning of the sound system and the structural devices, that part of his language development which became unconscious habit so early that he cannot remember it.* (Fries 1973, 19.)

As Earl Stevick (1987, 138) correctly stresses: *In learning a new language, then the chief problem is not at first that of learning vocabulary items. It is, first, the mastery of the sound system – to understand the stream of speech, to hear the distinctive sound features and to approximate their production. It is second, the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of the language. These are the matters that the native speaker as a child has early acquired as unconscious habits.* There must be sufficient vocabulary to operate the structures and represent the sound system in actual use. A person has “learned” a foreign language when he has thus first, within a limited vocabulary mastered the sound system (that is, when he can understand the stream of the speech and achieve an understandable production of it) and has, second, made the structural devices (that is, the basic arrangements of utterances) matters of automatic habit. This degree of mastery of a foreign language can be achieved by most students, by means of a scientific approach with satisfactorily selected and organized materials, within their first year. In that brief time the student will not become a fluent speaker but he can have laid a good accurate foundation upon which to build, and the extension of his control of content vocabulary will then come rapidly and with increasing ease.

As a matter of fact one can achieve mere fluency in a foreign language too soon. In the classes of the Slavonic Institute we have often had students who have come to us with knowledge of a considerable number of English words and thus speaking with some fluency. However, their pronunciation was not English either in the separate sounds or in intonation, and thus was extremely difficult to understand. Their use of structural devices was also not English. Such students, with fluency in vocabulary but with no basic control of either the sound system or the structure,
are almost without exception hopeless so far as ever achieving a satisfac-
tory control of English is concerned. They are usually unwilling or inca-
pable of starting again at the fundamentals of the language and building
up new habits within a limited vocabulary. Our teachers do much more
in less time for those students who, when they come, know no English
whatever, than for those who already have some fluency with no accurate
control of the sound system or the structure. In learning a new language
then one must not become impatient to expand his vocabulary and attain
fluency. Accuracy of sound, of rhythm, of intonation, of structural forms
comes first and becomes automatic habit before the student is ready to
devote his chief attention to expanding his vocabulary.

In learning English as a foreign language it is necessary to decide upon
the particular type to be mastered, for there is no single kind that is used
throughout all the English speaking world. The practical approach is to
decide for the kind of English that will be used by the particular group
with which one wishes to associate and converse.

But the person who is untrained in the methods and techniques of
language description is not likely to arrive at sound conclusions con-
cerning the actual practices of the native speakers he observes. He will cer-
tainly not do so economically and efficiently. And the native speaker of a
language, unless he has been specially trained to analyze his own langu-
age processes, will be more likely to mislead than to help a foreigner when
he tries to make comments about his own language. If an adult student is
to gain a satisfactory proficiency in a foreign language most quickly and
easily he must have satisfactory materials upon which to work – i.e., he
must have the really important items of the language selected and arran-
ged in a properly related sequence with special emphasis upon the chief
trouble spots. It is true that many good practical teachers have, out of
their experience, often hit upon many of the special difficulties and some
of the other important matters of a foreign language that would be reve-
aled by a scientific analysis. Usually, however, such good results from prac-
tical teaching experience alone are achieved by chance; are not related to
any principle and are thus unsystematic and uneven. The techniques of
scientific descriptive analyses, on the other hand, can provide a thorough
and consistent check of the language material itself and thus furnish the
basis for the selection of the most efficient materials to guide the efforts
of the learner. It is enough here to insist that only with sound materials
based upon an adequate descriptive analysis of both the language to be stu-
died and the native language of the student (or with the continued expert
guidance of a trained linguist) can an adult make the maximum progress
toward the satisfactory mastery of a foreign language.

Even with such materials the desired result does not follow inevitably
without the thorough cooperation of the student. The student must be
willing to give himself wholeheartedly to the strenuous business of learn-
ing the new language. He must throw off all restraint and self-conscious-
ness as far as the making of strange sounds is concerned. If he achieves an
accurate reproduction, he fails to achieve accurate reproduction and does
not sound peculiar to himself he will sound very peculiar to the native
speakers of the language he is trying to learn. It is much better for him if
he at once accepts the necessity of letting himself go no matter how pecu-
liar he sounds to himself – to try over and over again until he wins back
some of the flexibility he had as a child in making unusual sounds. The
one who can become the best mimic learns most rapidly and achieves
the best result. It is necessary to mimic not only the native speaker's pro-
duction of separate sounds or tones, his gestures, and his situation facial
expressions, - in fact to his complete manner of speaking. The student
must be willing to practice and use the new language constantly – to him-
self in reacting to every situation even if no hearer is present. This kind
of unrelenting practice and use is at first extremely hard and the student
will feel himself bound as in a strait-jacket. But the only way to attain
his freedom in the new language is through this struggle. The more tho-
roughly educated he is, the more sensitive he is to fine discriminations in
his own language, the harder it will be for him to reach a satisfying use
of a foreign language. The child who is placed in a foreign language envi-
ronment attains a satisfactory competence in the new language with amaz-
ing speed not only because he is linguistically more flexible and without
restraint and self-consciousness but also because his language needs are
much less than those of an educated adult. His experience and his voca-
bulary are much limited in his own language and it takes him comparati-
vously little time to gain control of an equivalent vocabulary in the new lan-
guage. An adult student who has already learned a native language exten-
sive enough to grasp and express a rich and varied experience can never
again be in the same position as a child learning his own language. For
an adult the new language will probably never function in the same way
his native language does. It is almost inevitable that, at first, the learner
will go from the new language symbol through his own language sym-
bols to and from experience, but he should constantly strive against such translation and the practice of seeing word equivalents in his own language until he has established a direct connection between his experience and utterances in the new language. Translation and “word equivalents” which seem to save time at the beginning really cause delay in the long run and may if continued even set up such habits and confusions as to thwart any real control of the new language. Constant practice and use of the language forms being learned with free and complete mimicry of the speaking habits of native users of the language must be contributed by the student if he is to make really effective use of the materials that are scientifically chosen and arranged for the efficient mastery of a foreign language.

The practice which the student contributes must be oral practice. No matter if the final result desired is only to read the foreign language the mastery of the fundamentals of the language – the structure and the sound system with a limited vocabulary – must be through speech. The speech is the language. The written record is but a secondary representation of the language. To “master” a language it is not necessary to read it, but it is extremely doubtful whether one can really read the language without first mastering it orally. Unless one has mastered the fundamentals of the new language as a language – that is, as a set of habits for oral production and reception – the process of reading is process of seeking word equivalents in his own language. “Translation” on an exceedingly low level is all that such “reading” really amounts to. Such a reader never enters into the precise particular way the foreign language grasps experience; he is still using as a means of grasping meaning of understanding only the processes and vocabulary of his own language with the added difficulty of seeing a different set of symbols on the printed page which must act as clues from which he must guess the correct words of his own language to be substitutes in order to make some kind of sense. He never really enters into the “thought” (the full meaning) expressed by the foreign language. (Bloomfield 1945, 625–641.)

More than that, the oral approach – the basic drill, the repeated repetitions of the patterns produced by a native speaker of the foreign language – is the most economical way of thoroughly learning, for use even in reading, the structural methods of a language. Only when one has such a thorough control of the fundamentals of a language that he can almost automatically produce utterances in accord with the usual patterns of that
language is he ready to process to the process of reading. With such a control the grasp of new words will come easily and speedily with increasing experience with the language, and reading will be profitable. One never seems to gain satisfactory control of language material by silent study and memorizing. The struggle with new words through a two language dictionary which seeks to give word equivalents in the two languages is exceedingly laborious and ineffective. Practically never do two words (except possibly highly technical words) in different languages cover precisely the same areas of meaning. When it is necessary, in addition to the struggle with new vocabulary, to puzzle out the structural devices in which the new words are used, the task becomes one that but few students can accomplish. Even if one wishes to learn the foreign language solely for reading, the most economical and most effective way of beginning is the oral approach. This oral approach for reading should be continued throughout at least the first stage of the language learning – that is, until the learner can within a limited vocabulary manipulate the structural devices of the language and has grasped the sound system.

Every language serves as the bearer of a culture. If you speak a language you take part, to some degree, in the way of living represented by that language. Each system of culture has its own way of looking at things and people and how to deal with them. This is another goal the teachers at Slavonic Institute are striving for as the students’ main stimulus to study English are improved methods of communication and travel that have confronted many of them with the need for foreign languages.

References
Academic courses, based on the feature films in the original language are quite common at the various departments of the U.S. and West European universities, but are still a novelty in Russia. There are several reasons, including the shortage of authentic materials, yet, the main obstacle remains to be the overly rigid curriculum system which does not encourage the introduction of new, non-standard courses.

The film courses may have different aims, which will define their specific goals and contents. The focus may be on developing language skills, information on the history of the nation, evolution of film art, etc. The course that I have worked out and been teaching for the last five years at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the Karelian State Pedagogical University proceeds from the concept of a feature film as a certain “cultural document”. As such, it may serve as a valuable tool, which helps the students to get acquainted with, and better understand, historical development and social reality of the country the language of which they study.

It might be argued that the overabundance of American “cultural products” in the present-day Russian society makes such a course superfluous and unnecessary. However, my experience shows, that even the students, who are majoring in English, generally lack the deep and systematic understanding of the U.S. recent history, as well as contemporary political, social and cultural issues. The commercial mass-culture products, to which the Russian young people got free access in the 90’s, has formed a simplified and one-sided picture of the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of American society and culture.

These considerations underlie my course “USA Social History 1950-2000 through Film”, which is based on the authentic materials collected during my JFDP and Fulbright scholarships at the George Washington University in Washington, DC in the years of 1999 -2000 and 2004.
The aim of the course is to provide the students with a vivid, systematic and comprehensive picture of the social, political and cultural development of the USA in the second half of the 20th century - with a special emphasis on the life of American youth. The goals include cognitive, aesthetic, linguistic aspects. The course is of multidisciplinary character, integrating the material of such disciplines as Contemporary History, Literature, Political Science, and, of course, various aspects of language training, which are supposed to develop the students’ oral and writing skills in English.


In view of the age and future profession of our students, the course gives special attention to psychological and pedagogical aspects of film contents. For example it’s the problem of understanding and tolerance of the age, ethnic and social differences (“Easy Rider”, “Philadelphia”), generation gap (“Rebel Without a Cause”), causes and forms of youth delinquency (“The Wild One”, “American Beauty”, “Requiem for a Dream”)

The development of language skills is not the primary goal of the course, but it is still an important one and embraces several areas. Through watching the films the students are exposed to a wide variety of regional, social and age variation of the spoken language in the real-life situations, which has a positive effect on their listening comprehension skills. Composing film reviews serves to develop the students’ writing skills. The discussion of the film contents and form which closes every class develops the ability to formulate, express and defend one’s opinion in an open debate.
The course is offered to the fifth-year students majoring in English. It consists of five blocks, each devoted to one decade in the USA history after the WW II. This division is based on the peculiar character of each decade in the second half of the 20th century in U.S. (“silent fifties”, “rebellious sixties”, “confused seventies”, etc.)

Each block starts with the introductory class based on the related section of the documentary series produced by the ABC Company “The Century. America’s Time” (1999) hosted by the famous TV-journalist Peter Jennings. Expectantly, the documentary series offers the American perspective of the political events of the last fifty years of the 20th century. The students are asked to compare this perspective with their own knowledge and appraisals, which helps to reveal the differences and as a result, stimulates the following discussion. This part is supplemented with my own videotaped material which adds to the immediacy of the course (“City Lights” Bookstore and Height-Ashberry neighborhoods in San Francisco, political events on the Mall in Washington, D.C., etc.).

Each block also includes two feature films, supplemented with the excerpts with several others. The main criterion for the selection was the reflection of the Zeitgeist - the events and atmosphere of each specific decade. Yet, the aim is not the mere illustration, but artistic representation and analysis. Special attention is given to the value structure, life style of the American youth. I also strove to diversify the genres of the film in the course by including, psychological and court drama, action, comedy, musical, travelogue (“road movie”) etc.

The screening of each feature film is preceded by the following kinds of preliminary activities:

- Providing background information on the film: its director, cast, perception at the time of release and cultural significance.
- Explaining language and/or socio-cultural difficulties, which may interfere with the full understanding of the film.
- Focusing the students’ attention on the most significant scenes and situations.
- Pre-questions and tasks to the film contents. They include pre-questions on the understanding and interpretation of certain episodes, characteristics of the film personages, drawing attention to the key phrases, etc.
The screening is followed by the film discussion. Each film is discussed from two perspectives: “horizontally” - as the reflection of the specific traits of the related decade, and “vertically” - the juxtaposition of approaches to the similar themes and subjects in the films of different decades.

In the first case the main attention is focused on the following issues:

- The formation of the “suburbia culture” and emergence of cultural idols of the 50’s. The formation of “silent rebellion” of the 50’s. ("The Wild One", “Rebel Without a Cause”, excerpts from “The Seven Year Itch”)
- The Youth Revolution of the 60’s. Hippie culture. The “New Left” ideology of the “Great Refusal”. The search for alternatives values and life modes (“Easy Rider”, “Hair”)
- The danger and consequences of drug abuse and AIDS (“Philadelphia”, “The American Beauty”, excerpts from “Requiem for a Dream”)

The second approach is used to identify and compare the similar motifs, situations and characters in the films of different decades, particularly in the following aspects:

- Youth and the U.S. society: confrontation and a difficult search for understanding (all the films of the course).
- The value structure of American youth in different decades (all the films of the course)
• Family roles and relations, “generation gap” between parents and their children (“Rebel without a Cause”, “American Beauty”, etc.)

• The evolution of youth culture - appearance, clothes, manner of speech, etc. (the most vivid example is the contrast between the hippies of the 60’s (“Easy Rider”, “Hair”) and yuppies of the 80’s (“Wall-Street”, “Working Girl”)

• The change of the role of and attitude to a woman in American society from the 50’s (The Wild One») to the 80’s and 90’s ( “Working Girl”, “Erin Brokovich”, etc.).

• The special role of music in the youth culture (protest song of the 50’s & 60’s, Woodstock Festival of 1969, rock-musicals, disco-music of the 70’s, etc.). The function of the music is discussed in detail in such films as “Easy Rider“, “Hair”, “Taxi Driver”, etc.).

As study material for the course the students use my book “Steps of Freedom. American history and culture 1950-2000. They are also recommended a wide range of additional Russian and American sources on the USA culture after WWII.

The forms of control include attendance/participation monitoring, tests and quizzes and six 3-4-page film reviews (three in each term). The papers enable the instructor to monitor the students’ perception of the video material and to identify the aspects that need additional attention and discussion. The opinions and ideas expressed in the students’ papers are used the following year as starting points to stimulate the discussion.

On the completion of the course the students are asked to evaluate it from several parameters. The general appraisal was invariably very positive and 100 % of the respondents stressed, that they would recommend this course to the students of the following “generations”.

This course was supplemented by the open and free screening of English/American films at the extra-curricular “English Video Club” at the Faculty of Foreign Languages. The demonstration was organized in series based either on thematic (British/American History, screen-versions of literature works, etc.), or genre principle (western, musical, fantasy, science-fiction, film-noir)

This film course served as a basis of the weeklong workshop for the college/high-school teachers of the Russian Northwest organized with the
support of the grant from the Bureau of Culture and Education of the U.S. State Department in Petrozavodsk in June 2001. The course materials have been also partly used in the work with the in-service teachers through the Karelian In-Service Teacher Education Institute.

In our opinion, such courses may play an important role in upgrading the level of English teacher education by providing background knowledge, developing language competence and critical thinking.
THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AS THE TRIGGER OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING REFORM

1 Introduction

The Joensuu University Language Centre has experienced a great many changes in recent years. As soon as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR 2001; 2003) had been introduced to teachers and its descriptors applied in the description of all the courses, even more fundamental changes were imposed by the study reform of 2004 resulting from the Bologna Declaration of 1999. The latest study reform gave rise, among other things, to the following innovations in Finnish universities: the European Credit Transfer System, i.e., the ECTS credit scheme was adopted, the former two semesters were divided into four teaching quarters at the same time as the main part of language and communication studies were incorporated in the first cycle of university studies, that is, the bachelor’s degree.

The contents of the Language Centre courses had undergone several changes and regular updating since the founding of the Joensuu University Language Centre in 1980. Similarly, the social-constructivist conception of learning had thoroughly shaken up teaching methods at the turn of the millennium. The actual framework of the course structure had, however, remained unchanged for a quarter of a century: the courses were divided into separate oral and written courses, the latter mainly consisting of reading comprehension, even if some elements of oral and written skills had been integrated into the reading comprehension courses in Joensuu. It was the oral skills courses, in particular, that were badly lacking any integration of language skills. The spoken courses were usually taught by native speaker English teachers, whose linguistic expertise (for example, native insight into collocations, see Sinclair 1991, 2004, 19) and other special know-how, especially in the area of teaching writing, had largely
been unexploited. Furthermore, in recent years the teaching of oral skills had been more focused in Finnish secondary schools (e.g., pilot tests of oral skills arranged for school leavers), which meant that the spoken skills of university students had significantly developed during the past decade. All these factors combined with the requirements of the Bologna Process contributed to an urgent need for a major restructuring of the Language Centre courses.

This article reports on the new module system of the Joensuu University Language Centre in the light of modern conceptions of learning and teaching. The functioning of the module system is described by experiences gained during its first year of introduction, in other words, by reporting the students’ and teachers’ views on the advantages and disadvantages of the new course structure.

2 On learning and teaching

The reform of the language centre English teaching receives little guidance in the new Finnish Decree on University Degrees (Government Decree on University Degrees 794/2004, section 6.1.2). According to the few details contained therein, the student “must demonstrate that s/he has attained: … skills in at least one foreign language needed to follow developments in the [student’s] field and to operate in an international environment“. This may be interpreted to include the comprehension of academic discourse and the requirement of both oral and written communication skills whereas the previous decree on degrees only stipulated speaking and reading comprehension skills. Hence, all domains of language skills, that is, speaking, listening, reading and writing, are to be accounted for in the planning of language centre teaching.

The social-constructivist conception of learning originating in the Vygotskian school, in turn, provides a frame of reference for the restructuring of language courses. According to Lehtonen (1998, 6; see also Vygotsky, van Lier 1996, Bruner 1996, Williams and Burden 1997; Elsinen 2000, 23), ‘learners are seen as active, agentive participants of the learning process. The force driving them forward is their quest for meaning, for personal relevance or authenticity’. Thus, students construct their language skills and language learning by themselves so that the teacher is only responsible for the creation of a learning-inducing framework, detailed
planning of studying, production of learning materials and provision of feedback, support and impetus.

The ontology of learning and teaching has been the focus of wide-ranging consideration in a variety of contexts. Budd (2005), among others, considers the most important principles of learning to include the following:

- Putting learning theory into practice
- Knowledge and understanding of students and their learning styles
- Benchmarking one’s own teaching practices against best practices
- Development of teaching toolkits for creating effective courses (Budd 2005)

Budd argues that the prerequisite of effective teaching is a fundamental comprehension of students’ learning and factors that motivate them. Analogously with the application of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR 2001, 2003), teachers must have insight into the starting level and knowledge of their students. If students are already familiar with the course contents, their motivation will decrease. Instead, students are active organisms searching for meanings (Driscoll 2000, 376). They need to have opportunities for construing knowledge and tying new material into their prior knowledge structures, which facilitates active learning (Meyers & Jones 1993; Ertmer & Newby 1993, 62; Brainerd 2003; also see Barkley, Cross & Claire 2005; Millis & Cottell 1998 on cooperative and collaborative learning; Budd 2002, on the use of technology in enhancing active and collaborative learning rather than adding content only).

Educational literature includes various lists of best practices (e.g., Angelo 1993). The following seven principles of good teaching, based on more than 50 years of research, have been presented by Chickering and Gamson (1987) for the first cycle of higher education. Thus, good teaching:

1. Encourages contacts between students and faculty
2. Develops reciprocity and co-operation among students
3. Uses active learning techniques
4. Provides prompt feedback
5. Emphasizes time spent on task
6. Communicates high expectations
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.
   (Chickering & Gamson 1987)

Budd (2005) suggested that we should benchmark our own teaching practices against best practices. Following his suggestion, it is not difficult to ascertain how well the principles presented by Chickering and Gamson (1987) as long as two decades ago are applicable to the everyday practices of Finnish language centre teaching. In the next few paragraphs, I now compare these best practices with the principles of the Joensuu University Language Centre.

Contacts between students and staff are typically close in language centre language classes. This is attested, for example, by the number of students applying for Erasmus or other international exchange programmes who approach the Language Centre teachers asking for references or letters of recommendation precisely because we are the only teachers who know them personally in the early stages of their university studies.

Similarly, cooperation between students is underlined on language centre courses which require them to avail themselves of pair and group work, working methods partly dictated by large group sizes but which also emphasize the social relations, environment and atmosphere of language centre courses, all benefits of small group learning. Active learning methods and techniques are also familiar practices in language centre teaching. ‘Learning by doing’ with the practice of different roles, simulations, practical tasks, and independent assignments are all designed to be as authentic and relevant as possible to the students’ future professional lives; thus, language centre studies are tailored to meet the specific requirements of each field of study.

Prompt feedback, in turn, functions as an impetus to enhanced motivation. Brief courses depend on immediate reactions from the teacher so that learning can take place at maximum speed and efficiency, and new skills be exploited while completing subsequent tasks. Language centre teaching also emphasizes time spent on task, in particular, in the teaching of reading. The larger the chunks of text that the eye can operate on at one time, the quicker the reading and comprehension of texts will be. Furthermore, the students must be enlightened about the bearing that time and energy spent on studying intensively has on the success of learning.
Instead of course final examinations, the Joensuu University Language Centre commonly uses continuous assessment in its evaluation. This system of evaluation functions as a self-perpetuating prophecy. Hard work and continuous pursuit in studying guarantee good results. Thus, students even at lower starting-levels may have better opportunities for developing from their own starting-points and passing the course acceptably, rather than by preparing for a one-only exemption examination—and perhaps doing it with too little effort or time. The last point in Chickering & Gamson’s (1987) list of good practices underlines respect of diverse talents and ways of learning. This demand is catered for at the Language Centre by offering an increasing array of alternative ways of fulfilling the language skills requirements. In addition to regular language courses and exemption tests, we offer Internet-based distance courses, multimodal teaching, and self-study projects to be reported by a portfolio. Students have extensive rights in planning and implementing their studies and their feedback, given both with a questionnaire in class and in electronic form on the Internet, is of vital importance for developing even better practices in future.

3 New module system of English language courses

Tell me
    and I will forget,
Show me,
    and I may remember.
Involve me,
    and I will understand.
(Confucius c. 450 B.C.)

Even if everything in regard to English teaching seemed good and well within Chickering & Gamson’s (1987) framework of reference of good practices, reforms were introduced with full force following the path paved by Confucius a long time ago, according to which real understanding is possible only by participating in planning, teaching and learning.

Previously, English language teaching at the Language Centre had consisted of a reading comprehension course and an oral skills course. The former had included different reading techniques, linking-words, affi-
xes, and structures common to academic texts related to special fields. Moreover, students had dealt with the academic discourse of their speciality and written a summary or another text on the course. The latter, the oral course, to be taken during the same or a later academic year, had consisted of a subject-specific presentation and various forms of discussion practices. Consequently, these two major domains of language skills (i.e., reading and speaking) had not really ‘overlapped’ on the courses, in particular because they were usually taught by different teachers. In the aftermath of the study reform effected in the autumn of 2005, the whole of the English teaching was to be restructured into spiral-like modules, which meant that all the major domains of language skills would be practised continuously in terms of two or three (in some cases four or five) shorter modules complying with the principles of ‘university-long’ learning. In this way, the English courses would be placed within a more extensive time span than one or two teaching quarters, which would also bring an extra benefit of easier timetabling as regards the four quarters and the students’ main subject studies. In the following subsections, I explain the new course system module by module.

3.1 Module 1

Figure 1 shows how Module 1 relates to the later Modules 2 and 3. (Unfortunately, the idea of modules as spirals does not come across in the figure.) This is the most frequent course structure in the disciplines taught at the Joensuu University Language Centre. Module 4 is instructed only in the Faculty of Law, Economics and Business Administration; the Department of Economics and Business Administration also including Module 5.

Figure 1. New module system of English language courses
Table 1 presents Module 1, which is called “Introduction to Academic Skills in English”. In addition to an understanding of academic genres and discourses, the aim of the course is to create an academic knowledge and skills base for both written and spoken communication, which then will be made more concrete, practised and deepened in the contents of the later modules. Thus, each module functions like an expanding spiral combining and practising the students’ knowledge and all facets of academic language and communication skills.

**Table 1. Module 1: Introduction to Academic Study Skills in English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>1 ECTS point = 12 hrs contact teaching and 15 hrs independent, subject-specific work (mixed, inter-facultative groups)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>The course introduces such academic skills as • different reading techniques • principles of undergraduate writing • formal, academic style • study, presentation and discussion skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>1st-year students of any field (interdisciplinary groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Continuous assessment. Grade: Pass / Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The starting-level of the Language Centre courses had previously been determined, according to the Common European Framework of Reference, as follows: skills level B2 in speaking, listening and writing, and skills level C1 in reading (CEFR 2001, 2003; see appendix for the language skill descriptions of the Joensuu University Language Centre English courses). The designation of the starting-level means that if the student’s starting level is not sufficient in these language skill domains, then the proportion of independent study will increase from the suggested number of hours. The students will be informed of this fact during the first meeting of the course when the descriptions of different domains of language skills are discussed. The students are asked to evaluate their own language skills by help of the descriptors of the CEFR (2201, 2003) or some other self-
assessment system, such as DIALANG\(^1\). Students’ self-assessment is an asset in language teaching and evaluation (see Elsinen, in press). On the basis of my experience, a majority of university students are able to assess their language proficiency quite reliably.

Module 1 probes all the basic skills and domains of academic communication including the rhetorical structure of academic texts, conventions of Anglo-American argumentation (e.g., thesis statement), differences between formal and informal writing, reading strategies, linking-words and affixes. It also addresses the principles of oral communication and presentation, intercultural communication, discussion leading, and discussion and listening strategies. Independent tasks consist of a formal e-mail message to the teacher, the preparation and giving of a presentation related to the student’s own field as well as leading a post-presentation discussion. Module 1 has been planned to be ‘teacher-friendly’ so that it involves no marking or giving of individual feedback. Thus, the number of course participants may be increased from the regular twenty students when need be and when the classroom capacity allows. In class, work is done in small groups or pairs with the principle of *think-pair-share* in the true spirit of social-constructivism. There is no final exam, but the course can be passed by active, 100% participation and completion of all the independent work assignments.

### 3.2 Module 2

The main objective of Module 2 is to practise and deepen the skills of reading comprehension, giving an oral presentation, discussion, and formal writing, which were introduced in Module 1 (see Table 2).

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\(^1\) DIALANG is a self-assessment project based on the Common European Framework of Reference and financed by the Council of Europe. It is available in 14 European languages free on the Internet (see, e.g., Huhta et al. 2002).
**Table 2.** Module 2: Academic English for Students of (e.g., Psychology and Philosophy)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>2 ECTS points = 24 hrs contact teaching and 30 hrs independent work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis of the course on reading and speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• reading extensive discipline-specific texts with confidence and at sufficient speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• discussing subject-specific topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• preparing and giving a short subject-specific presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• writing a critical summary or a response paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>1st- or 2nd-year students of Psychology and Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Continuous assessment. Grades: 5–0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even if the three modules have their own emphases, the principal aim of the module system is to practise all domains of language skills simultaneously. Hence, the modules could be depicted as an expanding spiral, which practises and sustains the same linguistic and communicative skills during each module – but, module by module, enhances the demands of the assignments and tasks. Consequently, the students’ basic language skills are strengthened vertically at the same time as their field- and profession-specific vocabulary, terminology and communication skills are expanding horizontally. Since the language centre courses are limited in the number of teaching hours, it is only seldom possible for students to move to a higher skills level on the strength of the course, and when possible, this needs a great deal of extra work and effort (see Takala 1997, 93) and also a sound starting-level.
3.3 Module 3

Module 3 focuses on the practice of academic writing, as shown in Table 3. The writing tasks to choose from include a critical summary or reaction paper, a short essay or research report, an abstract, and possibly also an application letter and curriculum vitae (whenever relevant to the field of study). The assignments are subject to modifications according to the requirements of the students’ specific subject areas.

**Table 3.** Module 3: Academic Writing and Presentation Skills for Students of Public Law

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>2 ECTS points = 24 hrs contact teaching and 30 hrs independent work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Emphasis of the course is on <strong>academic writing</strong> and <strong>oral presentations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• writing different kinds of texts (e.g. critical summary, reaction paper, outline, a short essay or research report, abstract)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• letter of application and curriculum vitae (CV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• leading discussion on a subject-specific topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• subject-specific presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>2nd- or 3rd-year students of Public Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Continuous assessment. Grades: 5–0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aim of the language centre teaching is both to make the studying of language skills as relevant as possible and also to assure maximum authenticity in the selection of different task types, assignments, teaching materials and the content of independent work. For example, for a student of mathematics it is more essential to practise the writing of a research report than that of an essay. On the other hand, the abstract, part and parcel of the Master’s thesis, is an important genre for students of all disciplines to practise. Moreover, as regards the students of Finnish Language and Literature, writing is an important tool in their future employment. Thus, the courses of these future experts usually include all the writing task types mentioned above.
4 Student and teacher experiences of the new module system

The new module system has now been in use at the Joensuu University Language Centre for two years. The first academic year was designated as the pilot year of the system, after which the English lecturers’ unanimous view was that the new modules were preferable to the previous dual-system of reading comprehension and oral skills courses. In this section, I shall now report on both the students’ and teachers’ experiences. The feedback focuses on Module 1, since it incorporated more new features than Modules 2 and 3, which were combined and modified on the basis of the pre-Bologna language courses.

4.1 Students’ experiences

The students’ experiences of Module 1 were mostly positive. Although the study reform of 2004 increased the proportion of independent studies in all disciplinary areas, the four new, shorter teaching quarters made it difficult to place longer language courses amidst students’ main subject contact teaching and lecture courses. Thus, it was felt that a small, one credit study unit could be scheduled more easily with the substance studies. Even if some individuals had negative experiences of the inter-facultative mixed groups, it was this innovation that received most praise from the students. In their words, they now encountered students of other fields, often for the first time. A multidisciplinary Module 1 group also posited an extra requirement to the popularization of the subject matter:

*I had to plan my oral presentation so clear that a student in another field could understand what it was all about.*

An even more perspicuous type of thanks was expressed in the following comment:

*Module 1 provides a quick overview of what’s coming and gives a chance to become acquainted with different aspects of academic and scientific communication at the very beginning of one’s studies.*
The same was noted by an apparently more mature student:

*The course was rewarding especially in terms of learning-to-learn methods and it would be good if these matters could be taught to students who are just starting their studies.*

During the transitional period between the old and new degree systems, some students took Module 1 in the mid- or final stages of their studies when they had already acquired a great many of the skills and strategies included in Module 1 on their own and might have experienced some of the course contents as repetition of their old knowledge.

### 4.2 Teachers’ experiences

The teachers rated as the most positive property of the module system the sustained and simultaneous practising of all the four domains of language skills. The knowledge acquired during Module 1 could be applied immediately in Modules 2 and 3, when only a quick revision and referral to Module 1 was all that was needed. Although the Module 1 groups were large, the teachers felt that lecturing followed by immediate sessions of small-group practice was an effective method in the introduction and practising of academic reading techniques, reading comprehension, speaking, oral presentation, active listening, discussion, and intercultural communication. Instead of the previous one or two courses, the module system created three courses so that language skills could now be practised and strengthened over a longer time span, which is a prerequisite to proper language acquisition. An additional advantage was the fact that, at the beginning of Module 3, the teacher and the students mostly knew each other – a factor that promotes group dynamics and the productivity of studying in general.

### 4.3 Problems

As anticipated, transition to the module system also caused problems and confusion among students. Since Module 1 had to be passed before taking the following module courses, this created ‘bottlenecks’:
I couldn’t get into the groups of Module 1, which means that I can’t participate in Modules 2 or 3 either.

The problem was solved by granting permission for students to take Modules 1 and 2 in future in the same teaching quarter. Because of these kinds of comments and complaints, it was necessary to increase the number of Module 1 groups from that originally planned. These problems were seen as those of the transitional period, when the system was still largely unknown (e.g., among the student tutors) and when some students were taking the language courses according to the old system, while the others were studying according to the more regulated, new degree system. One student felt that Module 1 was just “a scratch on the surface towards the skills and strategies”, later adding that “perhaps that was also the aim of the module”. Indeed, at the beginning of the course, it is explained to the students that Module 1 is an introduction to the subsequent modules, and hence a kind of ‘scratch on a surface’. Yet it provides a great deal of information which is then exploited and developed further in the later modules.

Although, from the teacher’s point of view, Module 1 would be beneficial to every novice university student, we also received the following kind of feedback: I don’t find Module 1 motivating. This type of problem is overcome by designing more demanding tasks and more pair and teamwork to students suffering from lack of motivation. It is self-evident that students vary as regards their linguistic background. Thus, we recommend exemption examinations for students who already possess skills equivalent to the contents of Module 1. Modules 1 and 2 are tested simultaneously in a written examination. On the other hand, Module 1 takes only six 90-minute class sessions (excluding the independent work) out of a student’s time, but provides a lot of preparation and guidance for university studies compared to merely taking and passing an exam. Consequently, it would be useful for every undergraduate to avail themselves of the practical, non-language-specific study guidance provided in Module 1 in the early stages of their studies in order to foster their studies from the very beginning. A great many aspects of reading and studying strategies are also applicable to studying in the student’s mother tongue, in which the language centre course may follow only at a later stage of studies.
5 To conclude

Even though the conglomerate of three (or more) separate course modules may appear fragmentary and cause the teacher more administrative obligations than did the previous language course structure, all the teachers of English module courses were unanimous about the benefits of this system compared with the previous one, from both the students’ and the teachers’ point of view. When determining the scope of the language centre courses, an attempt was made to estimate the workload they demanded from the students, which resulted in a reduction in contact teaching and an increase in the proportion of independent work. Although the teachers considered the reduction in course length a disadvantage, it also meant that the placement of shorter courses in the four teaching quarters and amidst students’ main subject studies became easier than before. The best practices advocated by Chickering and Gamson (1987) were reinforced in co-operative and collaborative learning, and in active studying during the courses, when their new, more restricted number of hours place a greater emphasis on the utilization of class time, prompt feedback and active learning techniques.

The most significant benefit from this reform triggered by the Bologna Process was felt to be the integration of different skills and uses of academic English resulting in, as if it were, a self-reinforcing spiral movement that expands and deepens what is learned in the framework of linguistic usage and in the substance of the student’s own field. Integration is the catchword of today’s language centre teaching both in view of the four domains of language skills and the substance teaching. At the same time, the students of the first cycle acquire language and communication skills that help them in the course of the second cycle to take the master’s degree and to meet their subsequent professional linguistic challenges. With the academic continuum, the spiral of language usage is reinforced again in the third cycle, and the same skills that were introduced in Module 1 are realized and reinforced, when necessary, by the courses in English Academic Writing (now termed Research Writing) and Conference English, thus assuring full membership of one’s academic discourse community (see Swales 1990, 2427).

An added value resulting, firstly, from this reform work, and secondly, from the previous description of the Joensuu University Language Centre English courses in terms of the Common European Framework of Refe-
rence (CEFR 2001, 2003; see appendix) was the fact that all the new course contents were described in detail and their work load measured according to the same criteria. This kind of thorough recording of the course contents both clarifies the principles of uniform treatment of students in teaching and assessment, and also facilitates the introduction of new teachers to their work. In addition, the students can now gain a clear understanding of what Language Centre courses have to offer and what kind of language proficiency and which skills are expected from them so that they can gain optimal benefits from the courses.

References


**Appendix**

**Description and assessment of the skills in terms of CEFR**

*Course level  B2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Skill: SPEAKING</th>
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</table>
| **Excellent** | *can discuss academic and professional topics in the student’s own field (e.g. stating opinions, following fairly complex argumentation, rephrasing information, asking for information, challenging other speakers’ opinions and views, and interacting with other speakers with competence in socio-cultural skills) fluently and accurately*  
| 5-4     | *can present an academic/professional topic based on academic resources (e.g. a journal article/own research/study book) and lead discussion on the presented topic*  
|         | *can explain and illustrate ideas, thus showing evident understanding*  
|         | *can communicate spontaneously, fluently and accurately*  
|         | *has natural and clear pronunciation and intonation*  
|         | *has a good and varied scope of vocabulary and grammatical structures* |

| **Good** | *can discuss academic and professional topics in the student’s own field (e.g. stating opinions, follow standard academic argumentation, rephrasing information, asking for information, challenging other speakers’ opinions and views, and interacting with other speakers applying socio-cultural skills) fairly fluently and accurately*  
| **3 -2** | *can present an academic/professional topic based on academic resources (e.g. a journal article/own research/study book) and discuss the presented topic fairly well*  
|         | *can explain and illustrate ideas, thus showing quite clear understanding*  
|         | *can communicate fairly spontaneously, fluently and accurately*  
|         | *has consistently natural and clear pronunciation and intonation with only occasional flaws*  
|         | *has a fairly good scope of vocabulary and grammatical structures* |
| Satisfactory | *can discuss academic and professional topics in the student’s own field on a fairly simple level (e.g. stating opinions, follow uncomplicated argumentation, rephrasing information, asking for information, expressing dis/agreement, and interacting with other speakers with awareness of socio-cultural skills)  
*can present a fairly simple academic/professional topic based on academic resources (e.g. a journal article/own research/study book) and discuss the presented topic to some extent  
*can explain and summarize ideas, thus showing basic understanding  
*can communicate with some spontaneity although not very fluently or accurately  
*has a general command of English pronunciation and intonation, pronounces basic vocabulary and word clusters quite correctly but has difficulties with the pronunciation of more specialist terms  
*has an adequate scope of vocabulary and grammatical structures |
## Course level B2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Skill: LISTENING</th>
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| Excellent| * can easily understand fairly advanced level of academic discourse, e.g. lectures given by native and near-native speakers  
* can understand standard language in clearly organized passages of speech on general and professional topics (even unfamiliar topics)  
* can easily extract specific information from a variety of audio resources  
* can identify viewpoints and attitudes of speakers and interpret the content of a speech critically |
| 5-4      |                                                                                                                                                 |
| Good     | * can understand standard academic discourse, e.g. lectures given by native and near-native speakers, fairly well  
* can understand standard language in clearly organized passages of speech on general and professional topics (familiar topics)  
* can extract fairly specific information from a variety of audio resources  
* can identify straightforward viewpoints and attitudes of speakers and interpret the content of a speech fairly critically |
| 3–2      |                                                                                                                                                 |
| Satisfactory | * can understand the gist of fairly straightforward academic discourse, e.g. lectures on familiar topics given by native and near-native speakers  
* can adequately understand standard language in clearly organized passages of speech on general and professional topics (familiar topics)  
* can extract the main points from standard audio resources, e.g. clearly articulated “standard” language spoken at normal pace  
* can identify uncomplicated viewpoints and attitudes of speakers and interpret the content of a speech in general |
**Course level C1**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Skill: <strong>READING</strong></th>
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| Excellent | *can easily understand long and complex academic texts (e.g. textbooks, research articles and reports in their field)*  
* can adjust reading speed and strategy to the reading purpose and tasks  
* can read critically and identify the writer’s viewpoints, bias and implicit meanings  
* can understand text organization and signalling markers  
*can synthesize information from multiple texts, paraphrase and summarise |
| 5-4     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Good    | *can understand long and fairly complex academic texts (e.g. textbooks, research articles and reports in their field)*  
* can adjust reading speed and strategy to the reading purpose and tasks fairly well  
* can quite critically read and fairly accurately identify the writer’s viewpoints, bias and implicit meanings  
* can understand text organization and signalling markers to a great extent  
*can synthesize information from multiple texts, paraphrase and summarise fairly easily |
| 3–2     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Satisfactory | *can understand the gist of standard academic texts (e.g. textbooks, research articles and reports in their field)*  
* can use different reading strategies according to the reading purpose and tasks but needs some guidance in selecting appropriate strategies  
* can to some extent identify the writer’s viewpoints, bias and some implicit meanings in uncomplicated academic texts  
* can understand fairly standard text organization and most common signalling markers  
*can to some extent synthesize information from multiple texts, paraphrase and summarise uncomplicated texts |
| 1       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
# Course level  B2

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Skill: <strong>WRITING</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent</strong></td>
<td>* can write extended and detailed texts on a range of subjects related to the study/research field, e.g. an essay, a formal report, a summary based on several sources, an abstract  * can express facts and opinions effectively and comment critically on other writers’ views and text content  * can synthesize complex information from multiple texts, paraphrase and summarize  * can produce a coherent text using cohesive devices, e.g. references, substitution and linking-words  * can use a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures accurately but may have occasional difficulties with naturalness of expression and style</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5-4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>* can write quite extended and fairly detailed texts on a range of subjects related to the study/research field, e.g. an essay, a formal report, a summary based on several sources, an abstract, but can have difficulties with naturalness of expression and style  * can express facts and opinions fairly effectively and comment quite critically on other writers’ views and text content  * can fairly well synthesize information from multiple texts, paraphrase and summarize  * can produce a fairly coherent text using cohesive devices, e.g. references, substitution and linking-words  * can use fairly varied vocabulary and standard sentence structures fairly accurately but often has some difficulties with naturalness of expression and style</td>
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<td><strong>3 -2</strong></td>
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| Satisfactory | * can write fairly straightforward texts on subjects related to their study/research field, e.g. a formal report, a summary based on several sources, a simple abstract  
* can express basic facts and opinions and to some extent respond to other writers’ views and text content  
* can synthesize main information from multiple texts, paraphrase and summarize straightforward academic texts  
* can produce a simple text using some cohesive devices, e.g. references, substitution and linking-words  
* uses limited vocabulary and simple sentence structures still having considerable difficulties with naturalness of expression and style |
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Zhanna Voinova

TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINEES SOME ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

The present article sums up the experience of teaching English language teacher trainees some aspects of successful cross-cultural interaction at Karelian State Pedagogical University, Petrozavodsk, Russia.

Language and culture are inseparable. Therefore, it is important apart from developing language students’ linguistic and communicative competencies, to help them achieve cross-cultural understanding, developing their cross-cultural competence and ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about their own and target culture, encouraging sympathy towards its people; understanding and tolerance of people’s culturally induced behavior (language learners’ socialization).

In working with English Language Teacher Trainees, efficient language instruction management is of great importance. Teaching this group of language learners in their second year, I stick to the following teaching principles:

• Student centeredness of language classes to enhance learners’ personal growth
• Communicative approach to teaching
• Content-based teaching
• Creating a positive learning environment
• Professional orientation of every language class
• Developing students’ communicative and cross-cultural competences helping the language learner to understand and feel more confident in the target culture and language
• Building students’ cultural awareness that includes the awareness of one’s own and of others’ culturally induced behavior, and the ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint
• Teaching culture through language and accessing the culture through the language being taught and making the study of cultural behaviors an integral part of each lesson
• Situational target culture teaching (role playing, teaching cultural verbal and non-verbal behavioral patterns) aimed at practicing basic patterns of target culture verbal and non verbal communication and behavior, as well as acting out common everyday situations (behavioral situations): interviewing native speakers/‘native speakers’; holding panel discussions.

To increase the effectiveness of simulations and role playing in the language classroom, it is advisable to acquaint the language learners with such aspects of role behavior especially important for cross-cultural communication as formality; register; attitude; acceptability and appropriateness; the immediacy of oral interaction; paralinguistic features (stress, intonation, rhythm, tone of voice, speed of delivery, pitch, loudness); extralinguistic (features/facial expressions and gestures). Giving the students every opportunity to play the roles of native speakers as often as possible is also desirable.

• Making cross cultural comparison (learners’ own culture versus target culture)
• Using authentic pragmatic materials from the target culture and adapting them for language learning purposes
• Maximum student involvement and active class participation
• Preparing the students to communicate with native speakers and handle the everyday situations they are likely to encounter in the target culture during communication situations outside-the-language classroom
• Increasing student language learning motivation by means of interesting tasks and specially created oral and written activities
• Intensive student interactions in pairs and/or small groups
• An individual approach to every student
• Using students’ own life experiences and interests in their class discussions and activities. In order to provide adequate activities, it is very important to find out not only the language proficiency level of the student, but also his/her interests and needs. For these purposes it is advisable to offer a specially
designed questionnaire, which will help the teacher to get to know the students better and not only become closer to them, but also form an adequate picture of the student’s language proficiency level and avoid any prejudice towards the student. It would definitely expand the language teacher’s impression of the student. If students’ language proficiency is low to fill in the questionnaire in English, they can do it in Russian.

• Developing students’ integrated skills, pronunciation and intonation, and body language with a variety of activities based on task –orientated approach to teaching culture.

• Applying various class work routines (individual, pair work (stable or rotating pairs), small group, teacher-class, teacher-pupil).

This technique helps the teacher provide maximum student involvement, exercise permanent control over the class and increase the effectiveness of student language learning.

• Providing tasks and activities in accordance with students’ interests and their language proficiency level

• Increasing student talking time in class, giving them a chance to use the language themselves

• Regular revision and systematization of language material through new tasks, speech situations, new combinations of language items used, new speech content.

• Using the learners’ personal experiences in language teaching;

• Referring to learners’ emotions, intellect in language teaching (expressing and exchanging emotions and opinions; stating / discussing/ solving problems; summing up opinions and facts; analyzing and comparing cultures)

• Forming homogenous groups of learners with similar language backgrounds

• Continuous assessment of the student’s language progress (e.g. portfolio, regular tests, projects etc. depending on the activity and number of students in a group) and students’ course evaluation

• Creating special textbooks for students of different levels of proficiency
Learning resources used at FLD to teach English Language Teacher trainees include textbooks for university language students published in Russia and Longman English language courses such as “Inside Out”, “Fast Track to CAE” etc. Learning resources are chosen in accordance with the students’ language proficiency level and the year of studies.

Of course, there are no ideal textbooks. *English Language Teacher Trainees Language Textbooks* should have the following features and meet the following requirements:

- Include a Student’s Book, a Workbook with different activities students might do as their homework, a cassette or CD supplying some listening material for classroom and home use, a Test Book (otherwise there should be some test sections in a Student’s Book with progress or achievement tests providing continuous assessment), and a Teacher’s Book to make lesson planning easier.
- Provide editions for students of different levels of language proficiency and language backgrounds (beginner, elementary, (pre-) intermediate, advanced)
- Have up-to-date language, cultural and topical content
- Adjust topical content to the specific bicultural and bilingual situation of the student
- Set clear explanations, tasks and objectives for the students to see what they are supposed to know by the end of the academic year course and HOW it is possible to achieve the best results
- Build students’ target culture knowledge and raise their cultural awareness by introducing authentic pragmatic materials (e.g. toys, money, tickets, household bills, restaurant menus, newspaper articles, comics, pictures, photos etc.). Such use helps students better understand the language and culture and overcome any possible culture shock
- Develop students’ integrated skills and their communicative and cross-cultural competences
- Include exercises and activities to master different language and speech skills and meet the students’ interests and needs
- Include activities for individual, pair and group work
- Provide continuous assessment (progress and achievement tests)
- Teach culture through the language being taught
• Encourage students to participate in textbook content discussions
• Stimulate students’ imagination, curiosity, initiative and their personal qualities (which is especially important if the teacher wants motivated students to come to his/her classes at the end of the school day)
• Offer different types of short authentic texts for reading, listening comprehension and discussion (fairy tales, stories, fiction, poems, non-fiction, cultural stories, jokes (especially those pointing out differences in cultures), functional texts (advertising, travel brochures, menus, instruction manuals, etc.), songs, TV shows, films.

Using different text types prepares the students in performing successful cross-cultural communication acts outside the classroom. Texts referring to the learners’ own culture, texts referring to target cultures, and texts describing both types of cultures are also widely used. The set of discussion exercises based on each type of the text has been worked out. Such exercises are meant to help students in enlarging target culture-related information, knowledge, vocabulary items; in examining patterns of everyday life, cultural behavior and verbal and non-verbal communication, and in analyzing and comparing students’ own and target culture, thus, developing the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about their own and target culture. Going through different sets of pre-text, while reading the text, and post-text discussion exercises, learners get a deeper understanding of the target language and culture and their own.

Trying to increase and reinforce English Language Teacher Trainees learning effectiveness and building up their confidence in successful cross-cultural communication university language instructors should remember to:

• Stimulate students’ language learning motivation and create a positive learning environment
• Suggest easier tasks and language warm-up exercises at the beginning of each class
• Apply visual aids, language reminders, tables, schemes and keys to exercises and supply learners with effective language learning tips and techniques
• Use target-culture-related speech situations of different types (Zhanna Voinova, 1998, 2000, 2006):
a) **Real life target culture related speech situations** based on students’ communication with native speakers in the language classroom.

b) **Target culture related speech situations fabricated specifically for target language and culture teaching purposes** and used in discussing target culture, vocabulary, and humor in radio, TV, cinema, comic strips, and texts containing target culture, and students’ culture information.

**Target culture related speech situations of different types** appeared to be an effective tool for recognizing cultural images and symbols (through sounds, words, songs, pictures, places and customs), examining patterns of everyday life, cultural behavior and verbal and non-verbal communication; and exploring values and attitudes, extending cultural experiences.

- Give students a chance to use the language themselves, as often as possible
- Provide ample opportunities to learn and practice integrated skills, pronunciation and intonation, body language with a variety of activities based on a task-oriented approach to teaching
- Help learners make their utterances productive and meaningful
- Stimulate students’ imagination, curiosity, initiative and their personal qualities
- Include activities that promote critical thinking and show how to deal with possible culture shock
- Ensure that the correction of mistakes is only of an instructive nature
- Insist that the individual approach to every student should be used – encouraging the progress of advanced learners and helping slow learners.
- Use functional and structural organization of language material in speech patterns
- Organize regular revision and systematization of language material by means of new tasks, speech situations, new combinations of language items used, and new speech content.
- Provide positive feedback
These teaching methods and techniques specially adapted for and applied in this particular group of learners proved their effectiveness. They are definitely worth trying with similar categories of language learners. They would create a more favorable language-teaching situation increasing English Language Teacher Trainees language learning effectiveness and building different cross-cultural skills necessary for both their successful language teaching and cross-cultural interaction (language learners’ socialization), thus finally leading to their integration in global society.

References
Chan D., Kaplan–Weinger J., Sandstrom D. Journeys to Cultural Understanding