Effectiveness of the use of more than two languages and quality assurance in European interuniversity master studies

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Abstract
The present research was conducted during the implementation of interuniversity Master’s programme Educational treatment of diversity (Spain, Check Republic, Latvia, Germany) and it analyses the results gained at the University of Latvia in 2008-2009. The research objectives were to analyze which opportunities using study materials in several languages improve the learners’ generic competences and learning outcomes and how they change in the three dimension reality: experience, self-feeling, social recognition (Reich, 2005). Methodological approach of Differences-in-differences estimation was applied. The conducted explorative research comprises the following stages: exploration of the context of language use, quantitative and qualitative data processing of e-platform data, estimation of individual differences, data processing applying AQUAD 6 software, data analysis and interpretation. The sample involved 21 students of the joint master’s programme. The study revealed that the use of many languages in studies is effective if it provides student’s personal experience, self-feeling and social recognition as conditions for creation of new knowledge and learning outcomes. During the studies new tools of educational treatment were used to create study situations. Students have developed new learning strategies, which helped to perceive social recognition in multilingual situations, thus overcoming barrier of language use, which has changed into the means of gaining new opportunities and advantages.
Key words: joint master studies, higher education, language acquisition, experience, social recognition, self-feeling, educational effectiveness, quality assurance

Introduction
The twenty-first century is characterized by mobility, ever-increasing flow of information and cooperation between countries in the fields of economics, culture and education. In the process of information exchange and gaining experience languages have a special mission. Language is not only a means of communication but also a means of acquiring information and creating new knowledge, including the scientific one. Language learning is a path to acquire profession.

The more languages we can master, the more comprehensive knowledge can be gained, which is especially important when conveying and processing information and making conclusions. It should also be emphasised that “there is no need to achieve of “near nativeness” in each of the languages to be learned” (Neuner, 2004:15). It is natural that the results gained while learning the first foreign language and the third or even the fourth foreign language differ, but, nevertheless, it is an important means of learning other subjects and developing one’s general competency. The difficulties that the students had been facing when
acquiring the subject using a language whose competency they have not developed yet is a challenge that provides new experience which may be helpful in the future.

1. Theoretical framework

Historically Europe has always been multilingual. In the 14th, 15th and 16th century Latin was the main language of instruction in Europe. Latin was the language of rulers, however, in everyday situations people spoke many languages and dialects. Later with the foundation of independent countries, plurilingualism became apparent (Krumm, 2004). Today plurilingualism has regained its popularity because of migrants, refugees and mobility of employees and students as well as because of tourism and entertainment.

The conceptual framework of the present research is based on meta-language approach (Jessner, 2008) for the use of more than two languages in the studies and current state of the research of Latvian scientists in the EU plurilingual project (1999-2002) (Hufeisen, Neuner, 2003; Kruze, Mortag, Schulz, 2007).

Students construct new knowledge on the reflection of information in different languages. It is important to use several languages in order to improve their general competency in the work with texts in several languages. Language competence is not the objective of the present master’s program but it is one of generic competencies which is used to get information from the texts in different languages (Gento, Medina, Dominguez, 2006) and it is a means for activities (Baacke, 1998) and acquiring of scientific information. A special role in this process is laid on reading and writing as important language learning aspects which are used to construct meaning (Au, 1993). It should be emphasised that “meaning does not reside in the text, but in the interaction among the reader, the text and the social context” (Axelsson, Bulthuis, Östergren, 2002:82). Social contexts differ. They might be any situation happening during the formal, non-formal and/or informal learning process, starting from university, workplace and finishing with shopping or attending a sports club.

B. Hufeisen points to three major language learning approaches that have been developed during the last decades: comparing and contrasting languages, an inherent language acquisition sequence and the interlanguage hypothesis. The last one refers to meta-language approach and it associates language learning with a dynamic and systematic process that focuses on the target language and involves transfer processes (Hufeisen, 2004), including the implementation of the knowledge of one’s mother tongue (L1) to learn the first foreign language (L2) and the knowledge of L1 and L2 to learn the second foreign language (L3) as a result mastering the content of other courses by using information gained by the help of L1, L2, and L3.

The fact that there are differences how learners learn L1, L2, and L3 was discovered in 1990ies. Developing literacy in L2 is always connected with the learners’ mother tongue (L1), “whether it precedes or follows it, and therefore there is always transfer (positive or negative)” (Skela, 2002:11). Experience influences both the learning process and its outcomes. Experience is the main factor that differentiates learning L2 and L3 from acquiring L1. It has to be emphasised that one’s life experience, unconscious learning of L1 in early childhood, experience of learning L2 influence learning L3, L4 and L5 (Maslo, E., 2008; Maslo, E., 2007). Other important factors are attitudes and motivation. R.C. Gardner (Gardner, 1985) considers if the learners’ attitudes are positive their learning experience will be pleasant. On the contrary, if their attitude is negative it negatively influences the whole learning process and it is unlikely that learners will develop favourable experiences.

Motivation is a “dynamic interaction between the learner and a complex system of social relations, cultural context and learning environments” (Coleman, 2007:247). It is also influenced by the target language itself. The transfer of languages takes place in a definite socio-cultural context and plurilingualism is a reality that helps mastering the course content.

Learning L3 is based on learners’ cognitive and emotional experiences gained during learning L2 and acquiring L1. Besides, language learning is influenced also by the closeness
of languages. There are many lexical similarities that can be traced between English and French, English and German, English and Spanish, etc. For instance:

1) data (English) – datum (Latin) – Daten (German) – datos (Spanish) – data (Swedish) – données (French) – dati (Italian) – dati (Latvian);
2) study (English) – studere (Latin) – studieren (German) – estudiar (Spanish) – studera (Swedish) – étude (French) – studio (Italian) – studēt (Latvian);
3) school (English) – Schule (German) – escuela (Spanish) – skola (Swedish) – école (French) – scuola (Italian) – skola (Latvian);
4) teacher (English) – magister (Latin) – Lehrer (German) – professor (Spanish) – lärande (Swedish) – professeur (French) – insegnante (Italian) – skolotājs (Latvian).

As it can be seen, in some cases and/or in some languages the lexis is more similar than in others. This means that the more languages one can master, the greater a possibility to grasp the meaning of lexis in the languages unknown to the learner is.

The similarities may also be traced in grammar constructions. German speakers will easily identify the use of Indefinite or Reported Questions in the English language as the constructions are similar.

G. Neuner defines these language similarities as “crossovers between the languages” (Neuner, 2004:25). Moreover, it is not important if these language bridges (crossovers) are formed between L1 and L3 or L2 and L3. It has to be marked that these transferable elements help developing L3 competence, especially reading comprehension, which is an important skill to convey scientific information. The developed language learning strategies, and experience of language learning also help learning L3, L4, L5 and so on.

There are lots of possibilities how to transfer the knowledge of L2 to L3. The following examples should be mentioned: intelligent guessing, testing of hypothesis (recognising a problem, reflection, construction of a hypothesis, formulation of the hypothesis, testing the hypothesis), relating new knowledge to existing knowledge, parallel use of a variety of sources of information and learning materials, using words from L1 or L2, converting words from L1 or L2, the recognition and use of language relationships, the use of meta-language terminology (Rampillon, 2004:100).

Languages form the space for the results in the studies and successful language use depends on the real situation and experience, self-feeling and social recognition. And from these dimensions every student constructs their own system of language use. Thus the experience to use many languages in new situations helps the student to involve into the common European higher education space (BFUG, 2008) and international studies are the natural transformative environment. In such a way students can gain experience how to react in unknown situations and change the language barrier into the means of gaining new opportunities and advantages (Adler, 1922; 1926).

2. Research methodology
2.1. The research purpose and questions
The present research was conducted during the implementation of interuniversity Master’s programme Educational treatment of diversity (Gento, 2008) at the University of Latvia in 2008-2009 to examine the effectiveness of educational treatment to students’ language diversity in order to promote the quality of the studies. Its topicality is determined by ever-increasing flow of information in which an important role is laid to languages. Language is a means of getting information and gaining experience. The research questions are as follows:

1) How the students feel in unknown situations when the study materials are offered in three different languages, one of them (Spanish) being totally or almost unknown to students? How the educators’ contributions can support students’ changing in the three dimension reality: experience, self-feeling and social recognition?
2) Has the educational treatment been effective? What pattern of educational treatment can be effectively used in the future?
2.2. Description of the differences in the implementation of Master’s programme
The Interuniversity Master’s Programme *Educational Treatment of Diversity* is implemented in four European universities: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (National University of Distance Education) – UNED (Madrid, Spain), Karla University (Prague, Czech Republic), University of Latvia and Ludwigsburg University on Education (Reutlingen, Germany). The successful graduates will be awarded a joint Master’s degree of educational sciences in pedagogy.

The joint aim of the programme is to develop students’ competences in the field of educational treatment of diversity which is characterized as profound knowledge and critical understanding of specialized facts/theory; highly developed abilities that show the understanding of study course and innovation ability that would help to work out creative solutions to complex and unpredictable problems at work or in studies; the responsibility for selected professional fields of complex activity or project management in unpredictable work or learning contexts as well as the responsibility for individual and group activities.

The duration of the programme conducted at the University of Latvia is 4 semesters at full-time studies or 5 semesters at part-time studies and it comprises 120 ECTS. The content of the respective programme consists of two parts: compulsory (Part A, including the Master’s thesis) and optional (Part B, in which the students acquire definite study courses). The two parts of studies are organized in modules. Each module corresponds to specific issues of educational treatment of diversity. Modules are divided into study courses (designed as sub modules). Each study course corresponds to 5 ECTS. According to the joint programme, the content and learning activities of the module are integrated and sequentially presented, in order to promote students’ competence and to offer a balanced allocation of time. The competences of the Master’s graduates in all participating universities correspond to the requirements of EQF lifelong learning level 7. The students enrolled at the University of Latvia acquire the following semester modules: *Psycho-Pedagogical Bases of Special Needs, Educational Treatment of Special Needs Inclusion, Educational Treatment of Inclusion of Diverse Special Needs, and Lifelong Learning Programmes of Educational Treatment of Diversity* (titled at the University of Latvia according to the Regulations of organization of studies at the University of Latvia). These differences are not principal.

The main differences compared to UNED are in the use of modality (e-platform):
1) The programme is implemented in the interactive e-learning modality – each day there is intensive communication using Skype and web-cameras, which replaces the existence of regular lectures;
2) the didactic material is prepared for students in Latvian, English or Spanish, and its structure supports independent studies in distance modality (concept of UNED).

In order to facilitate students’ academic success, meet challenges and facilitate the students’ competence various forms of individual counselling and support are implemented in all participating universities.

The present research evaluates the success in achieving the objectives of the joint Master's programme, as well as the use of implemented different pedagogical treatments, including the use of more than two languages in studies.

2.3. The sample of the research
The sample selecting 21 students (from 23) of the Master’s programme *Educational treatment of diversity* studying at the University of Latvia was composed. Initially there were 23 students at the programme, but only 21 matriculation questionnaires were received back. Those 21 students created the sample; 4 of them were studied in a more detail.

Information about the students was gained during matriculation interview and analysing the results of the questionnaires the students had to fill in when applying for the programme.
The sample consisted of 17 female and 4 male students which is a typical representation to the proportion of male and female teachers in schools of Latvia. The age of the sample was from 21 to 47. Most of the students had a Bachelor’s degree; one student had a Master’s degree in psychology. The students had indicated different educational backgrounds – sociology, English philology, arts, visual arts, etc. Regarding their occupation the following fields were mentioned: teaching, voluntary social work, training coordinator, psychology, advertising industry, etc.; 5 students had not answered the question about their occupation. Only 14.29% of the students had previous experience in distance studies which might cause some problems in studies. Most of the students (19) had certain expectations from the programme which were demonstrated in the answer to the question why they had chosen this programme. The answers included the use of ICT in the studies, the programme’s connection with their present/future work, a possibility to combine studies with work, getting experience of other countries and languages, the wish to learn languages, interest in pedagogy. The students’ self-assessment of competences revealed that they evaluated their communicative skills higher than other competences. Communicative skills were followed by technology skills. Only 23.81% of the students found their language competence appropriate for mastering the programme content.

2.4. Research design
This study is oriented towards the revealing of differences in interaction structures of quality of learning outcomes and effectiveness of use of more than two languages in higher education. Methodological approach of Differences-in-differences estimation (Woessmann, Hanushek, 2006) has been used in the study, which stresses the study of an individual’s contribution to learning outcomes.

An explorative research has been used in the research (Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2003; Mayring, Huber, Gürtler, 2004). The study consisted of the following stages: 1) exploration of the contexts of language use; thorough analysis of the documents and matriculation interview and questionnaires; 2) the analysis of the students’ self-assessment reports regarding their expectations and learning outcomes (frequencies and content analysis); 3) quantitative and qualitative data processing of e-platform data regarding the students’ language use in the platform (frequencies); 4) estimation of individual differences in forums and chats (frequencies and linkages); 5) data processing and analysis by applying AQUAD 6 software (Huber, Gürtler, 2004) and data interpretation (Kogler, 2007); 6) analysis of the results and elaboration of conclusions and hypothesis for further studies.

Dimensions expressed in systemic-constructivistic learning provided by K. Reich (Reich, 2005:21) (refer to Table 1) were applied to analyze the students’ experiences, self-feeling and social recognition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Self-feeling</th>
<th>Social recognition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic emotional experience</td>
<td>Wishes</td>
<td>consequences of the surrounding world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a pattern of behaviour developed in the motherland</td>
<td>Desires</td>
<td>adopting concepts of roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one’s own biography as a construction</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>adopting social expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success experienced in learning</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>search of one’s ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific world</td>
<td>physical status</td>
<td>positive and negative patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural peculiarities</td>
<td>Illnesses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>physical symptoms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data were processed and analysed applying AQUAD 6 software. In order to provide validity and reliability and escape subjectivity of the findings the data were coded by a team of researchers. Next the tables of frequencies were created and linkages were determined. Finally, after the conducted theoretical and empirical analysis conclusions were drawn and hypothesis for further studies was offered.

3. Exploration of the differences in the context of language use in Latvia

3.1. Teaching-learning foreign languages in Latvia

The analysis of the documents concerning foreign languages in basic and general education (Noteikumi Nr. 1027, 2006; Ministru kabineta noteikumi Nr.715, 2008; LR Izglītības un zinātņes ministrijas rīkojums Nr.59 "Par vispārējās vidējās izglītības programmu apstiprināšanu", 2009; Pamatizglītības pirmā posma (1.–6. klase) programmas paraugs, 2009; Pamatizglītības otrā posma (7.–9.klase) programmas paraugs, 2009) shows that the pupils master L1 competence from the 1st to the 12th form. In primary school pupils learn the Latvian language (mother tongue) six lessons per week. Starting from form 4 language and literature studies are separated and the number of lessons per week varies from 7 to 5 depending on the form. In secondary school language and literature used to be taught as one subject 5 lessons per week but since the study year 2009/2010 L1 studies are separated again –2 lessons are envisaged for learning grammar and 2 lessons – for literature. The same amount of lessons is envisaged in all types of general education institutions in Latvia: comprehensive general education; humanitarian and social general education; general education in the fields of mathematics, sciences and techniques; and vocationally oriented general education.

Pupils learn the first foreign language (L2) from form 3 to 12 and the programme envisages 3 lessons per week. However, it has to be said that in many schools there are extra hours planned for L2 learning. Mostly this is parents’ initiative. It is also popular to learn English already in the kindergarten, since the age of 4-5. Pupils start learning the second foreign language (L3) in form 6. In form 6 they have L3 twice a week and from form 7 to 12 –3 times a week.

In fact pupils master L1 and two foreign languages. In the context of Latvia most often L2 is English and L3 is either Russian or German, in a few schools L3 is French. There are a few schools where other foreign language (a Scandinavian language or Spanish) is offered.

In minority schools pupils learn Latvian (the official language), since form 1 and the minority language (Russian, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish, Hebrew, English, etc.) is taught simultaneously. Besides in the first three forms pupils have more lessons for learning the minority language (their L1) than Latvian (their L2). They start learning the first foreign language (L3 in minority schools) in form 3 and they have two L3 lessons per week. From form 4 to 12 the pupils in minority schools have L3 three times a week. These pupils do not have an opportunity to learn the second foreign language (L4 respectively).

However, it has to be emphasised that the situation in Latvian and minority schools in language learning is similar. Pupils from both types of schools have learnt three languages, including their mother tongue. Many speakers are bilingual (Latvian and Russian) and thus they have learnt only one foreign language. There will be a slight improvement in this respect. Starting from 2009/2010 the schools providing humanitarian and social general education have L4 three times a week from form 10 to 12.

According to the foreign language standards the secondary school leavers have to master L2 and L3 competence corresponding to B2-C1 level. The school leavers’ L3 competence should correspond to B1 language competence level which might be difficult to attain with the number of lessons envisaged in the curriculum. However, it is added that in some components communicative competence and socio-cultural competence may correspond to a different language competence level.
Based on the results demonstrated during secondary school leavers’ state examinations in foreign languages (Valsts pārbaudes darbi 2007./2008. m., 2009; Valsts pārbaudes darbi 2008./2009. m., 2009) the chart revealing general tendencies has been composed (refer to Table 2). The results in foreign language competence levels showed a similar situation during the period of 2006-2008 but in 2009 there was observed a distinct improvement in the school leavers’ German and French language competence.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language/year</th>
<th>No of pupils taking exam</th>
<th>A1 in %</th>
<th>A2 in %</th>
<th>B1 in %</th>
<th>B2 in %</th>
<th>C1 in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English / 2009</td>
<td>23652</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>18.04</td>
<td>28.10</td>
<td>26.71</td>
<td>18.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English / 2008</td>
<td>23526</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>30.82</td>
<td>30.52</td>
<td>16.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English / 2007</td>
<td>22575</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>33.23</td>
<td>29.97</td>
<td>16.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English / 2006</td>
<td>23598</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>14.33</td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td>28.51</td>
<td>14.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German / 2009</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>11.99</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>38.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German / 2008</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>16.73</td>
<td>28.96</td>
<td>29.71</td>
<td>18.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German / 2007</td>
<td>1474</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>16.78</td>
<td>31.08</td>
<td>29.85</td>
<td>16.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German / 2006</td>
<td>2218</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>16.01</td>
<td>29.44</td>
<td>30.07</td>
<td>17.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French / 2009</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>34.62</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French / 2008</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>37.69</td>
<td>36.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French / 2007</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>18.55</td>
<td>36.29</td>
<td>33.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French / 2006</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>35.54</td>
<td>36.36</td>
<td>33.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian / 2009</td>
<td>5674</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>23.46</td>
<td>29.20</td>
<td>25.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian / 2008</td>
<td>4132</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>14.40</td>
<td>29.48</td>
<td>31.15</td>
<td>16.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian / 2007</td>
<td>4399</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>31.35</td>
<td>30.73</td>
<td>15.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian / 2006</td>
<td>4566</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>14.91</td>
<td>30.73</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For years English has been the compulsory exam for all general education acquirers therefore the number of the pupils who had taken the state examination corresponds to the number of general school leavers in the respective year. German, French and Russian were optional exams. German is becoming less and less popular compared to other foreign languages and in 2009 the popularity of the Russian language has increased. The fewer pupils in German and French classes allow a teacher paying individual attention to each learner, as a result improving the learning outcomes.

The exam results show that most of the secondary school leavers have independent users and proficient users’ L2 competence (Lūka, 2008; Luka, 2009). This competence level (B1, B2, and C1) enables students reading texts in English and using English as a means for studying other courses/subjects. The same refers to Russian which is L1 or L2 for nearly half of Latvia’s population, especially for the bilingual ones. The Russian language skills can also be used in mastering the content of other courses. Regarding other languages (German, French), this might be a challenge for most of the learners since these languages are less popular than English and Russian. However, learners could be urged to use more languages for conveying information by using crossovers between languages.

3.2. Foreign languages in interuniversity Master’s programme Educational treatment of diversity at the University of Latvia

Foreign language learning has not been set a goal of the interuniversity Master’s programme. However, taking into account multilingual traditions of Latvia, foreign language learning is being fostered in the studies. According to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education the language of instruction at the University of Latvia is Latvian (Article 55 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, 1995). However, the amendments to the Law are being
worked out by the Saeima (the legislation body of the Republic of Latvia) at present. They will envisage an opportunity for higher educational institutions to allow using foreign languages as languages of instruction. Therefore at present the language of instruction of the respective Master’s programme is Latvian and the use of English and Spanish comprises 20% of the time envisaged for the studies. English and Spanish are used to obtain scientific information, namely, for reading comprehension, as well as in non-formal communication with guest lecturers. This corresponds to the objectives of the programme, which are oriented towards fostering of students’ competency, which includes generic competencies whose exposure is also the implementation of the acquired academic content into most widely used foreign languages (Spanish, English and others). To conform to the existing requirements of the Law the lectures provided by foreign professors are translated into Latvian.

It has to be marked that in the year 2008 there were no special requirements as to language competence level to study in the respective programme. Language use in the programme is based on the concept of plurilingualism, assuming that English is students’ L2, L3 or L4 and Spanish – L4 or L5. Thus by providing pedagogical support to the students, using languages in mastering academic content (teaching-learning aids in an understandable language, consultancy, e-platform for collaborative work) students with different cognitive abilities transfer language knowledge from one language to another.

3.3. The analysis of the Master students’ foreign language capacity

An analysis of the questionnaires gained during the matriculation process showed that the students had evaluated their language competence as the second least developed competence. However, it has to be added that their language capacity necessary for mastering the content of the programme might be assessed as average. Table 3 summarises the language capacity of the sample according to language learning aspects. In fact, the students had not studied Spanish and their German was on a low level as well. The students could use Russian when reading additional literature on the theme but Russian is not a language of instruction of the programme and it might be difficult to make language crossovers between Russian and English or Russian and Spanish. This means, that the sample will have to use Latvian to make language crossovers between English and Spanish, as well as English might be used to make language crossovers with Spanish. Here is exposed the difference with UNED where most students are monolingual; only some students are willing to use another language (L2) in studies.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>95.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>90.48 %</td>
<td>76.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>23.81 %</td>
<td>47.62 %</td>
<td>28.57 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>71.43 %</td>
<td>71.43 %</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What seems very positive is that the students are willing to learn the languages. Two students had indicated that they had chosen the programme in order to get experience of other countries and languages and to learn languages. However, when being asked about possible difficulties in their studies, before even having started to study three students (from 21) had a feeling that language (2 students) and exactly the English language (1 student) will be their problem to be successful. These students already at the start exposed their worries concerning the use of more than one language in the studies. This attitude might be a barrier to productive learning. To sum up, all in all, the students’ language competence level is sufficient to convey scientific information in Latvian, Russian and English and providing they learn how to use their knowledge in the studies they might help gaining versatile information from the original sources. This is a reason why a support system to contribute to
students’ learning outcomes in a plurilingual study context was elaborated. This support system differs from the one offered in the joint programme by other partner universities.

4. Differences in educators’ contribution to students’ learning outcomes in plurilingual study context

According to the context analysis the researchers and educators hypothetically presumed that the students will not need additional support in the studies regarding the experience of using different languages but there will be problems with self-feeling and the support will be needed in social recognition to eliminate negative influence on the learning outcomes as well as turn the possible problems into the widening of possibilities, i.e., they would help the students perceive the problems as a challenge and an advantage. This leads to a hypothesis that students better attain learning outcomes if their learning experience, namely, cultural peculiarities, developed learning strategies and the definite socio-cultural environment are supported by social recognition and self-feeling. If the students’ wishes and desires are met and a support system is created that would secure their social recognition in search of ideals, taking into account positive patterns and consequences of the surrounding world, students demonstrate better learning outcomes.

Thus in order to help the students attain their learning goals, wishes and reach the learning outcomes it is vital to create a support system that would favour students’ learning. As the respective Master’s programme is implemented in the interactive e-learning modality (platform), using Skype and web-cameras, students’ regular, compulsory attendance of lectures was not required. To replace the existence of regular lectures, didactic material, whose structure supported independent studies, was prepared for students in Latvian, English or Spanish. To facilitate students’ academic success various forms of individual counselling were implemented. Professors and tutors of the programme, who acted as consultants, had a periodical regular timetable to assist the students once a week during the university academic period. Distance communication with students was done by telephone and/or e-mail. In the studies the main focus was to help the students participating in the course understand and assimilate the content of the course modules, orient them to perform the tasks suggested during the course, clarify doubts or misunderstandings, help them in any academic problem and motivate to successfully complete the course. Therefore the consultations were not organized as lectures, but as inter-communicative activities in which students could make direct contact with professors, tutors and receive definite answers to their questions. During consultations with the professors and tutors’ support, problem-situations were solved, as well as systematic planning of unknown situations and finding solutions in team work were carried out. In some cases the acquisition process of the module’s topical issues was offered in mini-lectures delivered both by Latvian professors, university lecturers, and foreign professors.

The support system regarding language learning was created as well. Initially the support was provided for language environment – two tutors (language consultants) were ready to help the students, as well as the English version of the e-platform was created.

During the first two modules students faced an unknown, challenging situation – didactic materials were offered in Spanish. Students were supposed to solve the situation but educators were observing the situation and were ready to intervene. It was discovered that the students did not have experience in working with texts in a foreign language. They only had experience in translating the texts which they used in mastering the contents of the modules. Traditional tools were used for translation (dictionaries, literal translation). The support offered: the lecturers intervened in order to support social recognition and widen students’ experience in working with texts in foreign languages and thus improving their self-feeling. Educators exchanged experiences regarding reading strategies (global reading, skimming and scanning), the terminology (internationalisms) were actualized, the support of two foreign language tutors was provided to acquire the notions, cooperation possibilities were stressed, word magic and other software were provided to help the students. Tutors offered certain
advice for learning: “If I had to work with the texts in foreign languages, I would do it in the following way: first, make sure that I have understood the content; second, work with the glossary of each part; next, carefully read summary (resumen) of each part; next, read the pages entitled Claves de la autoevaluacion, which is the key to self-evaluation; and finally, pass over to the parts Desarrollo and referencias, which is the development of the theme”.

During the third and fourth module the following support system was offered: the study sheets (time sheets) were introduced, students’ collaboration was initiated by the professor of Module No.3. Thus students started cooperating, each group studied a definite part of the text, which was further subdivided among the group mates and after mastering the content, the groups introduced each other with the material studied. Thus students’ collaboration was promoted, team working skills were fostered.

During the fifth and sixth modules the following support was offered: the study materials were offered in three languages; the students themselves independently could form their language combination how to study. Both the students and the educators learnt from the experience gained in the first four modules. The aim of the activities was to urge the students implement the acquired knowledge into practice, use it in real situation in order to develop their competencies. The students were encouraged to contact the educators in case of difficulties or uncertainties. The provided support also included group dynamics’ observation sheets, self-assessment sheets, defining of competence levels. Self-assessment sheets to state learning outcomes were introduced as a help and support for promoting students’ competencies. Another support was offered in working with scientific journals/magazines. It has to be admitted that providing this support not everything that had been planned was attained, so this may be mentioned as a drawback of the created support system.

During the next modules self-directed learning was carried out. Students were urged to contact the educators if necessary. This was possible as the students had learnt how to work in the e-platform, as well as they had developed collaboration strategies and had learnt how to use the provided support system.

During the last two modules 100% self-directed learning was conducted observing the deadlines and taking into account the students’ time schedules and professional interests.

5. Findings of the research
5.1. The analysis of frequencies regarding language use in e-platform
In order to find out how frequently the students had visited the site in Spanish and English, which language they preferred for studies and how it influenced their learning, during the second stage of the study the data from e-platform were analysed. The course descriptions and materials in the e-platform were available in Spanish (a totally unknown language to the students), their translation into English (in some cases the translation was perfect but mostly it was done by applying Spanish-English translation software) and course materials in Latvian. Students also had to perform their self-assessment and take an exam.

The data obtained from the e-platform were systematized according to definite criteria and frequencies applying AQUAD 6 software were determined. The following items covered the language use: course materials in Spanish, the translation of the course materials from Spanish into English by applying translation software, some course materials translated into English by language tutors, the materials translated into Latvian.

During the studies the sample had visited e-platform 17452 times. 1081 times can be associated with languages (Spanish, English, Latvian). The analysis of the frequencies showed that the students had looked at the course descriptions in Spanish 388 times, at English descriptions 377 times, at Latvian descriptions 316 times. Thus a balance between the languages used can be observed. Although the students’ native language is Latvian, they had used L2 and L3, in fact L4, as in most cases the students’ L3 was Russian or German, in mastering the course content as well. This might be explained by the fact that a part of materials originally were in Spanish and the students admitted the importance of working
with original sources. The situation that the students had not given preference to English, which is their L2, might be explained by the fact that most materials were translated by applying Spanish-English translation software and as a result it might have been difficult to perceive the content. This also explains the fact why in many cases the students had used all the three languages simultaneously. This allowed them to find language crossovers and interpret the meaning of the text.

The number of times the students had visited the e-platform ranged from 271 (minimum) to 1694 (maximum). Mostly it concentrated around 750 to 925. The items dealing with languages were from 35 to 168. However it is not possible to give a number around which the answers were concentrating because the results differed a lot.

The students had used Spanish in mastering the content of the first study course (No.1: *Neurological and Psycho-Pedagogical Bases of People’s Educational Treatment of Diversity*) most of all – 110 times and least of all (36 times) to master the content of the third course (No.3: *Educational Integration and Inclusion of Quality for People with Diverse Special Needs*). These were also the courses when the students had used English most and least. Probably the first course caused most difficulties to the students which might be explained by the fact that this was the beginning of their studies. Everything was new; students had not yet created their own learning styles and strategies when working with materials from e-platform and in several languages simultaneously. This kind of learning (a somehow similar format to blended learning) is a new form of learning in Latvia and the students did not have previous experience in it. It is possible that the third course might have turned out to be easier for the students or they had formed corresponding learning strategies and could master the course content independently. The factor that also influenced the studies was that by the time the students were acquiring course No.3, the support system for students to master the course content was created and the students have learnt to use it.

Many students preferred downloading the course materials into their computer and studying independently. Thus they visited the e-platform only once to download the materials. In most of such cases the students had downloaded the materials in all the three languages and the frequencies cannot reveal which materials they had used most while studying.

Another tendency observed from the data of e-platform is that with acquiring of each consecutive course the students started using Spanish more frequently. There were also cases when the students had not used L1 to study the course at all, e.g., when mastering the content of the course No.3 four students had not used L1, the course No.5: *Conventional and Technological Materials for People’s Special Treatment of Diversity* – one student, and the course No.6: *Educational Treatment of Special Needs Proceeding from People’s Cultural Diversity* – four students had not used L1.

The students’ attitudes differed. At the beginning some were angry, even furious, that they had to use a totally unknown language in studies, but some could overcome the shock and admitted the benefits. One of the students wrote:

“I really highly appreciate my studies. I consider that the opportunity to learn in e-environment and not to rush to university every weekend to sit at the lectures is very positive” (from the Forum of Course No.1).

Another student (S4) expresses his satisfaction with the studies in the following way:

“I am very pleased with the studies. I have found exactly what I had been looking for. To my mind, it is not so important if the language of instruction is English or Spanish. In all universities it is necessary to learn a foreign language. In this time the approach used is very flexible” (from the Forum of Course No.1).

The students also found opportunities of chatting and communicating in the forum very important. They learnt collaborating, sharing the best practices, cheering each other. As a
result the initial language learning shock that they had to overcome helped develop their cooperation skills, problem solving skills and promoted their general competency.

5.2. The analysis of data gained from students’ self-assessment reports

In order to find out how each student’s system of language use changed in the studies and which pedagogical treatments supported this process the students’ self-assessment reports were analysed. The adopted approach implied the analysis of the results shown by extremes: those students who had used Spanish to master the content of the studies most frequently and those ones – least of all. As a result the students with different experiences were selected in order to estimate the differences-in-differences. This was done in order to determine whether there was a correlation between the number of times the student had visited the platform and the achieved results, as well as how their attitude towards studies changed and how it influenced the learning outcomes. The students expressions from self-assessment reports were systematised according to the criteria (refer to Table 1). The systematisation was started by first choosing the expressions of the student who had visited the parts of the e-platform in Spanish most frequently. Second, expressions of another student who had used Spanish most frequently were systematised. As there were many similarities between the expressions of the two students, according to the adopted approach (Woessmann, Hanushek, 2006) the researchers did not select the third student, but continued the study by selecting the opposites – two students who had used Spanish least of all.

The data were processed applying AQUAD 6 software. The determined codes were systematised into meta-codes corresponding to dimensions (Reich, 2005). It was discovered that not all meta-codes and codes could be traced in the students’ self-assessment reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Frequencies of expressions from the sample’s self-assessment reports according to meta-codes and codes (n=4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta-codes</td>
<td>Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>basic emotional experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one's own biography as a construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>success experienced in learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specific world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural peculiarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-feeling</td>
<td>wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>desires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social recognition</td>
<td>consequences of the surrounding world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>search of one’s ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive and negative patterns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students’ expressions in self-assessment reports could not be systematised according to such codes: a pattern of behaviour developed in the motherland (meta-code Experience), physical status, illnesses, physical symptoms (meta-code Self-feeling), adopting concepts of roles and adopting social expectations (meta-code Social recognition).

Most of the students’ expressions are categorised as to the meta-code Social recognition, namely consequences of the surrounding world (64 positive expressions from the
total 110 positive ones and 3 negative expressions from the total 5 negative ones). The small number of negative expressions in the students’ self-assessment reports leads to a conclusion that the students were satisfied with their learning outcomes.

Comparing the answers of those two students who had used Spanish in studies more frequently than others (S1 and S2) with those who had used Spanish the least (S3 and S4), the self-assessment reports do not show extreme differences. More differences can be traced in negative feelings than in positive ones as S3 and S4 have more negative expressions than S1 and S2. However, it has to be emphasized that the number of negative expressions is very small so it cannot be considered as an important factor to influence the students’ learning outcomes. Another difference to be stressed is observed in the fact about wishes. S1 and S2 have more wishes than S3 and S4. What is more, those wishes not only concern their own learning but the students also think how to improve their pupils’ learning process:

“… continue promoting the development of a versatile creative personality, the development of learning experience, promote the formation of many folded attitude, further pupils’ mutual cooperation, learning to collaborate, work in a team and help each other …” (from Appendix 1 of self-assessment report of S1).

These wishes include different cultures, inclusion, understanding of problem situations, socio-cultural experience, etc. This shows that the student is not only interested in her development but is ready to share with others, pass her knowledge and understanding of different processes to others. S1 also speaks about motivation in which she admits that the Master’s programme was a good new challenge for her and she is satisfied that she had taken the risk.

In turn, S3 (a student who has used Spanish in the studies least) admits the importance of cultural peculiarities. She points to different cultures and learning peculiarities in these cultures, formation of identity and the use of traits of character in learning.

Only 9 expressions could be related to languages and five codes can be mentioned:

1) 1 expression related to success experienced in learning (S1);
2) 3 expressions related to consequences of the surrounding world (2 by S1 and 1 by S3);
3) 2 expressions related to positive and negative patterns (1 by S1 and 1 by S2);
4) 2 expressions related to specific world (S2);
5) 1 expression related to wishes (S2).

S1 reflecting on her learning acknowledges that using different languages in studies helped her become aware of her abilities. Languages have been a driving force for motivation to learn and reach the targets. S1 explains her approach when mastering the study content in a foreign language:

“I often use google.translate.com in which it is possible to translate sentences and use other languages as well, e.g., Russian, English (from Competences_Term_2 of self-assessment report of S1).

S2 reflecting her experience with a three year old Russian speaking girl in a kindergarten and the methods used in integrating her into the group. This child turned to be the only Russian speaking child in the group and during the period of three years she had learnt Latvian and could communicate not only with her peers but also sing songs, recite poems and take part in performances. The adopted approach was – initially speaking to her in two languages, i.e., providing translations for every word, and step by step diminishing translations and switching over to Latvian only. Thus the child learnt understanding and communicating in a language being a team member. In this situation we cannot speak of language crossovers or similarities but language learning in its natural environment.

S2 also admits that her wish is to learn English because the low level of English competence makes her studies complicated. Thus mastering the content of the studies the
A student has become aware that she needs to improve her language competence and this factor may serve as motivation for additional studies.

S3 is more philosophical and reflects on the possibility to learn languages strengthening her opinions by the pillar of pedagogy and language philosopher Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein:

“To my mind, Wittgenstein’s conviction that a man’s language limits are also his world’s limits can be used in this context as well. All people cannot speak in all languages but people have an opportunity to exchange information, to tell and promote common circulation of knowledge based on comprehension, which is the basis for realizing one’s similarity with others” (from Appendix 1 of self-assessment report of S3).

Thus it can be seen that although S3 does not use English and Spanish to master the content of the studies she recognizes the role of languages in experience and information exchange. Language is a means of conveying information. The self-assessment report of S3 shows that disregarding the fact that she used mostly Latvian files she has reached the learning outcomes and is sharing the information gained with others.

To sum up, the students’ self-assessment reports showed that they all, disregarding the languages used in the studies, have demonstrated positive learning outcomes. The expressions of the students who had used more languages in studies demonstrate that their self-appraisal, determination and satisfaction have grown. They are pleased to see that they have overcome the language barrier and used previously unknown language to convey information. Their reflection shows positive attitude towards studies and a wish to continue learning.

5.3. The qualitative analysis of data gained in chats and forums of e-platform

Next, students’ expressions in chats and forums were analysed. Similarly with the analysis of the findings from the e-platform and self-assessment reports it was discovered that not all the codes could be traced in the students’ expressions (refer to Table 5).

Table 5

Frequencies of the sample’s expressions from chats and forums according to meta-codes and codes (n=4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta-codes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Positive associations / feelings</th>
<th>Negative associations / feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>basic emotional experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>success experienced in learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specific world</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cultural peculiarities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-feeling</td>
<td>wishes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>desires</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expectations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>physical symptoms</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social recognition</td>
<td>consequences of the surrounding world</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adopting concepts of roles</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive and negative patterns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (26 April 1889 – 29 April 1951) was an Austrian-British philosopher who worked primarily in logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language philosophy (Time 100: Scientists and Thinkers).
The students’ expressions could not be systematised according to such codes: a pattern of behaviour developed in the motherland, one’s own biography as a construction (meta-code Experience), physical status, illnesses (meta-code Self-feeling) and adopting social expectations, search of one’s ideals (meta-code Social recognition). Providing the principle of selecting the students for the study had been different, the results would have differed.

It also has to be emphasised that the findings show that several codes appeared only for some times. For example, only Student 4 (S4) pointed to physical symptoms of being tired and overworked and not being able to perform the task because of the lack of time. Besides, this was more mentioned as an excuse and explanation for not performing the tasks on time than complaining. The same could be said about expectations where also only S4 expressed his ideas about the programme which were positive and corresponded to his expectations of what a programme should be like (refer to Chapter 5.1.). However, S4 had visited e-platform fewer times than others, his expressions were positive and in chats and forums he tried to convince others and persuade them seeing the advantages of such learning:

“Thanks everyone for such discussions. I highly appreciate them. I really need them in order to interpret my observations and establish details that reveal a different look at the phenomena than before” (from the Chat of Course No.6).

Most of the students’ expressions are associated with the codes basic emotional experience, wishes and consequences of the surrounding world, which show that experience and environment influence the studies and the learning outcomes. Disregarding the times the students had visited e-platform in Spanish, their learning experiences and attitude are mostly positive. Negative associations were observed only 19 times, most of them (10 frequencies) were associated with experience. The determined linkages by applying AQUAD 6 data processing and analysis software showed that there is a relation between description of experience (the code: basic emotional negative experience) and self-feeling (the code: motivation). However the student is determined to cope with the difficulties:

“Disregarding the fact that I am trying to fulfil all the requirements of the course and acquire all the materials, I have to admit that the studies do not create positive feeling. To tell the truth, I am nearly disappointed in the studies and have understood that e-studies are not for me. Nevertheless, I have made a decision to overcome all the barriers in order to fulfil my intention – to find opportunities for implementing my skills and knowledge in the field of pedagogy thus helping people to grow and have a happy life. At present only this aim prevents me from giving up my studies” (the codes: basic emotional experience and motivation).

When analyzing the findings of the research from the aspect of languages it has to be said that only a few expressions concerning languages can be found. Only seven expressions can be associated directly with languages: four of them positive and three – negative ones. Thus Student 1 (S1) shares her opinion on how to more qualitatively get information and master the course content. She writes:

“I use on-line dictionaries (e.g., www.letonika.lv). In such a way it is possible to translate the text faster than using printed dictionaries” (from the Forum of Course No.1).

It has to be added that a tendency to translate all the terms and expressions was observed at the start of the studies. The determined linkages showed a relation between experience (the code: one’s own biography as a construction) and social recognition (the code: search of one’s ideals) (lines 60-66) where the student explained that she had been trying to literally translate the text and understand every single word and came to a conclusion that in order to succeed it is necessary to learn Spanish.
Gradually, after the created support system and advice offered by the tutors on working with lexis, the students’ learning strategies changed. They learnt how to work with a Glossary. The determined linkages showed a relation in social recognition between the code *search of ones ideals* and the code *positive patterns* (lines 357-368). This means that the students learnt from the patterns as well as others’ (tutors’) experience and improved their learning outcomes.

It has to be marked that the students (e.g., S1) are willing to share their ideas on everything they discover. Thus S1 urges the group mates to collaborate and exchange conspectuses of the translated texts. She is also the initiator to make informal groups and study in groups. She even suggests doing some parts of the course by her and motivates others to do the same. In fact, the development of cooperation and partnership skills are among those that have been promoted by acquiring the programme most of all. This cooperation is also connected with the use of L3, L4 to master the course content.

The determined linkages validate cooperation and show a relation between experience (the code: *one’s own biography as a construction*) and social recognition (the code: *search of one’s ideals*) (lines 36 – 40; 41 – 44) where a student admits that she has a very limited foreign language capacity and she expresses a wish to collaborate, to make a team in order to master the course. She is convinced that such cooperation will widen her opportunities of language learning and ensure personality development. However, there are also students who acknowledge cooperation but admit that they will not take part in the teamwork. For example the student is convinced that “language learning is an individual process and everyone has to learn a language individually” (the linkage between experience: *one’s own biography as a construction* and social recognition: *search of one’s ideals* (lines 60 – 66).

The students show interest in languages and demonstrate a wish to improve their foreign language capacities. S1 admits that in order to get the information about the course students translate materials from different languages into Latvian and thus it is possible to implicitly improve the language competence:

> “People translate the texts, learn from English and Spanish. The terms stick to their memory, language competences are developed, everything happens” (from the Forum of Course No.3).

Student 2 (S2), in turn, expresses an idea of using German not English for studies. This situation absolutely corresponds to the language use context in Latvia (refer to Chapter 3.1.; cf. Luka, Niedrits, Donina, 2009:16) where for many years German has been L2 for older population and a part of middle-aged generation master German not English as their L3, L2 being Russian. This also coincides with the negative experience of S4 which he came across when conducting his research in the prison schools. The teachers needed the questionnaire in Russian as their skills of Latvian (official language) were not adequate to understand the content of the questionnaire. The analysis of linkages by applying AQUAD 6 software reveals a relation between experience (code: *one’s own biography as a construction*) and social recognition (code: *search of one’s ideals*) (lines 156 – 171).

S2 expressed real satisfaction about the possibility to use German in studies. Although she marked that her German skills are average and it is difficult to evaluate language knowledge if the language is not used on everyday basis, she offers to help the group mates with the texts in German. This shows the student’s readiness and motivation to study and share, help the others. Thus by learning and sharing students could master the course content better and develop their language competences as well.

Students not only demonstrate their attitude towards learning but initiate discussions on the topics important to them. They discuss the importance of motivation, environment, positive and favourable attitude, supportive environment, the use of teaching-learning methods, inclusion problems, etc. in their discussions. They share opinions on every newly read material, the success and failure they have in the studies and at work, they discuss
wishes, desires and expectations concerning the studies. They even copy quotations from the

course books by the pillars of pedagogy in order to help others solve the problems. Towards
the end of the term the students have reached the stage of autonomous learning and

collaborative learning simultaneously.

**Conclusion and hypothesis for further studies**

The findings of the research allow drawing conclusions on the quality assurance and
effectiveness of the professors and tutors’ contribution applied to enhance the students’
learning outcomes.

Regarding *quality assurance* it is evident that all the students’ learning outcomes,
disregarding the language used in the studies (the times the students’ had visited e-platform
regarding different languages ranged from 35 to 168), did not differ. The use of many
languages in the studies was a challenge for students, initially a shock. Facing difficulties to
deal with the subject content, students were stressed but they also gained different experience
how to react in unknown situations and thus the language barrier changed into the means of

gaining different new opportunities and advantages. Irrespective of differences in initial
language capacity and different combination of languages, language using shock became an
effective means of acquiring social experience and served as a motivating factor to continue
language learning in order to improve their competence so that languages helped conveying
information. The provided support for students (students’ group, tutor and educator’s role)
which had been created in order to develop versatile reading strategies in foreign languages
resulted in changed students’ self-feeling regarding the language barrier and helped to
perceive social recognition in multilingual situations, thus overcoming barrier of language
use. Consequently the students’ language capacity has improved.

Regarding *effectiveness of the contribution to students’ learning outcomes* it is evident
that the students widened their experience, recognition and their self-feeling changed.
Although during the matriculation interview most of the students had admitted that their
English language capacity was above average (from 66.7% to 71.43% depending on the
language aspect), three students had expressed concerns that language might be a stumbling
block to succeed in studies. Initially students were shocked about the offered didactic
materials in foreign languages, but later after the created support system (availability of
language consultants, the advice on the reading strategies to be used, examples on interpreting
internationalisms, finding crossovers or bridges between the languages, the use of *word magic*
and other software) the students’ self-assessment reports pointed to a changed students’ self-
feeling (20 frequencies concerning positive self-feeling vs. 0 frequencies concerning negative
self-feeling) and discussions in chats and e-forums validate the findings (23 frequencies
concerning positive self-feeling and only 3 frequencies concerning negative self-feeling in the
sample of the 4 students). Similarly, the sample’s experience showed more positive feelings
than negative ones: 24 frequencies of positive experience in chats and forums vs. 10
frequencies of negative associations and 17 frequencies of positive experience in students’
self-assessment reports vs. 4 frequencies of the negative one. The discovered relation (the
determined linkage) between experience (the code: *one’s own biography as a construction*)
and social recognition (the code: *search of one’s ideals*) also adds to the fact.

Thus it might be stressed that the use of many languages in studies is effective if it
provides student’s personal experience, self-feeling and social recognition as conditions for
creation of new knowledge:

1) students better attain learning outcomes if their learning experience, namely, cultural
peculiarities, learning strategies developed and the definite socio-cultural environment
is supported by social recognition and self-feeling;

2) students demonstrate better learning outcomes if their wishes and desires are met and a
support system is created that would secure their social recognition in search of ideals,
taking into account positive patterns and consequences of the surrounding world.
The present research has limitations. The language use was studied paying attention to the frequencies and students’ expressions regarding language use in studies, as well as analysing the contribution offered to help solving language problems in order to master the study content but it was studied in isolation from the work of professors of other modules (except Module No.3) and their contribution. Another limitation is the length of the research. The results of the first study year (2 semesters) were analyzed but the full length of the joint Master’s programme is 4 or 5 semesters (refer to Part 2.2.). Providing the results of the second study year had been available for analysis, different results could have been attained. There is a possibility to continue the study.

The following hypothesis for further studies is put forth: in order to develop plurilingualism in studies it is necessary to promote students’ collaboration and team working skills, ensure interactive learning, peer learning, as well as create a favourable learning environment which supports learners’ good self-feeling and provides successful language use in plurilingual environment.

References


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