

THE STUDY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN MODERN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

“TEACHING MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (MFL) WITH THE AIM OF HELPING PUPILS ACHIEVE SOME PROFICIENCY IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND ENJOY THEIR MFL LEARNING CAN BE VERY REWARDING. TRYING TO WIDEN THE HORIZONS OF PUPILS AS TO HOW PEOPLE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER AND LIVE, IS AN EXCITING CHALLENGE. A MFL TEACHER CAN BE A CATALYST FOR DEVELOPING CURIOSITY IN YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND PEOPLE, AND FOR BROADENING THEIR HORIZONS AND HELPING THEM OVERCOME ANY NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES THEY MIGHT HOLD. [...] AMONG MANY OTHER THINGS, AS A MFL TEACHER YOU NEED TO BE IMAGINATIVE, PATIENT, OUTGOING, ENTHUSIASTIC, AND VERY WELL ORGANIZED IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL. TEACHING IS A HIGHLY COMPLEX TASK; TEACHING MFL EVEN MORE SO. IT REQUIRES FOR EXAMPLE THE MANAGEMENT OF PUPILS, THE CLASSROOM AND RESOURCES, INTERPERSONAL SKILLS, SUBJECT AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE ABILITY TO EMPATHIZE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE. MFL TEACHERS NEED TO PLAN WELL, REGULARLY TRY OUT NEW IDEAS, CATER FOR THE NEEDS AND DIFFERENCES IN INDIVIDUAL PUPILS, MAKING LEARNING CHALLENGING AND ENJOYABLE, ASSES PUPILS’ LEARNING REGULARLY AND EFFECTIVELY, EVALUATE THEIR ACTIONS CONSTANTLY AND ADAPT TO AN EVER CHANGING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT. [1]

KEYWORDS: FOREIGN LANGUAGE, HIGHER EDUCATION, MFL TEACHING, ENGLISH

I start my paper with a presentation of the history of English language saying that any language has a history and it can be divided into two branches: *external* and *internal* history. External history concerns the political and social developments in the community speaking the language while the internal history deals with the changes which take place over time within the language itself. A good example in this regard will be the rise of bilingualism between the Scandinavians and the English in the north of the country in the 9th and 10th century had repercussions for the structure of English. Then I will explain the beginnings of the modern term of English: a variety of names have been used to refer to the country and language of interest here. First there were the Latin and the Greek names like *Britannia* and *Anglia* than the German and the Saxon terms.

English has been spoken in England since around 450. The first dialects mentioned by the historians were the West Germanic and also the geographical variants Northumbrian in the north, Anglian in the middle and West-Saxon in the south. Another important

dialect which followed the invasion of England by the Normans in 1066 was Norman French one used by the English court and clergy. The present-day orthography of English is essentially that of the late Middle English period. Several changes occur which account for the particular form of English spelling today have their roots in that period. During that time the vocabulary of English took on the profile which it exhibits today: French loans were consolidated and a whole series of new classical loan-words (from Latin and Greek) were adopted into the language. The Early Modern period is also interesting as it is from this time that the colonization of America by the English dates. This meant that the varieties of English of the period were exported to America where several of their characteristics have been retained due to the naturally conservative nature of peripheral dialects of a language. Not least because Shakespeare lived at a pivotal period for the development of Modern English (late 16th and beginning of the 17th century) the term *Shakespearean English* is used quite often.

It is known fact that English belongs to the family of Germanic languages which are spoken throughout Scandinavia (North Germanic) and in central Europe in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and on the North Sea coast as well as in the Low Countries more exactly in the present-day Netherlands and Belgium. Frisian, a separate Germanic language, is still spoken in northern Netherlands and in the west of Schleswig-Holstein (present-day Germany, south of mainland Denmark). The local language of Luxemburg – Letzebergisch – is also Germanic. Scots is also derived from West Germanic (from northern forms of Old English dialects). The status of Scots as a separate language is a question of debate.

IS ENGLISH A LIVE LANGUAGE?

There is a close relationship between the people and the languages. Like people languages appear, develop and disappear. They are in a continuous change. The linguists have been fascinated by the changes which appear in different languages. The way languages change offers insights into the nature of a language itself. Possible answers to this matter tell us about the way they are used in societies, about how they are acquired by individuals and may reveal to us something about its internal organization.

There is no simple explanation why languages change. This is an area in which there is much speculation and little proof; this area is an interesting one but there are few if any direct answers. For this reason historical linguistics has traditionally been concerned with how languages evolve and not why they do so in one particular direction and not in another.

There is no such thing as an unchanging language. The rate of change may vary considerably due to both internal and external factors. English for example has changed enormously since Old English, due on one hand, to internal factors, the seeds of which may well have been set even before the language came to England in the 5th century, and on the other hand due to political and social developments in the late Old and Middle English period with the Scandinavian and Norman invasions. German, on the other hand has retained its complex morphological system with little simplification over the centuries.

What makes English a live language? Its dialects: old or modern they are the one which confer to the English language its originality. For example **the English dialect used in the city of London** occupies a special position. The early development of English in this city is marked by migration from various parts of England as of the early Middle

English period. The language of the migrants into the city has had a pronounced influence on that which emerged later here. The relative significance of dialects in the formation of London English is determined by the immigration for different directions into the city. For example there were connections with Essex to begin with, later in the 14th century movements from the relatively thickly populated areas of Norfolk and Suffolk are to be seen. By the late 14th century the relationship was shifted in favor of migrants from the central midlands. Later on the language of London continued on a path where it became less and less bound to a specific region. For instance the initial softening, which is typical of the area immediately south and south-west of the capital, is not to be found in London texts from the late Middle English period. The development of a form of English with the upper classes of the population of London took a separate course from that of the city dialect, Cockney.

English is the most commonly spoken language in the world today, and desire of those in other countries to learn the English language is growing at a steady rate. Therefore, there is a demand for bright and motivated individuals to teach conversational and written English to those abroad, both young and old.

When you decide that you want to learn a foreign language online, you have several options available to you: either to learn a foreign language online or to simply follow a University foreign language class which use both written and conversation means. The written means can be the traditional books, chalk and blackboard or the most recent computers and multimedia labs.

There are so many modern means to learn English today. I believe that English can only be learned by writing and repeating over and over again each word. From my experience with my students during the English classes I observed that their interest was grater whenever I used proverbs, legal terms, mottoes, and self-scoring quizzes to enlarge their vocabulary than I used the usual texts.

I also observed that if I use interactive language teaching my students learn more easily the English vocabulary than if they read the text. But vocabulary is only one part of English. An excellent mean to learn English is by using the newspapers and the journals. Spelling is another part of the English language that is equally important. Because of the many changes in pronunciation that have occurred since a written standard developed, and the retention of many historical idiosyncrasies in spelling, English spelling is difficult even for native speakers to master. So the only solution is to memorize the words.

THE TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES

“A modern language is any human language that is currently in use. The term is used in language education to distinguish between languages which are used for day-to-day communication (such as French and German) and dead classical languages such as Latin, Sanskrit, and Classical Chinese, which are studied for their cultural or linguistic value.

Modern languages are taught extensively around the world. Here are some examples:

EUROPEAN UNION

In all European Union school systems, it is mandatory to study at least one foreign language at some stage during the school career; there is a tendency for this to start earlier, even in the first year of primary school. Additional languages can be chosen as an optional subject. The most common foreign language chosen is increasingly English (the most

popular first foreign language in 23 of the 25 member states of the European Union which do not have English as the language of instruction), followed by French and German. Teaching is largely provided by generalist teachers in primary school and by specialists in middle and secondary schools. An exception to this is Ireland, where Irish Gaelic and English are the only mandatory languages, although the majority of students also study a modern language as it may be compulsory to do so at second level.

UNITED KINGDOM

All children of the United Kingdom learn English at school. In Wales, all children at English language medium state schools learn Welsh as a second language until the age of 16, which is mainly taught through the medium of English. Welsh language schools teach mainly through the medium of Welsh.

In addition, *Modern Foreign Languages* is a compulsory component in the state education system. At least one language is studied until the end of Key Stage 3. Particular schools may require younger students to study additional languages, and they may be given the option to continue these. Schools are required to teach a program of languages according to local and national guidelines. From 2010, all primary school pupils in Key Stage 2 (aged 7 – 11) will be entitled to some teaching of a modern foreign language. English is taught to immigrant adults and youths as necessary.

UNITED STATES

Although there is no official language in the United States, children learn American English as part of their institutional education. As the responsibility of K-12 education sits not with the U.S. Department of Education but with each individual state's State Education Agency (State Department of Education) some public school districts containing large numbers of English Language Learners (notably students who are Spanish, Chinese, and Navajo) offer bilingual education. This two-way setting uses the student's native language as well as English to impart curriculum, but the National Association for Bilingual Education notes it has been a controversial-and sometimes political-topic for a portion of citizens who believe in English Only education. The U.S. also hosts many English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for people who have not learned English in school (most frequently immigrants to the U.S.A.).

As the global world economy makes knowledge of a world language a valuable work skill, a growing number of elementary and middle school districts now offer modern language courses, usually on an optional basis. Students are increasingly advised (and at times required) to study a foreign language in high school, and more frequently at the college or university level. In 2006, "the most commonly studied foreign language[s] in the U.S., determined by the number of students enrolled in foreign language classes in colleges and universities" were, in order of popularity: Spanish, French, German, American Sign Language, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Latin, Russian, and Arabic." [2]

English is taught as a second or foreign language in many countries.

“English as a second language (ESL) is the use or study of English by speakers with different native languages.”

English is a language which has great reach and influence; it is taught all over the world under many circumstances. In English-speaking countries, English language

teaching has essentially evolved in two broad directions: instruction for people who intend to live there and for those who do not. These divisions have grown firmer as the instructors of these two "industries" have used different terminology, followed distinct training qualifications, formed separate professional associations, and so on. Crucially, these two arms have very different funding structures, public in the former and private in the latter, and to some extent this influences the way schools are established and classes are held. Matters are further complicated by the fact that the United States and the United Kingdom, both major engines of the language, describe these categories in different terms.

EFL, English as a foreign language, indicates the teaching of English in a non-English-speaking region. Study can occur either in the student's home country, as part of the normal school curriculum or otherwise, or, for the more privileged minority, in an Anglophone country that they visit as a sort of educational tourist, particularly immediately before or after graduating from university. *TEFL* is the teaching of English as a foreign language; note that this sort of instruction can take place in any country, English-speaking or not. Typically, EFL is learned either to pass exams as a necessary part of one's education, or for career progression while one works for an organization or business with an international focus. EFL may be part of the state school curriculum in countries where English has no special status (what linguistic theorist Braj Kachru calls the "expanding circle countries"); it may also be supplemented by lessons paid for privately. Teachers of EFL generally assume that students are literate in their mother tongue.

ENGLISH WITHIN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

The other broad grouping is the use of English within the Anglosphere. In what Braj Kachru calls "the inner circle", i.e., countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, this use of English is generally by refugees, immigrants, and their children. It also includes the use of English in "outer circle" countries, often former British colonies and the Philippines (a former US colony), where English is an official language even if it is not spoken as a mother tongue by a majority of the population.

In the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand this use of English is called *ESL* (English as a second language). This term has been criticized on the grounds that many learners already speak more than one language. A counter-argument says that the word "a" in the phrase "a second language" means there is no presumption that English is *the* second acquired language. *TESL* is the teaching of English as a second language.

In the UK and Ireland, the term ESL has been replaced by *ESOL* (English for speakers of other languages). In the UK and Ireland, the term *EAL* (English as an additional language) is used, rather than *ESOL*, when talking about primary and secondary schools, in order to clarify that English is not the students' first language, but their second or third. The term *ESOL* is used to describe English language learners who are above statutory school age.

Typically, a student learns this sort of English to function in the new host country, e.g., within the school system (if a child), to find and hold down a job (if an adult), or to perform the necessities of daily life (cooking, taking a cab/public transportation, or eating in a restaurant, etc.) The teaching of it does not presuppose literacy in the mother tongue. It is usually paid for by the host government to help newcomers settle into their adopted country, sometimes as part of an explicit citizenship program. It is technically possible for *ESL* to be taught not in the host country, but in, for example, a refugee camp, as part of a

pre-departure program sponsored by the government soon to receive new potential citizens. In practice, however, this is extremely rare.” [3]

WHY STUDY MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES?

The Modern Foreign Languages major allows students to combine the equivalent of two language minors (French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) into one major. The major is ideal for students who want to develop and demonstrate a mastery of more than one modern foreign language, whether as a sole area of specialization or as a second or third major. Majors not only develop communicative competency in two modern foreign languages, but they also gain significant knowledge of the literatures and cultures of multiple countries; develop important skills in literary and cultural analysis; and gain multicultural awareness. While helpful, previous experience in one or both of the selected languages is not necessary; with planning, it is possible for students to complete the major by beginning the study of both languages at SU.

Upon graduation, Modern Foreign Languages majors are well equipped to continue their study in a number of subjects, including languages and literatures; art history; law; philosophy; international relations; and political science. Their language skills make them excellent candidates for employment in a multitude of fields both nationally and internationally, including jobs in government; diplomacy; policy making; medicine; translation and interpretation; journalism; social work; art; film; and fashion.” [4]

In conclusion the teaching of modern languages is important for the following reasons:

It provides a flexible and personalized learning experience, in which students receive close monitoring and support from colleagues in school and university;

It provides up-to-date insights from language learning research alongside practical experience in the classroom.

It provides a framework for developing teaching in which research and theories can be tested in practice and reformulated through practice;

It encourages students to develop a systematic approach to self-evaluation, which will become a model in further career development.

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