RECEPTIVE MULTILINGUALISM IN TERTIARY EDUCATION: ENHANCING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AND TRAINING MUTILINGUAL READERS

[a]KATARÍNA CHOVANCOVÁ, [b]DARINA VEVERKOVÁ, [c]MAREK ĽUPTÁK

Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University, Tajovského 40, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia
email: [a]katarina.chovancova@umb.sk
Institute of Foreign Languages, Technical University in Zvolen, T. G. Masaryka 24, 960 01 Zvolen, Slovakia
email: [b]darina.veverkova@tuzvo.sk, [c]marek.luptak@tuzvo.sk

Abstract: The paper discusses the importance of building up receptive multilingualism in tertiary education on the background of current linguistic and curricular policies, giving space to a wide-spread presence of English as a lingua franca. It puts forward results of comparative research on receptive multilingualism of young Slovak speakers in relation to a genetically related language laying stress on the factor of contextual prediction. Understanding contextualized and uncontextualized items in a written text is measured in correlation to main features of linguistic repertoires of speakers. The study opens up towards metalinguistic and reflexive components of one's communicative competence as well, identifying possible key factors enhancing intercomprehension.

Keywords: language, curricula, receptive multilingualism, reading, skill, intercomprehension

1 Introduction

Despite a strong presence of English, multilingualism remains a characteristic feature of a large majority of communication contexts in Europe. Facing both historical reality and contemporary truism, multilingual communities are urged to coin strategies to handle plurality. Attempts made on various levels of political, social and cultural existence of our societies have met unequal success. The ideal of a fully multilingual speaker is not yet a practical reality.

The research presented in this paper is based on the key concept of receptive multilingualism. The notion is considered in an interdisciplinary perspective combining a central point of view of contrastive linguistics and, complementarily, a sociolinguistic point of view. Applications of the concept in the field of language acquisition are then taken into consideration.

The need for the mobility and multilingualism arises in the regions and there are used other languages than English (cf. WIDLOK – PETRAVIĆ – ORG – ROMCEA, 2010, p. 8). Slovakia is a member of the European Union since 1 May 2004. Multilingualism is one of the EU founding principles. This policy aims at the communication with its citizens in their own languages, protecting European rich linguistic diversity and promoting language learning in Europe.

Furthermore, the principle is anchored in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The citizens of the EU member countries have the right to use any of 24 official languages to contact the EU institutions. The EU institutions are obliged to reply in the same language. Another relevant reason for supporting the plurilingual approach in the Slovak educational system is the Schengen Agreement which creates the European Schengen Area where internal border checks were abolished. Free movement of the residents within the borders of the Schengen Area in Europe is allowed. This leads to the fact that Slovak students should learn also another foreign language besides English. The Barcelona objectives are to be met according to the European Commission. The national governments have to provide their citizens with the possibility of learning at least two foreign languages from early age. The receptive or comprehensive concept in the foreign language learning process is in the foreground: "The European Commission responds to these needs by taking the actions recommended in the proposal for a Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to

the teaching and learning of languages, ... etc."[1] English was established the first and only compulsory foreign language in Slovakia in 2011 by the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education. In the part Aims of Upbringing and Education it is stated that the aim is to allow children to "master English language and at least one other foreign language"[2]. The number of lessons per week is adjusted by the obligatory State Educational Programme and Framework Teaching Plans. However, in so-called innovated Framework Teaching Plan from 2015 the second foreign language became optional. It is in contrast to the law and the plurilingual approach is not ensured in foreign languages teaching. Thanks to the interventions of professional associations of foreign languages teachers, there is an effort to enforce two compulsory foreign languages in compliance with the School Act, according to the model of a mother tongue and two foreign languages (the European Commission proposes this model, too). From September 2019, Slovak children will have a possibility to choose their first foreign language (English, German, French, Russian, Spanish or Italian). However, English language will still remain compulsory, i.e. if a pupil chooses another language than English as the first foreign language (during primary education – ISCED 1), they will have to select English as the compulsory second language during lower secondary education (ISCED 2). It is stated in the Amendment to the State Educational Programme and Framework Teaching Plan.[3]

To sum up, English stays compulsory at two language levels after the implementation of this change. There will be no significant changes in the language policy of primary schools unless directors and teachers of foreign languages work purposefully with the opinion of general public. Except for English, other foreign languages (L2) are positioned legislatively as tertiary languages. This ranking is not true for the primary schools where the languages of national minorities are used. For the development of receptive multilingualism, it is important to teach children at least two foreign languages during their primary and lower secondary studies (ISCED 1 and ISCED).

2 State of the matter

All over the world English has become a sort of lingua franca in today's society, especially because of its widespread use in the spheres of work, studies, science, research, travelling or entertainment. Therefore the necessity of mastering English emerged at all degrees of studies in the Slovak Republic and for a certain period was imposed by the Slovak legislation to be studied as the compulsory foreign language. Nevertheless, other foreign languages still have had their irreplaceable position within the system of Slovak education. The following studied languages are the most preferred ones as the second foreign language in Slovakia: French, German, Russian, Spanish and Italian.

Technical universities in Slovakia propose up-to-date technical and professional study programmes and their graduates are well-educated professionals in the spheres of technology, engineering, science, research, industry or other areas. In the Slovak Republic, the tradition of technical universities is well established.

The Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia, provides education at three levels of studies within the European Higher Education and Research Area. At the Technical University in Zvolen, Slovakia, students can study at four faculties: Faculty of Forestry, Faculty of Wood Sciences and Technology, Faculty of

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[1] See: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/multilingualism/about-multilingualism-policy_en
[2] Act on Upbringing and Education (so-called School Act): https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/20190901.html
[3] http://www.minedu.sk/dodatok-c-3-k-svp-%E2%80%9Erup-pre-zs-s-vyucovacim-jazykom-slovenskym%E2%80%9C/

Ecology and Environmental Sciences and Faculty of Environmental and Manufacturing Technology. All these faculties have their specifically oriented study programmes in which students can obtain quality education in chosen areas. Despite highly technical orientation of studies, students of technical universities understand well the necessity of mastering foreign languages at high level. It is partly due to their studies duties (they need to study a lot of literature, including foreign authors' works, and to use this information e.g. when writing bachelor, master and doctoral theses) and partly due to the requirements of the labour market. Therefore, apart from technical and professional disciplines, the students of technical universities in Slovakia study professional foreign languages, too. Teaching of professional foreign languages at the Technical University in Zvolen is provided by the Institute of Foreign Languages. The students study professional languages closely related to their study specialisations at the specialised seminars. Three languages are proposed to the students: English, German and French. The students can study also Chinese language. However, proposed courses of Chinese are oriented towards the acquisition of only general Chinese, not technical. From the proposed foreign languages, the majority of the students of the Technical University in Zvolen choose English. This language (as the first foreign language for the majority of the Technical University in Zvolen students) is included into the University curricula, however, the number of lessons per week depends on the Faculties. Second foreign languages are poorly presented.

3 Needs

Teaching foreign languages including professional aspects (professional vocabulary, phrases, grammatical and syntactical structures etc.) is based on the work with professional (specialised) texts in foreign languages. According to Grabe (1991, p. 375), reading is probably the most important skill for foreign language learners in academic contexts because they must acquire a lot of knowledge which they are supposed to take advantage of and use in their career. Reading is the ability to understand the text, to get meaning from the written, as well as unwritten (reading between the lines), to acquire important information from the text and to benefit in some way from it. As one of four basic language skills, learners of foreign languages deal with it from the beginning of the process of studying foreign language and they develop it gradually all over their life (Veverková, 2018). Reading is also a base for the development of other language skills, e.g. Krashen (2004, p. 17) proposes that more reading brings about better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical development.

Reading comprehension is an active and complex process, during which a reader tries to understand a written text. If the readers want to be successful in reading and to read efficiently, they must master the language at needed level, as well as different skills and strategies necessary for the process (Veverková, 2018). Grabe (1991, pp. 378-379) mentions the following strategies as the ones used by the efficient readers: adjusting the reading speed; skimming ahead; considering titles, headings, pictures and text structure information; anticipating information to come, etc.

Hosenfeld (1977) declares that the efficient reader focuses on the meaning of the text as a whole, anticipates the content and does not pay attention to minor information.

Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, pp. 96-98) consider the following skills as important and needed to be mastered:

- selecting what is relevant for the current purpose;
- using all the features of the text such as headings, layout, typeface;
- skimming for content and meaning;
- scanning for specifics;
- identifying organisational patterns;
- understanding relations within a sentence and between sentences;
- using cohesive and discourse markers;

- predicting, inferring and guessing;
- identifying main ideas, supporting ideas and examples;
- processing and evaluating the information during reading;
- transferring or using the information while or after reading.

We consider reading a key skill for the learners of professional foreign languages at technical universities in Slovakia. In order to develop the reading competency of the students of the Technical University in Zvolen we have been carrying out the project "Developing the Reading Competency and Teaching Technical Foreign Languages at Technical Universities" since 2017. The project is being carried out in cooperation of two universities, Technical University in Zvolen and Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, both in central Slovakia. It is financed by the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. This project and its outputs are focused on improving the quality of teaching foreign languages and facilitating the reading competency of students. Its main outputs are going to be published by the end of the year 2019 and will be in the form of electronic course books for six university study programmes with the technological focus, which are taught in Slovakia, as well as in the Czech Republic: Forestry (English and German language), Timber Frame Structures (English language), Fire Protection and Safety (English language), Furniture and Interior Design (English language), Ecology and Environmental Studies (English language) and Mechanical Engineering (English language). Moreover, bilingual glossaries (English – Slovak and German – Slovak) of professional word stock and further supporting electronic materials aimed at developing the reading competency of students will be an important part of the outputs.

During the implementation of the project two scientific conferences have been held at the Technical University in Zvolen. The conferences proposed a place for the exchange of experience and practical observations of the university teachers of foreign languages from the Slovak, as well as Czech Republics. A lot of valuable discussions were involved during which new cooperation between various university workplaces emerged. Another conference is planned to be organised in October 2019.

A series of workshops was held at the Technical University in Zvolen, too, in order to increase proficiency of the project members in the sphere of developing the reading competency of the technical universities students. However, we had an opportunity to attend a very interesting workshop on the use of the statistics as the mathematics discipline in pedagogical and linguistic research.

The members of the project team have published 17 research papers and studies so far, related to the project topic in different journals in Slovakia and abroad. Two proceedings of scientific papers were published, too, and two monographs dealing with the topic of reading comprehension are being prepared for the publication.

We confirmed the importance of developing the reading competency of the students of technical universities in Slovakia also with the analysis of the doctoral students' attitude to reading professional texts in foreign languages. According to the short analysis that we carried out at the Technical University in Zvolen we can sum up that the doctoral students from our sample read professional texts in foreign languages, predominantly in English. Moreover, when studying, preparing for the exams or writing doctoral thesis, 70 % of doctoral students from our research sample prefer and use professional texts in foreign languages to the texts in Slovak language. Nearly 60 % of the questionnaire respondents spend more than 3 hours a week reading these texts. It was also found out that doctoral students are aware of the necessity of mastering foreign languages, because they are a tool to obtain new and useful information in the sphere of science and research. Professional literature written in foreign languages provides them with an important source of knowledge. More than half of them admit

that when doing their research they study mainly scientific and research papers written in foreign languages. Therefore, reading comprehension still deserves full attention of the teachers of foreign languages at the doctoral degree of studies.

Within the project "Developing the Reading Competency and Teaching Technical Foreign Languages at Technical Universities" we did the analysis of the attitude of the students of bachelor degree at the Technical University in Zvolen to reading of professional texts in foreign languages. It follows from the results that even students at the bachelor degree of studies are aware of the importance and usefulness of the professional texts in foreign languages, they found valuable and up-to-date information in them, they are definitely useful for their studies and personal development. The analysis was carried out on the sample of 175 students and nearly 62 % of the respondents declared that professional texts in English or German (they selected these two foreign languages as the languages in which they read foreign texts) are necessary for their studies and that they read them regularly. Therefore mastering the language skill of reading comprehension is crucial for them and the teachers of foreign languages for specific purposes should focus their attention to the development of this skill.

4 Theoretical framework

Receptive multilingualism (cf. Kloss 1929 in Beerkens 2010, p. 27) for receptive competence in West Germanic languages) means making an important step towards handling linguistic pluralities, claiming the importance and the advantage of a "one-way / one-code" information transfer for an adequately efficient communication in some conditions. Receptive multilingualism (in a very close conceptual relation to semicommunication, cf. Haugen 1966, Budovičová 1987) is based on the acceptance of but a partial communicative competence as a prerequisite of efficient information exchange (an implicit renouncement to flawless communicative competence modelled after native speakers) and on the will to preserve the plurality of means of communication. It is one of the issues dealt with within plurilingual approaches to language use and language teaching/learning.

Plurilingual approaches to language acquisition focus on developing plurilingual and pluricultural competence. It can be observed with speakers who master several languages to various extent, have experience with different cultures and are able to take part in intercultural interaction. Plurilingual competence is an asymmetric one:

"Rozlišuje sa, nakoľko jednotlivec jazyky ovláda a nakoľko ich používa. Každá rečová zručnosť môže byť u jednotlivca rozvinutá v inej miere. Veľmi málo bilingválnych a viacjazyčných jednotlivcov má rovnakú znalosť dvoch alebo viacerých jazykov. Jeden jazyk má tendenciu byť silnejší a býva nazývaný dominantným jazykom. Je to kompetencia nestála, dynamická, nerovnomerná alebo evolutívna. Slabší jazyk sa môťe stať silnejším. Konfigurácia tejto zručnosti sa totiž vyvíja podľa situačnej a komunikačnej trajektórie komunikanta – spoločenského aktéra. Obohacuje sa o nové komponenty, alebo ich dopĺňa, či transformuje, respektíve niektorými inými komponentmi mrhá. Je to vplyvom pracovných, geografických alebo rodinných zmien, ale aj vplyvom rozvoja osobných záujmov." (Bírová – Eliášová, 2014, p. 75)[4]

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[4] "There is a difference to what extent a speaker masters languages and to what extent they use them. Each speech ability of a speaker can be developed differently. Only a few of bilingual and multilingual speakers have the same knowledge of two or more languages. One language tends to be stronger and is called dominant language. It is an unstable, dynamic, uneven or evolutionary competence. Weaker language can become stronger. Configuration of this ability is developing according to the situational and communication trajectory of a communicator – social participant. It is enriched by new components or it complements or transforms them; it wastes alternatively other components. It is under the influence of working, geographical or family changes, as well as under the influence of personal interests' development." (translation: authors)

In language acquisition, plurilingual approaches towards languages and cultures imply several linguistic and cultural varieties at once. According to Candelier (2012, p. 6), they include awakening to languages, integrated language teaching, intercomprehension between related languages and the intercultural approach(es). These methodologies are defined in FREPA (Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches) and its accompanying tools, considered as bases for further plurilingual curricula development and innovation. Among six basic principles of plurilingual curricula construction, there are: a. holistic conception of teaching, b. taking into account the sum of learners' linguistic resources; c. focus on learner s' linguistic conscience; d. learning strategies development, e. linkages between teaching languages and teaching other disciplines, f. building up intercultural competence.

The language of schooling and the source culture (discussed by Schmitt, 2017, who points out at three of the main functions of the latter: "fonction de proximité", "fonction de mise en valeur du pays de l'apprenant" and "fonction interdisciplinaire") tend to be the gravity centre and the principal beneficiary of integrating processes mentioned above. Candelier (2012, p. 28) claims that innovative aspect of plurilingual approaches has to be seen in the possibility of valorising linguistic codes that occupy peripheral positions in regard to the main language of schooling (eventually, official language or majority language), but hold central "biographical" position, i. e. are important for learners in the perspective of their personal/familial background. These peripheral codes can be absent from the institutional language acquisition process and may remain unknown to the instructor. We speak about the necessary transition from the neglected multilingualism of speakers' linguistic repertoires and those of their communities to an inclusive multilingualism.

5 Research objectives and methodology

The aim of the study is to uncover the potential for mutual intelligibility of languages that are not necessarily bound by a close genetic relation trying to spot factors that may enhance understanding between speakers of these languages. Within the target group of young Slovaks, understanding of French language is tested with a specific focus of distinctions between contextual and non-contextual lexical elements, presuming the necessity, for the latter, to lean on extralinguistic knowledge and/or familiarity with linguistic systems.

The study uses an original methodology of assessment of written reception of an unfamiliar language. The main methodological instrument was a test of reading comprehension. The focus was on reading and understanding a short text in French language (100 words; 613 characters):

Le volcan Sinabung, sur l'île indonésienne de Sumatra, a craché cette semaine des flammes et une épaisse colonne de cendres brûlantes très haut dans l'atmosphère. Un responsable local estime qu'il s'agit là de la plus grande àruption de l'année. Les dernières image envoyées par les agences sont spectaculaires. Des milliers d'habitants alentour ont été affectés par les rejets de cendres et de fumée, mais personne n'a été sérieusement blessé. La zone de danger avait été évacuée. Le Sinabung, entré dans une longue éruption en 2013 après au moins 400 ans de sommeil, est l'un des 129 volcans actifs en Indonésie.[5]

The text was written in general standard French and did not comprise any specialised vocabulary (technical terms, slang, jargon etc.). Global understanding of the text and local (detailed) understanding of selected expressions were verified through the identification of semantic equivalents of lexical units in Slovak language. The list of elements used for testing understanding included, on one hand, contextually bound items (selected from the text above) and, on the other hand, lexical units without context (a separate series of isolated words). Both groups

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[5] Adapted from: https://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Environnement/Le-volcan-Sinabung-crache-a-nouveau-des-flammes-et-des-cendres-1428956

comprised full words; contextualized items included grammatical words as well. In the latter group, items belonged to various parts of speech. However, only nouns and adjectives were presented without context. Contextualized items contained some potentially problematic elements either because of their lower frequency or because of their formal resemblance but semantic difference from Slovak words. Items without context contained some typical „false friends". It was a choice of 10 words belonging to basic French, familiar to Slovak speakers, but without an easily spottable equivalent for someone who has not been studying French.

Previously conducted studies (Chovancová – Zázrivcová – Křečková, 2015; Chovancová – Zázrivcová – Ráčková, 2018), measuring the capacity of Slovak native speaker to understand Romance languages, used a similar methodology. Unlike these tests, this study was aimed at mapping metalinguistic representations as well and worked with the concept of bridge words (cf. *mots ponts* in Castagne, 2007), taken from the didactics of intercomprehension. A bridge word is a word from the mother tongue or from a foreign language (in most cases different from the target language to be understood) which, due to its formal and/or semantic relation to the opaque element from the target language helps the speaker understand the meaning of the latter. A bridge word helping an English speaker understand the French word *mer* (Engl. *sea*, Slov. *more*) can be the English adjective *maritime*, formally and semantically identical with the French adjective maritime. In a similar way, the Czech word *puntík* could be understandable for various kinds of (native) speakers in association with the German form *punkt* or the English and French form *point*.

As it was indicated above, local comprehension was tested using a series of 20 lexical items. The sub-series A consisted of 10 contextualized lexical items (*volcan, île, flammes, dans, local, dernières, habitants, éruption, ans, est*) selected from the text. The sub-series B consisted of 10 lexical items presented without any context (*âge, national, femme, bourse, forêt, école, difficile, tarte, mémoire, lac*).

The adequacy of Slovak equivalents proposed by speakers was assessed on a 6-grade scale (from 0 to 5) as follows:

- 5 – perfect semantic and formal equivalent (ex. fr. *dernières* [last] – slov. *posledné* [last]),
- 4 – perfect semantic equivalent with different grammatical categories from the original (ex. fr. *flammes* [flames]– slov. *oheň* [fire]),
- 3 – partial semantic equivalent or zero semantic equivalent with an identifiable positive interlinguistic transfer (ex. fr. *est* [is]– slov. *patrí* [belongs to]) or equivalent with a common seme/common semes with the correct equivalent (ex. fr. *âge* [age]– slov. *rok* [year]) or equivalent derived from the expected equivalent (ex. fr. *national* [national]– slov. *národ* [nation]),
- 2 – zero semantic equivalence with a clear negative interlinguistic transfer (ex. fr. *difficile* [difficult]– slov. *rozdielny* [different]),
- 1 – unmotivated zero semantic equivalent (ex. fr. *habitants* [inhabitants] – slov. *vzhľad* [appearance]),
- 0 – equivalent was not proposed.

While testing written receptive skills, the analysis of bivalent and parallel words in synonymic chains were used (cf. Nábělková, 2013). Each of the suggested equivalents was assessed. Its accuracy (A) and frequency (F) were scored. Thus, *plamene* (5;17) are considered as perfect equivalent for *flammes* (accuracy score is 5). This equivalent has been proposed by 17 tested speakers (frequency score is 17).

A specific objective of the study of the Slovaks' receptive competence of written French was to establish the importance of the linguistic context in reception and to check the capacity of speakers to make an active use of the context in predicting meanings. It was supposed that the linguistic context plays a crucial role facilitating reception and is competitive or otherwise

related to other factors, such as the degree of exposure to the target language, typological and genetic characteristics of the mother tongue and the degree of its relation to the target language and, finally, the overall communicative competence in foreign languages. The study aimed at unveiling indices to understand the nature of relations between various factors.

Metalinguistic competence of speakers was activated together with local understanding of contextualized units. For each item, they were asked to reflect on what helped them understand it, stating their preference between a bridge word (consequently, a bridge tongue), the linguistic context, both of these factors or neither of them.

6 Target group

The study involved 85 speakers. They were students of the Technical University in Zvolen, specializing in ecology and protection of biodiversity, environmental management, forensic environmental science, landscape protection, environmental engineering, interior and furniture design, economics and management of woodprocessing enterprises, furniture construction, fire security and protection, forestry. Before testing their receptive competence, overall communication competence in foreign languages was questioned. The speakers themselves had to declare their level of competences in various language. The self-assessment results were then confronted with the results of entry language test results.

Levels of competence are indicated according to CEFRL (A1 to C2). Speakers are familiar with this type of (self) assessment, due to its massive use in institutionalized acquisition of foreign language. The majority of speakers (84) declared an advanced level of competence in one foreign language (English). The language in which speakers declared the second highest level of competence, reaching A2 level on the average, was German (53 speakers, 62 %). The third most often mastered foreign language was Russian, between A1 and A2 on the average, in which 18 speakers declared to have a certain competence (21 %). Some speakers declared to have a basic competence reaching A1 level in French (18 %) and between A1 and A2 in Polish (18 %), rarely in Spanish and Italian (A1 on the average for 9 % and 8 % of speakers, respectively). In isolated cases, some knowledge of Hungarian (3 speakers), Romani (1 speaker) and Dutch (1 speaker) was declared. Some considered to declare the knowledge of Czech as a foreign language (11 speakers, 13 %). The mother tongue of speakers was Slovak (83 speakers), eventually Hungarian (2 speakers).

The scope of mapping language competences was to get to know language repertoires (fr. *bagage linguistique*) of speakers, i. e. their linguistics competences as well as, potentially, their knowledge about languages, useful in the search for parallels, contrasts and associations facilitating comprehension. However, the correlation between the number of languages spoken and the sum of levels of competences in these languages, established as an accumulation of scores (A1 – 1 point, A2 – 2 points, ... C2 – 6 points) cannot be established. Speakers with a high cumulative score can have two different types of profiles: a vertical one (less languages spoken, but higher level of competence in these languages) or a horizontal one (more languages spoken, but a lower level of competence in these languages).

Our understanding of the concept of language repertoire is related to the theory of language subconsciousness, language awareness and language consciences, presented by Dolník (2013, pp. 128 – 129) referring to the works of Horecký (1991) and Bühler (1939). Language subconsciousness is a system of linguistic instincts, an innate universal grammar conditioning the process of acquisition of natural languages. Language awareness means unconscious, automatized knowledge of languages acquired in the communication practice. Finally, language consciousness is the sum of knowledge about languages gathered by study or a conscious reflection.

7 Results

The test of local understanding showed various levels of intelligibility of discrete contextualized lexical items and uncontextualized lexical items (ordered decreasingly in Tables 2 and 3, respectively). The most transparent contextualized items were *volcan* (3.88), *éruption* (3.55) and *local* (3.12); on the contrary, the less intelligible ones were *île* (0.73), *dernières* (0.86) and *ans* (0.87). Among uncontextualized items, *national* (3.59), *âge* (2.71) and *mémoire* (2.34) were the most understandable; the most opaque ones were *tarte* (0.18), *bourse* (0.47) and *lac* (0.53).

Table 1. Intelligibility of contextualized lexical units.

Pos.	Lexical unit	Aver.	Equivalents
1	volcan (n.)	3.88	sopka[6] (5;47), vulkán (5;20), *vulkan (5;1), Ø (0;19)
2	éruption (n.)	3.55	výbuch (5;13), erupcia (5;44), *erúpcia (5;1), *erupsia (5;1), *érupcia (5;1), európa (1;1), európsky (1;1), Ø (0;23)
3	local (adj.)	3.12	miestny (5;22), miestne (4;5), domáci (5;1), lokálny (5;14), *locálny (5;2), lokálne (4;9), *lokalne (4;1), regionálny (3;3), tunajší (5;1), miesto (4;1), Ø (0;28)
4	habitants (n.)	2.47	obyvatelia (5;32), obyvateľov (5;1), obyvateľstvo (5;1), obyvateľ (4;1), obyvateli (5;1), človek (3;1), ľudia (3;1), zvyky (2;6), priestory (3;1), biotop (2;1), územie (3;1), vzhľad (1;1), *habitas (1;1), habitat (3;1), Ø (0;35)
5	flammes (n.)	1.72	plamene (5;17), *plameňe (5;2), plameň (4;3), *plamen (4;1), oheň (3;8), ohne (3;4), láva (2;1), zábava (1;1), Ø (0;51)
6	est (v.)	1.40	je (5;20), patrí (3;1), a (2;6), z (1;1), do (1;1), ktorá (1;1), aj (1;1), Ø (0;53)
7	dans (prep.)	0.88	do (5;8), v (5;6), dátum (1;1), výšky (1;1), kanec (1;1), ranec (1;1), dane (1;1), Ø (0;66)
8	ans (n.)	0.87	roky (5;7), rok (4;2), dní (3;1), vek (3;3), metrov (2;1), metre (2;1), od (2;1), nad (1;2), z (1;1), o (1;1), pokoj, Ø (0;62)
9	dernières (adj.)	0.86	posledné (5;7), posledný (4;2), posledná (4;1), najnovšie (5;2), *derniera (2;1), *deliéra (2;1), záver (3;1), naposledy (3;1), posledný (4;2), druhý výstup (2;1), opakovanie (2;1), začiatok (2;1), zverejnené (1;1), zajtra (1;1), Ø (0;64)
10	île (n.)	0.73	ostrov (5;11), povodie (3;1), v (1;1), ako (1;1), nachádzajúca sa (1;1), je (1;1), Ø (0;69)
		1.95	

Tables 1 and 2 (see below) show contextualized and uncontextualized units indicating the average degree of their transparency with a complete list of suggested French equivalents for each of them.

Table 2. Intelligibility of uncontextualized lexical units.

Pos.	Lexical unit	Aver.	Equivalents
1	national (adj.)	3.59	národný (5;44), *narodny (5;1), *národny (5;1), *narodný (5;1), národné (5;2), národne (4;2), národnosť (4;7), národ (3;3), nacionálny (5;1), *nationálny (2;1), príroda (2;1), Ø (0;18)
2	âge (n.)	2.71	vek (5;40), rok (3;7), roky (3;4), Ø (0;34)
3	mémoire (n.)	2.34	pamäť (5;11), pamäte (4;1), pamiatka (5;2), spomienka (5;11), spomienky (4;16), pamätať (3;1), zapamätať si (3;1), rozum (3;1), memorandum (2;1), Ø (0;39)

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[6] Equivalent(s) assessed by the full score (5 points) are considered, in accordance with available lexicographic works, as the most adequate. They are marked in bold in the series of equivalents presented. The sign * marks items which are written incorrectly from the point of view of the orthographic norm of standard Slovak.

4	femme (n.)	2.18	žena (5;36), známy (1;1), femme fatale (3;1), žensky (3;1), ženský (3;1), Ø (0;44)
5	difficile (adj.)	1.80	ťažký (5;10), *ťažky (5;2), ťažké (5;6), ťažko (4;2), náročný (5;3), zložité (5;1), zložitý (5;1), obtiažne (5;1), obtiažno (4;1), rozdiel (2;3), rozdielne (2;3), rozdielny (2;3), úbytok (2;1), Ø (0;46)
6	école (n.)	0.89	škola (5;14), ekologicky (5;1), prírode blízky (2;1), počúvať (2;1), Ø (0;68)
7	forêt (n.)	0.76	les (5;13), Ø (0;72)
8	lac (n.)	0.53	jazero (5;6), nedostatok (3;1), mlieko (2;2), batoh (2;1), bocian (1;1), lacko (1;1), Ø (0;73)
9	bourse (n.)	0.47	burza (5;8), Ø (0;77)
10	tarte (n.)	0.18	torta (5;2), koláč (5;1), Ø (0;82)
		1.54	

The overall average success in local understanding is 34.9 % (in Czech 74.6 %). Average success rate in understanding the contextualized items is 38.96 % (75.4 % in Czech), for the uncontextualized ones 30.9 % (in Czech 73.8 %).

8 Discussion

Variability of series of equivalents is expressed as N+1, where N designs the number of suggested equivalents apart from the zero equivalent and the number 1 referring to the presence of the zero equivalent in the series. According to the variability, lexical units range as follows : *habitants*, *dernières* (14+1 each), *difficile* (13+1), *ans*, *national* (11+1), *local* (10+1), *mémoire* (9+1), *flammes* (8+1), *éruption*, *est*, *dans* (7+1), *île*, *lac* (6+1), *femme* (5+), *école* (4+1), *volcan*, *âge* (3+1), *tarte* (2+1), *forêt*, *bourse* (1+1).

The presence of the zero equivalent in each series proves that none of the 20 analysed items was understood by all speakers. The zero equivalent was the most frequent one in 16 series of equivalents out of 20. *Volcan*, *éruption*, *national* and *âge* were the only items for which the zero equivalent was not the dominant one. Two of these items were contextualized, the other two were presented without context. The highest number of speakers suggested correct equivalents for these words: for *volcan*, 47 speakers suggested *sopka*; for *éruption*, 44 speakers suggested *erupcia*; for *national*, 44 speakers suggested *národný* and for *âge*, 40 speakers suggested *vek*. These items can be considered as most intelligible ones. They came in an equal measure from the series of contextualized and uncontextualized words.

Unlike the previous studies (Chovancová, 2018), there was no item for which the most frequently suggested equivalent would have been an incorrect one[7]. The highest number of equivalents was suggested for *habitants* and *dernières* (both of these contextualized items received 14+1 equivalents), then for *difficile* (uncontextualized, 13+1). *Habitants* showed almost perfect split between two most frequently proposed equivalents, i.e. Ø (occurred 35 times) and the perfectly correct equivalent *obyvatelia* (occurred 32 times). However, for *dernières*, the difference in frequency between the most frequent (zero) equivalent (64 times) and the second most frequent equivalent which is the perfectly correct one *posledné* (7 times) is overwhelming. *Difficile* is similar to *dernières* inasmuch as 46 speakers proposed the zero equivalent for this item, 10 of them suggested the perfectly correct equivalent *ťažký*, other equivalents were then proposed by smaller numbers of speakers. The zero equivalent was most frequently suggested for *tarte* (82 times) and *bourse* (77 times). For contextualized items, the zero equivalent was suggested with a slightly lower frequency. It occurred most often with *île* (69 times) and *dans* (66 times). Thus, considering *tarte* and *bourse*, then *île* and *dans* as the most difficult items to be understood, we note a certain tendency to lean on the context. In other words, the linguistic context seems to facilitate, although very slightly, understanding of French

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[7] The analysis of reading intercomprehension of Czech by Slovaks confirmed the existence of such cases. This result is interesting, when compared with results presented for intercomprehension of French by Slovaks, given a greater degree of proximity of Slovak and Czech when compared to Slovak and French.

words. Nevertheless, it does not yet prove a positive substantial influence of contextualization of items on their transparency.

To understand better variability of some series of equivalents, a closer look can be taken at some of the items. *Mémoire*, for instance, receives a rather rich series of equivalents (9+1), splitting in two sub-series according to the signification of the word that has been taken into account by the speaker. Some speakers referred to *mémoire* meaning: "schopnosť uchovávať a vybavovať si vnemy", "faculté comparable à un champ mental dans lequel les souvenirs, proches ou lointains, sont enregistrés, conservés et restitués"[8] corresponding to "the ability to remember information, experiences, and people" and they suggested equivalents such as *pamäť* (5;11), *pamätať* (3;1), *zapamätať si* (3;1), eventually – with a semantic shift – *rozum* (3;1). Those who took into account *mémoire* as "zásoba vnemov, ktoré sa môžu vybavovať" ("something that you remember from the past"), proposed *spomienka* (5;11) or *spomienky* (4;16) as equivalents. Finally, those who understood *mémoire* as "trvalá, stála spomienka (na istú udalosť, na niekoho vzdialeného alebo zomretého" (permanent memory of an event, of a distant or a late person), "niečo starobylé, pripomínajúce minulosť, pamätihodnosť" (something ancient reminding of the past) or "vec pripomínajúca niekoho, niečo" (a thing reminding us of something or somebody, a remembrance) suggested *pamiatka* (5;2). Among other equivalents, there were *pamäte* (4;1) corresponding to the English expression *memoirs* and the internationally accepted word *memorandum* (2;1). Both of these, belonging to the category of internationalisms, were probably suggested for their formal similarity with the original French item.

Series of equivalents give track of the presence of contact phenomena, i.e. formal and semantic interlinguistic transfer. The transfer is often – although not always – negative and leads to an unacceptable equivalent. That is the case of words such as *priestory*, *biotop*, *územie*, *habitat* suggested within the series of equivalents of *habitants* (in English *inhabitants*) due to a misleading formal similarity between the original item and a bridge word *habitat*. The same reasoning can be observed for *zvyky*, another unacceptable equivalents suggested for *habitants*, where the bridge word has probably been taken from English (*habits*). The effort to establish a semantic tie based on a formal similarity has led to a mistaken equivalent. More cases of this kind can be observed in the corpus (ex. *európa*, *európsky* as equivalents for *éruption*; *úbytok* /in the sense of *difference*/ as equivalent for *difficile* etc.) As it can be seen above (Tables 1 and 2), series of equivalents are rich in orthographic variations, some of suggested words are not orthographed in a standard way. Typically, diacritic signs are left out or added, e. g. *erúpcia*, *erupsia*, *érupcia*; *locálny*, *lokalne*; *ťažky* etc. It may be a result of scriptural habits gained in electronic environments of communication.

The metalinguistic and autoreflection-oriented component of the test can be assessed only partially. An important part of speakers, according to what was presupposed, did not respond to this part of questions. They may have considered the task too difficult in terms of time, organisation or complexity. They may have felt insufficiently prepared for the intercomprehension test itself and especially for an insight into their own multilingual practices. Still, we can put together a basic quantitative and qualitative assessment focusing on the dominant factors claimed to have a positive influence on understanding French words. The analysis of bridge words will be provided separately.

Among the factors facilitating the process of intercomprehension we have suggested, for contextualized items, there were: A – linguistic context, B – bridge tongue, C – both linguistic context and bridge tongue, D – none of the aforementioned. The speakers were not obliged to identify the helping factor for each

word, they were free to do so when they felt this identification was possible.

In this part of the test, the role of linguistic repertories of the speakers was clearly shown. In most cases, they were able to realize the influence of a tongue familiar to them on understanding French. They were able to tell which language helped them and they put the finger on bridge words, too. Bridge tongue was dominant for *volcan*, *flammes*, *local*, *habitants* and *éruption*, i. e. for the five most transparent contextualized items. Linguistic context was significant for none of these five. Some speakers were inclined, for instance, to lean on linguistic context in the case of *dans*, still contextual prediction were not of much help to them. We can suppose that the speakers involved in this study, like almost all the student population in Slovakia, are not used to make the most of contextual prediction as a receptive strategy. It can be viewed, indeed, as an occasion to get students acquainted with this specific operation.

9 Conclusion

It follows from the results of our research that the students are able to apply knowledge of other languages from their language repertories for the comprehension of unknown foreign language. They can find interlingual similarities and use them to orientate themselves in the text. This ability should be supported and developed in the learning and teaching processes. On the other hand, it was found out that the context did not always help the students to uncover the meaning of the text. They achieved approximately the same results in comprehension of lexical units in a context and without a context. To sum up, the context did not play a crucial role in the students' decoding the text in unknown language. For this reason, it is important to use the potential of the context in the supporting the language acquisition and learning from the viewpoint of plurilingual approach in foreign languages teaching.

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[8] Meanings in Slovak are taken from Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka; meanings in French are taken from Trésor de la langue française informatisé; meanings in English are taken from the online version of Cambridge Dictionary.

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Secondary Paper Section: AI, AM