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## English Language Attrition in Teachers: Questions of Language Proficiency, Language Maintenance, and Language Attitudes

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Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition 3/1, 75-100

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2017

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## **English Language Attrition in Teachers: Questions of Language Proficiency, Language Maintenance, and Language Attitudes**

### **Abstract**

The present study aims to investigate the attrition of English in English language teachers whose native language is Polish. It focuses on the attrition of more advanced vocabulary and structures which are taught in English Philology departments at universities, but which may not be necessary for teachers who teach at the lower levels of education and, as a consequence, they may be especially prone to attrition. At the same time, the study includes a questionnaire aiming to reveal the participants' attitudes towards linguistic correctness and their strategies of language maintenance. As the results show, some attrition can indeed be observed, yet it must also be remarked that the teachers do try to maintain their proficiency levels in English by using the language in various ways, such as reading books and articles in English, watching films in English, talking to native speakers, etc.

*Keywords:* language attrition, advanced users of English as L2, English language teachers, language maintenance

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study has been an investigation of language attrition in Polish teachers of English, their attitudes towards linguistic correctness, and their strategies of language maintenance. On the one hand, it can be assumed that English language teachers' levels of proficiency in English are relatively high. In principle, their levels should be C2 or at least C1, as these are the levels graduates from English Philology departments are expected to have while leaving university (C2 if they have a master's degree, while a graduate

with a bachelor's degree may have C1). On the other hand, however, language attrition is a natural process that takes place in bi- and multilingual systems when speakers are faced with the task of managing two or more languages (Herdina & Jessner, 2013, p. 753). Certainly, the most spectacular examples of attrition can be observed in emigrants who either have no contact with their native language any more, or who are exposed to a deteriorated version of their native language (for example, simplified, full of borrowings from the dominant language of the country, etc., Sharwood-Smith, 1989), but any bilingual speaker who stops using one of his or her languages, or certain words and structures in the language, is prone to attrition. In fact, like emigrants, teachers are also exposed to erroneous input, which, in their case, contains learners' errors. As a result, foreign language teachers who stop maintaining their levels of L2 proficiency are likely to undergo attrition, especially of structures which they do not use on a daily basis, for example, because they are not included in the school curriculum.

Still, instead of contenting themselves with maintaining a level of knowledge sufficient for teaching, for example, at primary school, teachers should apply various strategies of language maintenance and, as will be shown later in this article, many of them actually do. At the same time, teachers' active involvement in language maintenance can be assumed to be related to attitudes towards the target language and its norms. In other words, a positive attitude towards language accuracy may result in language maintenance, which counteracts attrition, whereas an indifferent attitude might lead to the abandonment of the language maintenance effort and to increased attrition of the teachers' competence in English.

In fact, as will be discussed in more detail below, research (e.g., Cherciov, 2013; Riemer, 2005) shows that a positive attitude itself is not a sufficient predictor of language maintenance, unless it is accompanied by a real language maintenance effort. Therefore, apart from the participants' attitudes towards the English language in general and linguistic correctness in particular, their ways of maintaining their proficiency levels will be taken into account.

Last but not least, it must be remembered that the attrition of English observed in the present study should be considered in probabilistic rather than absolute terms. Even though English Philology graduates can be assumed to have studied certain words and structures, it is difficult to establish which ones they actually processed deeply enough and internalized, and which ones they memorized only temporarily, to pass a practical English exam, but which they have not used since. However, forgetting such items would also constitute attrition, even if the participants did not even remember learning them. Certainly, qualitative methods, such as interviews and questionnaires, might be helpful to some extent, but the examples, albeit fairly typical, might still differ from the examples they encountered during their studies. The situation

is even more complex in the case of vocabulary, which is so vast that, while at the basic (A1–A2) levels it can be supposed that the names of food items, clothes, etc. are taught everywhere, at the advanced (C1–C2) levels there may be considerable diversity, depending on the texts read and discussed during the studies. However, as certain topics, such as work, travel, social problems, etc. are part of most advanced English curricula, it could be safely assumed that the participants were familiar with such expressions as ‘a golden handshake,’ ‘asylum seekers’ or ‘a white-collar worker.’ Therefore, if the participants turned out not to retrieve them from memory, it was more likely that they had forgotten them than they had never encountered them. Moreover, as more than one word is usually possible in a context (Dubin & Olshtain, 1993), the use of non-target words was accepted here as correct as long as those words met the semantic and collocational constraints of the context, except for idiomatic expressions, which do not allow any variation. Even so, failure to recognize an idiom and the use of a non-target word (e.g., ‘a golden watch’ instead of ‘a golden handshake’) could still be classified as ‘partly correct,’ provided that the response made sense.

To sum up, while the participants’ failure to produce words and structures which should be known to an English language teacher with a C1 or C2 level of proficiency can generally be assumed to constitute evidence of language attrition, the results should be treated with caution, as, theoretically, a particular person might not have encountered a given word or structure. Still, the words and structures used here are taught during English Philology studies, so they are more likely to have been forgotten than not to have been encountered at all. Even if they were practiced very briefly and not internalized properly, this is also a case of attrition, as “inexperienced items” (Preston, 1982, in Sharwood-Smith, 1989) constitute one of the “high attrition” sites (cf. Section on Language Attrition below).

## Language Attrition

In general, language attrition can be defined as “[t]he non-pathological decrease in a language that had previously been acquired by an individual” (Köpke & Schmid, 2004, p. 5, in Cherciov, 2013, p. 717). In other words, unlike, for example, aphasia, language attrition is not caused by an illness or a brain lesion, but rather by the gradual deactivation of a language that has not been used for some time. In fact, as Andersen (1982, p. 86) has remarked,

Language attrition is a special case of variation in the acquisition and use of a language or languages and can best be studied, described, documented, explained and understood within a framework that includes all other phenomena of language acquisition and use.

It can thus be regarded as a form of language development, even though its result is a decrease rather than an increase in language competence. In fact, Sharwood-Smith (1989, p. 188) describes attrition as a *competence change* which diverges from the norm instead of converging towards it. As in the case of acquisition, such a change can involve both external input and internal restructuring. As Andersen (1982, p. 87) puts it,

[r]estriction in language use accompanied by a break with a previously established linguistic tradition (or norm) leads to reduction in linguistic form and the creation of gaps in the individual's linguistic repertoire in that language.

In immigrant communities, L1 attrition can be viewed as acquisition in which speakers acquire an altered version of their L1 from 'more advanced' attriters, which can be structurally simplified, but also 'enriched' with lexical borrowings from the L2, which either replace L1 elements or denote phenomena specific to the L2 culture (Sharwood-Smith, 1986; 1989). Of course, in the case of language teachers, this break with a previously established tradition or norm is not as visible as in the case of emigrants, but losing contact with correct English taught at university and exposure to learners' errors can be supposed to have a similar effect.

Moreover, what undergoes attrition may be language competence or control (Sharwood-Smith, 1989, p. 190). In other words, the underlying competence may remain intact, but the speaker may lose the ability to control his or her production of that language, for example, because access to some rules has become inhibited. In a similar vein, Schmid, Köpke, and de Bot (2013) describe attrition as a dynamic and non-linear process, which affects different components of language proficiency, for example, fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

According to Dynamic Systems Theory (Herdina & Jessner, 2013, p. 753), language attrition results from the cognitive load placed on the speaker who faces the task of managing two or more language systems. As Herdina and Jessner (2013, p. 752) remark, the gradual process of language attrition takes place as the (dynamic) language system "undergoes a process of transformation to meet the altered communicative needs of the individual." Undoubtedly, a change in the speaker's needs, such as moving to a social context in which a certain language is no longer needed, can contribute to language attrition. However, apart from language needs, researchers have suggested several fac-

tors which can influence the process of language attrition. Predictions about the rate of language attrition concern, on the one hand, personal background factors (specifically, the age of onset and the length of residence) and, on the other hand, input and exposure, including the use of the target language. Last but not least, language maintenance depends to some extent on personal attitudes (Schmid, Köpke, & de Bot, 2013, p. 676). However, as Schmid, Köpke, and de Bot (2013, p. 676) remark, the role of each factor can be very difficult to investigate. Over long time periods, attrition does not progress linearly (de Bot & Clyne, 1994; Schmid & Dusseldorp, 2010, in Schmid, Köpke, & de Bot, 2013, p. 676).

Still, the development of language systems is non-linear by definition, as it proceeds in phases of acceleration and retardation (Herdina & Jessner, 2002, pp. 89–91). Herdina and Jessner (2002, p. 91) define gradual language loss as “an inversion of language growth,” which constitutes a process of adapting to the speaker’s communicative needs. However, language attrition is much more difficult to investigate than language acquisition or aphasia and has thus largely been ignored by research. As Herdina and Jessner (2002, p. 96) observe, first, language attrition is much less spectacular than abrupt complete language loss, second, speakers try to counterbalance attrition by means of compensatory strategies, and, third, at least at the early stages, language attrition “expresses itself in the form of an increased scatter of performance” (Herdina & Jessner, 2002, p. 96). In fact, measuring language attrition poses a serious challenge to linguistic research. First, as Herdina and Jessner (2002, p. 96) have remarked, there is no explicit performance measure which might capture the scatter of performance at the early stages of attrition. Second, designing tasks to measure attrition is very difficult: if the participants focus on one aspect of the language (for example, lexical access or grammatical rules), they are likely to perform better and the task will not detect attrition effects reliably (Schmid, Köpke, & de Bot, 2013, p. 678). They therefore conclude that the best way to investigate attrition is to test the participants’ speaking skills, because “[n]atural speech requires the rapid online integration and processing of information from many different levels” (Schmid, Köpke, & de Bot, 2013, p. 679). As a result, a number of trade-off effects between complexity, accuracy, and fluency can be observed, for example, focusing on the structure may lead to a loss of fluency or to errors in other structures (a loss of accuracy), while the avoidance of certain structures may result in decreased complexity. Still, recording speech requires direct contact between the investigator and the participant. Consequently, as the present study consisted of a test of English language competence and a questionnaire, which could also be distributed by email, it was decided to limit it to the written tasks for practical reasons. The participants could therefore do the test and fill in the questionnaire in their free time, and return them to the researcher afterwards. Even though this study design did not tap, for example,

the decrease in fluency, it can be supposed that some decrease in complexity and accuracy could still be observed in relation to the requirements posed on English Philology students at Polish universities.

Of the hypotheses concerning the order of L2 attrition, the most frequently cited one is the regression hypothesis ('first in, last out'), often in combination with the critical threshold hypothesis ('best learnt, last forgotten') (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2010, pp. 15–16). As Moorcroft and Gardner (1987, p. 339) conclude, the structures most prone to attrition are recently learnt ones, which suggests "that a thoroughly learned structure is relatively immune to language loss." However, another factor which contributes to the attrition of structures is their markedness. In reference to L1 attrition, Seliger and Vago (1991, p. 13) hypothesize that if either L1 or L2 contains an unmarked rule, then the unmarked rule will be retained and the marked one will disappear. However, if both languages contain marked structures, the L1 structure (or, in the present study, the L2 structure) will not be attrited. In a similar vein, Preston (1982, in Sharwood-Smith, 1989, p. 101) includes marked items in his list of high attrition sites or areas which are particularly prone to attrition. Other high attrition sites include, for example, items learnt last, low-frequency items, inexperienced items (i.e., those which the speaker does not use or is not exposed to any more) low information-load and low functional-load items, synonymous items (of a pair of synonyms, one disappears), and irregularities.

In relation to the present study, the above hypotheses can be applied especially to the attrition of complex but infrequent grammatical structures which are on the English Philology syllabus, but which are not used in everyday English, or which are not included in the school curriculum, such as, for example, more complex uses of reported speech, or inversion after 'no sooner,' 'only,' 'rarely,' etc. On the one hand, they may have been learnt last and, consequently, practiced the least. At the same time, as such structures are largely specific to English, they may be regarded as marked. It can therefore be supposed that attrition in English language teachers results in the loss of less frequent grammatical structures as well as advanced vocabulary.

It can thus be seen that language attrition can involve the gradual loss of different language skills, not only of accuracy, but also of fluency and complexity, which can be assumed to be particularly visible in teachers whose contact with English is limited mainly to teaching. If a teacher uses only simple structures and basic vocabulary which are included, for example, in the primary school curriculum, he or she may forget certain less frequent structures or lose control of their use, for example, be unable to retrieve them quickly enough. As a consequence of language attrition, language skills have to be constantly maintained, which requires making an effort included by Herdina and Jessner (2002, p. 130) in the following formula:

$$\text{GLE} \cong \text{LAE} + \text{LME}$$

GLE – General Language Effort

LAE – Language Acquisition Effort

LME – Language Maintenance Effort

In other words, it must be remembered that acquiring a language is not enough, as the language skills already acquired need to be maintained by regular practice. Undoubtedly, this requires a positive attitude both to the language as such and to linguistic correctness. An attitude has been defined by Ajzen (1988, p. 4, in Baker, 1995, p. 11) as “a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event,” and, it can be added, also to a language. According to Baker (1995, p. 11), attitudes can be measured and, consequently, “the specification of objects, persons, institutions or events is important and valuable in constructing measurement scales.” In the present study, attitudes towards linguistic correctness are measured by means of a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one (completely disagree) to five (fully agree). As Baker (1995, p. 12) explains, an attitude consists of a cognitive component, an affective one and readiness for action. However, attitudes may not always be clearly defined, as irrational prejudices and fears may be in conflict with formally stated beliefs (Baker, 1995, p. 12). As a result, attitude measurement may only be based on overtly stated attitudes and ignore hidden beliefs.

Similarly, readiness for action does not yet mean that action will actually be taken. Indeed, as Cherciov (2013) has shown, a positive attitude is not enough to counterbalance language attrition if it is not accompanied by an effort to maintain one’s language skills. In her study of language attrition in Romanian L1 speakers living in Canada “a positive *attitude* was instrumental only if it was conducive to an active effort to maintain the L1” (Cherciov, 2013, p. 730, her emphasis). Similarly, Riemer (2005) investigated the role of motivation in the maintenance of L2 French by German L1 speakers. In particular, she focused on the influence of motivation at the end of the L2 acquisition phase (“Erwerbsphase”) on the maintenance of French language speaking and reading comprehension skills in the “incubation phase” (“Inkubationsphase”), that is, at the time when they no longer studied French actively, but when their L2 competence was still subject to some cognitive maturation and restructuring, called “residual learning” (Riemer, 2005, pp. 218–219). As her results show, although its impact was weak, motivation indeed influenced L2 maintenance, yet, as in Cherciov’s (2013) study, its role could be ascribed to seeking contact with French in the incubation phase (Riemer, 2005, p. 230), for example, in the form of reading French books and periodicals, listening to French music, or exchanging emails in that language (Riemer, 2005, pp. 228–230). However, unlike reading and writing, listening to music does not correlate with the maintenance of L2



skills (Riemer, 2005, p. 229), which indicated that counterbalancing attrition requires more active language use. It can thus be assumed that, in the context of the present study, even though English language teachers do use English in their work, the maintenance of more advanced structures would also require their active use, or least their processing while reading.

Finally, as Szupica-Pyrzanowska (2016, p. 117) has observed, learners are particularly prone to attrition because of limited contact with the target language, therefore teachers are faced with the challenge of helping them to maintain their language skills. It might be argued that teachers are not actually learners any more, but just as L1 can undergo attrition in an L2 environment, so can even an advanced L2 if it is not used frequently enough, or if its use is restricted to a limited number of words and structures. Therefore, apart from providing learners with opportunities to use English actively, teachers should, arguably, also seek opportunities to use English in order to prevent its attrition.

## The Present Study

### Participants

The study was carried out with 39 teachers of English (L1—Polish) teaching in different kinds of schools, from primary school to university, as well as language schools and private tutoring. More precisely, they taught at: primary schools (15), secondary schools (15), middle schools (14), kindergartens (6), technical colleges (5), vocational schools (5), English Philology departments (6), university or college departments other than English Philology (3), language schools (7), and companies (4). They also gave private classes to children who had difficulty learning English (20), to gifted children (13), to children who were neither particularly gifted nor had learning difficulties but wanted to learn more English than the school curriculum provided (19), and to adults (16). Obviously, the sum exceeds thirty-nine, but the majority of them worked in more than one place.

Most of them (31) had a master's degree in English Philology, three held a doctor's degree in English Philology (linguistics or applied linguistics), three held a bachelor's degree in English Philology, and two held master's degrees in other disciplines and had English language teaching qualifications (CPE, post-graduate studies).

Thirty-four of them were female and five were male. They had completed their studies between one and thirty-three years before participating in the study (mean: 10.26 years, SD = 8.0935).

Last but not least, they were asked how often they had contact with English apart from teaching, which meant the opportunity to use English in contexts requiring more words and structures than were on the school syllabus, for example, talking to native speakers or reading books and watching films in the original. Fourteen of the participants stated they had contact with English every day, eleven—a few times a week, and five—once a week. Less frequent contact with English was rare: the answer ‘once in a few weeks’ was chosen by two participants, ‘once a year’ by two, ‘once in a few months’ by three, while one person chose ‘other’ and one did not provide any answer at all.

## Method

The instrument used in the study was a written survey consisting of two parts, an English language test with an overview of advanced vocabulary and grammar (C1–C2), followed by a questionnaire concerning the participants’ language biographies, problems of language attrition encountered by them in everyday life as well as in the test, attitudes towards linguistic correctness and strategies of counterbalancing attrition, or reasons for not doing so (see Appendix at the end of the article). However, the items were quite typical and even the sentences were similar to items which the participants might have encountered at university or in a CPE textbook. Even though the test was quite unpopular with the participants and some potential participants even refused to co-operate when they saw it, it was necessary to make them aware of the attrition processes already taking place, as self-evaluation is not always reliable. As was already mentioned above, the participants could return the tests and the questionnaires to the researcher by email, but they were explicitly instructed to rely on their knowledge and not to use any dictionaries or grammar books.

The test consisted of six tasks examining various areas of English language proficiency: (1) reported speech (5 sentences), (2) conditionals (5 sentences), (3) article use (5 sentences), (4) error correction (5 sentences containing different kinds of grammatical errors, one error per sentence), (5) key-word transformations (10 sentences) and (6) vocabulary, including idioms (filling gaps in 10 sentences).

Unfortunately, given the limited availability of the participants, both in terms of finding teachers willing to participate (as has already been mentioned above, several teachers refused, most probably for fear that revealing their language attrition might jeopardize their reputations as teachers, even though the survey was anonymous) and of the time they could devote, it was impossible to carry out a more extensive study, combining the written test with an oral

interview. However, in future research, it would be advisable to investigate the attrition of teachers' oral skills in English.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What areas can language attrition be observed in? Does the correctness of the responses depend on the area examined by a particular task?
2. What do English language teachers do to counterbalance attrition?
3. What are the participants' attitudes towards linguistic correctness in English, especially from their point of view as teachers?

## Results

For the purpose of the analysis, the participants' responses were divided into the following four groups:

1. Correct: usually there was one correct answer, but some variation was allowed, as long as the other response was also correct, for example, because it was a word that also fitted in the context. In fact, gap-filling always involves some variation. As Dubin and Olshtain (1993) have demonstrated, even native speakers' responses in gap-filling tasks vary considerably, which is due to the fact that different words can be used in the same context, from synonyms and other semantically related words (e.g., hyperonyms) to words chosen on the basis of different interpretations of the same incomplete sentence.
2. Partly correct: a partly correct answer could be either a non-target answer, especially in the case of vocabulary (e.g., 'a golden medal' instead of 'a golden handshake'), a non-target grammatical structure which might be theoretically possible in a certain context (though a little awkward in the target context, e.g., 'The novel was written by *a* British writer Philippa Gregory...') or the omission of a part of the target sentence (e.g., using the backshift of tenses in reported speech, but not changing the deixis, e.g., from 'last year' to 'the previous year'). Punctuation mistakes (e.g., no comma between the clauses in a sentence starting with an if-clause) counted as 'partly correct' if the rest of the sentence was correct.
3. Incorrect: the sentence contains a more or less serious error, or the word (in the vocabulary task) does not fit in the context.
4. Avoidance, which meant giving no answer at all, or providing only an insufficient part of the answer, for example, one word instead of a whole grammatical structure.

In general, even though there was no fixed key to the grammar and vocabulary tasks, given the possibilities of variation mentioned above, the participants' responses were evaluated on the basis of the rules of the usage of reported speech, conditionals, articles, and, in the key-word transformations

and the vocabulary task, of the semantic and syntactic properties of the words and expressions.

Overall, as the results show, the participants provided more correct responses than incorrect ones.

Table 1

*Percentages of correct, partly correct and incorrect answers as well as of avoidance, provided by the participants in the different components of the test*

Degree of correctness	Reported speech	Conditionals	Articles	Error correction	Key words	Vocabulary
Correct	54.36	57.44	48.20	67.69	67.69	66.15
Partly correct	20.00	23.08	15.38	2.56	11.54	14.10
Incorrect	25.64	12.82	36.41	29.74	15.13	11.28
Avoidance		6.67			5.64	8.46

The results were compared by means of a chi-square test in order to determine whether the correctness of the responses depended on the area under investigation. The difference proved to be statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ ,  $df = 15$ :

$$\chi_{\text{obs}}^2 = 157.64054, \chi_{\text{crit}}^2 = 37.697, \chi_{\text{obs}}^2 > \chi_{\text{crit}}^2$$

This shows that the difficulty of the tasks and, consequently, the correctness of the results, depended on the type of structures covered by each task. The easiest part was the vocabulary, also because more than one option was often acceptable (in fact, in gap-filling tasks, it is much easier to meet semantic than syntactic or collocational constraints, Włosowicz, 2016a), while articles seem to have been the most difficult. Indeed, article use is often context-dependent and cannot easily be limited to such rules as, for example, those which govern the use of conditionals (cf. Sajavaara, 1986). In fact, some of the participants seem to have forgotten some rules of article use (e.g., the use of the definite article to refer to groups of people, e.g., ‘the unemployed’, or idiomatic expressions such as ‘I pronounce you man and wife’), possibly because they had acquired them relatively late (as the regression hypothesis would suggest) and had not practiced them long enough. Another source of difficulty in article use is the fact that articles do not exist in Polish (demonstrative pronouns, such as ‘ten,’ ‘ta’ or ‘to’ (‘this one’ in the masculine, feminine, and neuter), which are sometimes translated into English by the definite article, are not articles) and, consequently, the correct usage of English articles poses Polish L1 learners,

even advanced ones, considerable difficulty (Włosowicz, 2012; Zielonka, 2009). It can thus be supposed that, like marked structures, article use is particularly prone to attrition; in fact, less frequent rules of article use, such as the ones mentioned above, can actually be regarded as marked.

However, reported speech also seems to have been quite difficult for the participants, because they either failed to use the backshift of tenses (e.g., ‘Agnes said that the following month Caroline and Gordon will have been married for ten years’), or they tended to overuse it (‘Alice told Sylvia that if she had been her, she would have taken the job they were offering her’). In fact, some idiosyncratic errors were also observed, for example: ‘Alice told Sylvia that if she was her, she would take the job she was offering to’, ‘Alice told Sylvia that if she was her she will take the job,’ or: ‘Alice told Sylvia that if she was her, she would took job they were offering to her.’ What might also be relatively disquieting is the proportion of errors in the error correction task (29.74%), which suggests that some teachers already have problems distinguishing correct structures from incorrect ones. At the same time, they do not seem to notice it, as the mean value of the responses to the statement ‘I have more and more difficulty distinguishing erroneous structures and usages from correct ones’ is only 2.15 (SD = 1.01). Finally, the lack of avoidance in reported speech, article use and error correction is due to the fact that the participants at least tried to do every sentence, while in vocabulary, key-word transformations, and conditionals, they sometimes left the whole word or sentence gap blank.

In general, typical examples (e.g., a conditional sentence starting with ‘if’ or ‘provided’) were easier than less typical ones (e.g., ‘Should the parcel be delayed/not arrive on time, please, call our customer service,’ and ‘Were John more responsible, he wouldn’t have lost his job.’). This shows that the less typical ones are more marked and are thus more prone to attrition. Indeed, in Polish conditional sentences almost always contain a function word which signals the presence of a conditional (‘jeżeli,’ ‘jeśli,’ ‘gdyby,’ etc.), while, as the examples show, English allows conditional sentences without ‘if,’ where the conditional is signaled by an auxiliary. Some examples of the participants’ errors with attempts to explain their possible causes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Examples of errors made by the participants and the problems associated with them*

Component	Participants’ errors	Problems detected
Reported speech	Margaret suggested to go for a walk.	The verb ‘to suggest’ requires a gerund (Margaret suggested going...)
Reported speech	Alice told Sylvia if she had been her, she would have taken the job they were offering her.	‘If I were you’ refers to the present, so no change to the third conditional is necessary.

Table 2 continued

Conditionals	Should not the parcel arrive on time, call our customer service.	Word order; target: Should the parcel not arrive on time...
Conditionals	If Olivia obtained a French language certificate, she could work for a French company now.	Failure to use a mixed conditional; target: If Olivia had obtained a French language certificate, she could work for a French company now.
Conditionals	Agnes said that, by the next month, Caroline and Gordon will have been married for ten years.	Incorrect deixis (target: the following month), no backshift of tenses.
Articles	Queen Elizabeth made a speech about condition of unemployed.	Adjectives used as nouns referring to groups of people require 'the'; the 'of' phrase here should start with 'the' (the condition of the unemployed).
Articles	At the end of the wedding ceremony, a priest said: 'I now pronounce you a man and a wife'.	Contextually determined definiteness (the priest who married the couple); a fixed phrase (I pronounce you man and wife).
Articles	The Queen Elizabeth made the speech about condition of the unemployed.	Some titles do not require the definite article; 'a speech' was not specific in the context; the 'of' phrase should start with 'the'.
Articles	At the end of wedding ceremony, priest said: 'I now pronounce you man and wife.'	Attrition of the (possibly imperfectly acquired) rule of using the definite article before nouns and noun phrases.
Error correction	If I wasn't interested in psycholinguistics, I wouldn't go to Professor Frost's lecture yesterday.	Failure to use a mixed conditional (I wouldn't have gone); assuming the form 'if I were' to be incorrect.
Error correction	Mark wanted to see Himalayas, so he flew to the Nepal. (According to the participant, this sentence is correct.)	Possible attrition of the rules of article use (target: the Himalayas, Nepal).
Key-word transformations	Little known were the news for Jane that her sister was going to break.	Failure to recognise the structure 'little did Jane know...'
Key-word transformations	In the 19th century, teenage girls weren't let by parents to go out on their own.	'Let' changes to 'be allowed to' in the passive voice; the Saxon genitive instead of the plural may be a mistake.
Vocabulary	As evidence of his role in the assassination of the Prime Minister came to light, the accused was sentenced guilty.	Failure to retrieve the collocation 'to plead guilty'.
Vocabulary	There is no idea in buying a violin if you are not going to play it.	Overgeneralization of the expression 'to have no idea'; forgetting the expression 'there is no point in...'

The participants were also asked to evaluate the difficulty of the tasks on a 5-point Likert scale (1—very easy, 5—very difficult).

Table 3

*The mean values and standard deviations of the levels of difficulty self-reported by the participants*

Value	Reported speech	Conditionals	Articles	Error correction	Key-word transformations	Vocabulary
Mean	1.920	1.840	2.350	2.235	2.320	2.387
SD	1.074	1.053	1.120	1.0439	0.902	0.942

The mean level of difficulty for reported speech was 1.92 (SD = 1.074), for conditionals: 1.84 (SD = 1.053), for articles: 2.35 (SD = 1.12), for error correction: 2.235 (SD = 1.0439), for key-word transformations 2.32 (SD = 0.902), and for vocabulary: 2.378 (SD = 0.942). On the one hand, this suggests that the participants are quite confident of their English language skills and do not find advanced tasks very difficult. On the other hand, these self-evaluation results only partly overlap with the actual correctness of the responses: certainly, articles were regarded as difficult and the participants' performance reflects it, but while reported speech was evaluated as fairly easy, quite a lot of errors were observed and, conversely, though the vocabulary task was regarded as quite difficult, the answers were generally correct. It is possible that, while in the case of grammar it was easier to retrieve the rules, the vocabulary task required more effort (comprehension, lexical item retrieval, etc.).

Predictably enough, lack of time to maintain their knowledge of English contributes to the participants' language attrition (mean: 3.47, SD = 1.31), as they are quite busy teaching (mean: 3.079, SD = 1.32). However, they are fairly strongly motivated to maintain their English (mean: 3.868, SD = 1.09) and profit from every opportunity to use English (mean: 4, SD = 1.15). In fact, they do not think their English is good enough and does not require any improvement.

Table 4

*Reasons for possible language attrition and the participants' motivation to improve their English*

Value	Too little time	Too busy teaching	Strong motivation	Profiting from every opportunity...	Rarely outside the classroom	Enough for the school curriculum	Good enough, no need to improve	Too much admin. work
Mean	3.470	3.079	3.868	4.000	2.703	1.605	1.737	3.130
SD	1.310	1.320	1.090	1.150	1.310	0.974	1.030	1.398

As for the participants' attitudes towards linguistic correctness, they were generally positive and the participants believe linguistic correctness to be important. Even though they often have to simplify the English they use so that the pupils or students can understand it (mean: 3.97, SD = 1.11), this does not mean that they do not care about correctness. In fact, most of the participants admit that, when they notice they have made a mistake in English, they correct it immediately in order not to mislead their pupils or students (mean: 4.289, SD = 0.802). If they are not sure, they also promise to look up the word or structure (mean: 4.289, SD = 1.037) and avoid giving evasive answers, for example, that such a word does not exist in English (mean: 1.26, SD = 0.69). While preparing their classes, they generally look up their answers in the key (mean: 3.237, SD = 1.42), but few of them limit themselves to consulting the key without doing the exercises (mean: 2.59, SD = 1.33).

Moreover, even though teaching can be really time-consuming and teachers do not have much time to maintain and improve their English, it also motivates them to improve their English constantly (mean: 3.97, SD = 1.2). Still, they are sometimes unsure about the correctness of what they have just said or written in English (mean: 3.316, SD = 1.04), they notice that they have become less fluent in English (3.289, SD = 1.49) and that they have forgotten quite a lot of vocabulary and grammar structures since they finished their studies (mean: 3.15, SD = 1.39). They also admit that they have become relatively more tolerant of learners' errors (mean: 3.25, SD = 1.08) and they tend to regard fluency as more important than accuracy (mean: 3.34, SD = 0.9087).

While a lack of time to maintain one's English may be assumed to be a cause of attrition in any advanced English language users, be they teachers or, for example, company employees, the latter two items require closer attention. On the one hand, these tendencies are not very pronounced, as the means indicate that, although the participants admit that they have become more tolerant of learners' errors and that they attribute more importance to fluency, they do not strongly agree with such statements. This suggests that their attitudes towards linguistic correctness remain positive and that, as teachers, they feel obliged to keep up certain standards. On the other hand, as the now prevalent communicative approach postulates focusing on reaching communicative goals, teachers have to apply such principles to their teaching. However, despite the unquestionable importance of communication skills, the application of the communicative approach is sometimes misguided, leading to excessive tolerance of errors, as long as basic communicative goals are achieved (Rychło, 2008; Włosowicz, 2012). Therefore, teachers should strike a balance between developing learners' communication skills and accuracy, in order not to become too tolerant of errors, which might discourage them from maintaining their English language skills and thus lead to attrition.



Table 5

*The participants' attitudes towards language correctness and their perception of their own English*

Attitudes and observations	Mean	SD
More tolerant of learners' errors	3.2500	1.0800
More difficulty in distinguishing errors from correct forms	2.1500	1.0100
Greater importance of fluency over accuracy	3.3400	0.9087
Having forgotten a lot from their studies	3.1500	1.3900
Correcting oneself immediately	4.2890	0.8020
Unsure about correctness	3.3160	1.0400
Being less fluent	3.2980	1.4900
Simplification for pupils	3.9700	1.1100
Teaching as a source of motivation to improve one's English	3.9700	1.2000
Checking the compatibility of answers with the key	3.2370	1.4200
Using the key only	2.590	1.3300
Finding learners' questions too difficult	2.3590	1.0600
Promising to look things up	4.2980	1.0370
Giving learners evasive answers	1.2600	0.6900
Frustration with learners' lack of motivation	2.3160	1.3170
English limited to the school curriculum	2.5380	1.2980

As for the participants' strategies of counterbalancing attrition, the following strategies are used by the numbers of participants indicated in brackets:

- reading in English (books, online articles, newspapers, magazines, etc. (31);
- watching films in English (35);
- reading newspapers and magazines in English (16);
- reading articles on the Internet (31);
- doing exercises from textbooks for advanced (e.g., CPE-level) learners (12);
- speaking English while travelling abroad (29);
- speaking English with foreigners, who are native (13) or non-native (18) speakers of English;
- speaking English with Polish friends, especially English philologists (5);
- corresponding with native speakers (11) or other foreigners (9) in English;
- chatting online in English with native (12) and non-native speakers (11);
- other ways of using English, such as translation and listening to the BBC radio (6).

Only one person claimed to use no English language maintenance strategies.

In summary, the participants themselves admit in the questionnaire that they have little time to maintain and improve their English (they are busy teaching, they have a lot of administrative work to do, etc.), and that the test had made them aware of how much they had forgotten since their studies; generally, they do not agree with the statement that their English is good enough and does not require improvement. However, many of them also state that they take advantage of every opportunity to use English.

## Conclusions

On the basis of the results, it can be supposed that teaching causes some language attrition, due to contact with learners' errors as well as the use of a limited number of words or structures, adjusted to the learners' level. For example, teachers have less contact with words and structures which are not part of the school curriculum. As one of the participants commented in the questionnaire:

The last statement ideally sums up my answers. The level of my students and pupils at school and kindergarten doesn't require to improve my qualifications. Sometimes, when I give private lessons, I am asked about something more difficult and I have to deliberate it. Of course, I would like to improve my English, but work and duties at home do not leave me too much free time.

The statement the respondent was referring to was: 'I feel that my English has become limited mainly to the words and structures included in the school curriculum.' Even though few of the participants were as sincere as the above mentioned one was, it might be assumed that more of them encounter similar problems.

Even though some attrition can be observed in all the areas under investigation, such areas as articles and reported speech seem to have undergone more attrition than, for example, conditionals and vocabulary. It is also rather disquieting that in the error correction task the participants overlooked a number of errors. In fact, the structures which caused them particular difficulty (e.g., mixed conditionals, the use of conditionals in reported speech, article use which went beyond the basic rules of definiteness and indefiniteness, etc.) are more likely to appear in a C2 level textbook than in everyday English, which provides evidence in favor of Moorcroft and Gardner's (1987) conclusion that structures acquired last and not practiced long enough are particularly prone

to attrition. As the results of the chi-square test show, the correctness of the responses does depend on the type of task.

However, teachers are also aware of this fact and try to maintain their English language skills, counterbalance attrition, and improve their English. As the results of the questionnaire show, the majority of the participants do more than one thing to maintain and develop their English language skills; they mostly read books and articles and watch films in English, but they also speak English in Poland and abroad, with native and non-native speakers of English, as well as with other Poles who are English philologists.

As for the participants' attitudes towards the English language and linguistic correctness, they are undoubtedly positive and the participants understand the need to maintain and improve their English. They are motivated to do so and try to profit from every opportunity to use English. However, lack of time often prevents them from devoting as much time to the improvement of their English language skills as they would like to. This proves Cherciov's (2013) statement that a positive attitude is not enough to prevent attrition if it is not accompanied by a concrete effort.

In conclusion, English language teaching can be regarded as a profession that requires life-long learning. One of the participants, an academic teacher with a master's degree, who teaches practical English skills to English Philology students, wrote: "I'm under the impression that my English has improved considerably over the years due to the constant challenge I have to face in my teaching work and new subjects that I teach." Thus, as the two practically opposite quotations indicate, the impact of teaching on teachers' English language competence can be either positive or negative, depending on such factors as the requirements of the job or, as discussed earlier, exposure to errors, which might lead to excessive tolerance of them and even to the acquisition of erroneous structures. In particular, it seems important whether the teacher is obliged to improve his or her language skills or, on the contrary, whether his or her job is limited to teaching beginners basic vocabulary and structures.

Another limitation of the present study is that, while some attrition could be observed and while it was reported by some of the participants themselves, its extent is difficult to research more quantitatively. On the one hand, as Herdina and Jessner (2002, p. 96) have remarked, attrition is generally difficult to investigate, among other things, because speakers try to counterbalance it, which is also the case of the teachers under analysis. Not only do they counteract attrition by maintaining their English language skills, but it is also possible that for the same reason they provided some of the non-target responses. Instead of retrieving the target words, they may have looked for other words—or structures, as in the key-word transformations—which could also be acceptable. On the other hand, attrition research is also probabilistic because the initial state of linguistic competence before the onset of attrition is usually unknown and has to be

established approximately and, similarly, the lengths of the incubation phases (which term, in the present study, does not refer to a time when the participants did not use English much, but when they no longer studied English as regularly and intensively as they had done at university) could vary. However, this is allowed by attrition research methodology: for example, in Riemer's (2005) study, the participants had studied French for at least two years and the incubation phases lasted between 12 and 240 months (the mean was 80.45 months). It can thus be seen that the group does not have to be homogeneous and that, actually, the participants' language attrition can also vary. In fact, the initial state in the present study can be established relatively precisely, as it is based on a typical English Philology curriculum and the requirements usually posed on students.

However, given the fact that not only does language attrition occur in teachers, but they also maintain their English on their own, it would, arguably, be advisable to organize some workshops or webinars, and perhaps to prepare some materials, which would help teachers to identify the elements of their knowledge of English that were especially prone to attrition and to counterbalance it in a more regular and systematic way. Yet, this would require larger-scale research and more cooperation on the part of teachers. Unfortunately, as has been mentioned above, some teachers refused to take part in the study as soon as they saw the test, claiming that they had already taken all English language tests in their lives. Still, it is possible that they realized they had forgotten some of the structures involved and, rather than testing themselves and checking in what areas their English had deteriorated, they refused to participate in the study. Therefore, some future research should also be carried out on the methodology of testing teachers' knowledge of English so as not to discourage them from participating. For example—also for the purpose of investigating the attrition of oral skills—a study might be carried out in the form of informal interviews about the participants' interests related to the English language and perhaps English literature and culture, so that they could talk spontaneously, which could reveal a decrease in fluency, accuracy, and/or complexity.

Moreover, in order to compare the effects of teaching practice, including exposure to learners' errors, with attrition in English Philology graduates who do not teach, a similar study might be carried out with English philologists who work in international corporations and who, despite using English on a daily basis, may be exposed to errors made by their foreign colleagues such as engineers, economists, etc., who may be fluent in English but less focused on accuracy, as the present author's (Włosowicz, 2016b) study on adult learners' expectations indicates. In addition, it would be advisable to research the influence of the level of English taught on teachers' English language proficiency: for example, it might be investigated whether attrition is more likely in kindergarten or primary school teachers, who use simple structures and are exposed to a lot of errors made by beginners than, for instance, in secondary school or university teachers.

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Teresa Maria Włosowicz

### **Der Verlust der Englischkenntnisse bei Englischlehrern: Sprachkompetenz, Aufrechterhaltung der Sprachfähigkeiten und Einstellung zur Sprache**

#### Zusammenfassung

Der Zweck der Studie ist eine Untersuchung des Verlusts der Englischkenntnisse bei Englischlehrern, deren Muttersprache Polnisch ist. Sie konzentriert sich auf den Verlust von Vokabeln und grammatischen Strukturen auf fortgeschrittener Ebene, die an den Fakultäten für Englische Philologie von Universitäten gelehrt werden, aber die den Englischlehrern, insbesondere auf niedrigeren Bildungsstufen, nicht unbedingt nötig sind und die, aus diesem Grund dem Sprachverfall (language attrition) besonders ausgesetzt sind. Gleichzeitig enthält die Studie einen Fragebogen, der bezweckt, die Einstellung der Probanden zur sprachlichen Korrektheit und deren Strategien zum Aufrechterhalten der Sprachkompetenz zu untersuchen. Wie die Ergebnisse zeigen, lässt sich wirklich ein gewisser Sprachverfall beobachten, es ist jedoch zu bemerken, dass sich die Lehrer selbst bemühen, ihr Kompetenzniveau im Englischen aufrechtzuerhalten, indem sie die Sprache auf verschiedene Art und Weise gebrauchen, zum Beispiel indem sie Bücher und Artikel auf Englisch lesen, sich englischsprachige Filme ansehen, sich mit Muttersprachlern unterhalten, usw.

## The form used in the study: The English language test and the questionnaire

### PART ONE: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST

#### 1) Change the following sentences into reported speech:

1. Margaret: 'Let's go for a walk! The weather is beautiful today.'

Margaret suggested \_\_\_\_\_

2. Kate: 'Grandma, did you have Spanish classes when you were at school?'

Kate asked her grandmother \_\_\_\_\_

3. Alice: 'If I were you, I would take the job they are offering you.'

Alice told Sylvia \_\_\_\_\_

4. Agatha: 'When will you finally finish the book you started reading last year?'

Agatha asked Charles \_\_\_\_\_

5. Agnes: 'Next month Caroline and Gordon will have been married for ten years.'

Agnes said \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2) Paraphrase the following sentences, using the appropriate conditionals:

1. I had an opportunity to go to Zakopane with my friends, but I chose to stay at home, so I did not climb Giewont.

If \_\_\_\_\_

2. The parcel might not arrive on time. In such a case, please, call our customer service.

Should \_\_\_\_\_

3. We'll go to the mountains next weekend as long as the weather is fine.

Provided \_\_\_\_\_

4. Olivia was advised to obtain a French language certificate, but she did not obtain it. That is why she cannot work for a French company now.

If \_\_\_\_\_

5. John is quite irresponsible, that is why he has lost his job.

Were \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3) Use the right articles. If you think no article is necessary, please, mark the blank with a tick, a minus sign, etc.

1. \_\_\_\_ Queen Elizabeth made \_\_\_\_ speech about \_\_\_\_ condition of \_\_\_\_ unemployed.

2. \_\_\_\_ Monday before \_\_\_\_ last, Jack bought \_\_\_\_ pineapples at \_\_\_\_ two pounds \_\_\_\_ kilo.

3. Nick left in \_\_\_\_ hurry, was hit by \_\_\_\_ car and spent \_\_\_\_ few months in \_\_\_\_ hospital.

4. At \_\_\_\_ end of \_\_\_\_ wedding ceremony, \_\_\_\_ priest said: 'I now pronounce you \_\_\_\_ man and \_\_\_\_ wife.'

5. \_\_\_\_ novel was written by \_\_\_\_ British author Philippa Gregory, who specializes in \_\_\_\_ historical novels about \_\_\_\_ English kings and queens.

#### 4) Correct the errors in the following sentences. There may be more than one error in a sentence.

1. Hindi is one of the languages using in India. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mark wanted to see Himalayas, so he flew to the Nepal. \_\_\_\_\_

3. If I weren't interested in psycholinguistics, I wouldn't go to Professor Frost's lecture yesterday.

4. Alexandra said she had enjoyed watching football since she had been a child. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Rarely Victoria travels during the holidays because she prefers to stay at home and knit. \_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5) Key word transformations: Paraphrase the following sentences, using the words given in capital letters.**

Example:

Arabic is much more difficult to learn than English. NEAR

English is nowhere near as difficult to learn as Arabic.

1. Thank you for the flowers you brought me on my birthday, but that really wasn't necessary.

HAVE

You \_\_\_\_\_ flowers on my birthday.

2. Jane had no idea of the bad news she was going to hear from her sister. KNOW

Little \_\_\_\_\_ her sister was going to break.

3. However hard you try, you won't get a job at Harvard University. MIGHT

Try \_\_\_\_\_ a job at Harvard University.

4. You won't pass the exam if you don't study hard. UNLESS

You \_\_\_\_\_ study hard.

5. I'm sorry, but I must tell you the whole truth bluntly. It was extremely rude of you to laugh at Mr Smith's funeral! MINCE

I'm sorry, \_\_\_\_\_: it was extremely rude of you to laugh at Mr Smith's funeral!

6. They stole Phil's car yesterday. HAD

Phil \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.

7. Amy dyed her hair black in order not to be confused with her twin sister. AVOID

Amy dyed her hair black \_\_\_\_\_ with her twin sister.

8. Helen likes all of Michael Jackson's songs, apart from *Smooth Criminal*. OF

Helen likes all of Michael Jackson's songs \_\_\_\_\_ *Smooth Criminal*.

9. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, parents did not let their teenage daughters go out on their own. TO

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, teenage girls \_\_\_\_\_ go out on their own.

10. Everybody knows that the actor has divorced his wife to marry a fashion model.

KNOWLEDGE

It \_\_\_\_\_ divorced his wife to marry a fashion model.

**6) Vocabulary: Fill in the gaps in the following sentences with the appropriate words.**

1. On retirement, Peter received a golden \_\_\_\_\_ from the company.

2. There is no \_\_\_\_\_ in buying a violin if you are not going to play it.

3. The word 'vitamin' is \_\_\_\_\_ from the Latin word for 'life'.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ has it that this castle was built by King Arthur.

5. A law-\_\_\_\_\_ citizen would never take bribes.

6. As a secretary, Eve is a white-\_\_\_\_\_ worker.

7. The President's mistake was so funny that the audience found it hard to keep a \_\_\_\_\_ face.

8. Don't even try to persuade me to smuggle gold into China, as I have no \_\_\_\_\_ of breaking the law.

9. As evidence of his role in the assassination of the Prime Minister came to light, the accused \_\_\_\_\_ guilty.

10. The refugees are \_\_\_\_\_ seekers. They are Iraqi Christians persecuted in their country for their faith.



## PART TWO: QUESTIONNAIRE

Sex: F\_\_/M\_\_

1. Native language: \_\_\_\_\_

L2: \_\_\_\_\_ Level of proficiency: \_\_\_\_\_

L3: \_\_\_\_\_ Level of proficiency: \_\_\_\_\_

What other languages have you studied? Please, indicate your proficiency levels

2. a) Degree in English Philology: B.A./M.A./Ph.D.

b) Year of obtaining your master's degree: \_\_\_\_\_

If you graduated less than a year ago, please, indicate the month too: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have only a bachelor's degree, please, indicate the year you obtained it: \_\_\_\_\_

If you also have a Ph.D., please, indicate the year of obtaining it **in addition to** the year of obtaining your master's degree: \_\_\_\_\_

(In the latter case, do you think that working on your Ph.D. improved your English language skills? If so, in what way?)

c) Where do you teach English? (You can choose more than one answer.)

- at a kindergarten
- at a primary school
- at a middle (junior high) school
- at a secondary (high) school
- at a technical college
- at a vocational school
- at a college or university, at a department other than English Philology
- at the English Philology department of a college or university
- at the Polytechnic
- at a language school
- in a company or companies
- I give private classes to children who have difficulty learning English
- I give private classes to gifted children
- I give private classes to children who do not have much difficulty learning English, but who just take extra classes outside school
- I give private classes to adults
- other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. a) What do you do in order to maintain your level of proficiency in English? (You can choose more than one answer.)

- I read books in English
- I watch films in English
- I read newspapers or magazines in English
- I read articles in English on the Internet
- I do exercises from textbooks for advanced learners, such as CPE textbooks
- I practise conversation with a native speaker of English
- I speak English with foreigners who are not native speakers of English
- I speak English while travelling abroad
- I correspond with native speakers of English
- I correspond in English with foreigners who are not native speakers of English
- I chat with native speakers of English, for example, on Facebook
- I chat with foreigners in English, for example, on Facebook

- I speak English with Polish friends who are also English philologists
- other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_

b) **Apart from teaching**, how often do you have contact with English?

- every day
- a few times a week
- once a week
- once a month
- once in a few weeks
- once a month
- once in a few months
- once a year
- other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_

c) To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1 – completely disagree, 5 – fully agree)

- I have too little time to maintain or improve my English. 1 2 3 4 5
- I am too busy teaching to devote time to improving my English. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have a strong motivation to use English and improve it as much as possible. 1 2 3 4 5
- I do my best to profit from every opportunity to use English. 1 2 3 4 5
- I rarely have any opportunity to use English outside the classroom. 1 2 3 4 5
- I feel no need to improve my English because the vocabulary and grammar I know are enough for the school curriculum. 1 2 3 4 5
- I think my English is good enough and does not require any improvement. 1 2 3 4 5
- Instead of focusing on English, I have too much administrative work to do. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

4 a) How do you perceive the influence of teaching on your level of proficiency and attitude to English? (Please, indicate to what extent you agree with the statements below. 1 – completely disagree, 5 – fully agree)

- I gradually become more tolerant of my pupils' or students' errors in English. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have more and more difficulty distinguishing erroneous structures and usages from correct ones. 1 2 3 4 5
- I adopt a communicative approach in which fluency is more important than accuracy. 1 2 3 4 5
- I feel that I have forgotten quite a lot of the vocabulary and grammar I learnt during my studies. 1 2 3 4 5
- If I notice that I have made a mistake speaking English to my pupils or students, I correct it immediately. 1 2 3 4 5
- I am sometimes unsure about the correctness of what I have just said or written in English. 1 2 3 4 5
- I feel that I have become less fluent in English than I was during my studies. 1 2 3 4 5
- I have to simplify certain rules and meanings so that my pupils or students can understand them more easily. 1 2 3 4 5
- Teaching English motivates me to improve my English constantly, which I do as much as possible. 1 2 3 4 5
- While preparing my classes, I always check the compatibility of my answers with the key in order to make sure that I have done the exercises correctly. 1 2 3 4 5
- While preparing my classes, I look up all answers in the key, but I have no time to do all the exercises myself at home. 1 2 3 4 5

- I sometimes find my pupils' or students' questions about the English language too difficult to answer. 1 2 3 4 5
- If I find a pupil's or a student's question too difficult, I promise to look up the word or structure and answer him or her later. 1 2 3 4 5
- If I find a pupil's or a student's question too difficult, I give him or her an evasive answer, for example, that such a word does not exist in English, even if it may actually exist. 1 2 3 4 5
- I am frustrated with my pupils' or students' lack of motivation to learn English, which decreases my motivation to maintain and improve my English language skills too. 1 2 3 4 5
- I feel that my English has become limited mainly to the words and structures included in the school curriculum. 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

- Have you noticed any other effects of teaching practice on your proficiency in English? (If so, please, describe them.)

How difficult were the tasks in the practical part of the study for you? (1 – very easy, 5 – very difficult)

- Reported speech 1 2 3 4 5
- Conditional 1 2 3 4 5
- Articles 1 2 3 4 5
- Error correction 1 2 3 4 5
- Key word transformations 1 2 3 4 5
- Vocabulary 1 2 3 4 5

Please, explain why (you may choose more than one answer):

- I forgot some of the words, idioms and structures I had learnt during my studies.
- Some of the words, idioms and structures seemed completely new to me.
- I had some of the words on the tip of my tongue, but I could not recall them fully.
- I was unsure about the grammatical structures which I do not regularly use.
- I got out of practice in solving grammar and vocabulary tests.
- I do not do such exercises with my pupils or students.
- During my studies, I rarely practised reported speech/ conditionals/ articles/ error correction/ key word transformations/ gap-filling tasks. (Please, indicate which task types you rarely practised.)
- I found it hard to guess what words, idioms or structures were expected in some of the sentence contexts.
- other (please, specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much.