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LEXICAL COMPETENCE
IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION
(A STUDY OF LEXICAL AWARENESSES)

The present study looks at the non-native teacher of English as a foreign language at the tertiary level of education (university and college level) and his/her lexical competence. It seeks to demonstrate the connection between that competence and the form of instruction given to language students. The opening part of the paper discusses in general terms the nature of teacher's professionalism (competences) emphasizing both methodological competence (e.g. strategies of instruction and explanation) and linguistic competence (e.g. language awareness and use of metalanguage).

In its research part, the study is a partial replication of a pilot project carried out by Zimmerman (2001), whose main aim was to evaluate awareness of lexical anomalies by native speakers (NS) acting as teachers of English as a second language at the tertiary level. The present study is based on a survey conducted among non-native speakers of English (NNS) i.e. Polish EFL teachers at a college level. The survey consisted of a lexical acceptability judgment test and teachers' comments on lexical instruction. Also a personal data questionnaire was administered to the group of informants (teachers) to ensure the homogenous character of the group – first of all in terms of their learning history (type of teacher training received) and teaching history (levels, age groups and professional experience).

The aim of the study was threefold:
1. To evaluate lexical awareness of the EFL teachers
2. To comment on teachers' instructional and explanatory competence
3. To compare NS teachers (Zimmermann 2001) and NNS teachers in respect of language instruction.

The conclusions of the study are to be implemented in courses of training of EFL teachers.

1. Introduction

According to Castejon and Martinez (2001:128), the structure of professional knowledge that (future) teachers gain in the course of their training in various educational settings

> *tends to be declarative, abstract and conceptual. Therefore the training of student teachers should integrate conceptual, procedural, pragmatic and theoretical ideas (…) Learning to teach involves developing various forms of knowledge that are acquired in different ways.*

The development of expertise in teaching is seen as a gradual process leading from the novice stage of search for underlying principles and ready-made recipes to the expert stage, when a teacher sees his class more holistically.

Research into perceptions of teaching of novice (beginning teachers) and expert teachers shows significant differences between the two groups. Following the findings of other researchers, Castejon and Martinez (2001) observe that:

> *Novice teachers define good teaching in terms of personal characteristics of teacher, children' involvement, and affective features in classroom interaction. Expert teachers define good teaching more in terms of lesson structure and teaching strategies (…) are better able to take account of context and purpose (…) make a deeper interpretation of events (…) generate hypothesis about the situation in question"*
> (for more detailed discussion see Castejon and Martinez, 2001).

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994:3), the following assumptions need to be made about the nature of teacher development:

1. *An informed teacher has an extensive knowledge base about teaching.*
2. *Much can be learnt about teaching through self-enquiry.*
3. *Much of what happens in teaching is unknown to the teacher.*
4. *Experience is not sufficient as the basis for development.*
5. *Critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching.*

What seems to be crucial to Richards and Lockhart, apart from the teacher's individual classroom experience resulting from his everyday practice, is his awareness of the need to observe and reflect, to enquire both on the basis of already acquired SLA knowledge and through keeping continually updated on the latest empirical evidence offered by research in the field.

This is not neglecting the significance of the reflective and experiential elements in successful FL instruction, the level of the acquired knowledge relating to linguistic competence of teachers, or in other words, their explicit awareness of the rules of (for example) the lexical system of a FL (this study) and the ability to use it in their instructional practices. How they explain lexical phenomena such as lexical anomalies to their learners, constitutes an important aspect of their professionalism.

In this article I would like to discuss the extent to which experienced teachers with at least 5 years of FL instruction at the advanced level of teaching (i.e. in tertiary education) are capable of applying their (assumed) knowledge, and how they do it in practical terms in their classrooms. I would like to evaluate their professionalism with respect to the above aspect of language instruction.

2. Teacher's professionalism

FL teacher professionalism is defined by James (2001:5–7) as a set of competences a teacher should develop in the course of his/her education and classroom practice. These are:

- subject matter skills relating to language competence and the ability to use a FL in the classroom context
- methodological skills resulting in successful teaching/learning process
- decision-making skills both in the classroom context and beyond
- social skills necessary to establish a good rapport with learners, peers, authorities and parents.

The development of full professional competence is a longitudinal process for each teacher, as it results not only from his or her initial formal education but also from practice and self-development.

2.1. Language competence and communicative competence in teacher training

If we look back at various approaches to FL teaching over a longer period of time, we might note an observable shift from form-focused instruction of the grammar translation or audio-lingual methods (with the dominant role of the teacher) to communicative approaches (advocating experience and immersion in language, and more autonomy given to learners in taking responsibility for their progress).

This shift is reflected in the educational (pedagogical) practices of teacher training. Whereas in the former approaches, this focus was on the language training of teachers, on development of their linguistic competences and the ability to pass the knowledge of language rules on to their learners, the latter approaches emphasize the role of communication at the level of language objectives as well as communication (interaction) with the learners in the classroom. Prominence is given more to reflection on how we communicate (communication strategies) and how to learn to communicate (learner training). This type of teacher training is not a bad thing, however, the question arises whether it is enough to make successful teachers – good language instructors whose learners will become good language communicators?

Crandall (2000:34), quoted in Zimmerman (2004:4) comments on teacher education:

(…) *during the last decade, general educational theory and practice have ex-erted a much more powerful influence in the direction of the education of both pre-service and in-service language teacher education, resulting in greater fo-cus on: 1) practical experiences, 2) classroom-centred or teacher research (…) and 3) teacher beliefs and teacher cognition in language education"*

Unquestionably, teachers' systems of belief, their experiences and action research are invaluable tools in developing a professional teacher. However, we need to re-member that the basis for the above comes not only from the methodological and social skills (competences) of the teachers; it also requires a very solid language com-petence itself. For example, a system of beliefs teachers create for their own practices derives from their background knowledge, not only from experience or so-called gen-eral wisdom. It should come from explicit awareness of how different aspects and levels of languages function. That is why it should be emphasized that training programmes the focus of which is mostly on the pedagogical issues of how to teach, without ensuring a solid linguistic knowledge of the teachers, need to be re-evaluated and amendments need to be made with more focus on language instruction – and not only practical but also theoretical. This entails, for example, more emphasis on obliga-tory courses in linguistics and descriptive grammar, semantics and phonology.

2.2. The power of explanation

Within the pedagogy of FL instruction one of the issues requiring special atten-tion is the teacher's ability to explain linguistic phenomena. And again, even though we accept and even encourage (as we should!) learner autonomy in his/her "discovery of language", we as language instructors need to retain the position of those that are 'knowledgeable' and have the expertise and power to explain 'why'. But do we teach in our training programmes how to explain, and indeed can we do it ourselves? Is this a matter of pedagogical training or is it something else?

Educational studies have become more and more concerned with this issue and the questions relating to the power of explanation:

- How do teachers explain?
- What factors determine the way teachers explain new or incorrect forms used by their learners?
- How are gaps in teachers' content knowledge made up for in teachers' explana-tions? (e.g. Shulman 1986)

It is obvious that the ability to explain linguistic phenomena derives directly not just from the methodological competence of a teacher, but from his/her language awareness and competence, knowledge of metalanguage and ability to categorize and come up with most illustrative examples of usage. In the case of the lexical level of language, Zimmerman (2004:1) explains the significance of the explicit lexical com-petence of FL instructors:

> *A teacher's response to lexical anomalies becomes relevant in the classroom when learners want information and feedback about the use of English words but their teachers find it difficult to analyse and describe their own intuitive judgements about their use (…) The ability to "explain" meaning is an uncommon skill.*

2.3. Teacher's profile *vs.* language instruction

The characteristics of a teacher and his/her profile are usually defined by:

- qualifications: formal education which gives teachers qualifications to teach on the basis of the completion of an academic teacher training programme, as opposed to foreign language competence documented by language examination certificates (such as, for example, First Certificate or Cambridge Proficiency Examinations), which define teachers as unqualified to teach
- teaching experience: duration of teaching and experience of different teaching environments (types of institutions, courses, age and level of learners).

Another variable which also has a significant influence on teachers' performance is whether they are a native speaker of the language taught or not. At some point in the development of language teaching methods, namely with the advent of direct methods, ALM and also at the beginning of CLT, it was assumed that a NS teacher will be a better teacher of his or her language since his or her competence is that of an expert. Such an attitude is still observable today when a lot of language schools advertise themselves by emphasizing that their teachers are all native speakers of a given language in order to attract more students.

Such a positive attitude to native speakers as FL teachers has relied and still relies more on the importance of procedural knowledge, which is the ability to use the language, than on teachers' awareness of how the language functions as a system. It is undeniable that a NS teacher offers a lot of valuable input for his/her learners but to what extent is this supported by his or her explicit knowledge of that language, and the ability to explain how it functions and consequently to apply the appropriate corrective feedback? The role of language awareness in FL and also one's mother tongue may be considered important variables in language teaching and learning.

This study looks at lexical levels of language functioning and describes NNS teachers' awareness. Zimmerman (2004:1), in dealing with NS of English, investigated the same aspect of teachers' professionalism and she states, I think uncontroversially, that:

> *Native or proficient speakers are not typically attuned to the semantic and syntactic properties of words: knowledge of subtle semantic distinctions are part of a speaker's implicit knowledge of language, but are usually not identifiable explicitly.*

3. Study description

3.1. Focus of the study

The present study is a partial replication of a pilot study of Zimmerman (2004). As in the case of the original study, I would like to look at experienced teachers of English at the tertiary level of education, i.e. teaching advanced English users at a college level of expertise in lexical instruction.

It may be assumed that the lexical competence of FL users is an important dimension of communicative competence, hence the choice of the research area. Also the very acquisition/learning process of vocabulary has to be seen as a complex process, not always open to the application of explicit rules. As Zimmerman (2005:2) rightly states:

> (…) *lexical generalizations are difficult to make and word-use is difficult to explain. In addition, it is widely accepted that word knowledge is not an all-or-nothing proposition; rather is has many dimensions (…) The implication here is that word learning is incremental in nature and that word use takes a very long time to acquire. Teachers need to be prepared to facilitate the varying stages of the process.*

The project focuses on the teachers' awareness of the linguistic functioning of the words and lexical phrases in a corpus of selected sentences. All of the samples represent a certain type of lexical anomaly with reference to either semantic or syntactic restriction governing their use.

Lexical anomalies are defined by Zimmerman (2004:1) as:

> (…) *inaccurate or inappropriate usages of words based on a speech community's standard of use: they may occur when words are combined in a way that is improbable for native speakers* (e.g. "The weather is attractive"), *or when language conventions are not known* (e.g. " Least but not last, I'd like to thank my friend Trang")

The examples of erroneous usages of words and phrases are selected on the basis of their frequency of occurrence among American non-native speakers studying ESL.

The examples of anomalies considered in the study are classified according to Zimmerman's (ibid.) taxonomy into the following types of errors:

- collocations
- set phrases (language conventions)
- connotations (meaning)
- degree (meaning).

The definitions and distinctions made in lexical theories of fixed phrases – and these refer to collocations and set phrases in this study – treat the phenomena in variety of ways. Here, collocations are understood as frequently co-occurring phrases

which are transparent in meaning and syntactically flexible. However they are diffi-cult to teach since they do not follow any rules of co-occurrence in a systematic fash-ion, hence they may result in production problems. Set phrases, so-called *chunks* of language or *pre-fabricated patterns* (Ellis 1986), often acquired as wholes and used in routine situations, belong to the category of *fixed expressions* (Singleton 2000).

The category of *connotation* refers to the one aspect of a word's meaning it car-ries which is based on a particular association it has for the speakers of a given language – which is not universal and often culturally grounded. For example, the verb *to collaborate* in English brings out certain positive associations, whereas in Polish it has negative ones, *kolaborować* – to collaborate with Nazis during the war. This pair of words can even be treated as *false friends.*

The *degree* category is defined by Zimmermann (ibid.:9) as the one used to "de-scribe the relationship between lexical sets of words" in terms of some property, as exemplified in sentence no. 10: *Students records are* **annihilated** *after five years.*

The study aims at demonstrating the extent to which the subjects, i.e. experi-enced teachers of English as a FL, all of them NNS of English, are capable of:

- detecting lexical anomalies in the corpus and categorizing them

and then goes on to show

- how accurate they are in their categorizations
- how they would explain the anomalies to their learners
- how accurate they are in their explanations
- whether their explanations are accompanied by examples
- what elements of metalanguage are used both at the level of categorization and explanation

Since the present study is a partial replication of Zimmerman's study, it will also be possible to compare the answers to the above research questions of NS of ESL (the original study) with those of NNS of EFL as language instructors (this study).

3.2. Participants

The participants in the study represent a pretty homogenous group of 16 teachers of English as a foreign language at the tertiary level of education. According to the data collected in the English Instructor Questionnaire (from Zimmerman 2004 and Zimmerman 2005), all the subjects hold an M.A. degree in English, which means they are graduates of English philology university departments with full teaching qualifications and advance competence in English. However, some of them specialise in other areas too, such as literary studies and theoretical linguistics. Apart from the experience of teaching at the tertiary level at the moment, some of them have teach-ing experience of secondary and even primary school levels of instruction. The lan-guage proficiency of the learners taught by the subjects ranges from low beginner to high advanced. The tertiary level, i.e. college instruction (at teacher training col-leges) relates to instruction at an advanced level of English proficiency.

They are not novice teachers as they have an average teaching experience of 8–10 years. Their teaching expertise lies in so-called practical English teaching, i.e. teaching language courses as discrete skills (reading, writing, speaking) and also integrated skills courses. Other taught courses are methodology of EFL, literary studies, translation and linguistics. The subjects can also be described not only as experienced teachers but also language learners. Apart from English, they are also bilinguals and trilinguals at intermediate and beginning level of other foreign languages (mostly German, French and Russian). Table 1 presents a detailed characterisation of the participant group.

Table 1. Subjects' profile

Language competence	Native (16) Polish	Fully proficient (16) English	Intermediate (16) French – 6 German – 6 Russian – 2 Italian – 2	Beginning (9) German – 3 Spanish – 2 French – 1 Portuguese –1 Chinese –1
TEFL teaching experience:	3–4 years 0	5–7 years 2	8–10 years 6	11–14 years 1	15 or more 7
Level:	pre-literate 3	low beginner 7	high beginner 9	low interm. 14	high interm. 14	low adv. 15	high adv. 12
Teaching programmes:	element. 7	secondary 9	intensive English 3	college/university 16	adult education 7
Subjects taught:	writing 9	reading 9	oral language 10	grammar 6	vocabulary 7	integrated skills 11

The questionnaire also focused on eliciting data concerning the subjects' views on lexical competence and instruction relating to FL vocabulary development. The teachers unanimously said that one of the most important dimensions of word knowledge relates to the contextual use of words and their collocation range. Some of the teachers (25%) believed that word formation is an indispensable aspect of lexical knowledge. Commenting on their ability to teach FL vocabulary, the teachers assumed that it is methodology course-books and reference books such as dictionaries – both general monolingual ones and also collocation dictionaries – that are the best source of knowledge. Above all, however, the teachers stated that being language learners and reading extensively in a foreign language contribute most significantly to the ability to teach vocabulary in a FL. It was also assumed that practice tests served as good models for vocabulary teaching and the development of one's own lexical competence. It seems that the teachers believe that it is mostly the lexical competence itself of a language instructor (developed by the above methods) that results in effective teaching practice. Language awareness, understood as knowledge

of rules relating to semantic and syntactic restrictions, was not mentioned in the teachers' comments.

3.3. Tools

Replicating Zimmerman's study (2004), the present study used the same tools of data collection – the English Instructor Questionnaire and grammaticality judgement tests (Zimmermann 2005). The grammaticality judgement tests consisted of 12 sentences in English, all of them including lexical anomalies. These lexical anomalies were all produced by high-intermediate to advanced level ESL students.

The instruction given to the subjects (language teachers) was to:
1. indicate the area of incorrectness in each of the twelve sentences
2. categorize the incorrectness (anomaly)
3. give an example of how it would be explained to students in an actual lesson, and also state what type of terminology (metalanguage) would be used.

Table 2 presents the sentences used and also explains the type of lexical anomaly occurring in each of them.

Table 2. A learner corpus used in the study (after Zimmerman, 2005)

Sentence:	Type of anomaly:
1. *I was forced to use two class meetings because **I was diseased**.*	collocation
2. *The reporters **exposed** the candidate's list of military honours.*	meaning: connotation
3. *The price of the book **influences** how much sales tax you pay.*	meaning: degree
4. *While she waited for her friend, she went **streetwalking** and looked in the shop windows.*	meaning: connotation
5. ***Least but not last**, I would like to thank my friend Trang.*	set phrase
6. *The family **was struck** by a series of very happy events.*	meaning: connotation
7. *He has been accused of some **slight** crimes.*	collocation
8. *They were singing a **gay** song.*	meaning: connotation
9. *The weather was so **attractive** that we hated to stay outside.*	collocation
10. *Student records are **annihilated** after five years.*	meaning: degree
11. *My **view of point** has changed considerably since I came to the U.S.*	set phrase
12. *The lawn mower **was disabled**.*	meaning: connotation

Each of the categorizations and explanations is classified as *accurate, inaccurate, wrong* or *none* (no answer given). *Accuracy* is understood as having "instructive or informative value" – for example, the label *a wrong word* is not as informative as *a lexical phrase*.

4. Data presentation and analysis

4.1. Introduction to comments and discussion

The data gathered in the lexical judgement tests will be presented and analysed focusing on the following aspects of the teachers' performance:
   a. ways of categorising lexical anomalies:
       – accurate *versus* inaccurate comments in general
       – categorisation into different types of anomalies
   b. ways of explaining lexical incorrectness:
       – degree of accuracy in explanations given in general
       – the use of examples in particular contexts of explanation
       – the most difficult categories to explain

Also a comparison will be drawn between:

   a. degree of accuracy in categorising versus explaining
   b. degree of difficulty for different categories in categorising versus explaining

The comments made throughout the analysis will be related to the pilot study of Zimmerman (2004) in order to indicate the similarities and differences between NNS (this study) and NS teachers (Zimmerman's study).

4.2. Categorisation

Table 3 presents the data reporting the way the teachers diagnosed and categorised the lexical anomalies in the corpus of twelve sentences selected for the purpose of the study.

Table 3. Individual sentences

Sentence no:	Categorisation:			
	Accurate	Inaccurate	Wrong	None
1. (…) *was diseased*	3	5	3	5
2. *The reporters exposed…*	3	10	1	2
3. (…) *influences how much…*	2	11	1	2
4. (…) *went streetwalking*	1	6	8	1
5. *Least but not last* (…)	15	1	0	0
6. (…) *was struck* (…)	5	8	1	2
7. (…) *slight crimes*	12	2	2	1
8. (…) *a gay song*	4	7	1	3

9. *The weather was so attractive* (…)	7	5	1	3
10. (…) *records are annihilated*	2	10	0	4
11. *My view of point* (…)	13	0	0	3
12. (…) *was disabled*	0	12	0	4
Total: (out of 192)	**67** (35%)	**77** (40%)	**18** (9%)	**30** (16%)

The total score shows that only 35 % of all categorisations were accurate and as much as 40% of them are to be described as inaccurate. Also some of the anomalies were not spotted and wrong interpretations were given (9%).

A general comment on the categorisations recorded coincides with Zimmerman's findings in the case of NS teachers. The teachers were very general in their comments and indiscriminate in the choice of descriptive categories, and also in their use of metalanguage.

The data shows that the highest number of correct categorisations occurred in the case of set phrases (sentence 5 and 11) and also collocations (sentence 7), whereas inaccuracy was more apparent in the categorisation of meaning-focused categories of connotation (sentence 2) and degree (sentence 3 and 10).The wrong categorisation was offered in the case of the verb "streetwalking' which was interpreted wrongly (it being largely an unknown usage to the teachers).

Table 4 demonstrates the scales of accuracy for categorisations offered according to the type of lexical anomaly.

Table 4. Categorisation of different types of lexical anomalies

Type of lexical anomaly:	Categorisation:			
	Accurate	Inaccurate	Wrong	None
Collocations (s. 1, 7, 9)	42% (21)	25% (12)	13% (6)	20% (9)
Set phrases (s. 5, 11)	50% (15)	40% (13)	0% (0)	10% (4)
M: connotation (s. 2, 4, 6, 8, 12)	16% (13)	54% (43)	14% (11)	16% (13)
M: degree (s. 3, 10)	12% (4)	62% (21)	5% (1)	21% (7)

M – meaning

The most accurately defined categories relate to the anomaly labelled as a set phrase (sentences 5 and 11), which received 50% of accurate answers. In the group of most inaccurate comments, degree and connotation achieved scores of 62% and 54% respectively.

On the basis of the above, it can be assumed that the meaning-focused categories of connotation and degree seemed to be the most difficult to define for the teachers, both in terms of their accuracy and the terminology deployed. Their metalanguage seemed to be very vague and, as the scores showed, inaccurate. The terms "wrong lexical choice", "wrong usage" or "lexical error" were used quite often. In contrast, the best scoring category of collocation and set phrases – the two categories which can be described as more form-focused (especially set phrases relating to word order rigidity) elicited comments using metalinguistic categories such as; word order, word category, passivization, etc. Also, the term "idiom" was used extensively irrespective of lexical anomaly.

4.3. Explanations

Table 5 demonstrates the way teachers would explain the selected lexical anomalies to their students. The presentation shows the degree of accuracy observed in the explanatory comments, together with examples provided by the instructors as complementary or intended as explanations themselves.

Table 5. Explanations for individual sentences

Sentence no:	Explanation				No of examples
	Accurate	Inaccurate	Wrong	None	
1. (…) was diseased	1	11	3	1	2
2. (…) exposed	6	7	0	3	5
3. (…) influences	3	7	0	6	4
4. (…) streetwalking	8	1	6	1	1
5. Last but not least	11	2	0	3	8
6. (...) was struck	15	0	0	1	4
7. (…) slight crimes	7	5	0	4	6
8. (…) a gay song	5	7	0	4	5
9. The weather (…) attractive	6	4	4	2	4
10. (...) annihilated	14	1	0	1	8
11. My view of point (…)	3	4	0	9	9
12. (…) was disabled	3	2	7	4	6
Total: **(out of 192)**	**82** **(43%)**	**51** **(26%)**	**20** **(11%)**	**39** **(20%)**	**62** **(31%)**

The overall score for accuracy of explanations given is 43% and the highest score observed was in the case of the meaning-focused categories of connotation (sentence 6) and degree (sentence 10), which were explained in a descriptive way but accurately enough for the learners to be able to see the differences. The explanations offered related either to the whole context or to the individual lexical items in question. In comparison with categorisation, this time the teachers found it more difficult to explain anomalies relating to collocations (e.g. sentence 1).

31% percent of all explanations contained illustrative examples, which in most cases provided the learners with the corrected form of the phrase but without additional examples cited. Such was the case for instance with sentence 5: "Least but not last" (8 examples) or sentence 11: "My point of view" (9 examples). 20% of the teachers did not give any explanation but provided other examples as a form of explanation. In the original pilot study of Zimmerman, the examples constituted 42.9% of all the explanations and in most cases were used as a complement to the explanation itself.

Table 6 classifies ways of explaining offered by the teachers according to types of errors (anomalies).

Table 6. Degree of accuracy in explanations for different types of anomalies

Type of lexical anomaly:	Explanation:				
	Accurate	Inaccurate	Wrong	None	Examples
Collocations (s. 1, 7, 9)	30% (14)	42% (20)	14% (7)	22% (7)	25% (13/48)
Set phrases (s. 5, 11)	44% (14)	12% (4)	22% (7)	22% (7)	47% (15/32)
M: connotations (s. 2, 4, 6, 8, 12)	47% (37)	21% (17)	16% (13)	16% (13)	28% (22/80)
M: degree (s. 3, 10)	50% (17)	25% (8)	0%	25% (7)	40% (12/32)

M = meaning
Examples = number of possible examples to be given

Again, the hierarchy of accuracy in table 6 reflects the detailed data for individual sentences from table 5. The highest degree of accuracy in teachers' explanations is observed in the category of meaning: degree (50%) and connotation (47%). As can be seen in the case where the teachers seem to be unable to comment on degree category (25%), they relied on examples – 40% of the comments were supplemented by examples. Collocation is seen as a relatively difficult anomaly to explain and the only explanation given is a form-focused one, e.g. sentence 1: "to be diseased – you can use disease as a noun, not a passivized verb".

These observations partially reflect the observations made by Zimmermann (2004), who noticed that:

> (...) *lexical phrases (set phrases) and connotations were most frequently explained accurately, and feedback about errors of collocation and degree were least frequently accurate.*

4.3. Categorisation *versus* explanation (comparison of NS *versus* NNS teachers)

Following the data in tables 3 and 5 and Zimmerman (2004), it can be observed that in terms of degree of accuracy the following was demonstrated:

	Categorisation comments:		Explanation comments:	
	NS	NNS	NS	NNS
Accurate:	30.4%	35%	60%	43%
Inaccurate:	36%	40%	36%	26%
Wrong:	0	9%	0	11%
No comments:	33.6%	16%	4%	20%

NS = native speaker teachers – Zimmerman 2004,
NNS = non-native speaker teachers – Gabryś-Barker (the present study)

On the basis of the above scores we can observe that:
1. If we compare the accuracy of categorisation and explanation, it is the explanations that received higher
   scores in both groups: 60% vs.30.4% in NS and 43% vs. 35% in NNS respectively.
2. NNS were (insignificantly) better in categorisation scores (35% vs. 30.4%), whereas NS were superior
   to NNS in explanatory comments (60% vs. 43%)
3. In categorising NS gave no answer in 33.6% of cases, whereas for NNS it was only 16%.
4. In explaining there were no comments given by NNS in 20% of cases and 4% of missing answers in the case of NS.
5. Examples were provided by NS in 42.9% together with explanations, whereas in the case of NNS
   only in 20% of answers were examples given

What do these scores tell us? They clearly support the view that formal instruction in linguistics (topic knowledge of NNS teachers) makes teachers more aware (but they are not far ahead of NS teachers) of the linguistic characteristics of anomalies identified so categorisation becomes easier (comment 1 and 3 above), however it does not greatly contribute to the power of explanation (comment 2 and 4).

According to the types of lexical anomaly identified by the subjects, analysed according to the category of anomaly, the following represents the data for accurate

comments (tables 4 and 6 and Zimmerman, ibid.). The high scores indicate ease of categorisation and explanation, whereas low scores on the accuracy scale indicate difficulty in categorisation and explanation recorded.

	Categorisation:		Explanation:	
	NS	NNS	NS	NNS
Collocations:	23.3%	42%	17.8%	30%
Set phrases	60.7%	50%	60.7%	44%
Meaning/connotations:	32.1%	16%	75%	47%
Meaning/degree:	10.7%	12%	35.7%	50%

Similarities between the two groups of teachers observed in **the categorisation comments** relate to high accuracy in *set phrases* (60.7% and 50% respectively) – an easy category (a fixed phrase frequently used), and low scores in *degree* – a difficult category (shades of meaning, intuitive response). Differences are noticeable in the ability to categorise *collocations* – difficult for NS teachers (23.1% of accurate scores only) – another example of an arbitrarily used fixed phrase known through exposure and usage, and in *connotations* that appear to be difficult for NNS teachers (16% accuracy only) – shades of meaning relating to individual properties of a given word, undefined by rigid linguistic rules.

Comparing the two groups in relation to **the explanation comments,** some similarities are observed, although NSs (having better awareness of associative meanings of a word) seem to score much higher than NNSs in *connotations*, which seems to be an easy category to explain through examples of usage (the scores are 75% and 47% respectively). The category of *collocation* is difficult for both groups (17.8% and 30% of accuracy respectively). However NNSs seem to encounter more problems with the explanatory comments, being unable to provide additional examples that would clarify the usage. The differences between NS and NNS teachers occur in relation to *degree* category – it is easy for NNSs (50% accurate comments) and difficult for NSs (35.7% of accurate comments). These scores seem to be difficult to explain, since as in the case of connotations, the degree category relates to a shade of meaning not explicitly expressed by a rule and yet it is NNSs that perform better in this case.

As far as the role of examples in explanations given by the teachers, NSs more often used a combination of explanation and example (Zimmerman, ibid:14), whereas NNSs mostly used either explanation or example to illustrate the correct usage of a word/phrase. It should be emphasized that an explanation, to be effective and which would allow learners to generalise about the correct use of a particular lexical item/ phrase for later language practice in a different context, is essential.

To sum up, the differences observed between NS and NNS teachers of English were not very significant but the above comments clearly support once again the belief that both intuition and explicit lexical knowledge are parts of language instructors' professional competence. NSs' lexical competence at the level of knowledge about the language (KAL) was lagging behind NNSs' awareness – as was demonstrated in their lower scores for categorisation. However, it was superior in their ex-

planatory power compared with NNS teachers. It allowed the former to give examples to clarify the meaning of explanations, which the latter group of instructors often missed.

5. Evaluation of NNS teachers' explanatory power: conclusions

The data and analysis conducted show the group of language instructors that took part in this study as **linguistically aware language users,** whose ability to spot the lexical anomaly was detected (for example, there are low scores for wrong interpretation (9%) or no interpretation (16%)). However, their ability to describe it in terms of categorisation was not strikingly high (35%).The terminology used to categorise lexical anomaly was not always very accurate. It can be assumed that to a certain extent this is due to the fact that even linguistics reference books often introduce confusion concerning lexical categories. The distinction between collocations, fixed phrases and idioms is not always very transparent and this might have caused some confusion for the subjects, and thus vitiate to some extent the value of the study. The same point was also made by Zimmerman about her pilot project (Zimmerman 2004:23).

Not only was confusion of terms observable but so also was the use of very inaccurate terminology in categorisation, such as *wrong word choice* or *wrong usage*, as I mentioned earlier. This was very much the case with teachers who, apart from teaching EFL, also taught other content subjects such as literature and culture studies. They exhibited a different attitude, especially at the level of explanation, focusing more on the meaning of the whole sentence and not on individual lexical anomalies (I'm referring to the 9% mentioned above).

In the explanatory comments, terminology and metalanguage in general was avoided by most of the teachers. The only exceptions were the *word categories* such as *noun, verb* or *adjective* or *animate* versus *inanimate* category. Taking into account the fact that language learners were at advanced levels and the context of this study – a formal setting of instruction as opposed to a naturalistic setting, and the programme of studies – pre-service training of future teachers of English at English teacher training colleges, their lack of terminology and metalanguage doesn't seem appropriate. It is as if an assumption was made that linguistic knowledge relating to language description is not necessary for a future teacher. Maybe it is not necessary in general language courses, but I would argue that even in such contexts where we are striving to develop learner autonomy, knowledge about the language and language awareness are important elements in self-study, whatever form them takes.

As linguistically aware language users, did the subjects exhibit **instructional power of explanation**? It seems that some of the teachers were linguistically aware and assumed that explanation of anomaly is enough for the learners to correct the sentences and further generalise about the use of a particular word/phrase. Only 31% of explanations were supplemented by examples of usage. The teachers seemed unable to go beyond one example given, and it was often just a correct form of the lexical anomaly in the particular sentence. Although the scores for accurate explana-

tions of the anomalies are higher than those for categorisation (43% versus 35% respectively), it still seems not high enough for fully qualified and experienced teachers of English.

As to the **implications for teacher training programmes,** the present study in a small way contributes to the ongoing discussion on the need for and impact of teachers' language awareness (Wright 2002, Larsen-Freeman 2004), whether it be understood as transmitted grammatical knowledge – a part of the training module (Lavender 2002) – or language awareness deriving from reflection and self-discovery (Savova 2003). Roberts (1998) relates to it as the shift from a transmission model in teacher education programmes to a constructivist one. However it may seem reasonable to assume that language awareness takes a different route of development in a formal context, in which lack of exposure to language that a naturalistic setting offers, will be compensated for by focus on explicit declarative knowledge as a variable contributing to teachers' ability to reflect on language and to construct hypotheses about it.

On the other hand, the study demonstrated insufficient explanatory competence in teachers and a perceived need to train accurate and effective "explainers" (instructors) of language phenomena to their students. This insufficiency results from their inability to produce adequate illustrative examples of usage. As mentioned before, a lexical dimension of any language does not constitute a fully rule-governed system. That is why not only programmes in descriptive linguistics but also development of the trainees' awareness that exposure to language – for example by means of intensive and extensive reading practice in a FL (as mentioned by one of the teachers in the questionnaire) – will contribute to their ability to teach vocabulary, as it will provide them with various contexts of its authentic use.

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