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Perception of success in the era of autonomous language learning

Language awareness and personal perception of success

Postrzeganie sukcesu w dobie autonomizacji procesu kształcenia językowego

Świadomość językowa a osobista percepcja sukcesu

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LIST OF ABBREVATIONS

CEFR   The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CLA   Critical Language Awareness

CLT   Communicative Language Teaching

CPH   Critical Period Hypothesis

EFL   English as Foreign Language

EIL   English as an International Language

ELF   English as a Lingua Franca

ELP   European Language Portfolio

FD   Field Dependence

FI   Field Independence

ID   Individual Differences

ITOA   Intolerance of Ambiguity

KAL   Knowledge About Language

LA   Language Awareness

L2   Second Language

LFE   Lingua Franca English

MALL   Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

MLAT   Modern Language Aptitude Test

PAR   Participatory Action Research

RQ   Research Question

SLA   Second Language Acquisition

SP#   Statement Pair number; denotes contrasting statement pairs on specific topics in the research

TOA   Tolerance of Ambiguity

UG   University of Gdańsk

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Acknowledgments

Introduction

The change in the educational paradigm towards autonomization of the language learning process has significantly contributed to a reevaluation of how success in language learning is perceived, revealing its inherently complex nature. Just as the Communicative Approach once revolutionized language learning, autonomy now plays a pivotal role, influencing various educational concepts (Benson and Voller 1997). Both in academic discourse and public debate, there is a strong emphasis on transitioning from the traditional, teacher-centered model to a learner-centered approach that empowers students to take greater control over their learning process (Holec 1981).

This learner-centered paradigm underscores the significance of self-directed learning and its potential benefits for language acquisition, including increased motivation, confidence, and improved language proficiency (Benson 2009; Little 2001; Pawlak 2017). By fostering active participation, educators can facilitate a more meaningful and effective language learning experience, thereby unlocking students' full potential (Benson 2010; Palfreyman and Benson 2019; Pawlak 2022). Despite ongoing debates regarding the conceptualization of autonomy, a consensus exists that it enables students to become more engaged and efficient language learners (Rahman 2018). Consequently, promoting autonomy has emerged as a central focus of language policy across many European countries (Pawlak 2011), often regarded as imperative (Janczar 2020).

Central to the topic addressed in this dissertation is the notion that autonomy in language learning demands a highly individualized understanding of success, as each learner's perception of success is inherently unique and subjective (Widła 2014; Lankiewicz 2018). Traditionally, success in second language acquisition was evaluated through pedagogical practices rooted in teacher-oriented approaches. This conventional view emphasized measurable outcomes such as linguistic competence (Chomsky 1965; 1982) and communicative competence (Hymes 1972), focusing on structured assessments through external validation and standardized benchmarks. Success was often equated with achieving predefined objectives, typically measured by proficiency or achievement tests.

In the era of autonomization, success in language learning is recognized as multifaceted and dynamic, shaped by an individual's hierarchy of values, personal goals, and experiences. Its perception varies among learners and evolves as their objectives change over time (Widła 2014; Lankiewicz 2018). Modern perspectives of success

encompass a broader, more personalized understanding that reflects each learner's unique needs and aspirations.

In this context, language awareness has emerged as a crucial component (Kelly 2019), significantly enhancing language acquisition, proficiency, and confidence (Fortune 2005; Komorowska 2014; Kelly 2019), while also fostering an appreciation for linguistic diversity and interlingualism (Lamb 2017). Language awareness supports independent learning by motivating learners to explore language functions and construct meaning (Yanti 2012). It encompasses understanding language learning strategies, recognizing cultural contexts, and assessing personal strengths and weaknesses (Pressley and McCormick 1995; Zając-Knapik 2020). This empowerment aligns with the principles of learner autonomy, emphasizing the central role of the learner in the educational process (Piotrowski 2011).

This dissertation and the included research aim to enrich understanding within the domain of conceptualizing success in autonomous language learning. The primary objective of this study is to examine the central research question, which explores how individuals perceive success in autonomous language learning and its relationship with language awareness. Specifically, the study examines whether heightened language awareness corresponds to changes in learners' personal perceptions of success. By elucidating the complex interconnections between these concepts, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of their interactions and explore the broader implications for language teaching practices.

To achieve this objective, the research employs a mixed methods approach (Biesta 2010; Morgan 2014; Kaushik and Walsh 2019), integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques to enhance reliability and validity through methodological triangulation. The study begins by administering questionnaires to collect quantitative data on students' attitudes toward autonomy, language awareness, and their perceptions of success. This phase is followed by participatory action research designed to increase participants' language awareness, supplemented by reflective notes. Subsequent to the awareness-raising sessions, the original questionnaire was re-administered to collect longitudinal data, thereby allowing for an assessment of the effect of increased language awareness on perceptions of success. The comparison of data collected before and after the sessions allowed for descriptive statistical analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed to identify patterns and correlations, while qualitative data was transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed to provide rich insights from the intervention. The final phase of the research

involved focus group interview to deepen understanding of the observed changes, further supporting methodological triangulation.

This research makes significant theoretical and practical implications to the field. It advances the discourse on autonomy in language learning and elucidates the relationship between language awareness and individual perceptions of success. The findings offer valuable recommendations for both academic and practical applications, benefiting educators and language learners alike. The results enhance our understanding of learner autonomy, illustrating it as a multifaceted and evolving process (Benson 2013; Blidi 2017; Little 2020; Tyczka-Nowak 2022) and provide theoretical insights into the importance of language awareness in foreign language education. By highlighting its transformative potential, varied dimensions, and practical implications, the research contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of language awareness and its role in contemporary language education practices.

The dissertation is divided into two main sections. One presenting a theoretical background and the other pertaining to an empirical part. Following the introduction, Chapter 1 presents a critical review of the literature on autonomy in language learning and related concepts, providing a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Chapter 2 explores the notion of success and the relationship between language autonomy and success. This chapter also concentrates on personal perception of success, referencing the concept of multilingualism, and describes individual factors influencing success in language learning. The following Chapter 3 focuses on language awareness and language learning. After discussing the origins, definitions, and related aspects of language awareness, this chapter examines the relationship between language awareness and learner autonomy. It concludes with reflections on how success is perceived through the lenses of both autonomy and language awareness. The empirical section begins with an outline of the main assumptions underlying the study and a justification for the proposed research methodology. It describes the research design, research questions and hypotheses, and profiles of the research group. Subsequent sections provide a comprehensive data analysis of three stages, followed by a comparative analysis of the data, which is later supplemented by an analysis of focus group interviews. Section 4.8 presents the research findings, addressing each research question respectively. The ensuing sections discuss the findings in relation to existing literature and evaluate the research in terms of its significance for theoretical development and practical

implications. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations, recommendations for future research and final remarks.

I. Theoretical background – literature and research review

Chapter 1 - Autonomy: A shift in language learning paradigm

The large-scale promotion of language learning in Poland began after the fall of communism. Starting in 1999, the education system underwent a comprehensive reform across all sectors to meet European standards. During this time, the number of public and private higher education institutions grew significantly, and foreign language teacher training and philological studies gained in popularity, accompanied by a considerable increase in publications, conferences, and research focused on foreign language teaching and learning (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej 2021: 120). Parallel to these developments, the field of language learning has undergone a notable transformation in recent years, moving away from the traditional, teacher-centered paradigm towards a learner-centered approach that empowers students to take greater control over their own learning process (Holec 1981). This autonomous approach recognizes the importance of self-directed learning and the potential benefits it can bring for language acquisition, including increased motivation, confidence, and language proficiency (Benson 2009; Little 2001; Pawlak 2017). The adoption of an autonomous approach to language learning constitutes a seminal change in the way language education is conceptualized and is likely to have a significant positive impact on the field, influencing teaching methodologies, curriculum design or learner outcomes.

As late as the mid-20th century, language was still seen as a lexical-grammatical system and the teaching process focused primarily on the processing of linguistic data, which was assumed to provide the prerequisite for achieving linguistic competence (Lankiewicz 2018). The Grammar Translation Approach, widely used during this period, epitomized this perspective by emphasizing the rote learning of vocabulary using bilingual word lists and the explicit teaching of grammar rules of the target language. This method involved translating sentences and texts into the native language and vice versa, providing language learners with a mental exercise that would enhance their intellectual growth (Ketabi & Shahraki 2011: 726-727).

Another influential theory of learning, Behaviorism, was introduced by B.F. Skinner (1957) who accounted for language development through environmental influences such as imitation, reinforcement, and conditioning. Behaviorist theory posited that repetition

and reinforcement enable students to refine their linguistic abilities (Ambridgea and Lieven 2011). Similarly, Bloomfieldian Linguistics concentrated on the structural aspects of language, including detailed analysis of phonology, morphology, and syntax, further reinforcing the importance of grammatical and lexical knowledge. Leonard Bloomfield (1926), considered the founding father of structural linguistics in America (Zhou 2020: 27), developed an analytic system to provide a rigid approach to structural linguistic analysis. Subsequently, influenced by American structural linguistics, Fries (1945) underscored grammar as the foundation for language learning, aligning with behaviorist psychology's notion of learning as "habit formation" (Decarrico 2001: 285). In the field of language teaching there emerged the Audiolingual method which was a synthesis of structural linguistics theory (Bloomfield 1933), contrastive analysis (Fries 1945), oral-auditory procedures, and behaviorist psychology (Skinner 1957). This method emphasized intensive practice of basic sentence patterns and pronunciation, placing excessive emphasis on grammar as a fundamental aspect of language acquisition (Ketabi and Shahraki 2011: 728).

In response to the limitations of traditional methods, such as grammar-translation instruction, a necessary shift in teaching methodology occurred, leading to the rise of the communicative approach to foreign language teaching in the mid-1970s. This approach quickly became the dominant pedagogical framework, emphasizing the development of learners' communicative competence and highlighting the central role of communication in language learning (Kukowicz Żarska 2009).

Rooted in Noam Chomsky's theories, the communicative approach was further refined by Stephen Krashen, who adapted Chomsky's insights for SLA. Chomsky's distinction between linguistic competence and performance revealed the complexities of language structure and underscored the necessity of transcending rote memorization to achieve a deeper understanding of language use (Chomsky 1965). Building upon this foundation, Krashen introduced five key hypotheses that emphasize the significance of naturalistic language acquisition through meaningful interaction and contextual exposure (Krashen 1982; Krashen 1985). Consequently, the communicative approach prioritizes fluency and practical use over grammatical accuracy, marking a pivotal shift in language pedagogy (Savignon 2002).

By focusing on the active use of language in authentic contexts, the communicative approach positions communication as the central goal of language education, encouraging learners to engage meaningfully with the language (Savignon 1987; Savignon 2002). Its

effectiveness and flexibility have established it as one of the most widely accepted methods in language teaching, with its influence still evident in contemporary language education practices (Ellis 1996; Dos Santos 2020).

As the importance of socio-cultural factors grew in language teaching and the language learning process, the 1970s witnessed a significant shift in the humanities from an epistemology centered on the object to one focused on the subject, as noted by Białek (2015: 19). This transformation recognized the learner as the central figure in the language learning process, placing considerable emphasis on the learner's role and establishing the attainment of communicative competence as the primary objective of education. Consequently, research in SLA began to prioritize learner-dependent factors over external determinants of learning effectiveness and efficiency. Researchers increasingly advocated fostering self-reliance and independence among learners.

This evolving perspective paved the way for a noticeable shift from the communicative paradigm to an autonomous approach since the early 2000s (Yagcioglu, 2015; Lankiewicz, 2018). Currently, autonomy in language teaching and learning stands as a thriving and expanding area of interest for both researchers and language practitioners (Benson 2006). While the concept of learner autonomy in linguistics dates back over 40 years, originating from the Council of Europe's project on modern language teaching and Henri Holec's influential 1981 report, it has gradually gained acceptance among educators. Scholars have articulated the concept of learner autonomy in diverse ways, and it has yet to be defined in a unified manner (Tyczka-Nowak 2022).

1.1. Autonomy in language learning: Origins and definitions

Holec, the founder of the concept, defines autonomy in his report as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (1981: 3). According to Holec, this ability is not innate and is instead acquired either naturally or, more commonly, through formal learning. His definition focused primarily on learner behaviors in relation to goal setting, selecting appropriate techniques and strategies, along with monitoring and self-assessment that demonstrates their assumption of responsibility. He points out that "to take charge of one's learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning [...]" (ibid.). Although Holec's definition was the first widely spread and commonly accepted one, it inevitably led to numerous questions and the need

for further elaboration. Scholars began investigating who takes control and from whom, the types of control that exist, and the conditions under which learners exert control. This line of inquiry has driven further exploration of the field and the development of specific components of autonomy (Benson 2009; Chik et al. 2018) including motivation (Gass and Selinker 2008; Brown 2010; Dorneyi 2015), self-esteem, independence (Everhard 2015), self-regulation (Leaver et al. 2005), metacognitive skills (Marantika 2021), or the use of learning strategies (Wang 2016; Oxford 2017; Pawlak 2017; Hogh and Müller-Hilke 2021). Furthermore, these elements are interconnected with practices such as individual and collaborative learning (Bound 1988; Dam et al. 1990), the use of authentic materials (Irmawati 2012), the implementation of a negotiated syllabus (Benson et al. 2009) and the role of teachers (Palfreyman and Benson 2019; Li et al. 2020; Ma 2021). It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive; the components and practices of autonomy in language learning are diverse and continually evolving.

An important contribution to the development of autonomy was made by Little (1991), who aimed to determine what exactly stands behind the "deceptively simple word" referred to as "autonomy" and how it can be implemented in specific educational situations. His description complemented Holec's, yet he highlighted the more psychological aspect of learners' performance, defining autonomy as a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little 1991:4). Autonomy is perceived as a certain degree of freedom for the learner, although it is always conditional and constrained. It can thus be observed that Little's definition emphasizes the capacity of the student to think critically and act independently as well as to establish objectives, devise strategies, and complete tasks efficiently.

Similarly, Benson (2001) perceives the aptitudes, methods, and techniques which enable learning a foreign language without a teacher to be the most essential elements that that foster the development of autonomy, while conceptualizing autonomy as "the capacity to take control of one's own learning" (Tyczka-Nowak 2022: 60), thereby emphasizing the significance of the abilities required to take charge of one's own learning. Moreover, Benson (2001) reviewed the literature on autonomy in language teaching and learning from its origins to the end of the 20th century and found Holec's definition problematic as it neglected the cognitive dimension of autonomy that underlie effective self-management of learning. He also pointed out that Holec and Little's (1991) definitions did not take into account the third dimension of autonomy, related to control over the content of learning. More specifically, language learning is generally

accompanied by interaction with others. Thus, the control of learning material also has a social dimension, which involves the readiness to work collaboratively with others (Dam et al. 1990) based on the learner's capacity to negotiate goals, objectives and resources with their colleagues (Benson 2001: 46). This belief in the value of interdependent learning in and out of the classroom has caused some practitioners to perceive learner autonomy as "a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person" (Dam et al. 1990: 102).

Benson (2001) notes that many researchers use terms independence and autonomy interchangeably, but this overlooks the social nature of learning. Najeeb (2013: 1240), citing Fisher et al. (2006), similarly observes that "learner autonomy" and "learner independence" are often treated as synonymous or nearly synonymous, given that the concept of language learners being independent is a core tenet of most literature on learner autonomy. Najeeb (2013: 1240) also highlights Lamb and Reinders' (2006) assertion that, given the complexity of the field, it is impossible to precisely define either independent language learning or autonomy. This perspective is supported by Aoki (2002: 111), who contends that there are various viewpoints on autonomy rather than a single authoritative description. Nevertheless, Najeeb (2013: 1239) argues that the relationship between autonomy and independence in language learning is not straightforward. Instead, autonomy is seen as a collective phenomenon derived from interdependence (Allwright 1990; Dam et al. 1990; Benson and Cooker 2013; Lamb 2017). Little (1996: 210) emphasizes that social interaction is central to the concept of autonomy, stating also that "all learning is the product of interaction: learner autonomy does not arise spontaneously from within the learner but develops out of the learner's dialogue with the world to which he or she belongs" (Little 1994: 431). Therefore, the goal of foreign language learning and teaching seems to be fostering autonomous interdependence. According to Hadden and Girme (2020), pursuing relational needs and goals does not necessitate sacrificing or deprioritizing personal needs; rather, these pursuits can complement and enhance each other. Consequently, personal and relational needs can be perceived as complementary and compatible with learner autonomy.

Over the decades, numerous interpretations of Holec's definition of autonomy have emerged, yet it remains the most frequently cited and provides a reliable foundation for further modifications (Blidi 2017). Consequently, learner autonomy continues to be a significant and debated topic in second language acquisition. Discussions include whether learner autonomy should be considered as a capacity or behavior; whether it is

determined by the responsibility or control of the learner; some specialists claim that autonomy is a psychological phenomenon with political implications, whereas others perceive it as a political right with psychological implications; and finally the questions arise whether complementary teacher autonomy affects the development of learner autonomy (Little 2003).

Benson (2009) advocates the view that autonomy should be considered as a complex, multifaceted concept, addressing the beliefs of relativists who acknowledge the validity of diverse definitions of autonomy as an alternative perspective. He (2001) also notes, that any attempt to define autonomy in a way that accounts for every potential element of learner control runs the risk of making it too long for practical application. Benson highlights a number of connections to multiple forms of autonomy practice, among them individualized learning, self-instruction, distance learning, the use of authentic materials, language advising, learner and strategy training, collaborative learning, project work, negotiated syllabus, and more. Everhard (2015) also indicates that in order to order to have a good understanding of the complexity of autonomy, its individual components, such as motivation, strategies, self-esteem or independence, need to be identified and carefully analyzed.

Despite the various disagreements regarding the conceptualization of autonomy, there is a general consensus that autonomy enables students to become more active and efficient language learners (Rahman 2018). The concept of autonomy in language learning and teaching has consistently sparked significant interest among theorists, researchers, and practitioners. This is evidenced by the multitude of studies, conferences, and publications focused on current and prospective language teachers (Benson 2007: 21). Therefore, the promotion of autonomy has become a significant focus of language policy in numerous European countries (Pawlak 2011), often regarded as imperative (Janczar 2020: 73). After reviewing the literature, it is evident that the core pedagogical principles promoting autonomy in language learning include active engagement in the learning process, reflective practices for critical planning and monitoring, and effective use of the target language. Moreover, fostering autonomy necessitates the ability to reflect on one's learning process, maintain self-awareness, embrace collaborative learning, and actively manage one's learning path – such as by setting goals, initiating and executing learning activities, and regularly evaluating performance and progress. Each of these components underscores the deep connection between autonomy and how autonomous learners perceive their success. By actively participating in and managing

their learning experience, learners not only enhance their language skills but also develop a heightened awareness and appreciation of their own progress and achievements, thereby fostering a strong sense of success and fulfillment in language education.

1.2.   The profile of an autonomous language learner

Language learners present a diverse range of characteristics depending on their individual background, experiences, and aspirations. The degree of motivation towards learning a language can vary greatly among individuals. Some are highly enthusiastic and keen, while others may be more hesitant or lack the motivation to persist with their studies. They may exhibit varied learning styles and preferences as well as differing levels of language proficiency. Recognizing the diverse characteristics of each individual, providing them with the necessary tools and resources enables them to effectively manage their learning process, thereby fostering the development of autonomy.

As described by Holec (1981), an autonomous learner is characterized by several attributes of independent learning. Primarily, such an individual must possess the capability to establish their own learning objectives and to regulate both the content and methodology of their education. An autonomous learner must also possess the ability to choose the most effective techniques and methods, adequately monitor their learning process (rhythm, time, place), and evaluate their personal development and accomplishments. Bound (1988) further expands upon the qualities of autonomous learners, highlighting that they possess a sense of responsibility for their own education. They take the initiative in planning their learning process, utilizing resources beyond those provided by the teacher, and engage in self-evaluation as well as collaboration with others. These characteristics demonstrate that autonomous learners are self-directed and proactive in their learning journey, rather than merely following predetermined instructions. "Proactive" autonomy, as defined by Littlewood (1999: 75), involves learners independently setting their own "directions" and making deliberate efforts to achieve their learning objectives. In contrast, "reactive" autonomy allows learners to organize their resources to meet pre-established goals (Littlewood1999: 75). While proactive autonomy is often considered the ideal, reactive autonomy can be a crucial step towards achieving full autonomy or a valid "goal in its own right" (Benson 2006: 24).

Higgs (1988) points out that an autonomous learner is characterized by a successful interaction between the learner, the educator, the learning environment, and the task being pursued. Without these key social elements, the outcome of autonomous learning may be less effective. Betts and Kercher describe an autonomous learner as someone who "[…] solves problems through a combination of divergent and convergent thinking, and functions with minimal external guidance in selected areas of endeavor" (1999: 14). This can be interpreted as the ability of autonomous learners to generate multiple ideas and consider various options, while also using their own judgment to choose the most effective solution to a problem with little help from others, demonstrating their independence in the learning process. According to Benson and Voller (1997), an autonomous learner is someone who can assume personal responsibility for their own learning process, which is a predictor of academic achievement. The aspect of responsibility is also a central focus in Benson's (1997) definition of learner autonomy. He places emphasis on the idea that learners possess an innate capability to take responsibility for their own learning, which is often hindered by traditional institutional education. It can be therefore stated, that the idea of autonomy is rooted in the principle that learners have the right to direct their own learning process and make decisions about their education. Integral to the concept of autonomy, this responsibility is a fundamental characteristic of autonomous learners (Holec 1981; Little 1991; Pawlak 2011; Oates 2019). Along with assumung responsibility, autonomous learners possess a number of important traits, including a willingness to take risks, self-reflection, self-awareness, creativity, flexibility, and the ability to engage in critical and analytical thinking (Blidi 2017: xxv). According to Blidi (2017), the development of learner autonomy is not a sudden or instantaneous process, but rather a gradual and long-term one that requires a commitment to learning. Learner autonomy is acquired through a combination of learner readiness, skills developed through instructional interventions, and shared experiences. In this view, autonomy can be considered both innate and acquired, reflecting the interplay of individual dispositions and the impact of educational experiences.

Although the previously mentioned characteristics are considered important for autonomous learners, it is crucial to emphasize that they do not ensure the attainment of autonomy. Autonomy in language learning is a complex phenomenon that involves the interplay of various internal and external factors, such as the learner's expectations, needs, motivation, language awareness, cultural differences and learning strategies. While the next section will address these crucial elements in formal language learning, it is also

of much relevance to examine the learning strategies that are equally relevant from the perspective of the autonomous learner.

In the academic literature, learning strategies have been defined in various ways (Droździał-Szelest 1997; Maccaro 2006; Griffiths 2008; Oxford 2017; Pawlak 2017), with Oxford (1990) providing one of the most prominent definitions. She describes language learning strategies as

> operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information…; specific actions taken by the learners to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations (1990: 8).

Different definitions of learning strategies underscore their intentional and goal-oriented nature in promoting language acquisition. Pressley and McCormick (1995) assert that strategies are deliberate actions controlled by learners to achieve educational objectives. Tarone (1983) defines learning strategies as efforts aimed at achieving linguistic and sociolinguistic proficiency in the target language, while O'Malley and Chamot (1990) describe strategies as conscious thought processes or actions used to comprehend, learn, or retain new information.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) introduced a categorization of learning strategies into three primary types: metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies, which are widely accepted classifications based on cognitive theory (Holden 2004: 259). Metacognitive strategies are pivotal in language learning as they involve learners consciously managing and regulating their cognitive processes (Pintrich et al. 1993: 803). These strategies encompass tasks such as setting learning goals, monitoring progress, and reflecting on their learning journey. By developing awareness of their own thinking patterns, learners can effectively identify challenges, hypothesize solutions, and critically evaluate their learning outcomes (Nerlicki, 2004; Zając-Knapik, 2020). This proactive approach allows learners to actively engage in the learning process, enhancing their ability to plan, monitor, and assess their learning strategies, thereby optimizing their learning experience (Holden 2004). Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, are employed to handle and manipulate information or to apply specific skills and methods to tasks (Holden 2004). These strategies encompass a range of approaches used by students to process information from texts and lectures, spanning from fundamental to more advanced techniques (Pintrich et al. 1993). Examples include memorization and information structuring, which assist learners in managing their learning and performing language-related tasks effectively across different contexts (Raoofi et al. 2014). Cognitive

strategies also include critical thinking as well as the development and rehearsal of learning materials. Finally, socio-affective strategies focus on the emotional and social dimensions of language learning, addressing aspects such as motivation, confidence, and interaction with others (Ellis 2012). Oxford (1990: 17) outlines two main components within the socio-affective domain: social strategies, which include asking questions and cooperating with others, and affective strategies, which encompass relaxation, motivation, and building confidence. These strategies collectively enhance learners' emotional engagement and social interaction, thereby enriching their overall language acquisition experience.

In addition, there are other categorizations of learning strategies found in the literature, such as, for example, cognitive, metacognitive and resource-oriented strategies (Hogh and Müller-Hilke 2021). Resource-oriented strategies distinguish between intrinsic (e.g., distractibility, effort regulation, time management) and extrinsic (e.g., managing the study environment, peer-learning, use of additional literature) resources to enhance learning (Hogh and Müller-Hilke 2021). It is important to note, however, that while these strategies may be referred to by different names (Griffith 2004), they do not necessarily differ in nature; rather, their classification varies according to the specific research objectives of the researchers.

Together, these strategies empower learners to manage their language education effectively, serving not only as components of learner autonomy but also as tools for developing greater autonomy (Wang 2016). Consequently, an autonomous language learner is characterized by having developed metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies (O'Malley and Chamot 1990), which empower them to take control of and make informed decisions regarding their language learning process (Marantika 2021). Such strategies not only foster learner autonomy but also bring significant benefits. They are essential for developing communicative competence, boosting self-confidence, and encouraging active engagement in language learning (Piotrowski 2011; Zając-Knapik 2020). By implementing effective strategies, learners can improve their language outcomes and become more self-sufficient in managing their learning experiences (Kolber 2012). Learning strategies not only improve language proficiency but they also shape learners' attitudes and beliefs about their own abilities and achievements. By actively managing and regulating their cognitive processes through metacognitive strategies, learners can develop a clearer understanding of what contributes to their success. They can identify which strategies work best for them, adapt their approach as

needed, and make informed decisions about their learning methods fostering a sense of empowerment over their learning outcomes. Ultimately, they enable learners to perceive success as an ongoing process of growth and progress in language acquisition.

Considering all aspects, an autonomous learner is an individual who comprehends the significance of their learning activities, takes ownership of their educational journey (Holec 1981; Little 1991), and understands that learning often starts in the classroom but extends far beyond it (Toporek 2021). Autonomous learners engage actively in various learning activities, which include setting both short- and long-term goals, planning, and completing tasks (Reinders 2010; Klimas 2017; Marantika 2021). Additionally, they exhibit well-developed cognitive and metacognitive skills (O'Malley and Chamot 1990), and collaborate effectively with others (Pawlak 2011). Such learners are intrinsically motivated, adept at identifying and utilizing learning strategies that suit their personal needs (Wilczyńska 2002). Autonomous learners are also willing to take risks despite making mistakes, they are not afraid to guess or conjecture, and independently develop a system of rules while maintaining a positive and tolerant attitude towards the subject of learning (Zając-Knapik 2020). Lastly, they engage in self-evaluation, taking responsibility for assessing their progress, capabilities, and outcomes. This self-assessment process provides them with a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, helping them identify areas that require improvement and additional support (Rafik Trad 2004). Accordingly, stands as a vital component of autonomous learning, empowering learners to navigate their paths in language acquisition towards success while ensuring that their perception of achievement is deeply connected to ongoing personal and linguistic growth.

1.3. Facilitating autonomy: The role of the teacher

A commonly attributed quote to Galileo Galilei "You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him to find it within himself" (Cassidy et al. 2012: 141) reflects his belief that a teacher's role is not to simply impart knowledge, but to help students realize their potential and develop their abilities. Despite the antiquity of Galileo's quote, it retains a high degree of contemporary relevance and should be a guiding principle for autonomy-supportive teachers. The teaching profession has undergone significant transformations in

its function over the course of centuries and remains susceptible to change in response to the evolving needs and awareness of society.

The development of students' autonomous behavior is currently one of the main goals of education (Boud 1988: 18; Manzano Vázquez 2016: 96). In order to attain these goals, some students necessitate stimulation and guidance from a competent teacher (Little 1991: 40; 44) prepared to create an environment that supports autonomous learning. Komorowska (2015: 17) and Pawlak (2022: 18-19) stress that current expectations of teachers entail much more than proficiency in language alone. There is a growing emphasis on teachers' abilities in interaction, pedagogy, and didactics. They are expected to foster a wide range of competencies (e.g. intercultural), enhance students' skills, encourage autonomous attitudes and behaviors, provide training in strategies, and consider a diverse range of students` individual differences, all while utilizing modern technologies.

To effectively foster autonomy in education, it is crucial to explore the dynamic between learners and teachers. As highlighted by Little (2020: 4), for learner autonomy to be effectively implemented, the role of the teacher has to be changed. The traditional model where learners depend on expert teachers should evolve into a relationship that embodies "an attitude of acceptance and appreciation of the views, desires and frames of reference of learners" (Boud 1988: 39). In state schools, characterized by hierarchical management, teachers frequently assert their authority and dominance over students as representatives of the institution (Rokita-Jaśków 2022: 203). Autonomy-supportive teacher must abandon the traditional role of authoritative instructors and experts and instead prioritize the development of students' awareness and independence (Asgari et al. 2021). Recently, there has been increasing focus on the concept of teacher agency, defined as "teachers' capability to take intentional, meaningful action that manifests their will, autonomy, independence and choice" (Szczepaniak-Kozak and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej 2024: 4) as well as "teacher's competence to plan and enact educational change, direct, and regulate their actions in educational contexts" (Sang 2020: 1). Rokita-Jaśków (2023: 193) argues that this concept enables teachers to liberate themselves from the constraints imposed by educational policies, thereby enabling reflective educators to effectively and autonomously implement their decisions.

Given the changing needs and expectations of students, the teacher cannot limit their role to merely imparting linguistic and cultural knowledge but must also act as an educator, evaluator, mentor, and innovator (Zawadzka 2004). According to Palfreyman

and Benson (2019), the role of the teacher in autonomous language learning involves multiple functions, including that of a facilitator who assists learners in overcoming difficulties, a counselor who provides support to reduce stress and anxiety and improve learning outcomes, and finally an organizer who manages activities and games to meet the learners' needs and expectations. It can be deduced that while the teacher's involvement remains essential, their approach to teaching must be shifted from the teacher-centered to the student-orientated one in order to promote learner autonomy (Almusharraf 2020; Wiśniewska 2001). Lin and Reinders (2019) stressed the importance of teachers establishing a supportive relationship with students through structured guidance. This enables teachers to understand their students' struggles and provide the necessary support. Palfreyman and Benson (2019) argue that the teacher's role is to provide responsive "scaffolding" for the student's efforts to take control of their language learning decisions and performance. Almusharraf (2020) concludes that teachers should play a crucial role in helping students through the process of self-assessment, setting goals, training, monitoring, and evaluating their language learning progress. Additionally, Dam (2000) points out that teachers providing sufficient support and involvement along with successful interaction in the classroom, play a critical role in promoting students' self-awareness and autonomy.

Numerous contemporary researchers emphasize the essential connection between student and teacher autonomy, highlighting that learner autonomy is unattainable without teacher autonomy (Wilczyńska 2004: 48; Pawlak 2008: 7). Wysocka (2003) notes that full success can be achieved by an independent learner guided by an autonomous teacher (cited in Marciniak 2014: 336). Little (1995: 179) similarly argues that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent, emphasizing that fostering learner autonomy relies on promoting teacher autonomy. He also adds, that only an autonomous teacher can really cultivate autonomy among their students, since it would be "unreasonable to expect teachers to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they themselves do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner" (Little 2000: 45). Madalińska-Michalak (2019: 12) argues that it would be highly challenging, if not unrealistic, for teachers to effectively educate towards learner autonomy if they themselves do not comprehend this concept and, when possible, do not practice it. Michońska-Stadnik (2004: 18) emphasizes that only a teacher who is autonomous themselves can effectively foster autonomy in students, while Tyczka-Nowak (2022: 59) asserts that teachers play a pivotal role in embedding specific values into the language teaching process and preparing students

psychologically and methodologically for independent learning. Likewise, the Council of Europe (2001) highlights that an essential component when discussing the teacher who supports student autonomy is the teacher's attitude and awareness of the concept of savoir-apprendre ("ability to learn"). Therefore, it can be inferred that without understanding and practicing autonomy themselves, teachers cannot effectively impart it to their students, thus making teacher autonomy essential for the development of student autonomy.

There are many definitions of teacher autonomy, which, due to the ongoing research on autonomous teaching, are constantly being modified (Zając-Knapik 2020: 98). Little (1995:176) understands teacher autonomy as "teachers' capacity to engage in self-directed teaching". He believes that genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous, describing them as "having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest possible degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process and exploiting the freedom that this confers" (1995: 179). According to Aoki, teacher autonomy can be described as "capacity, freedom to make choices concerning one's own teaching" (1999: 111). Benson, on the other hand, defines teacher autonomy as both "a right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control" (2000: 111) while Smith perceives it as "the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others" (2000: 89). Despite the diverse interpretations of the concept of teacher autonomy, they collectively emphasize its essence as the capacity for self-directed teaching, freedom to make instructional choices, and the right to freedom from external control. It can be firmly stated, that teachers who do not further their education and personal development may find it difficult to broaden their perspectives and promote students' autonomy and self-reliance, as emphasized by Madalińska-Michalak (2019: 12), who finds this essential for effective teaching. According to Droździał-Szelest (2011: 382), an autonomous teacher is in control of their own professional development, facilitates student autonomy in the educational process, selects teaching methods and materials, and takes responsibility for decisions regarding learning goals and content in both self-learning and teaching contexts. Additionally, autonomy among teachers promotes self-development, enhances skills and competencies as well as protects against professional burnout (Zając-Knapik 2020: 103).

Some examples of autonomy supportive practices of teachers are creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom, building and maintaining a sense of educational community by ensuring harmonious, conflict-free, supportive and cooperative group relationships (Opałka 2002; Schweder and Raufelder 2022). While respecting and implementing the curriculum, their role is no longer simply to assess students, but to guide them through the practice of self-assessment, goal-setting, training, observation and evaluation of their language learning (Almusharraf 2020). They should encourage students to take responsibility for their education, make choices and be independent in their decision-making by developing critical thinking (Madalińska- Michalak 2019), recognizing their point of view and vitalizing mental demands of learners (Reeve 2016), while enabling them to work in their individual way and imparting the fundamentals of learning capabilities (Su and Reeve 2011). According to Opałka (2002), teachers should treat each student as an individual, recognizing and respecting the values and beliefs that are important to them. They should promote a positive attitude towards new challenges and changes at the same time being compassionate and provide support and encouragement when a student struggles or fails. Sierens et al. (2009) found that the teacher's autonomous attitude enhances student interest and increases intrinsic motivation, especially if the teacher is passionate about the subject. When a student is enthusiastic about learning, their excitement can be contagious, leading them to try new strategies and experiment with their ideas independently while staying motivated throughout the process (Oates 2019).

Ma (2021) enumerates a number of research studies that have demonstrated the constructive effect of teacher autonomy support on student engagement (e.g. Hospel and Galand 2016; Martin and Collie 2019; Benlahcene et al. 2020; Li et al. 2020). Among young learners, autonomy support has been positively associated with self-monitoring of learning, deep data processing, persistence in defining and achieving goals, well-being, lower tension and ultimately higher learning outcomes (Kunst et al. 2019). At the academic level, however, promoting autonomy boosts intrinsic motivation, thereby improving students' learning and performance (Niemiec and Ryan 2009). Ma (2021: 4) finds that students who perceive their teachers as offering greater autonomy experience increased feelings of competence, self-control, engagement, and motivation, alongside reduced levels of tension. This indicates a positive influence on students' internalization of educational goals, leading to improved academic outcomes.

In summary, promoting learner autonomy is a complex and ongoing process (Benson 2013; Little 2020; Tyczka-Nowak 2022) that requires teachers to have a range of pedagogical skills and strategies, to be flexible and proactive in their approach. For many, fostering learner autonomy presents a difficult challenge due to the convergence of both their personal beliefs and a range of institutional conditions (Pawlak 2022). In order to encourage teachers to act autonomously, it is necessary to develop a sense of professional identity, the courage for pedagogical creativity, and their experience of the benefits of autonomy (Zawadzka 2004). It is important to highlight, that teacher's role is not anymore to simply assess students, but rather to encourage students to take responsibility for their education (Sue and Reeve 2011) guiding through a process of goal-setting, observation and self-assessment (Almusharraf 2020) and to meet the needs and expectations of learners by assisting and providing the necessary support (Palfreyman and Benson 2019).

1.4. Misconceptions and criticism of autonomy implementation

The idea of autonomy has frequently aroused heated debates, in which misconceptions about the nature of the concept and its implementation can often be observed. Given the vast number of these objections, the author of the present paper will concentrate on the most frequently mentioned ones.

Since its inception, researchers cannot come to a consensus on the very definition of autonomy, but offer a great variety of theoretical interpretations and understandings. It can definitely be described as a slippery concept to define precisely due to various terminological and conceptual inconsistencies in the literature (Little 2003). However, as noted by Lamb (2017: 181), it is a complex and dynamic construct, but it becomes meaningless unless it can be related to practice. These inconsistencies include defining autonomy as an ability or behavior, referring to it as learner responsibility or learner control, and treating it alternately as a psychological phenomenon and a political right. Finally, there is no consensus on whether autonomy should be perceived as a means or an end (Lamb, 2017: 181) thus, as described by Kuchah and Smith (2011: 128) "pedagogy of autonomy" or "pedagogy for autonomy". The former one involves engaging with learners' pre-existing autonomy (Kuchah and Smith (2011: 130), often through methods

like project work in language teaching, while 'pedagogy for autonomy', explicitly aims to develop autonomy alongside language proficiency (Palfreyman and Benson 2019: 13).

Another ongoing issue is whether autonomy is acquired or innate in nature. For Holec, it is an ability that is not innate but "must be acquired either by 'natural' means or by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way" (1981: 3). In contrast, Little (1991), drawing from constructivism, argues that learners inherently possess the capacity for autonomy, which can be enhanced through interactions with teachers and peers. Lamb (2017: 181) further discusses how this perspective raises the challenge of "training" or "developing" students to cultivate greater autonomy, involving teaching strategies and reflection on deeper learning goals and objectives.

Another controversial issue among current researchers is related to the ability to measure autonomy, however the list of literature published on the subject has been limited. Benson (2010: 77) notes that autonomy is an intricate concept consisting of a number of variable components that can be evaluated intuitively, making it a difficult construct to measure. Thus, The primary challenge in measuring autonomy lies in identifying the essential and observable components of autonomy. Additionally, assessing a student's autonomy level fairly by the tutor may prove difficult, if not impossible, because the tutor often observes only the outcome rather than the entire process (Sinclair 1999). Consequently, Confessore and Park (2004) emphasize that information gathered from observable behavior may not be an accurate indication of underlying intentions. Benson (2010) identifies the developmental nature of autonomy as a third issue when measuring it. Little (1991) posits that the sustainability of learner autonomy cannot be assumed, and a student may display varying degrees of autonomy across different domains.

Researchers have raised concerns about the practicality of the concept of autonomy, claiming that it may be unrealistic or difficult to achieve in real life situations. Hand (2006: 536) criticizes the notion of prioritizing autonomy as a goal in education, providing two reasons. Firstly, he contends that autonomy is not a skill that can be directly taught or learned, but rather emerges from specific situations and experiences. Secondly, he raises concerns about the appropriateness of educators promoting the idea of students relying solely on their own judgment and disregarding legitimate authority. It is essential to note that Hand's arguments are not specific to language teaching but apply to education in general. Hermes (2000) presents a picture of an autonomous learner who is mature, motivated, perseveres despite setbacks, and honestly evaluates their progress.

However, she highlights that this idealized image does not reflect the reality of students in school. According to her, students generally lack the knowledge and experience to make informed decisions about what they need to learn and often need guidance in selecting appropriate content. They also may not have the maturity to make decisions on their own and struggle to judge the importance of the content they are learning. Similarly, Little (2007) notes that there is substantial evidence indicating that learners are frequently hesitant to assume responsibility for their own learning, possibly due to the passive role typically assigned to students in schools and their apprehension about setting learning goals, selecting materials and activities, and assessing their progress. Biedroń (2004: 81) notes that despite the benefits of autonomy, many adults are reluctant to assume control in foreign language learning, expecting teachers to manage their learning entirely. She further argues (2004: 86) that changing entrenched mindsets in adults is difficult, and thus, autonomy should be encouraged from an early age across all subjects, not just foreign languages. Finally, autonomy promotion is said to distract from the real tasks related to language teaching and learning. Teachers often mention such limitations as institutional pressures, textbook constraints, time pressures, or the reluctance of students themselves (Droździał-Szelest 2004).

Chapter 2 - Perception of success in language learning

The concept of success in the literature of L2 learning arises quite regularly, as a result of the character of the discipline itself (Lankiewicz 2018: 100). However, due to the disparity between language pedagogy approaches in earlier years and those advocated by contemporary specialists, little research has been done regarding the accountability of language learners for their achievements or failures in language acquisition (Williams et al. 2004). The following chapter explores the notion of success in language learning, distinguishing it from related concepts such as competence or proficiency. It briefly outlines how success has been understood over the years based on dominant language learning methodologies. Chapter 2 also explores the connection between success and autonomy in language learning, emphasizing that in the era of increased learner autonomy, success cannot be defined in absolute terms. Instead, it can only be measured in relation to individual goals and motivations.

2.1. Defining the notion of success

Understanding the notion of success in foreign language learning is essential, as it extends beyond traditional metrics such as linguistic and communicative competence or proficiency. Relating success to these concepts underscores its unique and broader scope. Unlike the criteria defined by course programs or standardized assessments, success is a personalized concept that signifies the attainment of individual goals and overall satisfaction in the language learning process. A shift in foreign language pedagogy has resulted not only in a pedagogical reflection related to the autonomisation of the foreign language learning process (Lankiewicz 2017: 184) or the changing role of teachers (Pawlak 2022: 18), but also in the evolving understanding of success in foreign language learning.

The traditional understanding of success in foreign language learning emphasizes measurable aspects such as linguistic competence (Chomsky 1965; 1982) and communicative competence (Hymes 1972) providing a structured approach to evaluating progress through external validation and standardized benchmarks. The theory of linguistic competence was first introduced by Noam Chomsky in 1965 revolutionized the arena of theoretical linguistics. Chomsky (1957) introduced the concept of generative

grammar, which he defined as a set of rules that can be applied to generate an indefinitely vast number of sentences, each with a clear structural description (Tienson 1983). This theoretical framework laid the foundation for Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence, which refers to a native speaker's inherent ability to produce and understand well-formed sentences within their language (Thornbury 2006: 37).

Chomsky's theory posits that every native speaker "has mastered and internalized a generative grammar" (1965: 8), which enables them to generate and comprehend sentences they have never encountered before and allow speakers to distinguish between grammatically correct and incorrect sentences, even if they have not been explicitly taught these rules. What is important, Chomsky (1965) differentiates between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. While linguistic competence pertains to an ideal speaker-listener's internalized knowledge of the linguistic system – encompassing grammar, syntax, and phonology – linguistic performance deals with the actual use of language in real-life situations (Chomsky 1965; Canale and Swain 1980). According to Chomsky (1965: 4), performance is influenced by various factors including native speakers' competence. Therefore, he contends that the aim of linguistic theory should be to elucidate the mental processes that underpin language use. Consequently, Chomsky believes that linguistics should focus on competence rather than performance (Barman 2014). Summarizing, within Chomsky's framework, a learner's success would be reflected in their ability to distinguish between grammatically correct and incorrect sentences and to generate novel sentences that are structurally sound.

The introduction of linguistic competence has sparked significant debate and development in the field of linguistics. It emphasized the mental processes underlying language use and argued for a focus on these processes rather than solely on observable language performance (Barman 2014). However, Chomsky's concept of linguistic competence has not been without criticism. Its narrow focus and limited scope led to the development of the theory of communicative competence by Dell Hymes. Hymes' (1972) approach is based on the functions of language, a framework first introduced by Roman Jakobson in 1958. This perspective emphasizes not only linguistic competence but also the speaker's ability to use language appropriately in various contexts, considering pragmatic, socio-cultural, and stylistic factors (Kurtes 2012: 43). Hymes (1972) expanded on the notion of communicative competence, pointing out the limitations of the competence-performance distinction in Generative Grammar. Chomsky's theory (1965)

primarily addresses grammaticality and overlooks the importance of appropriateness. As he states:

> There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. Just as rules of syntax can control aspects of phonology, and just as rules of semantics perhaps control aspects of syntax, so rules of speech acts enter as a controlling factor for linguistic form as a whole. (Hymes 1972: 278)

Therefore, Hymes introduces the idea of communicative competence, which pertains to "speaking as a whole" (1971: 16) and covers not just grammatical knowledge but also pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills (Lehmann 2007: 14). He argued for a more comprehensive understanding of competence, incorporating its complexity. Hymes (1971) proposed that linguistic theory should be combined with theories of communication and culture to adequately address these broader dimensions. More precisely, this approach strongly supports the idea that achieving fluency in vocabulary and grammar alone is insufficient for language learning success. It is essential to also understand the pragmatic and sociocultural rules that underlie effective communication. Thus, a truly competent foreign language speaker will not only demonstrate precise use of vocabulary and grammar but will also understand and apply the contextual appropriateness of their utterances (Kurtes 2012: 43). In terms of success perception, communicative competence therefore assumes that effective communication requires both linguistic accuracy and the ability to use language appropriately in various social and cultural contexts. This concept has been widely accepted in language teaching literature and has been reassessed and redefined in numerous publications One of the most notable frameworks was introduced by Canale and Swain in 1980. They described communicative competence as comprising four key, interconnected components (Canale and Swain 1980; Lehmann 2007; Kurtes 2012):

1. Grammatical competence: This involves the mastery of the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical-semantic aspects of a language.
2. Sociolinguistic competence: This refers to the knowledge of how to use language appropriately according to social context and the rules governing discourse, ensuring coherence and cohesion in both spoken and written forms.
3. Strategic competence: This includes the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies to overcome gaps in knowledge or fluency, facilitating effective communication.

Canale and Swain's (1990) approach highlights the significance of their theoretical model on four key areas of foreign language education: syllabus design, teaching methodology,

teacher training, and materials development (Kurtes 2012: 44). Regarding syllabus design, they argue that "a functionally organised communicative approach for all stages of second language learning" (Canale and Swain 1980: 32) is the most effective, as it centers around the practical and visible goal of language study, which is communication.

Alongside linguistic competence and communicative competence, there are other terms related to success in language acquisition. However, the focus of this discussion will be on the evolving perception of success itself, influenced by shifting paradigms in language teaching. It is important to note, that the concept of success in the literature of L2 learning arises quite regularly, as a result of the character of the discipline itself. However, due to the disparity between language pedagogy approaches in earlier years and those advocated by contemporary specialists, little research has been done regarding the accountability of language learners for their achievements or setbacks within language acquisition (Williams et al. 2004).

Traditionally, success in second language learning has been viewed through the lens of pedagogical practices, particularly in teacher-oriented approaches. In this context, success was often perceived as achieving initially established objectives, typically assessed through internal or external tests such as proficiency exams or achievement tests. These evaluations aim to test students' linguistic and communicative abilities across various skills, including grammar and pronunciation (Lankiewicz 2024). In the mid-20th century, researchers perceived language as a lexical-grammatical system, and thus, when talking about success, they focused mainly on the aspects of language data processing. The Grammar–Translation Method, originated from the classical teaching of Latin and Greek, enabled students to comprehend and translate literary works written in the original language (Zhou and Niu 2015). In this method, success was determined by students attaining a reading proficiency that enabled them to engage with literature in the target language (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 3). Later on, researchers identified the limitations of the Grammar-Translation Method and advocated for a more dynamic approach that emphasized teaching the language itself, using the target language, and fostering both oral and written communication. As a consequence, the Direct Method emerged which was supposed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning outcomes by practicing speaking skills directly without using the students' mother tongue (Panggabean 2018). By implication, in the Direct Method, success was characterized by learners' capability to engage in spoken interaction, comprehend, and provide responses in the target language

without the need for translation or the use of their native tongue. During the 1940s, a method of foreign language learning and teaching known as the Audiolingual Method was developed, with a similar emphasis on direct instruction (Bartle 1962). This approach was rooted in behavioral theory, which posited that learning occurred by forming habits through repeated correct behaviors. The primary objective of this method was to achieve fluency in speaking and enhance listening comprehension by employing audiolingual techniques. Students would engage in activities such as listening to recordings of words and dialogues and then replicating them, with a particular focus on intonation, accents, and pronunciation. This process allowed students to establish connections between the sounds and their meanings, which, in turn, aided in the memorization and reinforcement of specific language structures (Hall 2011; Goldstein 2014). Following the Audiolingual Method, a noteworthy transition in language teaching methodologies occurred with the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Over time, language instruction began to incorporate socio-cultural factors and abandoned the notion of language as a mere code, recognizing it rather as a semiotic system for communication in which users play an active role (Lankiewicz 2018). This fundamental change in perspective ultimately led to the development of the widely acclaimed CLT approach, which is considered effective for both teaching and learning (Santos 2020). The fundamental idea behind the CLT approach is for learners to acquire and apply the language actively rather than just focusing on theoretical knowledge of the language (Savignon 1987; Savignon 2002). In essence, it aims to equip students with the ability to effectively use the communication skills of the target language. The focus on communicative competence granted native speakers an influential position, and learners were required to imitate them in various aspects of language proficiency, including culture, pronunciation, and communication skills (Tan et al. 2020). Nonetheless, Kramsch (1997) clarified that the notion of a single, standard native speaker is inaccurate and unjustified, as native speakers themselves do not strictly conform to the norms of a standard language, incorporating regional and class-associated characteristics into their speech. What is more, during the 1970s, the intrinsic factors that determine the effectiveness and efficiency of foreign language learning, i.e. those that depend on the learner, started to be of interest.

Having explored the progression of language teaching methodologies it becomes evident that language teaching has continually adapted to the evolving needs of learners. Nowadays, one of the most prominent adaptations is the shift towards the autonomous

approach to language learning and teaching, which emphasizes greater learner independence (Najeeb 2013) and self-directed learning (Schweder and Raufelder 2022). This change in the educational paradigm towards autonomization of the language learning process, has significantly contributed to a reevaluation of how success in language learning is perceived, highlighting its inherently problematic nature. Unlike reactive autonomy, which focuses on achieving predefined institutional goals, proactive autonomy introduces variability and complexity into how success is defined and assessed (Lankiewicz 2024). In proactive autonomy, students assume control over setting goals, selecting methods and materials, and evaluating progress (Benson 2001: 48). This can lead to a subjective evaluation process where success is not universally measurable but rather depends on individual perspectives and needs. This subjectivity can undermine traditional measures like proficiency tests, as they may not align with the diverse expectations and motivations of autonomous learners (Lankiewicz 2024). Thus, proactive autonomy underscores the challenges of defining and measuring success.

Despite its complexity, establishing a clear understanding of what constitutes success in contemporary foreign language learning is essential. Although this section does not provide a comprehensive definition, it outlines the aspects of success as understood by the author of the present paper for the purposes of theoretical reflection and later empirical research, highlighting the various factors that influence its conceptualization and measurement. The dictionary definition of success is "the achieving of desired results, or someone or something that achieves positive results" (Cambridge University Press n.d.). This broad definition emphasizes success as the attainment of an individual's hopes and desires. In the field of foreign language acquisition, researchers acknowledge a lack of comprehensive studies on understanding success in language learning (Williams et al. 2004). Existing research primarily focuses on various aspects related to success, such as motivation, assessment criteria, the significance of success as a core value or the personality traits associated with successful learners (Karabanova and Bukhalenkova 2016). However, a unified definition of success remains elusive.

Principally, success in learning a foreign language should be regarded as its mastery. However, the extent of this mastery can be open to various interpretations (Lankiewicz 2018: 101). As much as the author of the present paper understands success, it is the sense of fulfillment and satisfaction that learners experience when they achieve their language goals or make even small progress. It is the feeling of having reached the desired outcome. Consequently, defining learning success proves challenging because it

varies greatly among individuals. Each learner has distinct goals, levels of proficiency, specific needs and reasons for learning a foreign language. Therefore, success can be seen as the personal satisfaction derived from accomplishments made, or the satisfaction with the path they are on. Success in foreign language learning goes beyond linguistic (Chomsky 1965) or communicative competence (Hymes 1971), which involves knowing the rules of the language and using it appropriately in various social contexts (Lehmann 2007; Kurtes 2012). The modern understanding of success acknowledges a broader and more personalized perspective that reflects each learner's unique needs and objective.

In the literature of foreign language learning and teaching it is widely acknowledged that the conceptualization of success is highly complex. It depends significantly on subjective evaluation parameters, which are individual and evolve over time. As highlighted by Widła (2014) and Lankiewicz (2018), success is a gradual process without a clear turning point. They also note, that learners often struggle to assess their own progress, and their perception of success is not static but fluctuates with their evolving goals and aspirations. Essentially, the measure of success is based largely on the current hierarchy of one' s values, self-set objectives, and the experiences encountered along the way. Since each learner holds unique expectations of language mastery, influenced by varying needs and experiences, defining and measuring success remains a complex challenge (Widła 2014, Lankiewicz 2018; Lankiewicz 2024; Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı 2019).

2.2. Language autonomy and success

In the field of foreign language learning and teaching, the interconnectedness of autonomy and success presents a compelling area worthy of exploration. Understanding the interplay between these elements is crucial for both educators and learners as it encourages a more personalized approach to language acquisition. Just like acquiring any skill, successful language learning involves going beyond the prescribed curriculum and actively engaging with learning materials and resources. Students must recognize that their progress is largely shaped by their own efforts and dedication, while the teacher's role is to foster and empower autonomous behavior. Recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for success (Pawlak 2011), autonomy clearly emerges as a foundation in the achievement of academic excellence (Marsevani 2021: 54).

Numerous research findings (Littlewood 1999; Dafei 2007; Apple 2011; Lowe 2009; Ng et al. 2011; Ezzi 2021) indicate a positive association between learner autonomy and academic performance. Notably, learner autonomy plays a crucial role in three key aspects of language learning (Ng et al. 2011). Firstly, it enhances information retention, as actively engaged students are more likely to remember and internalize the information they encounter (Han 2021). Secondly, autonomy empowers students to regulate their independent learning by setting goals, planning study schedules, and monitoring progress, resulting in more efficient and productive learning experiences (Klimas 2017). Lastly, learner autonomy fosters a lifelong learning mindset (Oates 2019), encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning process and continue pursuing language learning even beyond formal education. This commitment to lifelong learning allows individuals to continuously develop and refine their language skills and knowledge throughout their lives.

Research also indicates that social interaction is a fundamental factor affecting language learning, with learners' success and engagement significantly influenced by everyday actions and interactions inside and outside the classroom (Hrastinski 2008; Derakhshan 2021). Furthermore, Little (2003) introduces the concept of "social autonomy" within the learning environment, which emphasizes a student's ability to effectively collaborate and interact with others in the language learning context. Mastering effective communication in a foreign language goes beyond vocabulary and grammar knowledge; it requires understanding cultural nuances, adapting language use to various communication situations, and using appropriate language in different social contexts. In line with this, Ryan and Deci (2016) argue that social engagement positively impacts individuals' well-being and overall sense of empowerment. When individuals participate in diverse social activities, they experience a sense of relaxation and a stronger connection to their community. As Han (2021) highlights, this social engagement also appears to foster greater autonomy and control across various aspects of their lives. Therefore, developing social autonomy in language learning empowers students to take greater control over their learning process. Additionally, embracing a more comprehensive approach to language acquisition can significantly enhance their academic success.

While promoting autonomy undoubtedly enhances effective learning, it also plays a crucial role in shaping how each student perceives success in language learning. Drawing on Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy in learning, autonomous learners are

characterized by their ability to take charge of their learning process. This includes assuming responsibility for setting learning goals, choosing effective learning methods, and consistently assessing their own progress. Thus, it can be deduced that when learners have clear objectives, they tend to perceive themselves as successful upon achieving them. Through the use of suitable strategies, they improve their learning abilities, again leading to a sense of accomplishment (Marsevani, 2021: 54). Finally, engaging in self-evaluation helps autonomous learners to recognize their progress and experience satisfaction and success as a result. However, it is essential to recognize that success remains highly subjective and varies widely among individual learners, each with their own distinct criteria. Some prioritize effective communication in social situations, while others concentrate on mastering cultural subtleties or specific language competencies. For some, success might be derived from effortlessly understanding content, whereas for others, it may depend on mastering grammar perfectly. Highlighting the significance of this personalized approach, learners gain the flexibility to adapt their learning practices to suit their unique needs and preferences, resulting in a more engaging and effective learning experience (Benson and Huang 2008; Dam and Legenhausen 2010).

To summarize, as the concept of success in language learning remains multifaceted and context-dependent, fostering autonomy has become an important strategy to empower students to take control of their learning journeys (Han 2021). By encouraging students to actively participate in the language learning process, teachers can unlock their full language potential and create a more rewarding and meaningful language learning experience (Benson 2010; Palfreyman and Benson 2019; Pawlak 2022). Ultimately, learners with a strong sense of autonomy may define success in more individualized and self-directed ways, highlighting the profound impact of autonomy on personal perception of success in language learning.

Above all, however, it is important to remember that autonomy in language learning requires a highly individualized understanding of success, as each student's perception of success is unique and subjective (Widła 2014; Lankiewicz 2018). Therefore, promoting a learner-centered approach that values and supports individual autonomy (Almusharraf 2020) requires an approach tailored to address their diverse needs and preferences (Lin and Reinders 2019). Alongside a more learner-centered pedagogy, it is crucial to consider the diverse types of learners and their positioning within different interaction patterns or social and cultural contexts. Consequently, the concept of success in language learning is interpreted as a perceptual rather than an objective measure of someone's language

competence (Lankiewicz 2024). Similarly, it is worth noting that a second language is not successfully learned by everyone, regardless of seemingly strong external motivation and social pressure (Santana et al. 2017). Descriptive analysis of the target language and careful preparation of learning materials cannot guarantee successful mastery of a second language. There are certain factors within the learner that also need to be taken into consideration when trying to predict learning outcomes, outlined in the following section.

2.3. Personal perception of success

Success in a school setting can be understood in two ways: it can rely on the efforts of those who organize and supervise the educational process, and on the learner themselves. From the organizers' perspective, success is defined by the achievement of the pedagogical goals outlined in the course program, which includes reaching the desired level of language skills as determined by communicative competence. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) aids in this process by translating theoretical concepts of communicative competence into practical applications. It standardizes levels and requirements across four fundamental language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, providing guidance for both teachers and learners (Lankiewicz 2018). The CEFR offers a detailed framework for language proficiency and establishes Common Reference Levels (A1 to C2) through illustrative descriptor scales. It also provides options for curriculum design that support plurilingual and intercultural education. Since its introduction in 2001, the CEFR, along with the European Language Portfolio (ELP) for learners, has been a key element of the Council of Europe's educational programs (Council of Europe 2020: 11).

The second interpretation of success in a school setting, which is at the same time central to the considerations of the present paper, centers on the learner's perspective. This personal definition of success is inherently interconnected, shaped by the various discourses surrounding the process of learning a foreign language (Lankiewicz 2018). It means that learner's understanding of success is not formed in isolation but is affected by various factors, be it social interactions, cultural norms or educational expectations. Lankiewicz (2018: 106) identifies key elements that shape the perception of success, including individual factors such as personality traits (discussed later in section 2.3.2.), metalinguistic knowledge as part of language awareness, and critical language awareness

(Fairclough 1992). All in all, conscious reflection on the nature of language (Roehr 2007), along with one's experiences and personal characteristics (Smuk 2016), shapes how learners establish their learning goals and the approaches they take to achieve them (Lankiewicz 2015), thereby influencing their personal perception of success.

Furthermore, to prevent overstated perceptions of one's achievements due to high self-esteem, language learners need to cultivate extensive self-awareness, which includes the ability to critically assess their own progress (see Smuk 2014: 25). At this point, it is also important to underscore the impact of self-evaluation on shaping individuals' perceptions of success in language learning. It empowers learners to assess their own progress and proficiency accurately, thus fostering a deeper sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning process. According to Jamrus and Razali (2019: 64-66), engaging in self-assessment not only motivates learners but also encourages them to reflect critically on their learning experiences and achievements in English language acquisition. This reflective practice promotes the development of essential skills such as critical thinking and metacognition, which are instrumental in setting and achieving learning goals effectively and is in line with autonomisation of learning process. Moreover, self-assessment is rooted in the concept of self-regulated learning, as described by Zimmerman (1990), which emphasizes learners' use of strategies to regulate their cognitive processes and enhance their motivation. By actively engaging in self-evaluation, learners can identify areas for improvement and take proactive measures to advance their language proficiency. Ultimately, fostering a culture of self-assessment in language education empowers students to become more autonomous learners, enabling them to sustain their motivation and commitment towards achieving success in language acquisition both within and beyond formal educational settings (Brown 2007).

Furthermore, a crucial aspect to consider in the context of self-assessment is the concept of self-efficacy, which is recognized as a key determinant in how individuals subjectively evaluate their success in acquiring a foreign language. Self-efficacy encompasses "one's beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions about his/her personal abilities and capabilities" (Bandura 1994: 72), while in the context of language education it refers to the extent to which students hold positive perceptions of their own ability and capacity to acquire a new language (Wang et al, 2022), as well as their belief in their competence (Han and Wang 2021). Tilfarlioglu and Cinkara (2009) contend that self-efficacy beliefs have an impact on cognitive, motivational, affective, and decision-making processes, all of which contribute to overall human functioning. Klassen and Usher (2010) posit that

learners who possess a strong belief in their academic abilities are able to overcome challenges and persevere in the learning process despite difficulties and obstacles. Emphasizing the significance of self-efficacy beliefs, Galyon et al. (2012) highlight that learners' self-efficacy motivates them to exert additional effort in completing their academic tasks and do their best (Wang et al. 2022), which, in turn, empowers learners to attain greater academic success (Caprara et al. 2011; Hwang et al. 2016). Overall, in the realm of foreign language learning, self-efficacy plays a vital role in shaping individuals' subjective perception of success. Higher self-efficacy tends to be associated with a more favorable perception of one`s linguistic capabilities, resulting in heightened motivation and an increased likelihood of accomplishing success in language learning endeavors.

Finally, the terminological ambiguity surrounding the concept of success in language learning arises from its fluid nature, existing along a continuum rather than as a singular, definitive achievement. Success unfolds over time as intentions and desires are realized, often leading to a state of satisfaction that may not be enduring (Widła 2014: 11; Lankiewicz 2018: 100). Considering all the preceding points, it can be summarized that in the era of increasingly autonomous educational processes, success lacks an absolute definition and can only be assessed relative to individual goals and motivations. It is multifaceted and complex concept that is largely contingent upon an individual's present hierarchy of values, the goals they have personally established, and the experiential journey accompanying the fulfillment of these objectives. It unfolds along a continuum rather than being a singular achievement, marked by the realization of intentions and desires over time. This understanding underscores the subjective nature of success, which varies greatly among individuals based on their perceptions and the criteria they apply (Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı 2019). Furthermore, the impact of these factors will be explored in detail in the subsequent sections.

2.3.1. The challenge of Multilingualism

In today's globalized society, a growing number of individuals are pursuing foreign language acquisition, beginning at various stages of their lives, whether in childhood or later (Szczepaniak-Kozak et al. 2023: 55). English, in particular, holds a special importance in many countries where it is not the primary language. It stands out as the most widely taught foreign language in more than 100 countries (Crystal 1997; Rohmah 2005), with millions around the globe striving to achieve fluency in this international

lingua franca (Hossain 2024). Individuals from diverse backgrounds, ages, and experiences recognize its essential role in their personal, academic, and professional lives, among other areas. Besides English, an increasing number of people are learning various foreign languages, leading to a rise in individuals proficient in multiple languages. Consequently, societies can no longer be described as merely monolingual or bilingual; instead, they are increasingly characterized as multilingual or plurilingual. According to nN (2023: 98), multilingualism has become a prominent reality in various regions worldwide, influenced by globalization and changing demographics that have fostered multilingual societies (Gal and Osidak 2023). Rooted in pluralism theory, multilingualism and plurilingualism are significant and relatively recent developments, standing in contrast to monolingual and monocultural perspectives (Hoss and Cruz 2021).

To introduce the concepts of plurilingualism and multilingualism, it is essential to understand how the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages differentiates between the two (Council of Europe 2020). Multilingualism refers to the coexistence of multiple languages within a society or an individual. In contrast, plurilingualism describes the dynamic and evolving linguistic repertoire of a person. According to the CEFR, plurilingualism is characterized by an uneven and changing competence, where an individual's proficiency in one language or variety may differ significantly from their proficiency in another. However, the key idea is that plurilingual individuals possess a single, interconnected linguistic repertoire. They integrate this repertoire with their general competences and various strategies to perform tasks (CEFR 2001). In other words, multilingualism pertains to the knowledge of multiple languages or the embrace of linguistic diversity within a community. On the other hand, plurilingualism highlights that as individuals are exposed to various languages within their cultural environment, they cultivate a communicative competence that integrates and interconnects all their linguistic knowledge and experiences (Council of Europe 2001: 4; Ebrahimi 2023: 98). Both plurilingualism and multilingualism involve the use of multiple languages in social contexts. However, as stated by Chabert (2018), plurilingualism extends beyond multilingualism by encompassing personal agency, identity, and performance in addition to language diversity. According to the Council of Europe (2001), multilingualism pertains to the presence of multiple languages in a geographical area, while plurilingualism refers to an individual's proficiency in multiple languages.

Multilingualism, the subject of this section, originates from two Latin words: "multi", meaning many, and "lingua", meaning language (Bussmann 1996: 776).

Therefore, multilingualism is referred to the capability of a speaker to communicate proficiently in multiple languages. Correspondingly, individuals who can understand or speak two or more languages fluently, and can effortlessly switch between them, are labeled as multilinguals (Szczepaniak-Kozak et al. 2023: 57). In today's globalized world, multilingualism is crucial not only for personal development but also as integral components of educational policy (King 2018: 5). David Crystal (2006) argues that multilingualism should be embraced as the norm, emphasizing its benefits over monolingualism, which he views as a limitation rather than a strength. As he states, "speaking two or more languages is the natural way of life for three-quarters of the human race" (Crystal 2006: 409). This viewpoint underscores the necessity of promoting multilingualism to enhance intercultural understanding and cognitive flexibility in individuals.

There are manifold consequences of multilingualism. The linguistic outcomes of multilingualism include, among other things, the emergence and expansion of a lingua franca, which typically arises from the necessity for intergroup communication (Okal 2014: 225). English can unequivocally be labeled as a global language more than ever before (Crystal 1997; 2003; Rohmah 2005; Rao 2019; McKay and Brown 2016; Hossain 2024). In the literature, numerous terms are used to describe this phenomenon, with English as in international Language (EIL) being a common designation. However, other terms are also employed interchangeably with EIL, such as English as a lingua franca: (e.g. Gnutzmann 2000) English as a global language (e.g. Crystal 1997) English as a world language (e.g. Mair 2003) English as a medium of intercultural communication (e.g. Meierkord 1996) or World English (BruttGriffler 2002) as summarized by Seidlhofer (2003). Regardless of the nomenclature, these terms share the recognition that language is no longer strictly associated with its native speakers or its place of origin. Instead, whether spoken by native speakers or by those who have learned it as a foreign language, English is subject to different attitudes, expectations, and norms (Rohmah 2005). The global expansion of the English language has reshaped its role, shifting from being a homogeneous and standardized language mainly spoken by a select group of influential countries to becoming an international language or lingua franca utilized by a broad and diverse array of speakers worldwide (Llurda 2004; Galloway and Rose 2017; Tan et al. 2020). Numerous studies (Llurda 2017; Marlina 2018; Schuttz 2019) have noticed that English no longer exclusively pertains to native-speaking communities, given that the population of non-native English speakers surpasses that of native speakers (Tan

et al. 2020). Consequently, language education has been influenced, and the main objective for language learners has shifted. Attaining a native-like accent and interacting solely with native speakers is no longer the primary goal for achieving proficiency in English. The rise of English as an International Language has altered learners' linguistic needs and objectives (Tan et al. 2020).

With these shifts in learners' perspectives, there is a need to adapt teaching practices accordingly. First of all, English does not belong to a specific community, but is used by speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Kubota and Ward 2000; Seidlhofer 2011). Given this diversity, educators may face a myriad of challenges in their efforts to effectively teach English. Nevertheless, modern teachers can adopt he right approach to make most preferable conditions for students. In line with culturally responsive teaching, it is crucial to prioritize the recognition of learners' cultural identities to foster inclusive learning environments. This stands as an essential component that supports learners' overall academic success (Hossain 2024). In her work (2003), Seidlhofer advocates abandoning the pursuit of "perfect" communication through native-like proficiency, instead focusing on practical skills and strategies essential for effective communication in EIL contexts. These include utilizing communication strategies, accommodating interlocutors' linguistic repertoires, and drawing on various cues for effective interaction. Exposure to diverse varieties of English and a multilingual approach are seen as beneficial for acquiring these communicative abilities. Furthermore, the author suggests reevaluating the necessity of lengthy English instruction, proposing the incorporation of language awareness education, which includes EIL instruction as one component. This approach prioritizes teaching language skills over specific languages, aligning with the evolving nature of global communication.

In the context of multilingualism, learners' perception of success in foreign language learning has evolved significantly. Multilingualism typically refers to the ability "to use" multiple languages to varying degrees (McArthur 1992: 673) or integrate this skill into everyday life (Franceschini 2009: 33). Beyond merely mastering languages, the emphasis lies in integrating and applying linguistic knowledge across diverse language contexts. Contemporary research suggests that learning additional languages builds upon existing linguistic knowledge, highlighting the effectiveness of integrating new knowledge with prior understanding (Hufeisen 2003: 25). Thus, the goal of acquiring multiple languages is not only proficiency but also effective learning strategies, recognizing the variability in language proficiency and usage across different contexts (Boratyńska-Sumara 2015).

In exploring multilingualism, Vivian Cook's concept of multi-competence (1991; 2016) and the idea of translanguaging are seen as foundational to theories of multilingualism (Lankiewicz 2023a: 145), as both emphasize the dynamic and interconnected use of various languages. Cook (2002) notes that "L2 users are fundamentally different from L1 users and should be treated in their own right," adding that they "develop a complex multi-competence, which is qualitatively different from the competence of monolingual speakers" (cited in Todeva and Cenoz 2009: 3). Scott (2010: 17) further describes multi-competence as "a dynamic system that accounts for the natural ebb and flow of a person's native language as well as other languages in various stages of development". Biedroń (2015: 290) summarizes that "multicompetence involves the whole mind of the speaker and assumes that a multilingual is a different person from a monolingual". As she elaborates, the idea of multicompetence rests on the assertion that an L2 user's understanding of a second language differs from that of a native speaker. L2 users function differently from monolingual language users in many respects. Their comprehension of both their first and second languages is distinct, they possess different metalinguistic awareness, and they employ different cognitive processes. The minds of L2 users are configured differently, with slightly different neural network connections in the brain compared to monolinguals (Biedroń 2015: 290). Multi-competent second language learners engage in reflective thinking about language learning and usage. Instead of focusing solely on achieving native-like proficiency, they prioritize understanding how to use a second language effectively. For these learners, success is not just about linguistic mastery but also involves gaining a deeper understanding of their role and contributions within a global, multicultural society (Scott 2015: 448). Drawing from Cook (2015), Scott (2015: 457) describes multi-competence as a mindset that deeply influences every aspect of the mind, integrating cognition, emotions, and motivation. This integration leads multi-competent learners to engage in reflective practices to evaluate their language learning progress, viewing success as an ongoing process of individual development and cultural understanding. In other words, the theory of multicompetence posits that the multilingual brain operates differently from the monolingual brain, leading multilingual individuals to perceive language and language learning in distinct ways. Unlike their monolingual counterparts, multilingual students do not heavily depend on teacher competence or external evaluations like standardized tests. They also reject the native speaker standard as the ultimate goal. Instead, they acknowledge the pluricentric nature of the English language, viewing it as a collective phenomenon. Therefore, their

sense of success is based on personal criteria, aligned with their own expectations and capabilities.

Translanguaging, on the other hand, represents a novel approach to language study, emphasizing poststructural "mobility, mixing and political dynamics, and historical embedding" (Bloomaert and Rampton 2011: 3). The CEFR defines it as "an action undertaken by plurilingual persons, where more than one language may be involved" (Council of Europe 2018: 28). This approach replaces the traditional notion of language with languaging, referring to the continuous use of linguistic resources and the personal, creative application of linguistic repertoires in meaning-making processes (Lankiewicz 2020). García and Leiva (2014: 204) argue that "language is an ongoing process that only exists as languaging". Translingualism suggests that plurilingual individuals do not have separate language systems but rather one integrated faculty from which they draw (García and Li 2014). Consequently, any language exchange between individuals from different backgrounds generates new meanings and new uses of linguistic repertoires. Canagarajah (2013: 6) states that "communication transcends individual languages" and involves "diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances".

In this framework, plurilingual individuals use hybrid linguistic repertoires that encompass "the full range of linguistic performances of multilingual language users" (Li 2011: 1223), including code-switching, mixing, translation, and transliteration (Androutsopoulos 2013: 186). Translanguaging illustrates a natural continuum of human linguistic activity, emphasizing that people use linguistic resources in personal ways during communication, either conforming to or challenging conventions (Lankiewicz 2023a: 146). García (2009: 45) describes translanguaging as "the constant, active invention of new realities through language". In essence, plurilinguals create hybrid forms by blending language codes during meaning-making processes, drawing on their multicompetence.

Accordingly, the perception of success among multilingual learners diverges significantly from that of monolinguals. Multilingual speakers define success not by achieving native-like proficiency in each new language, but by their ability to switch between languages or dialects, express themselves in one language while understanding another, and adeptly apply their multilingual repertoire to comprehend and interpret various texts (CEFR 2018: 28). Multilingual speakers also value their capability to recognize words from a shared international lexicon and to experiment creatively with alternative forms of expression. This pragmatic approach emphasizes adaptability and

cultural understanding over striving for native fluency, underscoring that effective communication and the ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts are paramount indicators of achievement (Todeva and Cenoz 2009: 3). Consequently, multilingual learners perceive success as the ability to use language in innovative, adaptive, and culturally sensitive ways, enriching their language learning experience with a personalized and meaningful approach. Multilingual learners do not compare themselves to native speakers (Boratyńska-Sumara 2015: 18); instead, they embrace their broader linguistic perspective and prioritize effective communication. This viewpoint resonates with the principles of English as a lingua franca, which prioritize facilitating mutual understanding over conforming to native-speaker norms.

Following this perspective on multilingual learners' perception of success, it is pertinent to explore how these principles align with English as a lingua franca. ELF represents a paradigm shift in global communication, where the emphasis is placed on facilitating understanding among speakers of different linguistic backgrounds rather than adhering strictly to native-speaker norms. Scholars like Deterding and Lewis (2019) argue that the necessity for a native-like pronunciation model is diminishing in international English classrooms. Kong and Kang (2020) further accentuate the diversity of English accents and pronunciations, highlighting the broad spectrum of linguistic variation present in English-speaking communities worldwide. Kaur (2014) observes that this diversity is manifested through the various accents attributed to English speakers globally. Jenkins (2000) reinforces this notion by explaining that as English serves as a lingua franca, speakers often transfer features from their first language into their English pronunciation. Finally, Widdowson (1994) emphasizes that English no longer exclusively belongs to native speakers but to all who use it, regardless of their linguistic background. Deterding

 (2010) asserts that while intelligibility remains paramount in ELF communication, there is a decreasing emphasis on closely mimicking traditional native-speaker accents. Instead, the focus is on achieving mutual understanding, with proficient ELF speakers demonstrating adaptability to their interlocutors' needs (Jenkins 2000). This approach celebrates the diversity of pronunciation styles, encouraging learners to maintain aspects of their own speech patterns while ensuring intelligibility. In line with this perspective, Kong and Kang (2020) emphasize that teaching and learning English should prioritize effective communication across diverse contexts. The impact of this recognition of diverse English accents and pronunciations on learners' perceptions of success is

substantial, as learners are encouraged to value their ability to communicate effectively rather than conform to a rigid standard of pronunciation (Kong and Kang 2020).

Building on the concept of ELF, Canagarajah (2007) introduces the notion of Lingua Franca English (LFE), which represents a more complex and dynamic understanding of English used in multilingual contexts. LFE acknowledges that speakers of English as an additional language now outnumber native speakers, leading to a form of English that overshadows traditional national dialects, such as British or American English, as well as nativized forms like Indian or Singaporean English. This variety of English is characterized by its widespread use and significance among millions of global speakers. LFE is unique in that it forms a virtual speech community. The speakers of LFE are not confined to a single geographical area but are dispersed globally, each inhabiting and practicing other languages and cultures in their immediate localities. Despite this linguistic and cultural heterogeneity, LFE speakers recognize English as a shared resource and activate a mutually understood set of attitudes, forms, and conventions to ensure successful communication. This aligns with House's (2003) concept of "communities of imagination" (cited in Canagarajah 2007: 925), where LFE speakers engage in a shared linguistic practice that transcends physical boundaries.

Because of the diversity at the heart of this communicative medium, LFE is intersubjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction. As described by Canagarajah, the form of this English is negotiated by each set of speakers for their purposes. The speakers are able to monitor each other's language proficiency to determine mutually the appropriate grammar, phonology, lexical range, and pragmatic conventions that would ensure intelligibility. Therefore, it is challenging to define this language in advance. It cannot be fully understood or described outside the specific interactions and the particular speakers involved in each communicative context. As Meierkord (2004: 129) noted, LFE "emerges out of and through interaction" and, for that reason, "it might well be that ELF never achieves a stable or even standardized form" (cited in Canagarajah 2007: 926). In this way, LFE is not a predefined system existing independently; rather, it is continuously created and redefined in each specific context of communication.

The variability of LFE means that the type of language used is actively negotiated by the participants, making something that might be inappropriate or unintelligible in one interaction completely understandable in another. This concept of form surpasses the traditional view of variation stemming from a common core of grammar or language

norms. As stated by Canagarajah (2007: 926), "variation is at the heart of this system, not secondary to a more primary common system of uniform norms". As Gramkow Anderson (1993: 108) explained, "there is no consistency in form that goes beyond the participant level, i.e., each combination of interactants seems to negotiate and govern their own variety of lingua franca use in terms of proficiency level, use of code-mixing, degree of pidginization, etc.".

The concept of LFE fundamentally changes how multilingual learners perceive success in language learning. In the context of LFE, learners perceive success not by adhering to the norms of prestige varieties such as British or American English, but by effectively constructing and navigating their own norms. They prioritize the ability to communicate effectively in diverse multilingual settings. Measuring the proficiency of LFE speakers against Anglo-American standards is meaningless, as LFE exists independently of these traditional norms (Canagarajah (2007: 925). Success in LFE is defined by a broad and complex range of skills and competencies. Beyond grammatical accuracy, which is only one aspect of linguistic competence, learners value language awareness, strategic competence, and pragmatic competence. Language awareness enables speakers to make quick inferences about the norms and conventions of their multilingual interlocutors. Strategic competence involves effectively negotiating interpersonal relationships, while pragmatic competence focuses on adopting communication conventions that are suitable for the interlocutor, purpose, and context of the interaction (Canagarajah 2007: 928).

LFE redefines proficiency to include the ability to communicate effectively in diverse multilingual contexts. For learners, success is not about achieving native-like accuracy but about the ability to navigate different interactions, adapt language use to various contexts, and make themselves understood by interlocutors from diverse backgrounds (Canagarajah 2007: 928). This redefinition of success is empowering for multilingual learners. It allows them to view their entire linguistic repertoire as a valuable resource, drawing on their knowledge of multiple languages to facilitate communication. In summary, Lingua Franca English redefines success in language learning for multilingual learners. It shifts the focus from native-like accuracy to effective communication, adaptability, and critical awareness, highlighting the linguistic and cultural diversity of its speakers. As described by Canagarajah (2007), this new perspective on proficiency and success in LFE empowers learners, validates their

multilingual identities, and emphasizes the importance of intercultural communication skills and linguistic creativity.

To clarify, this paper mainly focuses on English, given its global importance and its role as the primary foreign language for most students. As a result, the reflection sessions and research instruments were conducted and provided in English. During these sessions, students were encouraged to concentrate on discussing various aspects of the English language. Nevertheless, due to the multilingual nature of the group, examples from German, Italian, or Spanish were occasionally mentioned. Despite this, English remained the primary focus. Although the main emphasis is on understanding success in learning English, the findings can also be relevant to teaching other foreign languages.

2.3.2. Individual factors influencing success in language learning

There is a considerable body of empirical research in the literature on the impact of individual differences (ID) on second language acquisition (Biedroń and Pawlak 2016: 395). Dörnyei (2005: 2) emphasizes their importance, noting that IDs are "the most consistent predictors of L2 learning success". Success in learning a foreign language is affected by various factors, including, but not limited to, the teacher's competence and dedication, the techniques and materials used, and the level of exposure to the language outside the classroom. However, individual differences among learners are undeniably critical determinants of language learning outcomes (Pawlak 2019: 5). These differences include a wide array of characteristics like age, language aptitude, motivation, personality traits, learning styles, strategies (Pawlak 2015), alongside additional factors detailed in the subsequent sections. Although IDs are acknowledged as influential variables impacting both the process and outcomes of second language learning, , they contribute to foreign language learning outcomes to varying degrees (Biedroń and Pawlak 2016: 397). Regardless of the context in which one attempts to master a foreign language, the way we learn and the proficiency level we achieve are largely dependent on individual differences (Pawlak 2015).

Research into individual differences in learners has a rich history in Applied Linguistics, dating back to the 1970s, driven by the desire to identify effective language learners and distinguish them from less successful peers. This prominent focus in SLA

research has evolved over subsequent decades, incorporating new approaches and methodologies (Dorneyi 2005; Rokita-Jaśków 2020).

Today, there is renewed interest in ID research, partly due to a new perspective that emphasizes the interaction between intra-learner variables and the social contexts in which learners operate—a principle aligned with Complex Dynamic Systems Theory in applied linguistics (Rokita-Jaśków 2020). As a result, IDs have been extensively studied in SLA, establishing this area as one of the most thoroughly investigated psychological aspects of language learning (Dörnyei 2015). Studies consistently highlight IDs as reliable predictors of success in learning a second language.

Based on SLA theory and research, Biedroń and Pawlak (2016: 397) outline key hypotheses regarding cognitive individual differences and personality traits:

1. IDs are complex and heterogeneous, consisting of multiple factors that interact intricately with each other and with the environment

2. Different factors play roles at various learning stages, skills, and subsystems, suggesting that learners can benefit from them to differing extents depending on instructional conditions, learning contexts, and specific tasks.

3. These factors are dynamic and constantly influencing each other, aligning with Dynamic Systems Theory where they are viewed as interconnected variables rather than isolated elements.

4. Success in foreign language learning is achievable for most individuals when they achieve adequate communicative proficiency, driven by high motivation and access to supportive learning environments. Recent research underscores the effectiveness of language learning strategies and self-motivation techniques in enhancing language acquisition, even beyond critical periods, regardless of their origin or recommendation source.

Dörnyei (2015: 2) defines individual differences as "characteristics or traits in which individuals may be shown to differ from each other". He also adds, that traditional studies typically focus on fewer than a dozen factors related to IDs (Dörneyi 2015). Despite the seemingly straightforward definition, recent research, particularly concerning motivation and willingness to communicate, has shown that these factors are highly complex and of dynamic nature – fluctuating over time, classes, lessons, and specific instructional tasks (Pawlak 2017: 9). Moreover, according to Pawlak (2019: 6), individual factors can be

classified in diverse ways, none of which is ideal, as they are influenced by cognitive processing, emotional reactions, situational contexts, and interpersonal interactions.

Recognizing the significant impact of individual differences on students' academic achievements (Schmidt 2012; Dörnyei 2014), it is imperative to acknowledge that effective teaching must consider the unique attributes of learners (Ellis 2005). Thus, this section undertakes an examination of a diverse factors that go beyond conventional classroom pedagogy, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the complex mechanisms that support success in formal language instruction. According to Rokita-Jaśków (2021), diversity in learners stems from both internal factors like biological, cognitive, and affective predispositions, which are largely innate and moderately influenced by the environment, and external factors related to the various learning contexts. In simplest terms, internal and external factors refer to the elements that influence individuals from within and outside themselves.

2.3.2.1 Internal factors

Internal factors, which originate within the individual, include aspects such as motivation, attitude, personal learning practices and habits, among others (Brown 2007). These factors are unique to each learner and significantly influence their capacity to acquire a foreign language, with each factor interacting with the others. Although the list of such factors could be even more extensive, the author of this paper has chosen to concentrate on the ones most frequently mentioned in the literature.

The age of starting L2 instruction is a prominent internal factor that has been extensively researched in the context of language acquisition. Numerous studies underscore the significance of age as a critical biological factor influencing success in formal language learning (Andrews 2017; Spinner and Gass 2019; Rokita-Jaśków 2021). It is widely recognized that age not only affects the overall effectiveness of language learning but also shapes the development of other key variables, such as learning strategies or language aptitude (Rokita-Jaśków 2021). Many believe that only children can effectively acquire a second language, while adults are perceived to have diminished capabilities in this regard, often discouraging older individuals from beginning language learning. However, it is essential to critically examine whether this perspective is based on empirical evidence or influenced by biases.

The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), introduced by Wilder Penfield and later popularized by Eric Lenneberg, suggests that children have a limited timeframe during which they can achieve native-like proficiency in their first language, a concept extended to second language acquisition (Lenneberg 1967; DeKeyser and Larson-Hall 2005). This hypothesis asserts that if language exposure does not occur before puberty, full proficiency, especially in grammar and pronunciation, becomes unattainable. This idea is closely associated with brain lateralization, highlighting a critical developmental stage during which adolescents may lose the abstract thinking capabilities crucial for language acquisition (Cook and Singleton 2014). While originally focused on first language acquisition, the CPH has been applied to second language learning, suggesting that only children can achieve native or near-native proficiency in a second language (Han and Bao 2023; Hyltenstam 2020).

Each age group brings distinct strengths to the learning process, resulting in notable differences in language acquisition capabilities between younger and older individuals (Hyland and Hyland 2019; Szczepaniak-Kozak et al. 2023: 62). What stands out most about children is their remarkable ability to absorb sounds, structures, and intonation patterns effortlessly, resembling the way they acquire their mother tongue (Gimatdinova 2018). They thrive in natural learning environments, where they intuitively grasp grammatical structures without explicit instruction (DeKeyser 2012). Even in formal educational settings, children demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to phonological aspects and eagerly mimic native speakers (Pinter 2017; Rizki 2016). Their curiosity and fearlessness in making mistakes create an environment conducive to exploration and learning (Gimatdinova 2018; Rizki 2016). Conversely, adults benefit from previous learning experiences, determination, and well-defined objectives, enhancing their ability to concentrate over extended periods (Cohen 2010). Older learners exhibit quicker progress in initial stages due to analytical skills and enhanced vocabulary retention (Ortega 2009; Cook and Singleton 2014). They adeptly apply explicit grammatical rules and leverage pragmatic skills from their first language, enabling them to tackle complex tasks effectively (Saville-Troike 2005). Despite starting later in life, adults bring unique advantages to language learning and can achieve significant proficiency in a second language through strategic learning approaches and a deep understanding of language acquisition goals (Pinter 2017; Cook and Singleton 2014).

Concluding, age emerges as one of the explanatory factors for differences in SLA (Qiao 2024). Although the acquisition of a first language generally occurs in early

childhood, successful "second language acquisition can happen in childhood, early or late, as well as in adulthood" (Brown 2000: 57) and "attempting to learn the second language in adulthood, even mature adulthood, even old age, is certainly not bound to be a dismal failure" (Cook and Singleton 2014: 19). Nonetheless, there is a growing global emphasis on early foreign language education, particularly of English, driven by its perceived benefits in enhancing future career prospects and fostering children's emotional and cognitive development. This early language learning is increasingly seen as a parental investment in preparing children for a competitive global job market, providing ample time for mastering multiple languages (Rokita-Jaśków 2021).

Another crucial factor influencing success in foreign language learning is intelligence, cognitive ability often referred to as G factor (Spearman 1904). Intelligence impacts virtually all areas of life, including success in work, income, health, marriage, and education is no exception (Biedroń and Pawlak, 2016: 399). Despite its significant impact, intelligence lacks a universally accepted definition or theory, with even the g factor remaining "quite an enigma" (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015: 37). Intelligence is the factor most thoroughly examined in cognitive and genetic psychology and, yet it remains the least responsive to pedagogic intervention (Biedroń and Pawlak 2016: 398). Broadly, intelligence is defined as "the ability for complex thinking and reasoning" (Ceci 2001: 4), or as Ellis (2007: 649) puts it, "the general set of cognitive abilities involved in performing a wide range of learning tasks". A more contemporary definition by Plomin and Deary (2015: 99) describes it as follows: "Intelligence is at the pinnacle of the hierarchical model of cognitive abilities that includes a middle level of group factors, such as the cognitive domains of verbal and spatial abilities and memory, and a third level of specific tests and their associated narrow cognitive skills". Intelligence is mostly genetically derived and is crucial for the cognitive abilities essential in adult language learning (Pawlak 2019). It ranks on top of a hierarchy of cognitive abilities, including verbal and spatial abilities and memory (Plomin and Deary 2015). It is important to realize that intelligence largely determines other cognitive abilities, making its role in foreign language learning, especially for adults, difficult to overestimate (Pawlak 2019: 6).

Language aptitude, often linked to intelligence, is typically described as an inherent talent for acquiring a foreign language (Wen et al. 2017; Pawlak 2019), and represents another fundamental factor influencing success in language learning. Following a prolonged period of limited interest, recent years have seen a resurgence of enthusiasm

for FL aptitude research within the fields of educational psychology, SLA, and cognitive neuroscience (Wen et al. 2017).

Traditionally perceived as "an individual's initial state of readiness and capacity for learning a foreign language, and probable facility in doing so given the presence of motivation and opportunity" (Carroll 1981: 86), language aptitude was also widely referred to as an innate "gift for languages" (Rosenthal 1996: 59). Leaver et al. (2005: 56) characterize learning aptitude as "it consists of relatively stable factors within an individual that promote successful language learning". At the broadest level, as Robinson (2013: 57) points out, language aptitude refers to "the ability to successfully adapt to and profit from instructed, or naturalistic exposure to the L2". In other words, it pertains to a learner's readiness for language acquisition. Despite the different views towards aptitude, they collectively share the viewpoint that language learning aptitude pertains to individual traits that influence one's ease in acquiring languages. The exact nature of these traits, however, remains largely unresolved (Hinton 2014). Dörneyi and Ryan (2015: 38) emphasize that language aptitude is not merely an indicator of whether a person can learn a foreign language. Instead, it generally predicts the speed at which an individual will progress in learning, given "optimal conditions of motivation, opportunity to learn, and quality of instruction" (Carroll 1973: 6), except in extreme cases.

A significant milestone was the introduction of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) in 1959, which has become nearly synonymous with the concept of language aptitude itself (Wen et al. 2017). Over time, MLAT has been extensively utilized by governmental bodies, public servants, language educators, practitioners, and researchers (Wen 2021). The MLAT approach examines four elements of language aptitude that collectively establish and characterize language aptitude for its specific objectives. These components are outlined as follows:

> […] phonemic coding ability, the capacity to code sounds so that they can be retained for more than a few seconds; grammatical sensitivity, the capacity to identify the functions that words fulfil in sentences; inductive language learning ability, the capacity to take a corpus of material in a target language and make extrapolations (i.e.,generalizations) from that material; and associative memory, a capacity to form links between native and foreign language words (Skehan 2001: para. 2)

Numerous scholars have effectively employed the MLAT as an assessment instrument in line with Carroll's theory, but criticisms of the test are also not uncommon. Dörnyei and Shekan (2003) argue that the test's definition was created retrospectively to provide the test with a theoretical foundation. While the MLAT has led to new insights (Skehan 2002; Dörnyei 2010; Robinson 2012; Wen et al. 2019), contemporary assessments of second

language aptitude (Spolsky 1995; Wen et al. 2017) predominantly concentrate on conventional inquiries such as the aptitude`s capacity to predict language learning success, being modular or monolithic in nature or susceptible to experience (Chalmers et al. 2021).

As summarized by Biedroń and Pawlak (2016: 401), language aptitude is a significant variable encompassing various cognitive learner differences, explaining the largest proportion of variation in foreign language learning outcomes among individual differences. It is the strongest predictor of learning rate and high achievement in additional language acquisition. As a complex, multi-faceted factor, there is no single language aptitude but rather a range of aptitudes within cognitive IDs that function differently under various learning conditions.

The prevailing notion is that language aptitude accelerates and enhances language acquisition, leading to better learning outcomes (Lightbown and Spada 2000; Liu et al. 2022). Its capacity to foster an intuitive grasp of grammatical structures and retain these patterns refines language use (Li et al. 2019) and improves writing and communication skills. Additionally, specific dimensions such as phonological memory enhance pronunciation and intonation (Carroll 1962), boosting communication and comprehension. Ultimately, language aptitude equips individuals to effectively internalize diverse associations from input materials.

It is a common belief that learning a language comes more easily to some people than to others, resulting in higher levels of mastery (Pawlak 2019). Indeed, as Gardner and MacIntyre (1992: 215) noted, in the long run, language aptitude is likely the factor that best explains success in learning a foreign language. However, Qiao (2024) emphasizes that each learner may have unique strengths in certain cognitive skills relevant to processing information during language acquisition. This perspective challenges the notion of language aptitude as an inherent quality, a debate that persists (Singleton 2014). Recent consensus emphasizes the key role of working memory as a fundamental element of language aptitude (Wen 2016; Wen et al. 2017; Singleton 2017), suggesting that different cognitive abilities contribute to language learning success in various ways.

Alongside language aptitude, motivation is equally crucial in determining the final level of language proficiency and can compensate for various cognitive deficits (Pawlak 2019). As highlighted by Wen, Biedroń, and Shekan (2017: 4), empirical studies consistently demonstrate L2 motivation, aside from age, as the only individual difference factor that rivals language aptitude in predicting language learning success.

Motivation has garnered the most attention among individual differences in literature, with many linguists identifying it as the most influential factor in mastering a new language (Ellis 2008: 677; Gardner 1985, 2010; Brown 2010; Gass and Selinker 2008). It is commonly defined as the desire and effort to achieve goals, driven by underlying reasons and enthusiasm, and influenced by individual choices, social context, and cultural environment (Keller 1983; Oxford and Shearin 1994; Alizadeth 2016; Brown 2010). Dörnyei and Ryan (2015: 72) explain that motivation:

> provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long, often tedious learning process; indeed, all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent. Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula or good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement.

Moreover, Gardner and Lambert (1972) classified motivation into instrumental and integrative. The former is driven by external factors like academic or financial incentives (Ghamdi 2014), while integrative motivation is rooted in personal growth and cultural enrichment, reflecting an inherent fascination with language acquisition (Zareian and Jodaei 2015; Alizadeth 2016). Research shows both types contribute to success (Brown 2000), with integrative motivation sustaining long-term achievement and higher motivation levels (Cario-Pastor and Mestre 2014; Ellis 1998). However, the superiority of integrative motivation remains debated, as some studies challenge earlier findings by Gardner and Lambert (Lankiewicz 2014).

Motivation in second language learning is influenced by factors like learners' communicative needs and attitudes towards the language community (Qiao 2024). Moreover, it is deeply intertwined with identity and social dynamics, emphasizing the interaction between individual cognition and social context, as proposed by social cognitive theory (Lightbown and Spada 2000). Various theoretical frameworks such as attribution theory (Weiner 1972), self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1977), the L2 motivation self-system (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2009), and self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1985) have emerged to explore this relationship further.

Scholars consistently highlight motivation as crucial for learners' success (McMillan and Hearn 2008; Saeed and Zyngier 2012; Kaboody 2013). Regardless of their specific motives, motivated learners dedicate significant effort to achieve their language learning goals (Al-Otaibi 2004), resulting in higher proficiency (Al-Hazemi 2000). Finding joy in learning reinforces perseverance, which is essential for commitment and success in acquiring a language. Furthermore, when motivation is combined with autonomy, it

enhances learning effectiveness by enabling learners to navigate challenges and maintain high motivation levels (Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı 2019). This combination empowers learners to successfully pursue long-term language learning objectives, overcoming any shortcomings in their skills or learning environments (Gass and Selinker 2008; Nurhidayah 2020). Importantly, highly motivated students yet underprivileged students can often outperform academically gifted but less motivated peers (Gomleksiz 2001).

Shifting focus to other individual differences, learning and cognitive styles are often discussed as key internal factors in achieving success in foreign language education. There is some debate among researchers regarding whether learning style and cognitive style are the same, though it is generally acknowledged that cognitive styles are a crucial component of learning styles (Shi 2011: 20) and they both make notable contributions to second language acquisition (Tang 2009: 129). Despite their apparent similarities, they refer to distinct concepts. Cognitive styles are described as "a psychological construct relating to how individuals process information" (Brown et al. 2006: 327), whereas learning style is a more comprehensive concept. Beyond information processing, "learning style also contains individual's feelings and psychological behaviors" (Wang 2009: 34-35). According to Wang (2008: 30), "Learning styles refer to an individual's characteristics and preferred way of gathering, interpreting, organizing and thinking about information". In educational contexts, cognitive styles are often synonymous with learning styles due to the interplay of physiological, cognitive, and emotional factors (Brown 2010). Individuals have distinct learning preferences and styles, influenced by biological and psychological differences, which affect their learning rates (Qiao 2024).

Although the study of individual differences in cognitive style has faced criticism for conceptual confusion, contested definitions, poor measurement, and lack of validity (Peterson et al., 2009), its importance in SLA is also underscored (Tang 2009). Several definitions of cognitive style have been proposed, generally describing it as an individual's habitual and unique approach to processing, organizing, and perceiving information (Allport 1937; Tennant 1988; Saville-Troike 2005; Brown et al. 2006; Liu 2008). These definitions emphasize its enduring and stable nature (Riding, Glass and Douglas 1993), influencing how people address issues and acquire knowledge over time (Sternberg and Grigorenko 2001; Zhang 2023).

Due to the multidimensional nature of cognitive styles, researchers have developed tools to evaluate and quantify diverse learner preferences (Qiao 2024). Notable distinctions include field-independent vs. field-dependent styles, reflective vs. impulsive

styles, and tolerance vs. intolerance of ambiguity (Chen 2021). Probably the most widely recognized classification is Field Independence (FI) vs. Field Dependence (FD), introduced by H.A. Witkin in the 1940s (Witkin et al. 1977). FI is defined as the ability to isolate relevant elements within a perceptual field and focus on specific aspects of experiences (Dąbrowska 2010). FI learners are self-regulated and analytical, setting and achieving their own goals (Witkin et al. 1977; Zhang 2023). In contrast, FD refers to a global perception tendency, seeing the field as a whole rather than separate elements (Brown 2000). FD learners are often confident and cooperative, relying on external standards and seeking help from their surroundings (Witkin et al. 1977; Yuan Yunbo 2011).These cognitive styles influence SLA processes and learning strategy usage patterns. FI is correlated with the use of complex learning strategies and effective context-dependent strategy activation, while FD learners tend to rely on social strategies, repetition, and memorization. As indicated by numerous research findings (Seliger 1977; Naiman et al. 1978; Stansfield and Hansen 1983), FI enhances the likelihood of success in formal language learning, primarily due to the learner's ability to focus, analyze phenomena, and pay attention to details, while FD promotes naturalistic language acquisition and language communication, driven by social skills, orientation toward others, and empathy among individuals.

Another cognitive style, the reflective-impulsive dimension, focuses on decision-making speed under uncertainty (Chen 2021). Reflective individuals analyze information carefully, while impulsive individuals make quick decisions based on intuition (Shilan 2010). Reflective learners often excel in oral accuracy, whereas impulsive learners perform better in oral fluency (Chen 2021; Jamieson 1992; Michońska-Stadnik 2013).

Finally, Tolerance of Ambiguity (TOA) and Intolerance of Ambiguity (ITOA) are cognitive traits that affect navigating uncertainty, crucial in SLA. ITOA, originally defined by Budner (1962), characterizes one's tendency to perceive ambiguous, complex, or insoluble situations as potential threats. Norton later expanded upon this concept, offering a more detailed definition: "a tendency to perceive or interpret information marked by vague, incomplete, fragmented, multiple, probable, unstructured, uncertain, inconsistent, contrary, contradictory, or unclear meanings as actual or potential sources of psychological discomfort or threat" (1975: 608). On the other hand, TOA is the willingness to accept new information that contradicts one's existing beliefs or knowledge structures (Wang 2000). In SLA, TOA becomes crucial as it enables learners to navigate the uncertainty and differences between their native language and the target

language. It allows learners to take risks, accept unfamiliar concepts, and ultimately facilitates the acquisition of the new language (Peng 2018). In essence, TOA is an essential cognitive trait for successful language learners, enabling them to embrace ambiguity and adapt to the challenges of language acquisition by accepting differences between their native and target languages (Daqing 2021).

Examining learning styles more closely, the concept attempts to explain the different ways people learn, highlighting that everyone has their own preferred and more effective ways of learning. Over the years, learning styles have gained acceptance among educators and the general public, extending into the field of SLA, where it is recognized as an important yet under-researched topic (Dörnyei and Ryan: 2015: 106). Teachers observe that students approach language learning differently, which can inform teaching strategies. However, terminological confusion and lack of consensus on classification and identification methods remain challenges (Dörnyei 2005; Griffiths 2012; Pawlak 2019). Learning styles, though intuitively appealing and seemingly straightforward, prove problematic under scrutiny. Defined as "an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills" (Reid 1995: viii), they represent "broad preferences" for learning (Ehrman 1996: 49). This concept provides a profile of an individual's approach to learning and interacting with their environment (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015: 108). Griffiths (2012: 151) contends that learning styles can greatly enhance learning, making it more enjoyable and successful by acknowledging individual differences. For teachers, this means offering methodologies and materials that cater to students' preferences. For learners, it means having the freedom to learn in ways that are enjoyable and effective, helping them reach their full potential.

To summarize, both learning and cognitive styles play an important role in SLA. As quoted by Ma (2003: 63):

> On one hand, after learning students' different learning styles, teachers can adopt relative(corresponding) teaching methods and strategies; on the other hand, students can choose appropriate learning strategies if they know their own cognitive styles, which can promote their autonomy and help them become successful learners.

A body of research, exemplified by Dörnyei (2005), indicate stronger correlations between specific learning style preferences and favorable outcomes in learning and language usage within specific contexts. The cognitive styles of students affect the success of the learning process as they influence the nature of decision making, which in

turn enhances the quality of behavioral adjustments, improve capacity to manage daily tasks more efficiently and fosters effective critical thinking skills. Compatibility of cognitive styles with the domain of learning leads to notable advancements in their academic performance during assessments (Homayooni et al. 2006; Sharma 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that individual learning styles reflect personal preferences of a typically bipolar nature. In her work, Dąbrowska (2010) clarifies that no single style automatically determines either ultimate success or failure in language acquisition. She further asserts that each learner possesses the potential for success in their own distinct manner. Consequently, aligning with the perspective of Ehrman and Leaver (2003), a thorough understanding of students' styles and their role in the learning process can provide valuable insights into the decision-making processes students employ when using learning strategies. These insights, when consciously and intentionally applied, can contribute to enhancing individual outcomes of students in language learning (Dąbrowska 2010).

When discussing learning or cognitive styles, or describing an autonomous language learner, one cannot fail to mention learning strategies. Consequently, these have been referenced multiple times in previous descriptions and sections. Having previously defined learning strategies, the author of this paper would like to emphasize here their significance in the language learning process. As Pawlak (2019: 8) explains, learning strategies can be categorized into:

- Metacognitive strategies, which involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning processes.
- Cognitive strategies, which pertain to performing specific language tasks.
- Affective strategies, which help regulate emotions.
- Social strategies, which involve cooperation with others.

These strategies can also be examined in connection with various subsystems and language skills, such as pronunciation, grammar, reading, or speaking. It is crucial to note that enhanced learning outcomes do not solely depend on the frequency of strategy use; rather, strategies should be tailored to both the specific task and the individual learner's profile.

It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive. Other learner characteristics, such as gender, self-esteem (Pawlak 2019), personality (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015), language anxiety (MacIntyre 1999), working memory (Wen et al. 2017), and others found

in the literature, also contribute to language learning outcomes. However, for the scope of this thesis, the author has chosen to focus on the aforementioned factors, believing they provide a comprehensive overview of internal influences. Moving forward, the thesis will shift its focus to exploring external factors that impact language learning outcomes.

2.3.2.2 External factors

Rokita-Jaśków (2021) categorizes external factors influencing language learning into diverse contexts across multiple scales. On a macroscale, these factors include national language policies and the presence of ethnolinguistic communities. On a mesoscale, the external factors pertain to various educational institutions, whether private or public, along with the competencies of individual teachers. On a microscale, they focus on the family environment and the accessibility of learning resources, with socioeconomic status playing a crucial mediating role in the latter two scales. To put it simply, external variables in language learning originate from sources outside the individual, typically classified as environmental and curricular. Brown (2007) underscores that these external factors can differ for each individual but share the common attribute of being determined solely by circumstances beyond the learner's control and influence. This section will primarily focus on aspects within the educational setting, including teacher characteristics (Richards 2001; Nation and Macalister 2010), language immersion experiences (Klinger 2002; Muñoz 2010), and the integration of technology (Nurul Islam,2011; Khanchali and Ziadat 2011). Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that this list of external factors is not exhaustive, as acknowledged by the author of this thesis.

Over the past three decades, language learning opportunities have expanded with the introduction of mandatory foreign language instruction from an early age and enhanced teacher training (Rokita-Jaśków 2022). However, the effectiveness of language acquisition is significantly influenced by the educational setting in which students learn. Key factors in this regard include the curriculum structure, the classroom atmosphere, the teaching methods employed, and the interpersonal dynamics between teachers and students. Firstly, curriculum design is vital for successful language acquisition, especially in the context of the autonomization of the learning process. Numerous research studies prove that involving students in negotiating the syllabus and choosing materials boosts the effectiveness of teaching and learning by fostering a sense of ownership over their

education, which in turn increases motivation (Reinders 2010; Klimas 2017; Marantika 2021). This approach ensures that educational content aligns with students' interests and needs, promoting deeper engagement and more effective learning. Essential curricular considerations such as needs analysis, material sequencing, assessment methods, and presentation are critical for optimizing learning outcomes (Nation and Macalister 2010). Therefore, modern teaching practices should concentrate on flexibility and responsiveness to student needs, ensuring that educators can adapt their approaches to optimize learning experiences accordingly (Horyśniak 2019). In addition to the syllabus, the delivery of lessons is crucial in providing students with optimal conditions for effectively acquiring individual language skills. Therefore, when planning classes, factors such as student age and course objectives should be carefully considered (Komorowska 2015). Lesson planning offers educators a chance to address diverse language skills while meeting the specific interests and needs of each student (Horyśniak 2019; Richards 2001). In this regard, Chen et al. (2023) advocate a deep learning approach, encouraging educators to design courses that promote meaningful learning experiences where students integrate new knowledge with their existing understanding across various disciplines. Finally, when discussing the learning environment as a key external factor influencing language acquisition, the role of teachers cannot be overlooked. As emphasized in Chapter 1 of this thesis dedicated to autonomy in language learning, contemporary teacher expectations encompass more than just language proficiency alone. Today's teachers are expected to be competent in interaction, pedagogy and didactics. Their responsibilities include developing a variety of skills that include enhancing students' competencies, promoting autonomous attitudes and behaviors, providing strategic training, offering necessary support and adapting to students' diverse needs, all while incorporating modern technologies (Komorowska 2015; Pawlak 2022; Palfreyman and Benson 2019). Horyśniak (2019) emphasizes that teachers should ensure both the quality and attractiveness of lessons by incorporating supplementary teaching materials. According to Komorowska (2015), these materials should not only be interesting and appealing but also practical, serving to enhance student learning effectively. Additionally, teachers are tasked not only with fostering proper teacher-student relationships but also with cultivating a positive classroom atmosphere among learners, which is crucial for nurturing an optimal learning environment (Hussin et al. 2001). Highlighting mutual respect and promoting collaborative learning is essential in creating a harmonious and supportive environment where students feel valued and motivated to actively participate

in classes, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the learning experience (Chen et al. 2023).

Alongside the educational setting, extensive research underscores the critical role of the family environment in fostering the development of learning skills (Rokita-Jaśków 2015, 2022; Kolber 2021; Horyśniak 2019). Parents are often regarded as children's first teachers, while learning occurs naturally through everyday interactions. Such interactions can create favorable conditions for development or, conversely, contribute to educational failure (Kolber 2021: 181). Parents' sensitivity and attitudes can significantly support learners by encouraging foreign language practice or, alternatively, undermining motivation (Horyśniak 2019: 104). Particularly with young children, parents and caregivers play a crucial role in providing a conducive environment by organizing space and time, offering appropriate materials, and refraining from excessive interference (Kolber 2021). As emphasized by Rokita-Jaśków,

> In the case of very young learners, the child's family environment will exert such influence by providing opportunities for L2 use/practice, by providing L2 learning material, by parental involvement in class and home revision activities, by verbal encouragement, and, finally, by acting as positive role models. Learning experience will also include the frequency and quality of L2 instruction provided (2015: 460).

Kolber (2021: 181) also outlines various ways adults can positively influence language development, such as planning suitable activities and extracurricular engagements, motivating children to tackle new challenges, experiment, or innovate in problem-solving, and providing supportive feedback. Lastly, Rokita-Jaśków (2022: 388) underscores the significant impact of socioeconomic status, parental language proficiency, and parental aspirations on the quality of exposure to a foreign language, thus shaping children's learning outcomes in language acquisition. These aspects highlight the crucial role caregivers play in fostering children's linguistic development and overall educational success.

Another external factor influencing language acquisition is technology. Among the various factors - tools, methods, or strategies - that can boost motivation, technology's role in foreign language learning stands out. With the advancement of digital technology, its tools and applications are now integrated into both formal and informal settings, within and beyond the classroom (Panagiotidis 2023: 69). Today's students, often referred to as digital natives, are well-acquainted in a wide range of technologies and are adept at multitasking in an era of omnipresent connectivity. Millennials, who consistently and effortlessly engage with technology, have had their learning preferences and

educational expectations shaped by these interactions. This, in turn, affects teaching and learning practices across all levels of education (Panagiotidis 2023: 70).

Research has shown that technology-enhanced environments can significantly boost students' motivation and engagement while improving their productivity. As Lamb states,

> developments in digital technology are probably the most prolific source of innovation in L2 teaching methodology in contemporary times, at least in western or developed world contexts, and the motivational properties of each innovation are usually considered an important aspect of its instructional qualities (2017: 30).

He also lists several key motivational benefits of using technology in foreign language learning, including greater autonomy and individualization, enhanced opportunities for communication, identity development, leveraging learners' existing IT skills, content-based instruction, intercultural content, designing motivating tasks, increasing the relevance of the L2, and alternative forms of assessment (Lamb 2017). Additionally, the evolution of technology has sped up the shift from traditional teacher-centered methods to learner-centered approaches in language teaching. To effectively address the needs of digitally literate students, educators had to take on a different role, focusing more on facilitation and guidance rather than direct instruction. This shift has greatly benefited learners by making the educational process more interactive and engaging (Riasati et al. 2012).

The utilization of modern technology in language learning extends beyond mere teacher use and encompasses a multitude of opportunities. The Internet, for example, has emerged as a pivotal tool in English language acquisition. Students now have access to authentic English materials globally, such as songs, films, and various other resources, all just a mouse click away (Nurul Islam 2011). However, this represents only a fraction of the capabilities offered by the Internet. It serves as a versatile platform facilitating various activities, including research, accessing library materials, online quizzes, podcasts, and more, effectively catering to the diverse needs of learners worldwide (Khanchali and Ziadat 2011).

The widespread adoption of digital technologies, such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), has sparked growing interest among researchers in modern language education (Ostanina-Olszewska 2018). Particularly noteworthy is the increasing popularity of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), owing to its numerous benefits. MALL not only provides user-friendly and readily accessible resources but also

facilitates communication with teachers, facilitators, and peers, all while promoting learner autonomy, and at a low cost (Pengnate 2018).

In summary, the integration of technology in language learning provides numerous benefits that enhance motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. By leveraging digital tools, educators can create more effective and personalized learning experiences that align with the needs and preferences of modern learners. There is a prevailing belief that formal foreign language teaching often falls short due to learners receiving inadequate input in the target language (Ostanina-Olszewska 2018). Muñoz (2010) emphasizes the differences between learning a foreign language in natural versus instructed settings, favoring the former and pointing out the drawbacks of the latter. Embracing educational technology can revolutionize teaching and learning practices, creating an optimal learning environment (Marshall 2002). Therefore, both teachers and students are encouraged to take advantage of educational technology, as it can significantly enhance student learning and support second language development (Ostanina-Olszewska 2018).

Finally, language immersion or exposure to the target language is widely recognized as one of the most crucial external factors influencing language learning success. Language exposure entails interactions that occur outside the traditional classroom environment (Al Zoubi 2018). Benson (2011: 62) defines outside-of-class language exposure as "any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning".

In recent years, research in SLA has increasingly focused on the impact of exposure outside formal education settings on the learning of foreign languages. The proliferation of internet, audiovisual media, and social platforms has expanded opportunities for language learning, particularly English, beyond traditional classrooms. English, as a global lingua franca, is now being learned from a younger age due to early education reforms across Europe and worldwide, resulting in daily exposure to the language for many. Despite these trends, disparities in English proficiency persist, influenced in part by the amount of formal English instruction received in schools and the extent of learners' exposure to the language outside of educational settings (Muñoz and Cadierno 2021: 186).

Numerous studies have highlighted the crucial role of the learning environment in acquiring a second language, emphasizing the necessity of regular interaction for effective language learning (Brown 2001). Drawing on Behaviorist theory, learning is

seen as conditioning through stimulus-response reactions (Lankiewicz 2010), with B.F. Skinner suggesting that language acquisition adheres to operant conditioning principles, underscoring the importance of opportunities to use the target language both inside and outside the classroom. Muñoz (2010) identifies limitations in traditional classroom settings, such as limited exposure to the target language due to constrained teaching time and potential teacher proficiency issues. Scholars and linguists universally stress the importance of consistent practice in language acquisition (Marinova-Todd et al. 2000; Flege et al. 1997), with research indicating that minimizing the use of one's native language leads to faster and more effective learning outcomes.

Traditionally, learners in foreign language contexts have primarily relied on classroom instruction, often lacking sufficient exposure to the target language, which can hinder learning due to limited input in terms of both quality and quantity (Muñoz 2006). This restricted environment may result in a slower learning pace and a focus on metalinguistic knowledge rather than practical language use (Muñoz and Cadierno 2021). Recent research underscores the significant impact of out-of-school exposure on second language acquisition, affirming that language learning is greatly enhanced through immersion and interaction in natural settings (Muñoz and Cadierno 2021). Such exposure not only supports usage-based theories of language learning but also emphasizes the importance of real-world language experiences in fostering linguistic competence and fluency. This aligns with the common belief that the most effective way to learn a language quickly is to immerse oneself completely in the language by traveling abroad, where daily interactions provide ample opportunities for learning and practice.

Chapter 3 - Language awareness and language learning

Language awareness is integral to language learning, profoundly impacting both learner autonomy and perceptions of success. The European language awareness movement, which aimed to develop "sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall 1985: 7), has been instrumental in this regard. By engaging learners in linguistic patterns, language learning approaches, and sociolinguistic issues, it fosters an appreciation of linguistic diversity and interlingualism (Lamb 2017: 174). Enhanced language awareness helps students develop a deeper understanding of language structures and usage, thereby enhancing their confidence and competence. As students become more aware of language's complexities, they often feel more competent and confident in their abilities, thus redefining their personal criteria for success. This chapter first reviews the origins and definitions of language awareness, providing a foundational understanding. It then explores the various aspects of language awareness, emphasizing their contribution to language learning. Next, the chapter explores the relationship between language awareness and learner autonomy, illustrating how awareness fosters independent learning. Finally, it analyzes how language awareness influences perceptions of success, demonstrating how increased awareness can enhance learners' confidence and redefine their success criteria.

3.1.   Language awareness: Origins and definitions

The exploration of language awareness (LA henceforth) has consistently intrigued researchers, going beyond the traditional boundaries of linguistics (Lustański 2021). Scholars draw from a multitude of theoretical perspectives, including linguistics, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience, resulting in diverse interpretations of LA (Maćkowiak 2020). Undoubtedly, language awareness stands out as a dynamic and captivating field of academic engagement (Garrett 1993). Beyond the extensive body of literature on LA (e.g., Donmall 1985; Cygan 2011), the field is supported by a dedicated journal, Language Awareness, and the Association for Language Awareness, which advocates the subject and organizes specialized conferences (Garrett 1993).

The term language awareness originated nearly half a century ago from pedagogical initiatives in England, emerging in response to the Bullock Committee's 1975 report *A

Language for Life (Donmall-Hick997: 21). This report primarily focused on the pedagogical aspects of teaching English, highlighting its role both as a mother tongue and as a language of instruction. Eric W. Hawkins subsequently advocated for the introduction of a new subject – 'language' – to act as a bridging discipline connecting English with foreign languages within the curriculum (Hawkins 1999: 124). The report underscored the pivotal role of language proficiency in shaping the entire school curriculum (James 1999). Furthermore, the report emphasized the potential benefits arising from the collaboration between native language (English) and modern language teachers, which represents a shift away from their previous isolated pedagogical practices. To foster this collaboration, the National Congress for Languages in Education established the language awareness Working Party in 1982 (Donmall- Hicks 1997). The group aimed to establish a theoretical foundation and conduct systematic surveys among educators to identify educational institutions that had implemented language awareness initiatives. The Language Awareness working party generated newsletters, compiled an annotated bibliography, developed an evaluation program for LA courses, prepared a list of speakers, and hosted a dedicated conference. Notably, the report emphasized the need for enhancements in literacy education within British schools, among other recommendations as argued by (Komorowska (2022: 129). Consequently, the concept of language awareness received significant interest and evolved into a prominent movement in the United Kingdom during the mid-1980s. Moreover, in 1984 Eric Hawkins published an influential work titled *Awareness of Language: An Introduction*, a publication that significantly expanded the scope and perspectives within the discipline (Komorowska 2022: 128). Subsequently, in 1992, the international journal Language Awareness was inaugurated, accompanied by the establishment of the Association for Language Awareness, with 84 members in total (Finkbeiner and White 2020). The mission statement of the Association was as follows:

> The Association for Language Awareness aims at supporting and promoting activities across the whole breadth of Language Awareness. These are conducted in different fields of Language Awareness (e.g. mother tongue learning, foreign language learning, teacher education, language use in professional settings), at a variety of levels (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary education, professional training and practice), and with objectives in a range of domains (e.g. effects on language performance, on attitudes to language etc.) (ALA 2012).

The main objective behind introducing the concept of LA was to foster connections across different aspects of language education. This included integrating native English, English as a foreign or second language, other foreign languages, and minority mother

tongues, with the aim of breaking down existing barriers (Hawkins 1984; 1999). This initiative emerged during a period marked by a reaction against Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device hypothesis, which had imposed a "a taboo […] on formal language instruction and talk about language" (Hawkins 1999: 124). Despite the increasing attention devoted to LA, a precise and unanimous definition of the term remains difficult to determine. LA is commonly viewed as an educational movement, defined as "a person's sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life" (Donmall-Hicks 1997: 21). This description, proposed by UK's National Council for Language in Education (NCLE) as described by Donmall-Hicks (1997: 22), has influenced the conception of LA as an educational initiative, motivating the development of curricular strategies aimed at involving secondary school students in activities related to language acquisition, utilization, and linguistic diversity (Little 2010). However, it has been criticized (Thornbury 1997) for its broad range of possible interpretations. In the field of psycholinguistics, on the other hand, language awareness pertains to learners' understanding of language, irrespective of their conscious reflection on language (Nicholas 1992; Little 2010).

Defining language awareness poses a considerable challenge, characterized by an ongoing uncertainty and a persistent quest for clarity (Carter 1994). As articulated by Garrett and James, there remains no definitive answer, and "it is a field still searching for clear definition" (1993: 109). According to Komorowska (2022: 30), the unclear definitions surrounding language awareness have led to disagreements and misunderstandings. There has been controversy over how language awareness relates to unconscious learning, with the latter frequently associated with implicit learning. However, Truscott (2015: 140) argues that implicit learning can involve both conscious and unconscious elements, and he warns against confusion "between awareness of form and awareness of task that involves use of the form". Certain crucial aspects of language awareness have, however, garnered unanimous consent. Researchers agree both on the significance of the learning context and learner's value to observed elements within the learning process. Similarly, the decreasing role of attention in shaping a learner's habitual responses has also emerged as a point of agreement without controversy (Komorowska 2022).

Shifting our focus to the primary definition found in the existing scholarly literature, the Association for Language Awareness defines LA as "the explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language

teaching and language use" (www.languageawareness.org). Levelt et al. (1978: 5) perceive LA as "implicit knowledge that has become explicit" and Read (1978: 73) describes it as "focusing attention on something that one knows". Among the definitions of LA developed by Polish linguists, probably the most frequently mentioned is Markowski's formula, presented in the 1990s. According to him, LA is "all judgments regarding language and perspectives on language" (Markowski 1992: 198) [own translation], encompassing both intuitive linguistic judgments as well as judgments motivated and supported by scientific knowledge. Carter's (1994) definition of LA includes a broad scope of concerns, stating that it entails an awareness of certain properties of language such as double meanings, creativity, and the playfulness of language. Furthermore, awareness that language is embedded in culture, i.e., that for instance idioms and metaphors reveal much about culture.

More so, LA is also self-awareness of the forms of language used, meaning that in most cases language is systematically ordered but sometimes the relationships between forms and meanings of language are just arbitrary. Lastly, LA is also the consciousness of the close connection between language and ideology, in other words, "seeing through language". According to Bilash and Tulasiewicz (1995), language awareness encompasses four aspects that must be integrated with existing subject areas. These elements include language content, language skills, attitude training, and metacognitive abilities. This integration offers students the chance to engage in reflective consideration of the mechanisms underlying language acquisition, learning, and language application. For James (1996: 23) language awareness is "possessing METACOGNITIONS about a language over which one already has a degree of control and about which one will therefore have developed a coherent set of intuitions". In more contemporary terms, Al-Hejin (2004:3) defines awareness as "refer[ing] to an individual's subjective experience of a stimulus or cognitive content" and he outlines three prerequisites for becoming aware of an experience, drawing inspiration from Allport (1988). These conditions involve changes in behavior or cognition, verbal acknowledgment of awareness, and the ability to describe the experience. Finally, to get comprehensive understanding of the broad spectrum of language awareness, Ronald Carter's definition from the 1994 Hong Kong International Conference on Language in Education offers an insightful perspective (cited in Andrews 2007: 12) :

A general language awareness involves at least:

a. awareness of some of the properties of language; creativity and playfulness; its double meanings.
b. awareness of the embedding of language within culture. Learning to read the language is learning about the cultural properties of the language. Idioms and metaphors, in particular, reveal a lot about the culture.
c. a greater self-consciousness about the forms of the language we use. We need to recognise that the relations between the forms and meanings of a language are sometimes arbitrary, but that language is a system and that it is for the most part systematically patterned.
d. awareness of the close relationship between language and ideology. It involves 'seeing through language' in other words.

In the United Kingdom, LA is often referred to as Knowledge About Language (KAL) (Andrew 2007). Mitchell, Hooper, and Brumfit describe KAL as a fresh perspective on a longstanding issue, emphasizing that "that pupils learning languages in formal settings should acquire some explicit understandings and knowledge of the nature of language, alongside the development of practical language skills" (1994: 2). Furthermore, they contend that KAL encompasses a wide range of topics, spanning from languages interrelationships and early childhood language development to the intricacies of social interaction, language choice, and personal identity. It also examines areas such as individual and social bilingualism and multilingualism, language variation, the role of language in social control, and ultimately, mastery of linguistic systems (Mitchell et al. 1994). The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010: 308) defines KAL as "any kind of knowledge about language that teachers make use of in their teaching, such as knowledge of grammar, language use, and second language learning".

The question of whether KAL and LA are interchangeable remains open (van Lier 1996: 80; Lankiewicz 2015: 135). Both concepts share a common belief that a connection exists between understanding the formal aspects of a language and one's proficiency in using that language, whether it be one's native tongue or a second language. Consequently, enhancing learners` capacity to accurately analyze and describe a language is believed to potentially enhance their effectiveness in using that language (Andrews 2008). In their report, Mitchell et al. (1994: 2) asserted that KAL is essentially "a new title for an old concern". It is noteworthy that while language awareness is a term employed in both first and second language acquisition contexts, the terminology KAL is sometimes preferred when referring specifically to one's native language (Carter 2003).

Over time, approaches to LA have significantly evolved. In the 1980s, LA was closely associated with a normative approach to language learning. This approach emphasized an atomistic analysis of language, focusing on its individual components, and

was supported by formalistic methodologies like grammar translation, drills and pattern practice (Carter 2003). However, as language teaching methodologies advanced and became more focused on linguistic forms and discourse-oriented language descriptions, a new LA movement emerged. This movement adopted a more holistic approach to language, which naturally extended to the development of Critical Language Awareness (CLA). As highlighted by Fairclough (1992: 3), CLA "presupposes and builds upon what is variously called 'critical language study', 'critical linguistics', or 'critical discourse analysis". As "critical linguistics" can be defined as an analytical approach to language and its use, with a central focus on how language functions in assigning power upon specific societal groups (Richards and Schmidt 2010: 145), it can be concluded that CLA takes the view that language use is not neutral but is always part of a broader social struggle, emphasizing the importance for learners to examine the ways in which language is used (Carter 2003). With this in mind, CLA shares similarities with the "power" domain (discussed in section 3.2), introduced by James and Garrett (1991), as it acknowledges that language serves a communicative purpose, and it recognizes intention behind any message. During communication, people deliberately choose grammatical structures, vocabulary, register, and discourse type to achieve objectives like persuasion, manipulation, control or praise.

The fundamental difference between CLA and LA revolves around their underlying assumptions regarding the effectiveness of language awareness in addressing social issues related to educational failure, parental language comprehension, and the treatment of minority languages and non-standard dialects (Fairclough 1995). In practical terms, this means that while LA seeks to resolve these issues within the educational system, supporters of CLA advocate for a more multifaceted approach. Fairclough (1995) suggests that the language awareness approach may inadvertently result in negative social consequences for various reasons, including:

− The potential overestimation of schools' capacity for societal change,
− The perpetuation of class division not limited to education,
− LA's emphasis on distinguishing between different language varieties based on appropriateness, which could reinforce perceptions of inequality and, thus, prove counterproductive,
− The promotion of a standard language form may entail the marginalization of other language varieties.

Lastly, the expansion of research on the role of awareness in L2 learning in the SLA field was likely inspired by the Monitor Model presented by Krashen in 1981 (Leow and Donatelli 2017: 189). This model considered the role that the construct of "awareness" (then referred to as "consciousness") plays in L2 learning/acquisition, and distinguished conscious learning from mere acquisition, which is unconscious. Attention was drawn to the close relationship between the learning process and the acquired product. In other words, it examined the link between the way L2 data was processed, either with or without awareness, and the type of knowledge obtained after the learning process (Leow and Donatelli 2017). Krashen (1981) emphasized the superiority of acquisition processes over conscious learning processes. That is, he believed that the success of SLA was to a great extent the result of unconscious acquiring as merely easy aspects of L2 can be learned in a conscious way, and such learning takes place under rigorous conditions, i.e. when learners have time for reflection, are familiar with the rule, and are concentrated on accuracy, or form. Krashen's "Monitor Model" and his approach led to more than 10 years of empirical research on the role of awareness in SLA. (Robinson et al. 2012). It also led to the incorporation of awareness into a pedagogical approach that considered the impact of instructional type on subsequent outcomes (Leow and Donatelli 2017).

3.2. Aspects of language awareness

In the 1990s, language awareness underwent a transformation in its conceptualization and became perceived as a continuum (Komorowska 2022: 129). This continuum ranged from having a general sense of whether a sentence was grammatically correct, to the ability to identify and correct errors, and finally to a deep understanding of the underlying grammatical rules (James 1999). In this period, the cognitive aspect was emphasized in both LA and KAL. Awareness was no longer viewed as single function located in a specific brain region; instead it is now understood as a component of various cognitive functions. When one of these functions is impaired or altered, it may affect and diminish specific aspects of awareness, but it does not completely deprive an individual of their overall state of awareness (Komorowska 2022). In subsequent developments, the concept of LA has evolved beyond just linguistic aspects. It now encompasses broader dimensions, incorporating social, political, and cultural factors into its understanding.

James and Garrett (1991: 111-112) introduced the idea of five language awareness domains that govern the learner's language proficiency and comprehension:

1. The affective domain, which deals with motivations and beliefs regarding languages and cultures.
2. The cognitive domain, focused on the rules, categories, and patterns governing language usage.
3. The social domain, which pertains to diversity, mobility, and intercultural interactions.
4. The power domain, associated with political dynamics within discourse.
5. The performance domain, involving language in practical use, communication strategies, and the ability to discuss language matters.

The authors emphasize that they view these five domains not as separate entities "mutually exclusive, operating in isolation from one another" but rather as interconnected elements that contribute to clarifying the concept of language awareness, regardless of its context or reference point (James and Garret 1991: 20). During the 21st century, there continues to be a predominant focus on the cognitive domain, as indicated by Svalberg (2007). It is, however, essential to recognize the growing importance of social and critical dimensions, particularly among educators (Komorowska 2022). Consequently, this section aims to discuss the cognitive aspects of LA.

Within the literature concerning the cognitive dimensions of language awareness, there is an ongoing discussion concerning the contrasting viewpoints regarding the impact of explicit learning on the process of language acquisition. Nevertheless, comprehending the role of awareness in learning necessitates recognizing the distinction between implicit and explicit learning. According to Ellis (1994), explicit learning entails a conscious process where individuals formulate and test hypotheses while searching for underlying structure. On the other hand, "implicit learning is acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operations" (Ellis 1994: 1). In essence, explicit instruction involves the instructor clearly stating learning objectives and providing unambiguous explanations of presented skills and information structures, whereas implicit teaching does not outline such objectives or offer explicit explanations, leaving learners to derive their own conclusions, construct their conceptual frameworks, and assimilate information in the manner that best suits them.

The core of the implicit versus explicit learning debate centers on whether these two learning modes constitute distinct systems and, if so, how they interact or relate to each other (Robinson et al. 2012). Krashen (1982) posits that grammatical competence can only be acquired through exposure. In other words, learners rely on implicit knowledge to comprehend and generate utterances, while explicit knowledge comes into play for monitoring the accuracy of those utterances. While explicit instruction and the resulting explicit knowledge are advantageous for responding to discrete test items, they have no bearing when language is applied in real communication situations (Norris and Ortega 2000; Svalberg 2007). In the context of LA, there is a strong emphasis on promoting the importance of deliberate, explicit learning (Soons 2008). However, experts generally agree that instruction should give priority to nurturing both explicit and implicit knowledge, although to varying degrees (Lamb 2017). Nevertheless, as articulated by Svalberg (2007), it is crucial to identify the particular type of explicit knowledge that proves most favorable, especially concerning its applicability to specific language features. In explicit learning, the learner is consciously engaged in processing the information. This distinguishes the learning process from simply acquiring knowledge. Explicit learning involves the learner's active metacognitive participation, where they have the ability to reflect on and describe their thought processes using a formal or semi-formal metalanguage. Essentially, it entails the learner's capacity to articulate and discuss specific aspects of their knowledge acquisition process. Implicit learning, in contrast, occurs without conscious awareness, remains inaccessible to deliberate memory recall even post-acquisition, and is utilized spontaneously without conscious oversight. In this context, implicit learning is intuitive, unexamined, and does not enable the learner to articulate or discuss the acquired knowledge at a metacognitive level (Soons 2008).

It is important to note that not every aspect of second language knowledge is consciously and intentionally employed, highlighting the significance of both explicit and implicit learning processes in language acquisition. For instance, when describing an object like a ring, a student may correctly order adjectives (e.g., "an expensive, silver ring") without necessarily being aware of the specific rule that governs the sequence of opinion, color, and material descriptors. While this knowledge may be inherent in their language skills, it may not have been consciously learned. Consequently, some linguists argue that language learning should be viewed as a process of implicit deduction or induction (Ortega 2007; Schmidt 2010). Andringa (2020), upon examining existing literature, observes that awareness often emerges as a product of knowledge acquired

implicitly. As an illustration, Cleeremans (2007) perceives awareness as essentially "the product of the brain learning about its own unconsciously accrued representations as a result of information processing and implicit knowledge acquisition" (Andringa 2020: 337). Prior to information becoming consciously accessible, it undergoes a process of assimilation to reach a certain level of stability and quality, which undoubtedly takes time. The engagement of awareness occurs when learners need greater control over their behavior and decreases as that behavior becomes more automatic. The analysis of the issue of awareness in cognitive psychology leads Andringa (2020: 338) to the following conclusions:

- The potential of implicit learning processes should not be underestimated.
- The involvement of awareness in behavior varies and depends on the level of control required, which in turn is related to the degree of automation of behavior.
- Awareness can be determined by a certain level of implicit learning.

Despite the extensive discourse surrounding LA, particularly its cognitive aspects, Kennedy (2012) highlights the limited research conducted thus far regarding the interplay between language awareness and the practical use of a second language. The author provides instances of existing research, such as DeKeyser's (2010) study involving intermediate-level Spanish language learners in a study abroad program. DeKeyser's findings revealed that, after a six-week immersion, some students remained unaware of fundamental aspects of Spanish syntax. This lack of awareness hindered their ability to effectively utilize language input for Spanish language acquisition and, notably, led some students to avoid engaging in conversations with native speakers.

In a parallel study within the context of L2 Spanish acquisition, Stewart (2010) pursued research with a distinct methodology. Students were instructed to maintain bi-weekly journals in which they documented their observations and comprehension of various aspects of the Spanish language, along with their experiences of using Spanish. The outcomes derived from these journal entries revealed that certain students exhibited a higher propensity compared to others in terms of recognizing Spanish language elements from input and interactions. Moreover, they actively sought out "opportunities for extended discourse" (Stewart 2010: 153). The studies mentioned emphasize the critical link between language awareness and practical use of the second language (L2). Learners who lack sufficient awareness of fundamental L2 elements tend to limit their interaction in the target language, resulting in an incomplete grasp of the L2. Conversely, learners

with heightened awareness are more likely to actively seek opportunities to engage in L2 use, thereby promoting more effective learning outcomes (Kennedy 2012).

3.3. The relationship between language awareness and learner autonomy

The concepts of language awareness and learner autonomy are integral components of modern language education, and their dynamic interplay holds a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness and empowerment of language learners. Language awareness, emphasizing a conscious understanding of language structures, functions, and nuances (Carter 2003), provides foundational knowledge, while learner autonomy, which encourages self-directed learning (Schweder and Raufelder 2022), promotes active application and practice of this knowledge. Moreover, LA fosters critical analysis of language use, complementing the self-reflective nature of autonomous learning. Together, these approaches deepen learners' engagement with language, enabling them not only to use language effectively but also to understand and critically evaluate its nuances and contexts. In the LA-oriented classroom, autonomy plays a crucial role as learners actively explore and reflect on language use, interact with others, and creatively apply language skills (Council of Europe 2001; van Lier 1996). This engagement enhances learners' cognitive and affective dimensions, enabling effective learning and reaction to language experiences (Borg 1994; James and Garrett 1991). Thus, by integrating language awareness and learner autonomy, learners achieve comprehensive mastery of language skills through a balanced approach that supports both knowledge acquisition and practical application.

The concept of learner autonomy should be considered in a multi-dimensional way, as it relies on number of various factors such as the learners` needs, motivation, learning strategies (Blidi 2017) as well as interdependence (Lamb 2017) based on cooperation and heightened LA. This awareness fosters reflection and is perceived as an exploratory process stemming from the learner`s own experiences with language use (Arnó 2017; Carter 1990). The development of LA is crucial when it comes to acquiring a foreign language autonomously, particularly when it aligns with the student`s personal interests (Lee and Oxford 2008; Sung 2011). This is believed to be instrumental in personally engaging students in the learning process, thereby assisting them in structuring their learning objectives and enhancing their language acquisition (Tragant and Victori 2012).

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Progress in language education has highlighted the importance of nurturing LA encompassing both innate psycholinguistic abilities and information provided as part of classroom instruction (Komorowska 2014). Consequently, there has been a noticeable increase in demand for an educational strategy that effectively integrates language acquisition with the development of autonomous knowledge acquisition skills, nurturing both aspects of language awareness and promoting learner self-efficacy. LA in the psycholinguistic sense is part of our innate ability to acquire and process language, while more in the educational sense it is knowledge about language that is passed on to learners during classroom instruction (Arnó 2017; Little 2007). Second language pedagogy is now faced with the challenge of fostering LA in students. In a psychological sense, the gradual development of language awareness is necessary to achieve proficiency in the spontaneous use of spoken language and in turn, in the context of language knowledge, LA is the basis and necessary element for critical reflection and analysis (Garrett 2006; Leow 2020). In the case of second language learning, most learners typically do not possess an ingrained understanding of the target language, meaning they lack psycholinguistic awareness in that regard. However, in the classroom setting, learning predominantly starts with the description of definitions, analysis and explanation of various aspects related to the target language. Thus, almost from the very beginning, students gain exposure to language awareness in the form of knowledge. The supporters of the Grammar-Translation Approach advocate that learning should begin by providing grammatical rules in the expectation that learners will, over time, be able to apply them in real-life situations (Little 2010). While this approach was not a complete failure, it did not meet the expectations of the majority because only those students who exhibited an analytical mindset could use it and succeeded. The Grammar-Translation Approach proved uneconomical and was therefore replaced by the Communicative Approach, also called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), in the 1980s. (Kumar et al. 2013; Zhao 2022). This approach focuses on language as a medium of communication and is far more learner-centered as it is driven by the learner's needs and interests. Moreover, it emphasizes the use of language in authentic situations, attempting to incorporate authentic materials that are typically more interesting, inspiring and motivating for student, while also serving as a partial alternative to interactions with native speaker communities (Irmawati 2012). According to Richards (2006), the primary aim of educators adopting the Communicative Approach, is to teach communicative competence. This means instructing learners on how to effectively use language for its

intended purpose, demonstrating the appropriate language use based on various contexts (such as formal or informal speech), teaching them how to generate and understand diverse types of texts (including reports, interviews, and everyday conversations), and ultimately helping learners recognize their ability to communicate with others even when facing certain limitations. The key is employ different communication strategies as needed.

Although CLT has gained the approval from educators and is actively promoted in many European school systems due to its potential for establishing attainable communicative learning objectives for most students, it is not ideal and its drawbacks can also be found (Zhao 2022). According to Dos Santos (2020), it is essential to recognize the importance of diversity among students, as different individuals require varying degrees of emphasis on specific skills. For instance, international students might prioritize enhancing both their speaking and writing abilities to meet the demands of numerous projects and dissertations. In contrast, beginning learners may want to concentrate on building foundational skills for a more holistic and comprehensive language development. Little (2010) argues that in communicative approach not much attention was given to linguistic form, leading to a widespread perception that it was at odds with fostering language awareness and a deep understanding of the target language. Furthermore, this approach tends to produce learners who excel in a limited set of spoken communication situations but struggle in unfamiliar contexts. These learners also have limited exposure to written language (Norland and Pruett-Said 2006) as a means of expression and possess minimal knowledge of the phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexis of their target language. Consequently, they lack language awareness and the opportunity to cultivate the competence of an autonomous learner because, as Little suggests, "autonomy lies outside their experience" (2010: 100). Teachers of foreign language should concentrate on different aspects of communicative competence, with a crucial emphasis on tailoring their methods to each student's specific needs. It is important to recognize that even within a single group, students' requirements may change as the class progresses (Dos Santos 2020).

When evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of current teaching methods, it becomes evident that there is a compelling need to identify an approach that effectively combines language acquisition with the ability to learn independently. In the era of postmethod pedagogy, as proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1994), the focus shifts from finding a new or better method to seeking an alternative to traditional methods.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues that any attempt to discover a new method within the existing methodological framework is conditioned by the construct of marginality and thus suffers from fundamental flaws. Post method pedagogy emphasizes the parameters of "particularity, practicality, and possibility" (Kumaravadivelu 2003: 544), advocating a combination of methods and techniques that support natural learning processes and foster learner autonomy. This ideal approach should place the target language at the center as a natural mode of communication while acknowledging its inherent rule system. In simpler terms, the educational field requires a pedagogical approach that fosters both forms of language awareness with the ultimate goal of enabling learner autonomy (Little 2010). Just such an approach can be observed in the teaching practices of Dam (Dam 1995) and Thomsen (Thomsen and Gabrielsen 1991), who teach English in one of the middle schools near Copenhagen. True, the conditions may have been somewhat more favorable for them than average as English can be heard very frequently in Denmark and the number of pupils in the class is lower than usual, but still, one cannot deny the success that these two educators and their students have achieved. Early on, they identified two crucial issues that brought them closer to learner autonomy, which were student initiative and viewing assessment as a continuous process (Thomsen 2000). Their approach to achieving this success primarily revolved around developing learner autonomy not only in language learning but also in language usage. Consequently, students were encouraged to acknowledge their responsibility for their own learning process and were expected to actively use the English language during class. Together with pupils, they defined teaching goals, methods, and content while also assessing the effectiveness of the learning activities, which resulted in the development of learners' language awareness in the context of education. Furthermore, they emphasized the significance of acquiring a foreign language through its practical application and insisted on using English within the classroom (Little 2010). Nonetheless, it is believed that Dam and Thomsen's emphasis on writing serves as an important interface between the explicit processes of language learning and the implicit processes of spontaneous language use. In their roles as English teachers, Dam and Thomsen required their students to compose a range of texts on subjects of personal interest, such as self-descriptions, letters to friends, short stories, and more (Little and Kirwan 2019). This educational approach cultivates learner autonomy by placing them at the forefront of the learning process, driven by their interest in the texts they create. It also serves as a pedagogical link between both forms of language awareness (Little 20210). To elaborate further, these written texts that learners are tasked

with composing facilitate both the practical and introspective use of spoken language, thereby promoting language awareness in a psychological sense. Simultaneously, they serve as a point of reference for explicit knowledge about the target language, allowing for development through analysis and evaluation (Little 2010; Little and Kirwan 2019). Caceres-Lorenzo (2015) also highlights a strong link between language awareness and learner autonomy. According to the author, nurturing language awareness is crucial for ongoing foreign language learning, especially when it is in line with students' individual interests. This heightened awareness serves as a significant stimulant, motivating students to actively participate in exam preparation, thereby aiding them in structuring their learning goals and improving their language awareness (Tragant and Victori 2012).

Although there is no universal agreement on the exact definitions of learner autonomy, it is notable that both awareness and reflection have consistently emerged as prominent characteristics in the literature on learner autonomy dating back to the 1970s (Lamb 2017). Jiménez Raya and Lamb (2008) propose that a thorough examination of the literature on learner autonomy indicates the presence of two primary orientations. The first one, referred to as "independent learning", focuses on self-management, specifically emphasizing external elements that facilitate learners in assuming responsibility for different aspects of the learning process, including planning and evaluating one's progress. Essentially, this orientation entails learners being capable of making decisions regarding their learning throughout the entire process (Lamb 2017). Notably, this orientation aligns with the autonomy definition put forth by Henri Holec (1981) which tends to be the most widespread and accepted. The second orientation, as identified by Jiménez Raya and Lamb (2008) and termed "autonomous learning", is rooted in cognitive psychology. It places its focus on internal factors, specifically those cognitive and psychological aspects that predispose learners to assume responsibility and control over their thoughts and actions. This perspective embodies a particular form of self-awareness and self-regulation among learners, closely associated with the development of motivation, learning strategies (both cognitive and metacognitive), and metacognitive knowledge and beliefs. These elements are also evident in David Little's definition of autonomy, where he describes it as fundamentally "a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (1991: 4). Lamb (2017) concludes that while both of these orientations of learner autonomy originate from rationalist traditions, they offer two distinct yet complementary conceptions of the learner autonomy construct.

The Council of Europe has contributed significantly to developments concerning learner autonomy, which was subsequently followed by the development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, designed to foster a common understanding of foreign language proficiency. The teaching methods recommended by the CEFR clearly aim to promote learner autonomy, emphasizing the importance of "raising the learner's awareness of his or her present state of knowledge; self-setting of feasible and worthwhile objectives; selection of materials; self-assessment" (Council of Europe 2001), alongside "ability to learn" being an explicit competence to be enhanced (Lamb 2020: 177).

The European Language Portfolio plays a role in facilitating learners' awareness and their reflections on it. Essentially, the portfolio serves two primary purposes: one is to provide a means for reporting, and the other is to serve as a pedagogical tool. To be more precise, it complements certificates and diplomas by providing additional information about the owner's language learning experience and specific evidence of second language skills and achievements. It gives the owner the opportunity to document language learning that has taken place not only within formal education but also outside of it (Ziegler 2014; Kohonen 2004). In pedagogical terms, on the other hand, the ELP serves to promote plurilingualism, raises cultural awareness, enhances the language learning process for the owner and ultimately supports the development of learner autonomy (Little 2002). As described in Little (2002) the ELP consists of three compulsory elements which are as follows:

- A language passport, which summarizes the owner's language identity through brief information about experience, formal qualifications, and the owner's self-assessment of their current proficiency in familiar foreign languages.
- A language biography, which offers space for reflection, serves to set goals in language learning, monitor progress and record particularly important language learning and intercultural experiences.
- Dossier, which is used to collect records of learning that validate and best reflect the owner's proficiency in a foreign language and cross-cultural experiences.

Finally, it is important to highlight the contribution of Little (1997) in the field of language awareness and learner autonomy, who explores the relationship between learner autonomy and language awareness, employing Karmiloff-Smith's (1992) "representational redescription" model. This model conceptualizes learning as the

continuous representation and re-representation of knowledge at various levels of explicitness. Little (1997) distinguishes between two forms of language awareness: one that is possibly innate and independent of conscious reflection, and another acquired through formal or informal learning (Benson 2011). He argues that as knowledge of language shifts from implicit to explicit, it becomes influenced by both internal and external sources (Little 1997). He also contends that fostering autonomy means enabling learners to maximize their learning potential through critical reflection and self-evaluation, allowing them to become independent users of their target language. Furthermore, Little emphasizes the interconnectedness of learning-to-learn goals and language learning goals, emphasizing that true autonomy blurs the lines between language use and language learning. Proficiency in spontaneous language use depends on the gradual development of language awareness, which serves as the foundation for critical reflection and analysis, encompassing both implicit and explicit metalinguistic knowledge (Benson 2011: 111).

3.4.   Language awareness and its relation to success

Language awareness is a fundamental component of success in language (Kelly 2019). It encompasses various aspects of language acquisition, from grammar and vocabulary (Yanti 2012) to cultural understanding and mindset (Dufva 1994). Developing language awareness not only accelerates language learning process but also enhances overall proficiency and confidence in using the language effectively (Tulasiewicz 1997: 394; Fortune 2005: 35)

Language awareness encompasses various elements, including understanding language learning strategies, considering cultural context, recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses, or engaging in self-assessment. Language learning strategies, for instance, constitute conscious and controlled approaches to language acquisition (Pressley and McCormick 1995). Having an understanding of these strategies empowers individuals to choose most appropriate techniques that align with their learning preferences, thus increasing their effectiveness (Zając-Knapik 2020). Moreover, making deliberate and conscious choices regarding suitable strategies increases learners' self-confidence and encourages greater autonomy in their foreign language learning process (Piotrowski 2011). As emphasized by Barcroft (2009), successful learners are those who adeptly

manage these strategies, fostering both independence and the development of language awareness (Caceres- Lorenzo 2015). Finally, as emphasized by Dufva (1994), when learners become conscious of their strengths and weaknesses and set specific goals, this awareness proves beneficial for recognizing the accessible resources and strategies that can be instrumental in attaining these objectives.

Likewise, cultural context holds significant importance within LA, extending beyond language and its structural aspects to encompass pragmatic and social dimensions in communication. Understanding the customs and social norms of the target language proves crucial for using the language appropriately and respectfully. Dufva (1994) highlights the existence of distinct communicative styles and nonverbal behaviors, leading to noticeable disparities between the source and target cultures. One needs to be aware, that culture entails not only observable external elements like manners, habits, customs, or rituals but also internal facets such as beliefs, attitudes, notions, and conceptual frameworks held by individuals within that culture (Holland and Quinn 1987). Schmidt (1994) posits that successful learning necessitates the conscious attention to linguistic form, which involves noticing linguistic features rather than merely being aware of grammatical rules. Lamb (2017) underscores the importance of striking a balance between focusing on meaning and form in language learning. Research conducted in the 1990s indicated that to achieve success in language acquisition, one must pay heed to form, meaning, and language learning strategies concurrently (Naiman et al. 1978). Cummins (2005) highlights that the development of language awareness goes beyond merely studying a language's formal aspects, but it also entails fostering critical language awareness, which involves investigating the intricate relationship between language and power dynamics. The goal is not solely to demystify language but also to strengthen students` sense of self-identity. To facilitate successful language learning, students can conduct research on various language varieties, such as colloquial and formal "standard" language, critically analyzing why one is often perceived as superior. Additionally, they can explore topics like code-switching and its roles in their personal lives as well as bilingual communities (Delpit 1998).

Furthermore, according Baker and Prys Jones (1998), increased LA offers multiple advantages and therefore plays a pivotal role in achieving success in language learning. To begin, it helps "to make explicit a student's implicit knowledge of their first language or languages" (Baker and Prys Jones 1998: 628) meaning that LA assists learners in recognizing and articulating the rules and patterns that are often instinctual in their native

language. By making this implicit knowledge explicit, learners gain a deeper understanding of their own language, which can serve as a strong foundation for acquiring a foreign language (Svalberg 2012). Secondly, LA cultivates essential language study skills by providing learners with valuable analytical and problem-solving abilities necessary for effective language acquisition. It encourages them to explore linguistic phenomena, at the same time enabling them to become more autonomous and efficient learners (Dmitrenko et al. 2020). Moreover, increased LA facilitates the development of a comprehensive perception and comprehension of language (Baker and Prys Jones 1998), encompassing its grammatical structure, syntax, semantics, and pragmatic functions. This broader perspective empowers learners to employ language effectively across diverse contexts and forms (Yanti 2012). Additionally, it contributes to increased effectiveness in communication as it enhances learners' ability to express themselves clearly and appropriately (Gray 1994). Finally, through its exploration of language diversity, LA fosters an appreciation of the multitude of linguistic forms and dialects. As a result, language awareness can "develop an understanding of the richness of language variety" (Baker and Prys Jones 1998: 628- 632).

The significance of language awareness and its potential benefits are also underscored in the recent policy document from the European Commission, titled "Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages" (European Commission 2018) The Commission's proposal strongly advocates the inclusion of language awareness as an integral component of the curriculum, underscoring the importance of prioritizing language learning outcomes and improving language education in compulsory schooling. Moreover, according to Yanti (2012), the introduction of LA in an academic environment holds merit since it promotes bilingualism, which can enhance other cognitive skills like metacognition and metalinguistic capabilities. Additionally, it encourages independent learning as it motivates learners to investigate how language functions and how it can be used for conveying and constructing meanings. According to Kelly (2019), language awareness may develop proficiency in one's native language as well as motivate learners to acquire more foreign languages. Moreover, it encompasses skills such as using language to acquire knowledge and insights about the world, and cultivating the ability to reflect on how language is used, both by oneself and others. She adds that from a theoretical perspective, the promotion of language awareness is undeniably a valuable objective (Kelly 2019). Cummins (2005: 16) emphasizes the objective of developing among

students "a culture of inquiry into language" and its functioning across various social contexts. She also lists various activities that can be considered part of a language-focused approach for developing CLA. These activities include, among others, exploring how language serves different functions and objectives, understanding the conventions of various musical and literary forms, comparing languages across different cultures, studying how oral and written discourse is structured to convey powerful and persuasive messages, or examining the diversity of language usage in both monolingual and multilingual settings (Cummins 2005).

According to James and Garrett (1991), LA activities encompass five distinct domains, each offering unique benefits to learners. These domains continue to be referenced and explored by scholars till today:

1. In the cognitive domain, LA focuses on language patterns, aiming to enhance awareness in teaching and learning across various subjects while bridging the gap between native and foreign language instruction.
2. Within the affective domain, LA addresses attitudes, fostering tolerance and understanding toward diverse varieties of English and the multitude of home languages spoken by students.
3. The social domain of LA emphasizes the role of language in effective communication, aiming to increase tolerance and improve intergroup relations.
4. In the power domain, LA seeks to raise awareness of manipulative language use, exposing hidden meanings, assumptions, and rhetorical devices, thereby dispelling the myth of infallibility surrounding native speakers.
5. Lastly, in the performance domain, LA endeavors to enhance learners' command of language through increased awareness, potentially leading to improved linguistic proficiency.
(based on: James and Garrett 1991; Fehling 2008; Finkbeiner and White 2017).

3.5.   Final reflections: Perceiving success through autonomy and language awareness

This dissertation focuses on the interplay between personal perceptions of success, language awareness, and autonomous language learning. The concluding section will

therefore synthesize these three concepts to demonstrate how learner autonomy influences students' perceptions of success in language learning, highlighting the crucial role of language awareness in this process.

In the era of autonomization of the learning process, success in language learning is perceived as multifaceted and dynamic, influenced by an individual's hierarchy of values, personal goals, and experiences. Its' perception varies among learners, evolving over time as their objectives change (Widła 2014; Lankiewicz 2018). LA has emerged as a critical component in this context, contributing significantly to faster language acquisition, improved proficiency, and increased confidence (Fortune 2005; Komorowska 2014; Kelly 2019). Language awareness fosters independent learning by motivating learners to explore language functions and construct meaning (Yanti 2012). It includes understanding language learning strategies, recognizing cultural contexts, and assessing personal strengths and weaknesses (Pressley and McCormick 1995; Zając-Knapik 2020). This empowerment aligns with the principles of learner autonomy, emphasizing the learner's central role in the educational process (Piotrowski 2011).

Learner autonomy is fundamental for achieving successful language learning outcomes. It empowers students to take responsibility for their learning and manage their independent study, which is essential for success (Pawlak 2011). Research shows a positive correlation between learner autonomy and academic performance, with autonomy enhancing information retention and fostering a lifelong learning mindset (Apple 2011; Ng et al. 2011; Han 2021; Oates 2019). Van Lier's (1996) AAA curriculum (awareness, autonomy, and authenticity) emphasizes teaching methods that encourage and guide learning rather than force it, highlighting the importance of learner choice and responsibility. Successful language learning involves active engagement with materials and resources beyond the prescribed curriculum, with teachers playing a crucial role in fostering autonomous behavior (Benson 2010; Palfreyman and Benson 2019). Moreover, LA is a key component, as it enhances students' ability to reflect on and understand language use, thereby improving learning efficiency. The European Commission (2018) also advocates the inclusion of LA as an integral part of the curriculum, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing language learning outcomes and improving language education. By integrating autonomy and LA into their learning processes, students are more likely to perceive their language learning as successful.

The relationship between LA and learner autonomy is deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing in language learning. Autonomy enables learners to use their LA to

take control of their learning, make informed decisions, and adjust their strategies as needed. Conversely, heightened language awareness empowers learners by providing the insights and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of language acquisition independently. Autonomous learners effectively manage language learning strategies, fostering both independence and the development of language awareness (Barcroft 2009; Caceres-Lorenzo 2015). As Dufva (1994) notes, learners who are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and set specific goals benefit from this awareness by identifying accessible resources and strategies essential for achieving their objectives. This heightened awareness allows learners to perceive their success in more individualized and self-directed ways, demonstrating the profound impact of autonomy on personal success perception in language learning. Ultimately, learners who exhibit autonomous characteristics and have heightened language awareness are more likely to view their success in language learning as a result of their own efforts, strategies, and personal growth. They see their proficiency as deeply personal, recognizing that it is evaluated according to their individual expectations and beliefs, rather than being defined solely by external standards.

II. Empirical part: Personal perception of success under scrutiny

Chapter 4 - Research project

Having elucidated the theoretical background, this chapter aims to present a comprehensive research project. It is a largely a qualitative study supported with statistical data analysis to enhance its reliability validity following the principle of methodological triangulation. This approach seeks to underscore the role of language as a reflective tool, thereby promoting its transformative potential for educators and foreign language learners. By focusing on the current realities of language use, the study encourages a critical understanding of the complexities inherent in foreign language learning. The ultimate objective is to investigate the relationship between language awareness and perceptions of success in the context of autonomous language learning. This chapter introduces the research background, outlines the main assumptions, and describes the research design, including the research questions and hypotheses. It also details the research group, followed by an extensive analysis of the collected data. The evaluation of hypotheses is conducted, and the findings and discussion section addresses the research questions, provides a thorough discussion, and highlights the significance of the research. Both theoretical and practical implications are considered. Finally, the chapter outlines the limitations of the study, offer recommendations for future research, and present concluding remarks.

4.1.   Research background

The perception of success in autonomous language learning represents a pivotal area of research within the modern field of language education. Given the increasing emphasis within contemporary educational frameworks on learner autonomy and personalized learning approaches that prioritize student-centered teaching, understanding how individuals perceive and define their own success becomes essential. Success in language learning is now recognized not merely as meeting external measurements or achieving predefined outcomes, but primarily as learners' subjective evaluation of their progress, satisfaction and personal growth (Xiao 2012). It is intricately linked with language awareness, a metacognitive skill that empowers learners to make informed decisions

about their language learning strategies and processes (Ruiz de Zarobe and Smala 2020) thereby enhancing the effectiveness of language learning (Caceres-Lorenzo 2015).

This thesis explores the relationship between language awareness and personal perception of success in the context of autonomous language learning. By investigating these dynamics, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how increased language awareness influences learners' subjective definitions of success, while also assessing the extent to which they exhibit traits typical of autonomous language learners. Understanding learners' success perception and its connection to language awareness is of utmost importance, as it can inform educational policies, pedagogical practices, and the design of self-directed language learning resources. This research, thereby, contributes to the broader field of language acquisition and pedagogy, offering insights into the nuances of autonomous language learning, especially relevant in language education in general.

In the field of autonomy, language awareness, and learning success, despite a wealth of publications, a persistent lack of clarity and the need for further investigation remains evident. Researchers have approached the concept of learner autonomy in various and often contradictory ways, with no uniform definition (Tyczka-Nowak 2022). Similarly, the concept of language awareness faces challenges with unclear definitions and a lack of consensus in existing literature (Danilewicz 2011; Komorowska 2022). Success, in turn, emerges as a highly subjective and multidimensional construct that varies from person to person (Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı 2019) making it inherently challenging to define.

Although previous research indicates positive connections between learner autonomy and academic performance (Pawlak 2011; Lowe 2009; Ng et al. 2011; Ezzi 2021), and higher levels of language awareness are associated with enhanced language proficiency (Komorowska 2014) and are anticipated to impact how learners perceive success (Kelly 2019), there remains a need for further research to clarify how learner autonomy, perceptions of success, and language awareness interact with each other. To the best of the author's knowledge, there is no existing paper that integrate all these aspects simultaneously. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the complex interplay among learner autonomy, perceptions of success, and language awareness within the context of learning English as a foreign language.

Throughout the research, the author of the thesis decided to adopt a mixed methods research approach (Biesta 2010; Morgan 2014; Kaushik and Walsh 2019), which combines both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Utilizing this data

collection strategy serves to offer a comprehensive and holistic analysis, striving to provide a more thorough and impartial representation of the subject under examination (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006). The primary rationale behind selecting participatory action research as the predominant qualitative method in this study lies in its alignment with the research goals of deriving insights from implemented interventions and subsequently applying this acquired knowledge for the benefit of others. This phase of the research aimed to enhance participants' linguistic awareness and assess whether heightened linguistic awareness translates into altered perceptions of success. Moreover, by collecting data from students on their autonomy levels, language awareness, and success perceptions at the outset of the research and after a series of awareness-raising meetings, the author was able to conduct a straightforward, descriptive statistical analysis. The final phase involved conducting focus group interview to gain a deeper understanding of the changes throughout the process and enabled the triangulation of methodological data.

4.2. Main assumptions

In the pursuit of the goals of this research, several fundamental assumptions underpin the study. First of all, the research operates on the premise that students are actively engaged in autonomous language learning (Blidi 2017), appearing as interdependent agents (Lamb 2017) who carefully choose their learning strategies (Oxford 2017; Hogh and Muller-Hilke 2021; Zając-Knapik 2020), set linguistic goals (Klimas 2017), and consistently evaluate their progress, which enable them to become more efficient language learners (Rahman 2018).

Acknowledging the prevailing phenomenon of multilingualism in today's globalized context (Rao 2019; McKay and Brown 2016), the study assumes that students are increasingly becoming proficient in multiple languages. They frequently interact with languages different from their native tongue, laying the foundation for the development of multicompetence (Lankiewicz 2023a).

The research is founded on the belief that multilingual and multicompetent individuals possess the capacity for reflective growth (Marlina 2018; Schuttz 2019). Through continuous self-assessment and active reflection, learners adapt their linguistic strategies and adjust their multilingual goals, fostering a dynamic perception of success that encompasses the diverse facets of multi-competence (Cook 1991; Ezzi 2021; Pawlak 2011). Furthermore, the perception of success is considered highly subjective (Widła

2014), driven by an autonomous approach and significantly influenced by the contemporary hierarchy of values and evolving personal goals (Lankiewicz 2018; 2023).

In light of the evolving nature of the English language, as the study has been narrowed to and focused on English language alone, defining success becomes an increasingly intricate task. English is perpetually transforming into a global lingua franca with a multitude of diverse varieties and functions (Galloway and Rose 2017; Tan et al. 2020). No longer confined to a singular, monolithic "correct" form (Marlina 2018; Schuttz 2019), it now represents a dynamic and diverse spectrum of linguistic variations (Dos Santos 2020).

Finally, this research posits that language awareness, which encompasses metalinguistic knowledge and reflection on language use, acts as a pivotal mediating factor in the relationship between autonomous language learning and the personal perception of success. It is expected that higher levels of language awareness correlates with higher levels of language proficiency (Komorowska 2014) and will significantly enhance learners' perception of success in their language learning process (Kelly 2019).

4.3.   Research design

The primary objective of this research is to examine the relationship between the level of language awareness and students' self-perceived success in autonomous English language learning. The hypothesis to be verified posits that promoting reflection to develop linguistic awareness can lead to more deliberate learner behavior, reshape their view of the language acquisition process, and ultimately change their perception of success.

This study employs a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of mixed methods allows for a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between language awareness and students' perception of success in foreign language acquisition. It provides the opportunity to capture both the depth of individual experiences and the wide range of quantitative patterns in the data. This research aims to uncover and understand the complex dynamics of language awareness and its influence on the perception of success in foreign language learning. The exploratory approach is well-suited to the objectives of gaining insights into this relatively underexplored area.

The study includes different research techniques and tools. First of all, questionaries were administrated among students to gather quantitative data regarding participants attitudes to autonomy, language awareness and self-perception of success in English language acquisition. In late October, the initial phase of the research began, involving 47 students from the entire first-year group of the Applied Linguistics program for the academic year 2023/2024 who completed the form. It was followed by participatory action research aimed at rising students' language awareness. This part of the research was carried out during the winter semester, being launched at the very beginning of November and concluded in January the following year. It consisted of 7 meetings in total, each lasting approximately an hour and a half. These awareness-raising sessions were conducted by the researcher in person at the University of Gdańsk as a part of a compulsory Practical English class course for a selected first-year group the researcher was teaching. Finally, focus group interview was conducted with the same group of students to elicit qualitative data, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of their experiences and perceptions as well as data triangulation. With the students' consent, the interview was recorded, enabling full attention to be dedicated to the ongoing conversation rather than transcription.

Once the entire data collection process was complete, quantitative data was analyzed using statistical description to identify patterns and correlations while qualitative data was transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to extract rich insights from the intervention and the research as a whole.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language awareness and students' perception of success in learning a globalized English language. Its outcome can contribute to the fields of Applied Linguistics and language education by further promoting the idea of autonomy in language learning and teaching. These research findings offer recommendations for both academia and practical application. Specifically, they are aimed at researchers in Applied Linguistics, language education, and related fields; policy makers and curriculum developers responsible for shaping educational policies; and academic institutions dedicated to language studies and teaching. From a practical perspective, they are intended for educators, including teachers and lecturers in language education, linguistics, and related subjects, as well as the learners themselves. These recommendations:

- encourage a critical understanding of the complexity of foreign language learning, moving away from normative approaches and sensitizing learners to a more critical acceptance of established rules;

- emphasize the role of language as a form of reflection, thereby promoting its transformative potential for educators and foreign language learners, focusing on the current realities of language use and offering alternative approaches for effective learning;

- highlight the importance of cognitive processes, which are essential for effective language learning and a full comprehension of achieved success.

4.4.   Research questions and hypotheses

Taking into account the theoretical considerations and existing research in the relevant field, the author of this thesis has developed the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Question One (RQ1): Do 1st-year students of Applied Linguistics demonstrate traits and behaviors associated with autonomous language learners?

Hypothesis: Students actively engage in autonomous language learning, consciously choosing learning strategies, setting linguistic goals, and continuously evaluating their progress to become more efficient language learners.

Research Question Two (RQ2): What is the extent of language awareness demonstrated by first-year students before the reflection sessions begin?

Hypothesis: First-year students typically display a moderate level of language awareness, indicated by their choice of study which suggests an interest in and some level of awareness of language. However, their awareness is not expected to be at high level, considering their early stage of study.

Research Question Three (RQ3): How do 1st-year students of Applied Linguistics perceive their success before the reflection sessions begin?

Hypothesis: With an anticipated moderate level of linguistic awareness, the perception of success is likely to prioritize objective measures, such as assessments of linguistic competence or comparisons with native speakers, over subjective self-evaluation.

Research Question Four (RQ4): What is the relationship between language awareness and students' perceived success in autonomous English language learning after reflection sessions?

To enhance precision and clarity, the research question regarding the relationship between language awareness and students' perceived success in autonomous English language learning will be pursued by additional questions:

a) How does language awareness shape students' foundational criteria for evaluating success and their inclination towards prioritizing external measurements?

b) How does language awareness influence students' perception of success in acquiring various language skills?

c) How does language awareness influence whether students prioritize language proficiency over acknowledging language learning as an ongoing process and the satisfaction derived from their progress?

Hypothesis: Language awareness acts as a pivotal mediating factor in the relationship between autonomous language learning and personal perception of success. Specifically, language awareness affects:

a) The emphasis students place on native speaker competence, with higher levels leading them to value their progress as second language learners.

b) Learners' perception of success, broadening it to include effective communication and interaction within English-speaking contexts.

c) The measurement of success, with higher levels leading to it being primarily based on personal progress and self-confidence.

4.5. Research group

The research group comprises first-year undergraduate students enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts program in Applied Linguistics within the Department of Languages at the University of Gdańsk. The study included a total of 16 students who agreed to participate after receiving adequate information about its objectives. The majority of the participants were female, with only 2 males of similar age, ranging from 19 to 20 years old.

The group was selected through convenience sampling but the choice was not accidental. First year Applied Linguistics students are expected to have a higher level of language awareness compared to an average English language learner due to their knowledge of foreign languages as well as an interest in the language and its associated aspects. At the same time, considering the early stage of their academic education, the author of this paper posits, based on her own observations, that the level of language awareness may not have reached the same advanced and mature state observed in students graduating in Applied Linguistics.

The selected group can be characterized by its lively and enthusiastic members who eagerly participate in extra activities, making their involvement in a project highly engaging. Their fluency in foreign languages facilitated seamless execution of all project-related tasks in English. There was a friendly atmosphere among students where everyone feels at ease expressing their thoughts and ideas openly. Throughout the research, regular face-to-face interactions between the researcher and the students were conducted weekly to discuss specific topics and collaboratively address any challenges that arose. There were precisely seven meetings during the winter semester of 2023/2024, each focusing on different aspects of language awareness. These meetings began in early November and concluded in January of the following year.

4.6. Research methodology

The author of the thesis decided to apply the mixed methods research (see Biesta 2010; Morgan 2014; Kaushik and Walsh 2019) as it integrates both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to increase confidence in the findings. Scholars are not in consensus regarding the terminology used to denote studies that integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods. Within the existing literature, various terms are used to describe this methodology, including multitrait-multimethod research, interrelating qualitative and quantitative data, methodological triangulation, multimethodological research mixed model studies, and ultimately, mixed method research (Creswell et al. 2003: 165). The latter term, "mixed method research", appears to be the most widely accepted within the research community (Dörnyei 2007; Creswell et al. 2003). Nowadays, mixed methods research is widely recognized as a third research approach in methodology, alongside qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson et al. 2007: 112). However, its conceptual

foundations dates back to 1978 when the key premise of mixed methods research was formulated (Denzin 1978). Namely, he stated that methodological triangulation can help reduce the inherent weakness of a particular method by counterbalancing it with the strength of another one. In this way, both internal and external validity of the research can be maximized (Dörnyei 2007: 43). Later on, mixed method researchers gained ideological certainty, being supported by the philosophy of pragmatism. Consequently, there has been a growing consensus in recent years, particularly within Applied Linguistics, urging researchers to incorporate mixed methodologies into their investigations, which can be summarized in Lazaraton's words: "I would also hope that we would see more studies that combine qualitative and quantitative research methods, since each highlights "reality" in different, yet complementary, way" (2005: 219). O`Leary (2014: 147) cited by Silverman (2020: 403) enumerates a list of advantages of mixed methods. In broad terms, such an approach allows researchers to examine a subject matter from multiple perspectives. This multifaceted viewpoint is achieved primarily due to the capacity of mixed methods to effectively use the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data. It also facilitates a shift away from mere numerical analysis, directing attention towards the exploration of meanings. Additionally, mixed methods offer more than just one way of looking at a situation as well as enhance the credibility of researchers' findings through the process of data triangulation. Triangulation generally refers to the combination of multiple theories, methods, observers and empirical materials, allowing the researcher to create a more comprehensive yet objective representation of the object of study (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006). Methodological triangulation, which entails the utilization of diverse research methods (Denzin 2017), emphasizes the practical aspect of research methods (Morgan 2013). Overall, triangulation is a valuable strategy whenever one seeks to explore a topic from diverse viewpoints and perspectives (Shea 2021: 72; Myers 2020: 10). Through the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, so a "fuller picture" (Myers 2020: 10) of what is happening, can be attained.

In the research, a two-pronged approach to data collection was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods. Initially, a comprehensive data collection instrument in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix) was developed, which is segmented into three distinct sections, each addressing different aspects. The first section aimed to evaluate the level of autonomy among participants. The second section focused on assessing language awareness, while the final one explored students' perceptions of

success. This structured questionnaire was distributed to all first-year students of Applied Linguistics at the University of Gdansk at the beginning of the research project. Sections 2 and 3, pertaining to language awareness and perceptions of success, were re-administered after an interval of 8 weeks to a chosen subset of students, subsequent to seven specifically designed and conducted awareness-raising meetings. To provide clarity, a detailed description of each section follows, outlining the objectives, motivations, and inspirations behind the design of the instrument:

1. The first section of a questionnaire (see Appendix - Section I) concerns an autonomous approach to language learning. Its primary objective was to address the first research question: whether first-year students of Applied Linguistics exhibit traits and behaviors associated with autonomous language learners. The questionnaire design drew inspiration from Holec's (1981) depiction of an autonomous language learner, a widely recognized framework in the field. Within this section, the questionnaire comprised 10 deliberately contradictory statements, reflecting diverse attitudes toward language learning. Moreover, the chosen measurement instrument employed a semantic differential scale, wherein respondents mark a continuum defined by opposing statements at the extremes. Using a 5-point scale, respondents were tasked with expressing their preference for one phrase over the other. This approach acknowledges that autonomous behavior is not characterized by a simple dichotomy of all or nothing, but rather represents an evolving process towards greater autonomy. The use of the differential scale facilitated the capture of respondents' feelings and attitudes without requiring explicit verbalization. To minimize potential biases or self-deception effects (Hopkins et al. 1990), the statements were alternately arranged to avoid consistently favoring any specific set of attitudes. Furthermore, the organization of these statements follows a cross-check methodology, which aims to validate and confirm students' stances by comparing it against another source. After conducting an extensive search and review of existing tools for assessing autonomy in both Polish and English literature, the author of the thesis opted to develop a customized questionnaire specifically tailored to evaluate the level of autonomy attained by first-year language students. The presented statement pairs were carefully designed to assess the extent to which students exhibit

characteristics associated with autonomous learning, drawing inspiration from Holec (1981). These encompass various behaviors, including:

- Expressing one's will and taking responsibility for one's own learning (Statement Pair, hence SP#1 & SP#2).
- Being able to define one's own goals (SP#3 & SP#4).
- Being capable of defining the content of the learning material and monitoring its progress (SP#5 & SP#6).
- Selecting the methods and techniques to be employed (SP#7 & SP#8).
- Monitoring the learning process and evaluating acquired knowledge (SP#9 & SP#10).

2. In line with Carter's (1994) comprehensive definition of language awareness, as previously quoted in section 3.1, the second section of the instrument explores LA through 13 contradictory statements, collectively addressing various facets of linguistic awareness. Using a semantic differential scale, where respondents place marks on a continuum defined by opposing statements at the extremes, students are tasked with indicating, on a 5-point scale, their alignment with each statement pair. The primary objective of this section is to assess the extent of language awareness demonstrated by first-year students before the commencement of the reflection sessions, concurrently addressing the second research question. The motivation behind formulating statement pairs stems from Carter's comprehensive definition which encompasses an understanding of language's inherent properties, incorporating elements such as its potential for double meanings, creativity, and playfulness (corresponding to SP#1, SP#2, SP#3). Furthermore, his definition acknowledges the intricate relationship between language and culture, where idioms and metaphors often serve as cultural indicators (reflected in SP#8, SP#9, SP#10, SP#11). Within the framework of Carter's definition, LA extends to self-awareness concerning the structured nature of language. This involves recognizing that while language is systematically organized, the connections between linguistic forms and meanings can, at times, be arbitrary (SP#4, SP#5, SP#6, SP#7). Finally, LA, as per Carter's perspective, encompasses an awareness of the close link between language and ideology. This involves the ability to "see through language" and is represented by SP#12 and SP#13 in the research instrument. Simultaneously, it is important to acknowledge that the design of the

instrument drew inspiration from Lankiewicz's (2015) research, which explored language awareness using comparable criteria, but primarily employed a questionnaire that featured contrasting statements to assess participants' beliefs and attitudes.

3. The third section focuses on understanding students' perspectives on success in learning English as a foreign language. It specifically addresses Research Question Three, exploring the perception of success before undergoing language awareness enhancement sessions. Participants are requested to indicate their level of agreement with 12 statement using a 5-point scale, where numerical value 1 represents strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement. These statements encompass various facets of language learning success, including assessment criteria (native speaker competence versus learner achievement), the importance of achieving native-like fluency in speaking, confidence in communication regardless of accent or errors, proficiency in reading and writing, ease in expressing thoughts and ideas, the notion of continuous improvement versus perfection, satisfaction with progress, and the significance of exams and requirements in defining success. The selected aspects provide a comprehensive view of how students perceive success in learning English as a foreign language. Inspired by theoretical considerations and former research findings, each statement reflects different dimensions, enabling me to capture diverse perspectives and priorities among language learners. These statements are informed by various factors, including the role of English in a globalized context (Crystal 1997; Jenkins 2000; Llurda 2004; Rohmah 2005; Hossain 2024), challenges to the notion of a perfect native speaker (Seidlhofer 2003; Deterding and Lewis 2019; Tan et al. 2020), and critical awareness of language-related factors (Fairclough 1995; Seidlhofer 2003; Carter 2003).

After collecting the data, the researcher conducted a preliminary simple descriptive analysis using Microsoft Excel. This involved examining key measures such as frequency, central tendency, measures of dispersion like range or standard deviation, and measures of position (Cooksey 2020). Summarizing and describing the fundamental characteristics of the dataset enhanced the understanding of the data. Subsequently, the variables essential for the descriptive analysis were identified. Once the dataset had

undergone a comprehensive analysis, the findings were interpreted within the context of the research objectives. The subsequent stage of the research incorporates its qualitative component. In this phase, the author of this dissertation has chosen to undertake action research, more precisely adopting a participatory action research approach (Whyte 1991), with the aim of heightening participants' linguistic awareness. Conducting these language awareness raising sessions allowed a subsequent attempt to answer Research Question Four by investigating the correlation between language awareness and students' perceived success in learning English when there is an improvement in language awareness. The main objective of action research is to solve current practical issues while simultaneously advancing scientific understanding.

In the literature, action research is portrayed as a process in which the researcher simultaneously drives organizational change and thoroughly examines the transformation. This approach is characterized by its collaborative and change-focused nature, requiring active involvement from both researchers and participants. As described by Myers (2020: 69-71), this key distinction sets action research apart from many other methodologies, as it entails the researcher's active participation in initiating interventions and concurrently assessing the outcomes of these interventions. Numerous definitions of action research can be found within the literature, yet the most common is that provided by Rapoport, which states that "Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (1970: 499). Within action research, different types can be distinguished, with one employed by the author of this dissertation referred to as participatory action research (Whyte 1991) (hence PAR). It is a collaborative approach which places significant importance on the active involvement of participants throughout all research stages (Creswell 2014). They are involved both as subjects but also as co-researchers. This participatory approach gives them control over the research process, enabling them to shape the research agenda, contribute to data collection and analysis, and ultimately control the application of the findings (Myers 2020).

A distinctive feature of participatory action research (PAR) is its promotion of both self-awareness and critical awareness, which together drive individual or collective change (McIntyre, 2008). Essentially, PAR seeks to comprehend and enhance the world through transformative actions. Fundamentally, it involves a collective, self-reflective inquiry where researchers and participants work together to understand and improve their

practices and the contexts in which they operate. The process of reflection in PAR is directly linked to action, and its outcome is aimed at empowering individuals to exert greater control over their lives (Baum et al. 2006). Therefore, action research appears as a promising method to broaden the scope of knowledge and enhance the practical significance of my research. This approach provides me, as a researcher, with the opportunity to derive insights from the interventions undertaken and subsequently apply this acquired knowledge for the benefit of others.

Having outlined the description of PAR in the literature, the author will now turn to her own research. By analyzing the literature on developing language awareness in the context of foreign language learning and teaching (e.g., Gabryś-Barker 2019; van den Broek 2020; Komorowska2022), she designed a course framework and prepared the essential materials to implement PAR. These materials include tasks designed to stimulate students to independently look for solutions, open-ended tasks aimed at activating their cognitive skills, examples of referring to metalanguage, and self-assessment components. The materials and the course of the meetings were designed to foster active dialogue, encourage autonomous problem-solving and facilitate the exchange of reflections, with the ultimate goal of increasing language awareness among the participants of the study. These language awareness raising sessions with the students were divided into several thematic meetings related to:

- creativity, playing with language, double meanings, versus following strictly the language rules and principles (session 1: 1st and 2nd meeting)
- self-awareness of the language forms used by the students (session 2: 3rd and 4th meeting)
- cultural properties of language, idioms and metaphors (session 3: 5th and 6th meeting),
- the close relationship between language and ideology (session 4: 7th meeting) (Carter 1994)

Consequently, each session and each meeting is dedicated to a specific aspect. To provide a clear understanding of this research phase, a detailed description is provided below, outlining the proceedings of each reflection session.

<u>Session 1</u>

Meetings 1 & 2: Topic - Creativity, Playing with Language, Double Meanings

Based on Carter`s quote: "awareness of some of the properties of language; creativity and playfulness; its double meanings" (1994: 5)

Aim of this session: Cultivating participants' understanding of language dynamics, emphasizing creativity, playfulness, and the complexity of double meanings. Fostering reflection on individual language perspectives, encouraging exploration of linguistic nuances and the subjective nature of interpretation.

Course of the session:

Meeting 1

1.   Group Discussion:

- How participants see language in the context of playing with it.
- Whether they strictly follow language rules or prefer bending them to own preferences
- The role of language in conveying information versus feelings and emotions.
- Possibility of interpretation problems within the group.

2.   Task – based exploration:

- Exploration of homonyms
- Visualizing words and searching for images online.
- Analyzing various phrases to highlight interpretation differences.
- Differentiating denotative and connotative meanings.
- Analyzing variations in perceptions linked to attitudes toward chosen song excerpts.

Meeting 2

- Discussion on the main function of language.
- Exploration of personal language use and the functions of verbal communication.
- Differentiating sentences between observation, thought, feeling, and need.
- Using an emotional vocabulary wheel.
- Reflecting on a time when a message was misunderstood and the impact of psychological state.
- Discussion on neologisms with examples and creation of neologisms by participants.

Final discussion – Drawing conclusions

Students participate in a final discussion on selected properties of language to consolidate insights gained during the session. After that each student is provided with a reflective card to jot down personal reflections.

Reflective Card Prompt:

> Considering everything we have talked about, has anything changed in your thinking? Did you learn something new or become aware of something? Write your reflections on how you now see language in the context of double meanings, playfulness, etc.

<u>Session 2</u>

Meetings 3 & 4: Topic - Self-awareness of language forms we use

Based on Carter's quote: "A greater self-consciousness about the forms of the language we use. We need to recognize that the relations between the forms and meanings of a language are sometimes arbitrary, but that language is a system and that it is for the most part systematically patterned" (1994: 5).

Aim of this session: Deepening participants' awareness of language forms, encouraging critical reflection on language usage, and exploring the nuances of grammatical rules and hyper-correction.

Course of the session:

Meeting 3

1. Group Discussion:
   - Relations between forms and meanings.
   - Effective communication: Standardized language vs. personal meaning assignment.
   - Grammar's role in communication effectiveness.
   - Adapting language to context or audience.
   - Speech parts knowledge and effective communication.
   - Mastering common forms vs. hyper-correction in everyday talk.

2.   Task – based exploration:

- Situation 1: English art class slang (derived from Lankiewicz 2015)
- Situation 2: L2 class humor (derived from Lankiewicz 2015)

Group reflections: Who shapes word meanings? Is there a fixed meaning? Connection between language use and personal identity. L2 class scenarios fostering slang usage and creativity from students' own experience

3.   Group discussion: Are grammatical rules essential or supporting elements in communication?

4.   Task – based exploration:

- Identifying sentence elements
- Exploring sentence word order, adjective word order
- Identifying underlined speech parts.

Meeting 4

1.   Group Discussion: Hyper-correction versus commonly used forms.
2.   Task – based exploration:

- Situations emphasizing strict adherence to language rules - students reflection.
- Examples of hypercorrection.
- Identifying problems in common language mistakes.
- Analyzing frequently made mistakes in the Polish language.
- Identifying problems in phrases and providing own examples from both native and foreign languages (English, German).

Final discussion – Drawing conclusions

Students participate in a final discussion on self-awareness of language forms we use to consolidate insights gained during the session. After that each student is provided with a reflective card to jot down personal reflections.

Reflective Card Prompt:

    Considering everything we have talked about, has anything changed in
    your thinking? Did you learn something new or become aware of
    something? Write your reflections on how you now see language in

the context of standardized structures and words, grammatical rules, concept of speech parts, and hyper-correction

<u>**Session 3**</u>

Meetings 5 & 6: Topic - Cultural properties of language, idioms and metaphors

Based on Carter's quote: "awareness of the embedding of language within culture. Learning to read the language is learning about the cultural properties of the language. Idioms and metaphors, in particular, reveal a lot about the culture" (1994: 5).

Aim of the session: Highlighting subjective interpretations in language, exploring variations in object categorization, and understanding how cultural factors shape diverse perceptions.

Course of the session:

Meeting 5

1. Group discussion:
   - Feasibility of expressing any concept across diverse languages, potential limitations.
   - Possibility to achieve one-to-one equivalent translation.
2. Task – based exploration:
   - Discovering the suitable expressions in different languages (using examples such as wanderlust, Schadenfreude).
   - Finding equivalent translations for different idiomatic phrases.
   - Drawing task illustrating differences in categorizing objects.
   - Examining variations in naming colors and food items across different languages.
   - Identifying words that pose translation challenges.

Meeting 6

1. Group discussion on dialects: exploring participants' perspectives on dialectal forms.
2. Recognizing linguistic diversity through dialectal forms.
3. Assessing the impact of dialects on the overall value of a language.

Final discussion – Drawing conclusions

- Reasons behind the absence of direct equivalents for certain words and phrases in different languages.
- Variations in language perception shaped by cultural influences.
- Linguistic nuances associated with emotional expression.
- The impact of everyday experiences and imagery on linguistic expressions.

Due to the extensive feedback received during the concluding discussion and the limited duration of the class, the researcher opted to gather students' reflections following the subsequent session, which comprised only a single meeting.

Session 4

Meeting 7: Topic - The close relationship between language and ideology

Based on Carter's quote: "awareness of the close relationship between language and ideology. It involves 'seeing through language' in other words" (1994: 5)

Aim of the session: developing an awareness that goes beyond the surface meaning of words and expressions. Exploring language as a multifaceted system that extends beyond a neutral conveyor of information.

Course of the session:

1. Group discussion:
- Sharing personal experiences: discussing examples from students' experiences where language reflected their ideologies and beliefs.
- Interpreting Carter`s quote: "seeing through language".
- Exploring media and advertising language.
- Analyzing the influence of political and religious discourse on shaping public opinion.
2. Task-based exploration:
    - Identifying persuasive language techniques in presented cases.
    - Exploring the hidden functions of language in the materials presented (advertisements + speeches) through critical analysis.

Final discussion - drawing conclusions

Students participate in a final discussion on the relationship between language and ideology to consolidate insights gained during the session. After that each student is provided with a reflective card to jot down personal reflections.

Reflective Card Prompt:

> Considering everything we have talked about, has anything changed in your thinking? Did you learn something new or become aware of something? Write your reflections on how you now see language in the context of the relationship between language and ideology.

Following the awareness-raising sessions, the author proceeded to the data analysis phase. The proceedings of the seven thematic meetings were recorded using a Dictaphone, so the first step was to transcribe these discussions. A thematic analysis of the transcriptions was then conducted to identify recurring themes, patterns, or emerging issues within the research. This was accomplished by applying coding and categorization techniques to systematically organize and interpret the data (Burns 2010). Additionally, the reflective cards written by the research participants after the second, fourth, and seventh meetings were systematically structured and analyzed. The purpose was to determine if there were any changes in the participants' awareness or attitudes as a result of the research process. Finally, comparisons were made between the content of these reflective notes and the results from the post-participation questionnaire to assess the extent to which the reflections aligned with the research findings.

After completing all the language awareness sessions, the students were requested to fill out the same questionnaire they had completed at the very beginning of the study, prior to the awareness sessions. However, this time they were supposed to answer sections 2 and 3, which pertained to their perceptions of success and language awareness. The data gathered in this phase enabled an assessment of whether the meetings effectively enhanced language awareness among the students compared to the data collected at the initial stage of the study. Furthermore, the researcher investigated whether there were any shifts in perceptions of success and validated the research hypotheses formulated prior to the study. Simultaneously, through comparison and analysis of the data, the research hypotheses were verified.

With initial conclusions formed, the author decided to conduct in-person focus group interview. This decision aimed to further explore the changes observed throughout the

research and to enhance the understanding of primary quantitative research results, particularly regarding students' behaviors and motivations. Morgan (1997) highlights that focus groups provide supplementary source of data, validating quantitative findings and offering triangulation in multi-method studies. As noted by Lankiewicz (2023b: 209), this approach not only helps preserve ecological validity but also inherently promotes a critical and ethical stance towards academic research. Therefore, the focus group was designed to investigate students' perspectives on four aspects that were either surprising or unclear from the previous questionnaire results. Specifically, it examined students' attitudes toward language learning materials, self-evaluation versus external assessments, native-like speaking abilities, and grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency.

Compared to other data collection techniques such as questionnaires or observations, interviews offer a rich source for exploring individuals' inner feelings and attitudes (Dilshad and Latif 2013: 191). Wisker (2001) emphasizes that interviews are especially useful for gathering information based on emotions, experiences, sensitive issues, insider perspectives, and privileged insights. According to Gundumogula and Gundumogula (2020), focus groups expand on the interview method by providing a more targeted and in-depth form of group discussion. Led by a moderator or facilitator in a structured format (Lankiewicz 2023b), focus groups aim to explore selected topics, promoting organized discussion and exchange among participants. Anderson (1990: 241) defines a focus group as "a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic". Consequently, the author of the present paper found focus groups to be the most effective tool for gathering insights from students, particularly when the goal is to understand their thoughts and reasoning (Kitzinger 1995).

Various authors provide recommendations for the size of focus groups, typically suggesting a range between 3 to 12 participants (Krueger 1994; Boddy 2005). Despite the sample of this study consisting of 13 individuals, the relaxed atmosphere and flexible time management facilitated in-depth discussions. Furthermore, the friendly environment encouraged participants to express diverse viewpoints. An effective moderator should be non-judgmental, respectful, open-minded, and possess strong listening and observational skills while being sensitive to participants' needs (Dilshad and Latif 2013: 193). As the moderator, the author strived to meet these requirements and made sure every participant felt comfortable and heard. The decision against conducting personal in-depth interviews was based on the value of group interaction, which goes beyond merely collecting

individual opinions and is a distinctive feature of focus group interviews (Denscombe 2007).

The focus group interview was held at the university on April 26th, during a practical English class, and lasted just over an hour. The participants were the same group of Applied Linguistics students who had attended the awareness-raising sessions, with 13 individuals present. Before the focus group interview, participants were informed about its purpose and agreed to be recorded. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) note that there are no universal rules for determining the number of focus group discussions needed. In this research, a single session was sufficient to address the relevant topics comprehensively. The focus group format was ideal for providing additional clarification on certain aspects, complementing other data collection methods and yielding comprehensive information (Gundumogula and Gundumogula 2020).

In order to provide a concise and transparent overview of process of data collection, the following table encompasses the key stages employed throughout the research. The table identifies each stage's specific aim, corresponding task, instrument utilized, and the analytical approach adopted.

Table 1 - An overview of research stages compiled by the author of the present paper

RESEARCH STAGE	AIM	TASK	INTRUMENT	ANALYSIS
Introduction	Obtaining consent from participants	Presenting the research idea	—	—
Stage one	Collecting data on students' a) autonomy levels, b) language awareness, and c) perception of success prior to awareness-raising sessions	Distributing instrument to 47 Applied Linguistics students	Questionnaire based on a) Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy b) Carter's (1994) definition of LA c) success perception	Descriptive analysis
Stage two	Raising participants' language awareness	Participatory action research with a selected group of students	Session of seven approximately one-hour meetings with especially prepared materials	Qualitative analysis- systematic approach and thematic analysis

	Assessing changes in attitude towards selected language aspects and comparing reflective notes with PAR findings to assess alignment with research outcomes from questionnaire	Collecting supplementary data – reflective notes on the discussed subject matter (after meetings 2, 4, 7)	Reflective cards	Examine content of reflective notes for alignment with research outcomes
Stage three	Analysing the change in success perception resulting from increased language awareness.	Distributing questionnaire to selected students from awareness sessions	Questionnaire sections 2 and 3	Descriptive analysis, comparing results with initial data
Stage four	Gaining deeper understanding of changes throughout the process	Conducting an interview with selected group of students	Focus group interview	Qualitative coding and narrative analysis

However, before commencing the first research stage, the author, recognizing the importance of piloting as emphasized in the literature, decided to validate the research questionnaire beforehand in order to ensure its effectiveness and accuracy for the study. Dörnyei (2003: 63) highlights the significance of "field testing" or "piloting" a questionnaire during its development stages to refine its wording and identify potential pitfalls. Therefore, to validate the research, the questionnaire was administered online during the academic year 2020/2021 to a pilot group of 49 first-year philology students from various universities in Poland. There are several approaches to evaluate internal consistency, and among them, Cronbach's alpha stands out as most commonly employed method (Lankiewicz 2015). Calculating Cronbach's alpha index, based on the ratio of test item variance to scale variance, resulted in a value of 0.718373389. This value surpasses the generally acknowledged minimum threshold of 0.6, indicating the internal consistency of the developed instrument (Nunnally 1967). The pilot studies indicated the need for minor adjustments, leading to improvements in clarity by segmenting the questionnaire into sections. Additionally, a new section focusing solely on language awareness was introduced to enhance the comprehensibility of the collected data.

The second phase of validation focused on evaluating the appropriateness of the materials designed for the awareness-raising sessions. Specifically, the thesis author

aimed to confirm whether the task-based explorations were effectively structured to guide participants towards specific conclusions. To achieve this, additional sessions were conducted with a control group totaling 4.5 hours during the summer semester of 2020/21. This control group consisted of first-year students enrolled in the Applied Linguistics program at the Faculty of Languages, UG. The control group was intentionally chosen to consist of multilingual first-year students whose level of language awareness and perceived success could reasonably be expected to align with that of the target group starting their studies later in the academic year 2023/2024.The outcomes of these sessions indicated minimal challenges, confirming that the initially developed materials remained largely unchanged.

4.7. Data analysis

This part centers on analyzing data collected across multiple stages to investigate changes in students' autonomy levels, language awareness, and perceptions of success before and after their participation in awareness-raising sessions. Each stage, as outlined in Table 1: An overview of research stages, will be examined in sequence. Stage one entailed conducting a descriptive analysis of questionnaire data related to students' autonomy levels, language awareness, and their perception of success prior to participating in awareness-raising sessions. In stage two, the focus shifted to qualitatively analyzing action research sessions designed to raise awareness among a selected group of participants. This stage also involved examining reflective notes from students regarding the discussed topics. Stage three involved conducting a descriptive analysis to examine changes in participants' perception of success resulting from increased language awareness. This analysis included comparing data from questionnaires distributed before and after the awareness sessions. Finally, qualitative coding and narrative analysis were employed to analyze interactions during focus group interview. Doing so, stage four provided deeper insights into how students' perceptions changed throughout the entire process.

4.7.1. Stage one analysis

The first stage of the research involved distributing a specially designed questionnaire to the target group just before beginning the language awareness-raising sessions. This target group consisted of all first-year Applied Linguistics students beginning their university studies in the 2023/2024 academic year, totaling 47 respondents. As previously mentioned, the questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section, the results of which will be discussed first, aimed to evaluate whether first-year students demonstrate characteristics of autonomous learners.

4.7.1.1 Section I: Autonomy questionnaire

After distributing the online survey (see Appendix 1) to students during a university meeting, each student independently responded to the questions using their mobile devices. Once all students had submitted their responses, the data was downloaded, and the author automatically generated a table of responses in Microsoft Excel. Before proceeding with a detailed analysis of the responses from the first part of the questionnaire on autonomous characteristics, the responses were reviewed for consistency and completeness, following the guidelines outlined by Kitchenham and Pfleeger (2003). It was determined that all 47 participants provided answers for most statement pairs. However, statement pairs numbered 5 and 6 received 46 responses each, necessitating a sample size adjustment for these two cases. Following this, the author herself conducted a manual statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel as the tool for quantitative data analysis. This software enabled various operations such as determining the mode and calculating the mean. The data coding process involved assigning significance to the proximity of responses. Two closely aligned answers indicated either a high or low level of autonomy, depending on the chosen side. Choosing the middle position, indicated by an average falling between 2.50 and 3.50, suggests that, within the specified context, respondents exhibited a learning attitude that was neither entirely autonomous nor reliant on a teacher.

Furthermore, in the questionnaire, pairs of sentences were intentionally arranged to avoid implying a specific approach to learning. This means that a sentence characteristic of an autonomous attitude was placed on the left in some instances and on the right in others. To enhance clarity during the analysis, the author of the thesis reversed the students' responses in the four pairs (SP#4, SP#6, SP#7, SP#9) where the sides were switched (i.e., the sentence on the right reflected the autonomous attitude). Consequently,

in each case, responses with numerical values of 1 and 2 indicate an autonomous approach to learning, 3 signifies neutrality, while numbers 4 and 5 suggest that, in that particular aspect, students did not exhibit characteristics typical of autonomous learners.

The analysis of the first section reveals that the predominant attitude among respondents toward autonomous learning is evident in only three pairs of statements. More precisely, the mean of the students' responses to statement pairs 2, 3, and 7 indicates their agreement with sentences reflecting an autonomous learning attitude. These statements and their corresponding average responses are as follows:

Statement Pair #2 – arithmetic mean: 2.08

Language learning mainly involves actively processing, analyzing, and organizing information.	Language learning mainly involves accepting new knowledge from more experienced individuals.

Statement Pair #3 – arithmetic mean: 2.15

I define my own goals because I know what I want to achieve by learning the language.	I focus on meeting exam requirements, syllables and imposed guidelines to achieve good results.

Statement Pair #7 – arithmetic mean: 2.2

I rely on the teacher's guidance to determine how, when and where I find the best way to learn.	I am confident about my ability to identify the most effective methods, timing, and setting for my own learning.

The analysis of other four statement pairs related to taking responsibility for one's learning process (SP#1), balancing teacher instruction with independent knowledge acquisition (SP#4), consciously selecting best-suited learning strategies and methods (SP#8), and expressing preferences for verifying one's progress (SP#10) suggests a leaning towards an autonomous attitude. Although the average responses position them in a middle ground, indicating a neutral stance between autonomy and teacher dependence, it is noteworthy that there is a slight inclination towards the autonomous perspective.

SP#	SP#1	SP#4	SP#8	SP#10
Mean	2.51	2.68	2.79	2.68

The mean scores for SP#5 (3.22) and SP#6 (3.09), which pertain to language learning materials, and SP9 (3.40), focusing on handling language issues, position them in a

middle range, suggesting a neutral stance with a slight inclination towards relying on the teacher. On average, the surveyed students show a preference for the teacher's involvement in selecting suitable teaching materials. Likewise, when confronted with complex language issues, their responses reflect a preference for immediate explanations rather than addressing language problems independently.

However, analyzing the most frequently observed value of the dataset (referred to as the MODE) reveals an interesting pattern. In five out of ten statement pairs (SP#1, SP#2, SP#3, SP#7, SP#8), the most frequently chosen answer reflects an autonomous attitude. This includes taking responsibility for the learning process, acquiring language, defining goals, selecting appropriate methods, consciously choosing techniques, and solving language problems independently. In three statement pairs (SP#4, SP#5, SP#6), the most frequently occurring value suggests a neutral stance – neither fully autonomous nor teacher-dependent. These relate to following teacher instructions, selecting learning materials, and relying on the teacher's choice of materials. In last two cases (SP#9, SP#10), the most frequently chosen answer indicates a preference for relying on someone more qualified to evaluate progress, favoring tests or teacher verification as the most valuable assessment method, which is contrary to autonomous attitude towards learning. The following table presents the most commonly occurring value in the dataset (MODE) for each statement pair.

SP #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MODE	2	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	4	4

If individual answers are taken into consideration, the average responses indicate that approximately 32% of respondents can be labeled as autonomous learners. However, the majority, comprising nearly 66% of respondents, demonstrate traits indicative of a position between autonomy and teacher-dependency. Notably, only one student, representing 2% of respondents, exhibit a more teacher-dependent attitude toward learning than an autonomous one. The following graph (Graph 1) illustrates the mean responses of individual students, with a scale ranging from 1 indicating high autonomy to 5 denoting low autonomy.

Graph 1 - Student autonomy: Individual average responses
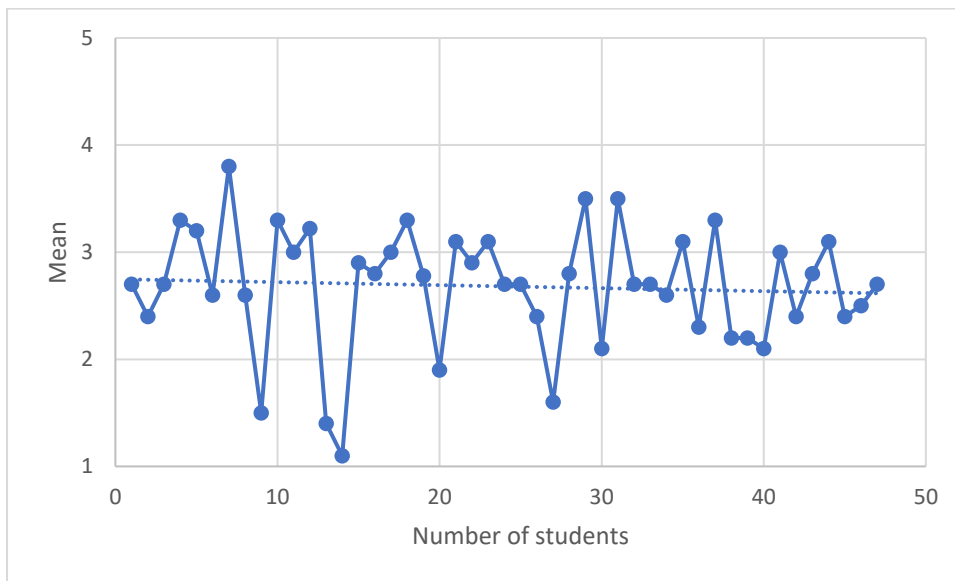
Upon closer examination of the results, it becomes evident that 15 respondents scored below 2.5, distinctly placing them in the category of autonomous students. It is noteworthy to highlight that one student recorded an exceptionally low mean score of 1.1. This implies that, except for a singular statement pair, this student consistently chose the highest level of agreement with statements characterizing an autonomous learner. On the contrary, a distinct student, holding an average response level of 3.8, stands out as the sole individual classified as non-autonomous.

Within the group of students (totaling 21) whose responses are placed in the middle position, indicated by an average falling between 2.50 and 3.50 and suggesting a learning attitude that is neither entirely autonomous nor reliant on a teacher, three subgroups emerge. The first subgroup comprises 16 respondents situated in the middle, yet inclining towards autonomy, with average responses exceeding 2.5 but not reaching 2.9. The second subgroup consists of 13 students, also categorized as neutral but slightly favoring a teacher-dependent attitude, as their average responses equal or exceed 3.1. The remaining two respondents exhibit an ideal middle ground, with average responses precisely equal to 3.

Graph 2 - Student Autonomy: Distribution of individual responses by percentage
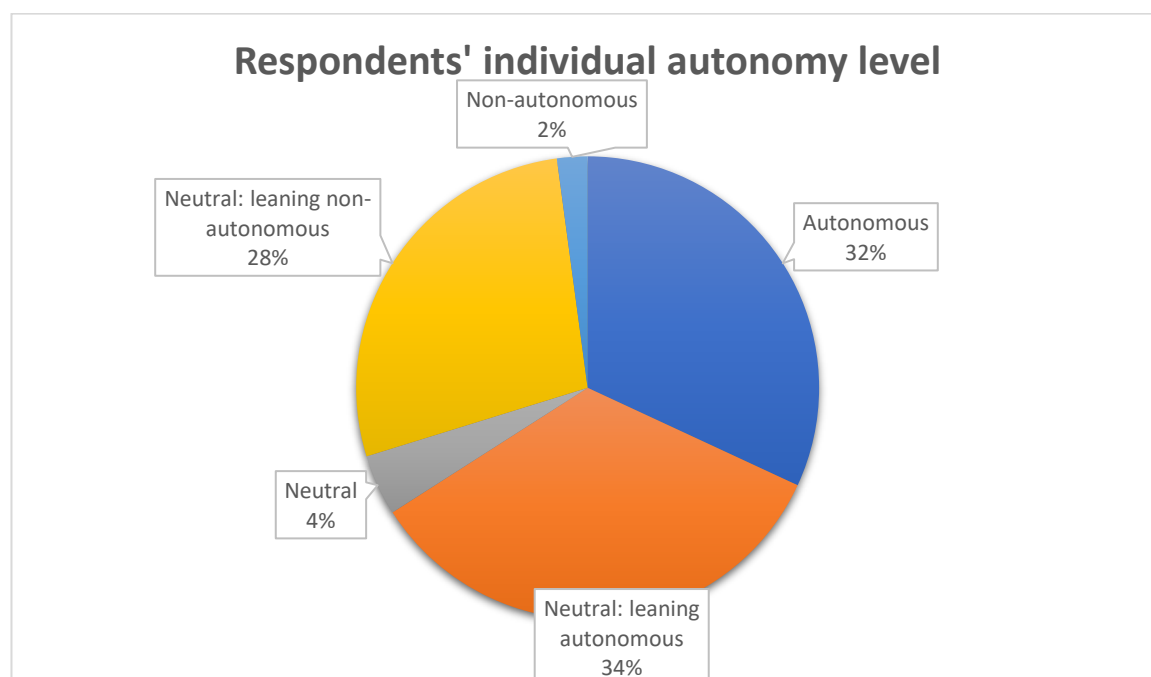
The graph above (Graph 2) depicts student autonomy levels based on individual responses. Notably, 32% of respondents exhibit full autonomy, while 34% lean towards autonomy. Only 4% maintain an exact middle position, with 28% leaning towards teacher-dependence. A minimal 2% are classified as non-autonomous.

Analyzing the most frequent choices in the dataset, it turns out that among the 47 respondents, 9 opted for the highest level of agreement, signaling a fully autonomous stance. However, the majority, encompassing 16 respondents, consistently favored the second level on the agreement scale, underscoring a prevalent inclination towards an autonomous approach to learning. A neutral attitude, represented by a value of 3 on the congruence scale, was most frequently selected by 14 students. On the other hand, 8 respondents consistently aligned themselves with statements that do not characterize an autonomous learner. Specifically, 7 respondents chose a value of 4, while only one student consistently favored a value of 5, suggesting a notably low inclination towards autonomy in the majority of their responses. All in all, examining the individual agreement levels across all survey participants for the ten pairs of statements, the predominant value observed was 2, indicating a tendency towards an autonomous perspective.

Comparing the results of the data analysis with the predictions posited by the first hypothesis, it becomes evident that students predominantly display an active involvement

in autonomous language learning, largely supporting the hypothesis. Specifically, the arithmetic mean for the first statement pair (2.08) indicates that students perceive language learning as a cognitive process requiring mental engagement and effort. Furthermore, the slight shift towards agreement in the second statement suggests that students acknowledge their role in shaping their learning process. While not fully embracing complete autonomy, their responses generally lean towards autonomy. Additionally, respondents demonstrate a capacity to select and employ tailored learning strategies, indicating a conscious effort to optimize their learning experience. The results also imply, that students tend to favor taking charge of their own language learning goals rather than solely relying on the instructions of teachers. Their tendency towards autonomy is further evident in their choice to independently expand their knowledge to enhance skills and achieve learning goals. The analysis findings also uphold the hypothesis positing a preference for objective criteria in measuring success, such as assessments of linguistic competence or comparisons with native speakers, rather than relying on subjective self-evaluation. The data highlights that a significant majority of respondents favor using tests or teacher verification as their primary assessment approach.

Overall, the analysis suggests that students exhibit a considerable degree of autonomy in their learning approach, with a strong belief in their ability to make informed decisions and a conscious effort to utilize effective learning strategies tailored to their individual needs. Moreover, the data reveals a proactive approach among students in setting linguistic goals, indicating a deliberate effort to enhance their language proficiency. These findings align well with the predicted framework of autonomous language learning engagement.

4.7.1.2 Section II: Language awareness questionnaire

The second section of the questionnaire, designed to evaluate the language awareness of first-year students, was administered to a sample of 47 participants. Before conducting a detailed analysis, responses were carefully examined for consistency and completeness (Kitchenham and Pfleeger 2003). Notably, all 47 responses were received for each statement pair. The distribution of the online survey facilitated the transfer of collected data into a downloadable dataset. Subsequently, a manual statistical analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel as the quantitative data analysis tool. The data coding

process involved assigning significance to the proximity of responses. Two closely aligned answers indicated either a high or low level of language awareness, depending on the chosen side. Choosing the middle position, represented by an average falling between 2.50 and 3.50, suggests that, within the specified context, respondents exhibited neither a low nor high level of LA.

Pairs of sentences in this section were arranged in such a way to avoid implying a specific approach, meaning that a sentence characteristic of high language awareness was placed on the left in some instances and on the right in others. To enhance clarity during the analysis, the students' responses were reversed in the four pairs (SP3, SP7, SP10, and SP13) where the sides were switched (i.e., the sentence on the left reflected high LA). Consequently, in each case, responses with numerical values of 1 and 2 indicate a low level of language awareness, 3 signifies neutrality, while numbers 4 and 5 suggest that, in that particular aspect, students exhibit a high level of language awareness.

Graph 4 below depicts the average language awareness responses across all statement pairs for the entire sample, visually represented through a bar chart. Additionally, the specific data of the arithmetic mean for each statement pair is provided below the corresponding bars. A score close to 1 indicates agreement with a statement reflecting low language awareness, while a score of 5 signifies agreement with a statement indicating a high level of language awareness. As observed, the majority of responses center around the mid-level, with only a few statement pairs showing clear deviations above or below the value of 3, suggesting a state of neutrality.

Graph 3 - Language awareness: Mean responses
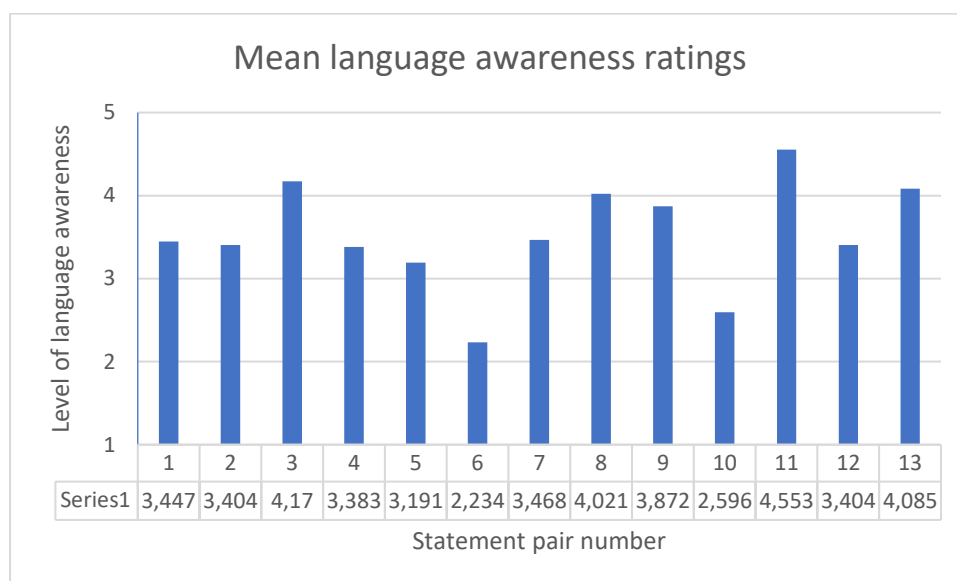
When aggregating the mean responses from all participants and dividing by the number of statement pairs, the resulting average level of language awareness for the entire surveyed group is 3,525231. According to accepted standards, a value of 3.51 or higher is classified as demonstrating high awareness. Consequently, it can be concluded that the surveyed group collectively demonstrates a high level of language awareness, albeit marginally above the neutral point. Although practically within the average range, the score exceeds neutrality by one hundredth of a point.

In even a more in-depth analysis, taking into account the mean responses from all participants for each statement pair, the following pattern of language awareness emerges:

- A low level of language awareness, reflected in ratings ranging from 1 to 2.49, is observed in only one sentence (SP#6). In this context, most students prioritize understanding speech components like adjectives, nouns, and verbs as essential for comprehending language function.

- A middle level of language awareness, reflected in ratings ranging from 2.5 to 3.5 is observed in most statement pairs. The responses suggest that there is neither strong agreement nor disagreement regarding whether individuals within a language always understand words and meanings in the same manner (SP#1). Secondly, language is viewed both as an information transmitter and a means of expressing intentions and emotions (SP#2). Participants express also a balanced viewpoint regarding the

standardized structures and words in languages, and their mastery for communication (SP#4) as well as the role of grammatical rules in language knowledge (SP#5). Finally, no distinct leaning towards agreement or disagreement is evident in terms of language, especially international ones like English, being the property of a particular cultural community (SP#10) or being a communication tool to express ideas, beliefs, values or worldviews of its users (SP#12).

- A high level of language awareness, reflected in ratings ranging from 3.51 to 5, is observed in five cases (SP#6). On average, students exhibit a tendency to value the importance of creativity and playfulness in language learning (SP#3). Additionally, they challenge the universality of language, expressing a belief that not every language can convey identical ideas (SP#8). Moreover, their responses indicate that a majority rejects the notion of universal grammatical rules, asserting that these rules can vary among individuals, even within the same language (SP#9). A consensus appears to emerge supporting the statement that there is no incorrect form of language solely because it represents a dialect (SP#11). Lastly, most students acknowledge the influential role of language in conveying and promoting ideological beliefs, including the use of propaganda techniques by entities such as governments, political parties, and interest groups (SP#13).

When analyzing individual mean responses, it becomes evident that a significant part of the surveyed group, comprising 25 out of 47 respondents, can be categorized as demonstrating a middle level of language awareness, with their arithmetic mean responses falling within the range of 2.50 to 3.50. Conversely, the remaining 22 participants exhibit a high level of language awareness, with the average of their responses equal to or greater than 3.51. Based on individual mean responses, the following graph illustrates the percentage distribution of students demonstrating neutral and high language awareness at the beginning of the research project.

Graph 4 - Language awareness: Percentage distribution of LA level among students
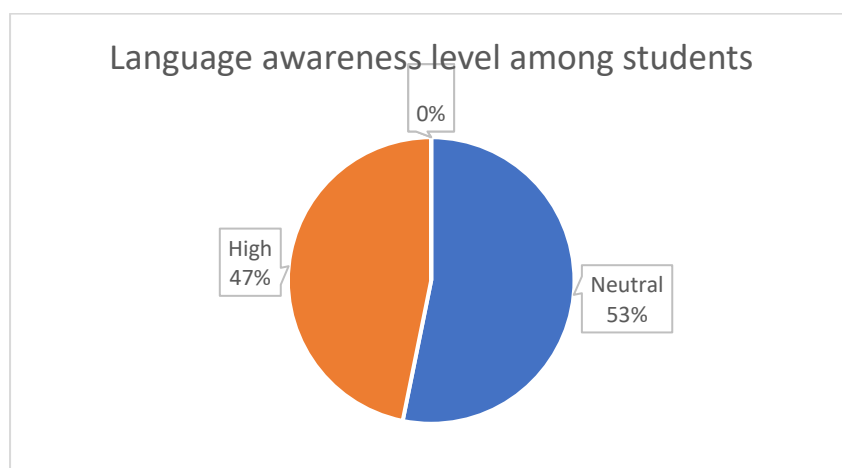
The data analysis supports the hypothesis that the language awareness of first-year students tends to be moderate, given their early stage of study and initial exposure to language-related concepts. However, the findings reveal a more ambiguous picture, with a significant proportion of students demonstrating a higher level of language awareness than expected.

Most responses cluster around the moderate level of language awareness, with only a minority showing substantial deviations above or below a value of 3. This indicates a neutral stance in different facets of language comprehension, consistent with the hypothesis predicting moderate awareness among students. However, there are occurrences in which students display an unexpectedly elevated level of language awareness, diverging from the hypothesis's expectations. These instances manifest in their sophisticated understanding of concepts such as valuing creativity and playfulness in language learning, challenging the universality of language, rejecting universal grammatical rules, acknowledging the influential role of language in conveying ideological beliefs, and supporting the idea that there is no incorrect form of language solely because it represents a dialect.

Upon closer examination of individual responses, it was revealed that slightly more than half of the respondents (53%) displayed a moderate level of language awareness, while the remaining 47% exhibited a high level. These findings shed light on the language awareness of first-year students before the reflection sessions, partially contradicting the hypothesis that posited a moderate level of awareness. While many students showed a neutral stance in various language aspects as anticipated, a significant portion demonstrated an unexpectedly advanced understanding. This challenges the

hypothesis, which did not anticipate such a high level of awareness, particularly considering the early stage of their studies. Overall, the data reveals a more diverse range of language awareness levels, with nearly half of the respondents demonstrating a relatively high level of language awareness.

4.7.1.3 Section III: Perception of success questionnaire

Section three of the questionnaire addresses students' perceptions of success in learning English as a foreign language. Participants were required to assess their level of agreement using a 5-point scale. This section employs a simple linear scale, where a rating of 1 indicates strong disagreement with the statement, and 5 signifies strong agreement. It comprises 12 statements, and responses from all participants were carefully examined for consistency and completeness (Kitchenham and Pfleeger 2003). Similar to previous sections, a manual statistical analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel for quantitative data examination.

The data from the first two questionnaire responses provides insights into students' perspectives on language learning success, specifically in relation to native speaker competence. These questions, along with their corresponding quantitative answers and percentages are illustrated in the following bar charts.

Graph 5 - Success perception: Responses to statement 1

Language learning success should be evaluated based on native speaker competence.
47 responses
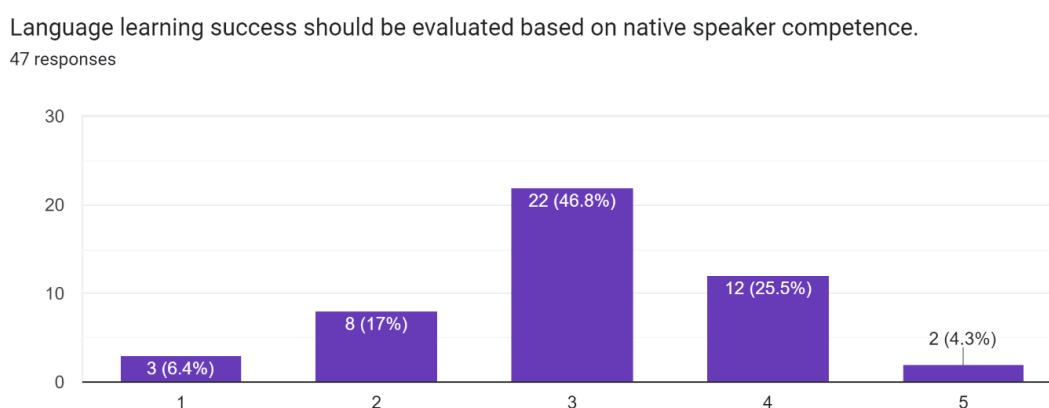
As graph 5 shows, significant proportion of participants (46.8%) expressed neutrality regarding the importance of native speaker competence in assessing language learning

success. However, 25.5% leaned towards agreement, indicating a considerable value placed on this aspect. Only a small percentage (6.4%) strongly disagreed and 17% disagreed moderately, opting for rating 1 and 2 respectively.

Graph 6 - Success perception: Responses to statement 2

Language learning success should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a second language learner.

47 responses
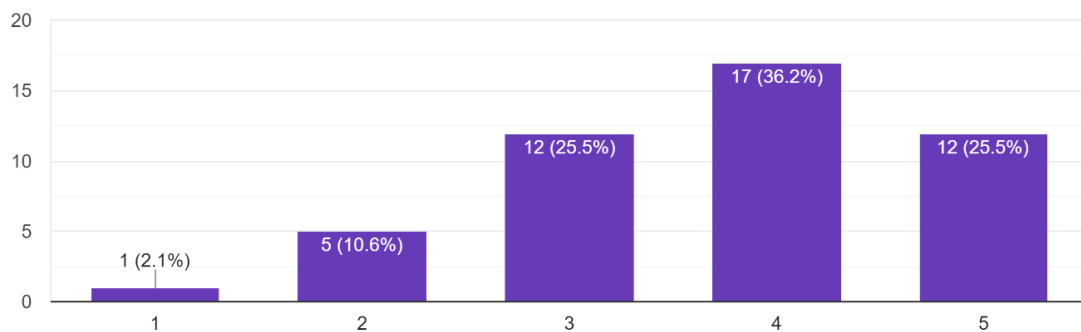
An overwhelming majority of students (over 60%) supported the idea that success in language learning should be evaluated based on performance as an L2 learner. This perspective was represented by 29 out of 47 respondents, with 25,5% strongly agreeing and 36,2% expressing moderate agreement. About 25% of students, constituting a quarter, remain neutral on this perspective. Conversely, a smaller percentage, 2.1%, strongly disagreed, and 10.6% held a moderate level of disagreement, emphasizing the diversity of opinions within the student cohort.

Turning to the third and fourth statements, participants exhibited varied perspectives on language learning success and speaking proficiency. These nuanced views on native-like fluency and proficiency are depicted in the accompanying bar charts corresponding to the following statements:

Graph 8 - Success perception: Responses to statement 3

I`ll achieve full success if I attain native-like fluency in speaking.
47 responses
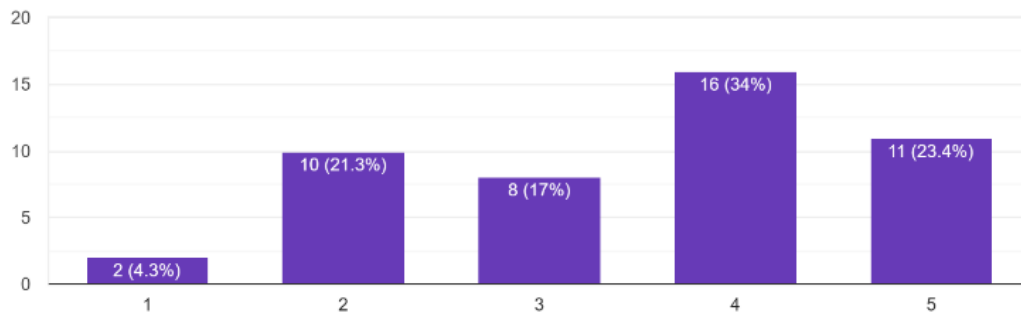
As observed, approximately 57% of respondents strongly or moderately agree with the statement asserting that full success is achieved when attaining native-like fluency in

Graph 7 - Success perception: Responses to statement 4

Being a proficient language user doesn't require speaking like a native speaker.
47 responses
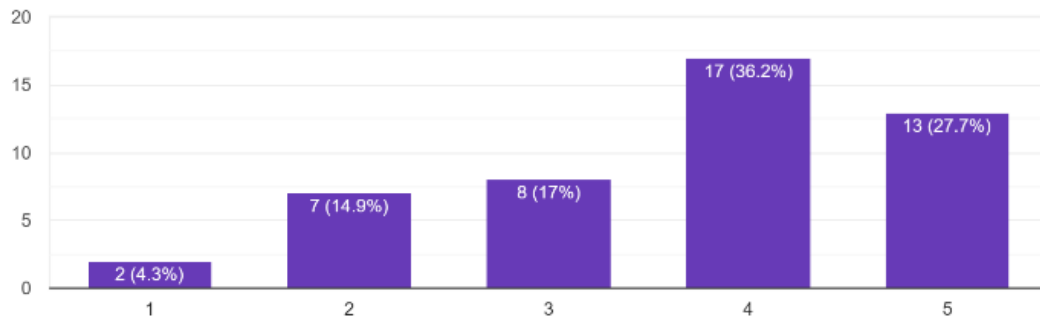
speaking. While 17% of the surveyed group maintains a neutral stance, a quarter of the students, accounting for 25.6%, do not consider native-like fluency essential for achieving full success. Interestingly, while approximately 57% of respondents agreed with the statement advocating for native-like fluency as a marker of success, nearly 64% believed that proficiency in a language does not necessitate the oral competence of the native speaker. This contradiction highlights two opposing beliefs within the same group. Almost 20% of the group either disagreed moderately or strongly (ratings 1 and 2), underscoring the significance some participants place on native-like speaking for proficiency. The remaining 17% maintains a neutral position in this regard.

The subsequent two statements (Graphs 9 and 10) address the broader concept of overall language proficiency, particularly in terms of perceiving success in language learning within the framework of interaction with others, as well as comprehension in reading and writing. It is emphasized that flawlessness is not obligatory; despite minor mistakes or imperfections, one can still perceive their progress as a success.

Graph 9 - Success perception: Responses to statement 5

Language learning success is achieved when I can confidently engage in conversations, regardless of accent or minor errors.
47 responses
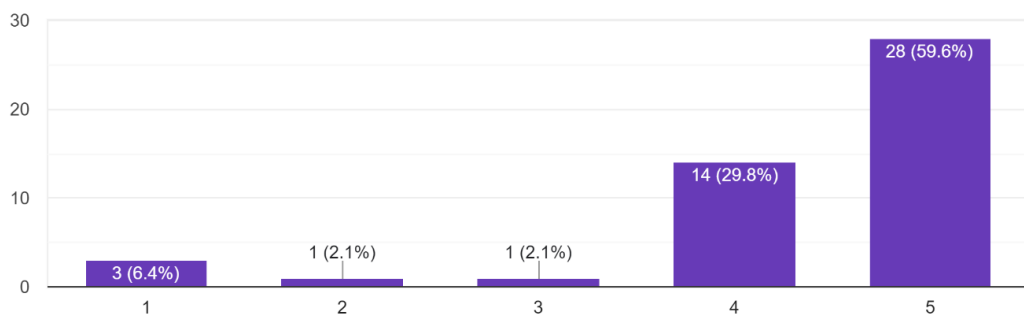
As depicted in the graph, a significant majority of respondents express strong or moderate agreement with the statement that engaging in conversations, irrespective of accent or minor errors, is perceived as a success by them. There are only individual responses indicating disagreement or neutrality, accounting for as little as 10.6% of the entire group.

Graph 10 - Success perception: Responses to statement 6

I consider myself successful in language learning when I can easily read and understand texts in the target language and write clearly, even if it is not perfect.
47 responses
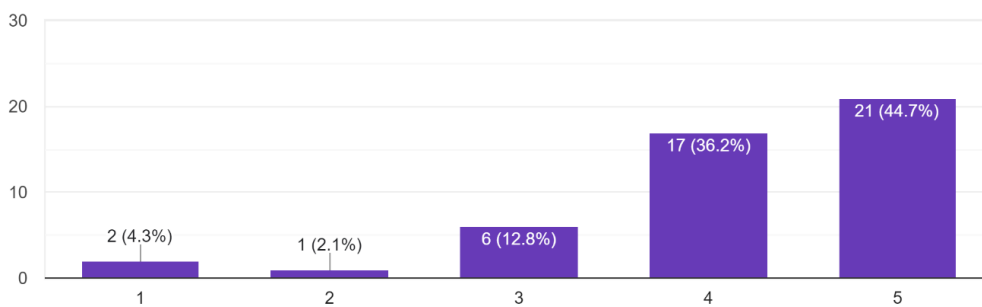
Likewise, a vast majority of the group, exceeding 80%, consider themselves successful in language learning when they can effortlessly comprehend texts in the target language and express themselves in writing, even if not flawlessly. A minority,

representing 12.8%, remains neutral, while a small group of three respondents corresponding to 6.4% holds the perspective that success necessitates perfection, simultaneously disagreeing with the given statement.

The subsequent two statements explore the concept of success in language learning, each offering a distinct criterion for proficiency attainment. While the first statement underscores the importance of achieving a level of comfort in expressing thoughts and ideas, even at the expense of minor errors or stylistic flair, the second statement places greater emphasis on attaining a high degree of grammatical correctness and stylistic sophistication. Essentially, one perspective emphasizes success as ease of communication, while the other prioritizes linguistic accuracy and stylistic refinement.

Graph 11 - Success perception: Responses to statement 7

Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can comfortably express my thoughts and ideas.
47 responses
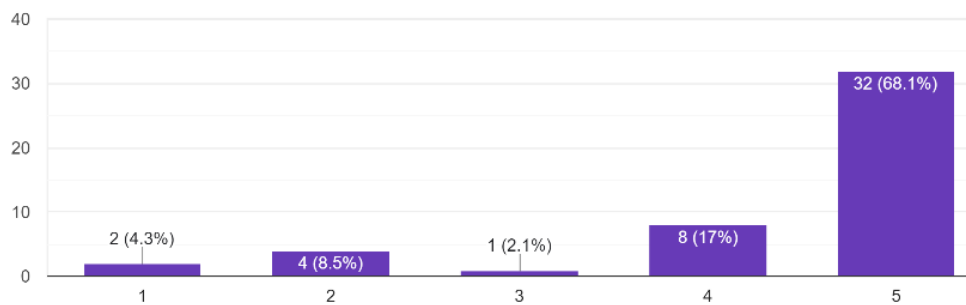
Graph 12 - Success perception: Responses to statement 8

Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can express my thoughts and ideas with grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency.
47 responses
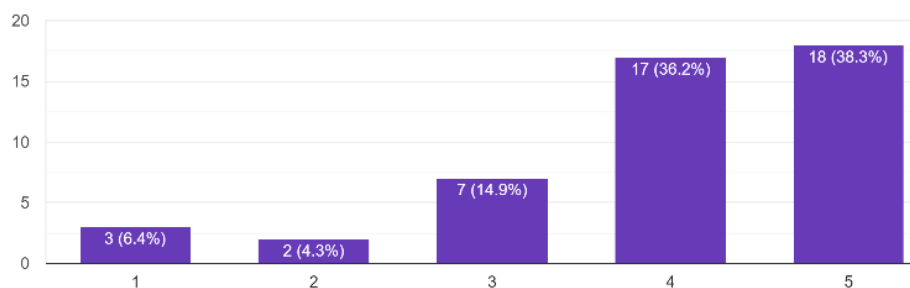
The results from the survey indicate a strong consensus among respondents regarding the first sentence, with a significant majority (85.1%) either agreeing or strongly agreeing that success in language learning is about reaching a point where one can comfortably express thoughts and ideas. Only a minority expressed disagreement, with a combined 12.9% of respondents disagreeing or expressing neutrality. In contrast, opinions were more evenly distributed regarding the second sentence. While a substantial proportion (74.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement emphasizing grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency, a notable percentage (25.6%) either disagreed or expressed neutrality. This suggests a more varied perspective among respondents regarding the importance of grammatical correctness and stylistic proficiency in measuring success in language learning.

The following two statements both acknowledge the continuous nature of language learning, emphasizing continuous improvement and growth as crucial indicators of success, rather than attaining perfection. However, their perspectives on satisfaction differ. The first statement finds satisfaction in observing progress and development over time, while the second one implies that satisfaction remains elusive due to the constant existence of unmastered aspects in language learning.

Graph 13 - Success perception: Responses to statement 9

Language learning success is a continuous journey, and I feel successful when I see improvement and growth over time, regardless of reaching perfection.
47 responses
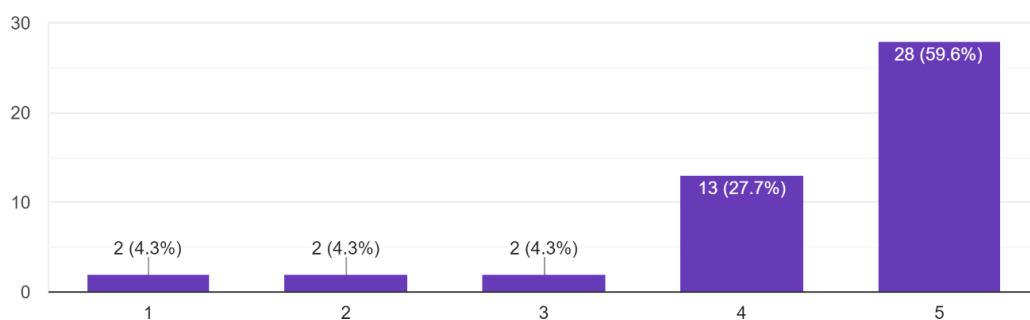
The student responses reveal a notable consensus, with over 87% of the surveyed group expressing agreement with the statement number 9. They express feeling successful about their language learning journey, valuing improvement and growth over time, despite acknowledging imperfections in certain aspects. The remaining responses are evenly distributed, each accounting for 4.3% of the total.

Graph 14 - Success perception: Responses to statement 10

I will never be completely satisfied with my progress as there will always be aspects I haven't mastered.
47 responses
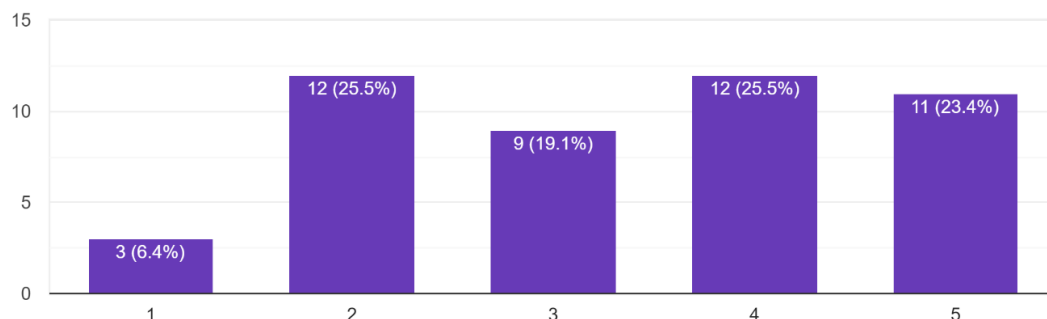
The students' responses reveal a notable discrepancy in perceptions of success in this regard. The data shows no clear tendency, as responses range almost equally from moderate disagreement to total agreement, as depicted in the graph above. While some students focus on the unmastered aspects, which challenges their sense of success, others derive satisfaction from the progress they've achieved, finding it sufficient to feel fulfilled.

The last two statements offer differing perspectives on subjective and objective measures of success in language learning. The first emphasizes the importance of confidence and satisfaction derived from one's current achievements, while the second equates success with meeting externally imposed requirements.

Graph 15 - Success perception: Responses to statement 10

Success in language learning is about feeling confident and satisfied with my progress.
47 responses
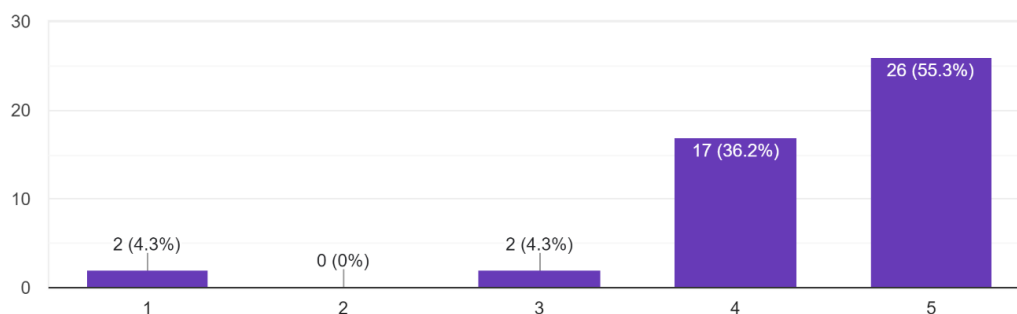
The analysis of the results from statement 10 reveals a clear consensus among participants regarding the definition of success in language learning. With over half of the

respondents (55.3%) expressing strong agreement, the prevailing sentiment emphasizes the significance of feeling confident and satisfied with one's progress. This robust level of agreement suggests that a substantial number of the surveyed group places considerable importance on subjective measures of success, such as personal fulfillment and self-confidence. Moreover, the absence of any responses in the disagreement category and mere two responses in strong disagreement underscores the immense support for this perspective.

Graph 16 - Success perception: Responses to statement 11

Success in language learning is about passing exams and fulfilling requirements.
47 responses
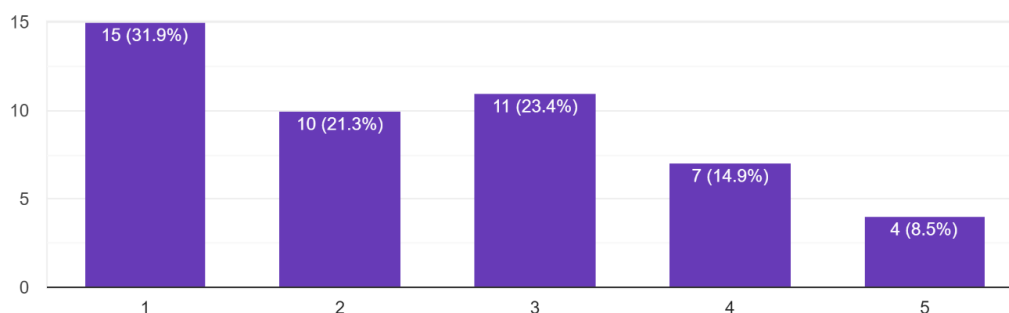
Regarding the perception of success as passing exams and fulfilling requirements, there is no definitive trend, as each level of agreement has received some support. While a majority – over 53% – strongly or moderately disagrees that success hinges on passing exams or meeting formal requirements, the remaining respondents are either neutral or agree to some extent. Thus, although roughly half of the students do not view exams as the sole measure of personal success, there is a significant division of opinion on this matter.

The analysis of responses from the survey's third section on perceptions of success in language learning revealed a wide range of viewpoints among students regarding the definition and assessment of success. It offered insights into the diverse attitudes and beliefs prevalent among language learners, revealing the multitude of factors influencing their perception of success. Although there was agreement on specific aspects, such as the significance of feeling comfortable when expressing thoughts and the satisfaction gained from witnessing progress over time, opinions varied on other points. Notably, there was divergence regarding whether native-like fluency should be considered a marker of success, the importance of grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency, and the notion

that certain elements of language learning may never be fully mastered. These differing views highlight the varied perspectives on what constitutes satisfaction and success in language learning.

A notable consensus emerged regarding the subjective nature of success in language learning, with the majority of respondents emphasizing personal fulfillment and confidence as key indicators. This aligns closely with the third hypothesis, which posits that the perception of success is highly subjective, influenced by an individual's autonomous approach and evolving personal goals and values. Further support for this hypothesis is provided by the fact that over 87% of respondents acknowledged language learning success as an ongoing process, expressing satisfaction in observing improvement and progress over time. Collectively, these results validate the notion that success in language learning is inherently multifaceted and varies from person to person based on their unique priorities and standards, leading to a highly personalized perception of success.

4.7.2. Stage two analysis

The subsequent stage of the research involved action research targeted at enhancing participants' language awareness, which was conducted with a selected group of students. This phase consisted of seven meetings, each lasting approximately one hour, during which recordings were made with the students' consent, and later selected excerpts were transcribed. To ensure participant anonymity, each student was assigned coded initials to serve as their identifier. The objective of the analysis was to evaluate changes in attitude towards selected language aspects, drawing upon Carter's (1994) definition of language awareness. To achieve this, a systematic approach was employed, utilizing thematic analysis. Reflective cards were collected from students during the sessions to supplement the data, which is later compared with the research outcomes gathered from questionnaires administered after the reflection sessions.

In the first session's proceedings, which centered on the creativity, double meanings, and playfulness of language, students highlighted several key issues associated with personal perception, subjective experiences, linguistic misunderstandings, and the necessity for a more creative approach to language exploration in school settings.

Students noted that the way we interpret words and their meanings is influenced by our personal beliefs and upbringing. To illustrate:

> IW: I think that the use of language is actually an individual thing. […] Not everyone of us has the same sense of humor or the way of thinking and that can sometimes even cause troubles during communication.

Furthermore, participants recognized cultural disparities as significant influences on the perception of words. For instance, students noted that certain foods like kiełbasa, pierogi, and vodka are typical in Polish culture. However, when interacting with individuals from other countries or cultures, they realized that these items may be considered exotic, particularly in distant cultures such as Asia.

The group also recognized that each word can carry different connotations depending on individual experiences. During the discussion we came to the conclusion, that language operates similarly to other aspects of life. For instance, one students dislikes a song because it reminds her of challenging work experiences during the summer, whereas the rest of the group loves it. Similarly, the words we use are intertwined with our memories and experiences, thus influencing our perception of them in unique ways.

During discussions, the group encountered instances of linguistic misunderstandings, such as differing interpretations of phrases like "Ale lura" or "Right after dinner". These moments sparked laughter and surprise among the participants, highlighting the subjective nature of language comprehension.

Finally, the students unanimously expressed their enthusiasm for linguistic play whether by inventing neologisms or figuring out their meanings.

> IR: I think that when we can play with the language we can learn more, because it stimulates our imagination.
> LR: I think it`s important to play with the language, we can improve our creativity, sometimes we`re using a word, that doesn't exist, but the others understand it.
> MZ: Playing with words […] make words easier to remember.
> PS: For students who just started learning language form of learning should also be fun like games etc. because they learn faster thank to this and they associate learning this language as something positive
> JT: (reaction to PS) Yeah, learning indirectly is a key sometimes.

They complained about the lack of opportunities to engage in such linguistic exploration in conventional educational frameworks, seeing this as a missed opportunity for creativity and learning enjoyment. Their shared experiences revealed a common theme: none had been given the opportunity to explore language in a more innovative manner or to interact with fresh lexicon originating from their peers abroad.

Following the first awareness-raising session, which consisted of two meetings involving group discussions and task-based exploration, participants were provided with

reflective cards and instructed to write down their personal reflections. Consequently, the content of this supplementary data was then carefully examined and analyzed. The subsequent analysis is detailed below, with the original spelling of the presented quotes preserved. The notes from reflective cards were categorized through a coding process, resulting in their division into four categories based on the learners' respective interests.

First of all, excerpts from the students' reflections are provided, emphasizing the dynamics of language, as evidenced by their use of terms such as "change" and "development". These fragments suggest that language is perceived as a dynamic and evolving instrument for communication, with participants acknowledging the necessity of language adaptation to meet contemporary societal and personal needs.

> IW: In my opinion language is constantly developing, which is good, because the world is developing so it is easy to communicate, I mean that if people were to communicate in a language that hasn't changed since before Christ it wouldn't be easy to communicate or even it would be almost impossible [..].
> KŻ: In my opinion language can change during the generations. Nowadays we use a lot of different words than people in the past
> JB: Language is a constantly developing tool used for communication, it is always being changed by its users to fit their needs so that they are able to express themselves, their opinion, thoughts and feelings.
> MW: I think that language is constantly changing and it's a good thing. We need to adjust it to our needs- whether it's a social situation or just a personal need.

Secondly, there is a category where students focused on aspects of language such as creativity and playfulness, as evidenced by their use of these terms in their reflections. From the excerpts provided below, it is evident that students believe that experimenting with language, playing with words, and creating new ones are crucial for language acquisition and expression. They perceive these activities as not only aiding in memorization but also fostering creativity and enabling more complex expression of emotions and intentions.

> MS: Also playing with words and creating new ones help to memorize them and develop the creativity.
> JB: I believe that playing with the language is important and sometimes really funny. Creating neologisms is needed because it often helps you to express your feelings.
> IR: But having fun and not following the rules isn't bad. It can help us learn faster and express ourselves, our emotions, intentions better.

The third category appears to blend elements from the previous two, focusing on the interplay between language creativity and its ongoing evolution. Many students emphasized the importance of playing with language and being creative with it, acknowledging that such experimentation contributes to its development. The following excerpts from their reflection notes suggest that, following the two reflection meetings,

students perceive language as a dynamic entity that thrives on creativity and innovation. They recognize that by embracing linguistic playfulness and inventiveness, individuals can both contribute to and adapt to the evolving nature of language. Additionally, they value the emergence of neologisms as a reflection of this ongoing linguistic evolution, viewing them as both enriching and enjoyable elements of language usage.

> DP: Playing with the language is very important. Thanks to it, it can evolve. It enables also a person to be creative and learn the language much faster. Neologisms are also of a great value […] and they are simply fun to use and create.
> OŚ: Things such as youth words list and boomer words list shows how language is changing and that only we as a people have an influence on this creature.
> LR: Language is alive all the time, new words are still made and it won`t change. They are needed because language is developing.

Following, the coding process enabled categorization of the reflections cards under key themes such as expression, emotion, misunderstanding, and individual perspective. The fragments underscore the subjective nature of interpretation, revealing students' awareness of the individualistic aspects of language usage. They acknowledge that language is significantly influenced by emotions and feelings, resulting in diverse expressions and potential misunderstandings.

> AP: We can express ourselves in different way.
> WS: Language is not only for the information, but also to express our emotions and feelings. Sometimes we can misunderstand someone's words, depending on our mood.
> PP: I believe it is easy to misunderstand someone, especially when we are feeling strong emotions like anger. Also I feel like the same word can have a different meaning or usage for different people.
> MS: After these 2 meetings I think even more that language and use of language is really individual thing. Our perspective depends on the believes, environment and society.

One quote stands out from the rest and could not be categorized in any of the previous schemes. However, the author of the thesis found it important to consider as it reflects a different understanding of language dynamics and usage among that student. This respondent believes that there is not necessarily an expectation for every individual to be familiar with or actively use all of these new words. This reflects an awareness of the selective nature of language acquisition and usage, recognizing that individuals may prioritize learning and using words that are relevant to their own experiences and environments. It implies an understanding of the pragmatic aspect of language, where the utility of new words is determined by their applicability to specific situations rather than their sheer novelty.

Taking everything into account, it could be summarized that the session successfully achieved its goal of cultivating participants' understanding of language dynamics. It emphasized the importance of creativity, playfulness, and the recognition of the complexity of double meanings within language. Additionally, the session fostered reflection on individual language perspectives, encouraging exploration of linguistic nuances and the subjective nature of interpretation. Most of the quotes gathered from the reflective cards right after the first session align with these themes, demonstrating an increased awareness and appreciation for the complex nature of language among the participants.

The objective of the second session, spanning meetings three and four, was to enhance participants' understanding of language forms, promote critical thinking about language usage, and explore the intricacies of grammatical rules and hyper-correction. The group discussion at the beginning reveals a spectrum of opinions regarding the importance of grammatical rules and language forms in effective communication. Some participants emphasized the necessity of adhering to grammatical rules for clear communication, asserting that standardized language patterns are fundamental. They argued that learning correct grammar is essential for effective communication, especially for non-native speakers.

As the students initially seemed reserved, the researcher facilitated the discussion by presenting a series of guiding questions, aiming to encourage participation and stimulate dialogue. These questions were directed towards a specific part of the group, inviting their reflections on the significance of grammatical rules and the adaptability of language forms in various contexts or audiences. The ensuing responses showcase a range of similar viewpoints, with some participants emphasizing the foundational role of grammar in effective communication, especially for non-native speakers, while others underscore the importance of incorporating new words and structures in language evolution. The students' statements are transcribed in their original form:

DR: Well, for me effective communication rely on using correct grammatical forms and language patterns. It's a purpose of language to have its rules and if people want to effectively learn and talk they should learn it correctly. It's worth using hyper-correct forms because they are needed in everyday life too.

MZ: In my opinion the grammar and standardized language patterns are the base of communication. We people, for whom English is not a mother language, need some guidance how to properly use a language.

Below are selected statements from students' responses during the discussion, collectively highlighting the significance of language standards and grammar in effective communication, alongside an acknowledgment of the dynamic nature of language:

KŻ: In my opinion more important are words and meanings that are standardized, but language is a living creature so of course every year new things and new words for that things are created. We shouldn't underestimate them, however "basic" words or default words and structures are the standardized one.

OŚ: It's more beneficial to focus on hyper-correction because it's important to know every aspect of our language.

WS: They are crucial. You should know the grammar well, so that when you say "I be doing" it is on purpose and not because your grammar is poor.

Presented quotes emphasize the importance of language standards and grammar in facilitating effective communication. While advocating adherence to established linguistic norms, they also acknowledge the ongoing evolution of language, reflecting an understanding of linguistic dynamics.

There is consensus among participants that speech parts play a crucial role in communication. The subsequent discussion affirms the significance of speech parts, with participants acknowledging their vital role in facilitating understanding and expression in communication. Understanding and using verbs, nouns, and adjectives are seen as essential for conveying meaning effectively. Additionally, participants recognize that deeper knowledge of speech parts leads to better comprehension of language.

Moderator: What about the speech parts? Do you believe it's important to know each of them, their place in a sentence and so on, in order to communicate effectively and understand each other?

PS: These [speech parts – author's annotation] are very important. Using verbs, nouns adjectives lets the audience understand what we want to say. Without them it would be really hard to understand. They have a really big influence.

MS: […] the more we know about it [speech parts – authors annotation], the more we can understand the language.

MZ: Basic grammatical rules are crucial in effective communication […]. We don't have to know grammar very well but words like adjectives, nouns are our power.

At the outset of our discussion, a general consensus among participants was evident. The author of the present paper, acting as the moderator of the meeting, subsequently inquired whether there were any divergent viewpoints within the group.

Moderator: Okay, let's reconsider. Are you really all in complete agreement? Does anyone hold a contrasting viewpoint to what has been said so far? Remember, there's no right or wrong here, each perspective is important. So, please feel free to share any differing opinions, even if you think you're alone in them. You're certainly not alone [laughter].

It emerged that there was indeed another perspective present: a group advocating that hyper-correct grammar might not be paramount as long as effective communication is

achieved. They highlighted instances, particularly when abroad, where adherence to rigid grammatical rules can impede understanding.

> IG: Ok so in my opinion grammatical rules aren't as important as they should be for me. I mean that as a linguistic student grammar should be important but to be honest it`s just boring and difficult. From my experience I can say that no one really care about grammar in effective communication.
> IR: Being honest after that many years of learning English I am completely tired of revisioning rules all over again every year. For me in language is the most important to communicate and actually when I took part in Erasmus in high school and I was talking with people using "high English" they couldn't understand me. I think effective communication depends on with who we want to communicate. Sometimes gestures and easy words can be more essential in communication than perfect grammar.
> JB: I think that when someone learns English at school and then go to England, he can have problems with understanding, so important is to teach people the real language not school language, so yes.
> PP: I wish we could learn for example at the uni how to use spoken language and don't pay that much attention on grammar. I want to know how natives speak, I mean I want to know their everyday language.

Subsequently, when asked about instances where they had adjusted their language to suit specific situations, the group emphasized the importance of adaptability, recognizing the dynamic nature of language. They collectively agreed that people regularly modify their language and communication styles to align with different contexts and audiences, considering it a fundamental aspect of effective communication. This adaptability is perceived as inherent and often occurs without conscious effort. Moreover, they recognize using different communication style depending on the given situation. For instance, simplifying language when talking to children contrasts with the use of more complex language in formal presentations.

> LR: There are a lot of situations […]. Good example is interview when we are trying to get a job we should use more formal language and avoid using dialects
> DP: We are adapting them even without us knowing
> MS: When I talk to kids I use simple and easy forms, but when I need to make presentation for subject I try to use more difficult words.

Ultimately, the students seemed divided when asked about the choice between hyper-correction and mastering everyday language forms. While some students advocated for prioritizing the mastery of common language forms, emphasizing the pragmatic benefits of effective communication in daily situations, thus reflecting an inclination towards a communicative approach to language learning, others leaned towards acknowledging the importance of grammatical rules in language acquisition. However, most of them were somewhere in between, stating that grammatical rules are important when learning the language but not the most important factor.

This balanced opinion, adopted by the majority, provided a kind of summary of the discussion and introduced a new perspective, which prompted the entire group to

converge towards a shared consensus that the situation was not as contrasting as initially perceived. Following comments from the group resonated with this general sentiment, with many individuals nodding in agreement and endorsing the viewpoints expressed. This intermediate approach served to reconcile seemingly opposing perspectives. While acknowledging the importance of grammatical rules and knowledge of speech parts, the group also emphasized the significance of diversity and the practical aspects of everyday communication.

> IG: The grammatical rules are not that important, but are required at least on a basic level. For example, you cannot create a sentence mentioning the past, without knowing any past tenses. That being said, some tenses and grammatical rules are omitted in everyday life.
> IR: When it comes to learning a language, it's important to focus on correction and common forms equally. In some situations we would have to use formal and correct language and in some just common phrases and words. It depends and it's impossible to say what us more beneficial but I know for sure that it's good to focus on both.
> JB: It depends, what one's goal is. If a person wants to learn a language on purpose of, for instance, finding a job related to a language, then the grammatical rules and broad vocabulary should be learned at the most. However, if it's for informal communication those are not required.

The group discussion showcased a range of viewpoints regarding the significance of grammar and language forms in communication. Nonetheless, as the discussion progressed, it became evident that the participants began to diminish the perceived disparity between these perspectives. They acknowledged the importance of grammatical rules to some extent, but also recognized that not all grammatical rules are equally crucial in everyday communication. They emphasized the need to balance the focus on correction and mastering common language forms. They highlighted the variability of language use depending on the situation and stressed the importance of being proficient in both formal and informal language, emphasizing at the same time the role of individual goals in language learning.

Following the completion of the second session, participants were once again asked to document their reflections on provided cards. Subsequently, the collected data underwent categorization through a coding process, resulting in their classification into four categories corresponding to four distinct aspects of language and language learning, aligning with statement pairs numbered from 4 to 7 from the questionnaire. These categories encompassed the balance between standardized language structures and individual interpretation in communication, the role of grammatical rules in language knowledge and communication, different perspectives on the conceptualization of language structure, and views on language instruction for English as a Foreign Language

learners. The analysis of selected excerpts is presented below, maintaining the original spelling of the quotes.

First of all, several students presented their perspective regarding the nature of language and its use in communication. Presented reflections demonstrate a range of viewpoints concerning the relationship between standardized language forms and individual agency in communication. While some students emphasize the importance of learning standardized forms for grammar proficiency, others highlight the dynamic and contextual nature of language use, suggesting a more fluid interpretation of linguistic structures and meanings. The first reflection notably challenges the idea of standardized language patterns as a predominant feature of everyday communication, advocating for an active role of individuals in shaping language during interaction. Conversely, the second reflection advocated the importance of mastering standardized language forms, particularly for grammatical accuracy. The third, fourth and fifth reflections acknowledged the diverse roles individuals assume in life, necessitating adaptability in communication styles. They align with the idea that the meaning of structures and words is determined during communication, as the interpretation of language can vary based on factors such as the listener's background and context.

> LR: I think people hardly ever use standardized language patterns in everyday communication. There are a lot of new words created every year, and so, language is flexible. People add new meaning to previously created words.
> JT: I think we should learn standardized forms so that we are good at grammar.
> KŻ: When we are talking to someone we need to include their age, social status, background and many other things if we want to show them respect and to have effective conversation.
> MW: There are situations during our lives when we have to adapt our language. We play many different roles: students, parents, children, teachers and that's why sometimes we have to adapt to a person or a situation.
> DP: I pay attention to pick the right type of language when I talk with someone, I consider their age, status , etc.

Upon reviewing the role of grammatical rules in language knowledge and communication based on the provided reflections, it becomes apparent that while there is some variance in perspective, there is a prevailing tendency among students to value grammar as a crucial aspect of effective communication. Reflections (1-4) collectively reveal that after the task-based session, students realized that they often make mistakes in both English and their native language, often without prior awareness. Despite a minority viewpoint (opinion of IW), suggesting a relaxed approach towards adhering to grammar rules, the overall consensus leans towards acknowledging the significance of grammatical accuracy in facilitating clear communication and mutual understanding among speakers. This

sentiment is supported by reflections 1, 6, and 7, which highlight the critical role of grammar in fostering effective communication.

> KŻ: I have realized that I make some mistakes when I am talking. My best friends told me that now I can speak better thanks to them. I believe that grammar is important and we should focus on it. It is really needed to know the grammar because people can understand you better. But of course everyone makes mistakes, we can`t avoid them."
> MZ: Yes, I realized what mistakes I made. A lot of things that I didn't know […]
> PS: During this lesson I got to know interesting things […]. Now I see that I've been doing some mistakes for all my life and never realized that stg is wrong. It's really funny.
> IR: I've realized that some phrases, that are common in use, are actually not grammatically correct. I wouldn't be able to tell the correct version in most cases, even though it is in my native language.
> IW: In every language there are words/sentences that everyone says, but they are incorrect, but it's ok to use them. We don't have to use 100% correct grammar just while speaking with someone from another country. Even in polish not everyone uses properly grammar and stick to the grammatical rules.
> JT: In my opinion grammatical rules are pretty important because without them we wouldn't be able to understand other people.
> AP: In my opinion grammatical rules are very important in effective communication. It makes it much easier to communicate with each other and to convey a clear message.

Only one student decided to address the concept of speech parts in their reflection. In doing so, the student recognizes the potential impact of understanding different parts of speech on communication effectiveness.

> LR: I think that the more parts of speech you know the more effective can you communicate, it depends on the linguistic space in which you move, but for ordinary people basics are completely enough.

It suggests that familiarity with a broader range of speech parts can enhance communicative abilities, depending on the linguistic context in which one operates. However, the student also recognizes that for the average person, particularly in everyday situations, a basic understanding of speech parts is sufficient for effective communication. This opinion reflects a balanced view of the role of parts of speech in communication, considering both their potential benefits and the practical needs of everyday language use.

The final concern raised by students, which at the same time constitutes the fourth category in the analysis, pertains to respondents' perspectives on the importance of mastering common language forms or strict adherence to grammatical rules in communication. The following reflections were qualified within this category:

> JB: I think it's more beneficial to master the most common forms used in everyday communication.
> PP: I think in language learning it is more beneficial to focus on mastering the most common forms, because I think it is better to be able to communicate than be hyper-correct.
> WS: I think that grammatical rules are important when we are learning the language, but I don't think that they are that much important in communication.
> MS: Talking about Grammar, hyper correction and so on and so forth, nothing has really changed for me. My statement for this is that they are important factors, but I think not the

> most important ones. I think that communication is the most important and its possible without them.
>
> IR: I don't think much has changes in my thinking. I still pay a lot of attention to hypercorrection, but I became aware that it is not always crucial to maintain it. It is important to speak using correct grammar structures, but a person can be free to be more flexible while communicating.
>
> LR: It's good to know the correct form, but I don't see the point in being hyper-correct. Let's play with language and have fun. However, we all should be aware of correct forms and how to talk properly in different situations.
>
> PS: […] I am still a fan of learning people hyper-correct forms of languages because all of that changes smoothly and unconsciously during conversations.

The first three reflections underscore the practical benefits of mastering common language forms over hyper-correctness, prioritizing effective communication over grammatical perfection. The third reflection acknowledges the relevance of grammatical rules in language acquisition but diminishes their importance in actual communication. The following three reflections imply a belief that while grammatical rules and hyper-correction are important factors, they are not of a paramount importance in communication. Finally, the last reflection places big importance on hyper-correctness and suggests that there has been no shift in perception regarding the subject. Collectively, these seven perspectives highlight a recognition of the importance of mastering common language forms for effective communication, with varying degrees of emphasis on the significance of grammatical rules. Rather than advocating one extreme over the other, the general perspective demonstrates a balanced consideration of linguistic accuracy and practical communication needs.

In the third session's proceedings, which centered on cultural properties of language, students highlighted several key issues. More precisely, commencing with a discussion on the expression of concepts across different languages, students demonstrated a heightened level of linguistic awareness from the outset. While attempting to identify suitable expressions in various languages for several words or phrases, they swiftly concluded that in certain instances, this task proved impossible. Particularly, students agreed that finding equivalents in Polish or English for terms like "wanderlust" or "Schadenfreude" and "Treppenwitz" from German is often unfeasible due to cultural disparities. Throughout the discussion, we explored several English words that posed translation challenges for the group into their native languages for various reasons. Examples of such terms include "posh", "spoiler", and in the context of Facebook, the term "like". According to the students, while translations for these words do exist in Polish, they do not adequately capture the full intended message or sentiment. Furthermore, students highlighted that vocabulary related to cuisine, such as "sausage" or "dumplings", along with their Polish

equivalents, pose significant challenges for translation, often making it impossible to fully capture the intended essence. Consequently, they expressed a preference for descriptive methods to avoid diluting the cultural context of a given society.

The subsequent meeting of this session was dedicated to the topic of linguistic diversity, specifically focusing on dialectal forms and their significance within a language. Right from the beginning, the discussion was characterized by unanimous agreement among the participants. The students collectively expressed their appreciation for dialects, considering them as an integral and valuable aspect of language. Meeting number 6 on dialects was followed by a final discussion where students drew conclusions regarding the absence of direct equivalents for certain words and phrases across different languages. They also explored variations in language perception influenced by cultural factors. Additionally, the group discussed linguistic nuances related to emotional expression and concluded by examining how everyday experiences and imagery influence linguistic expressions. The focal point of the discussion revolved around the question of whether any language can adequately express all ideas. Students collectively shared their perspectives, suggesting that while in many instances it is possible, often it necessitates employing a larger vocabulary or more elaborate descriptions to precisely convey the intended meaning. During task-based exploration, they frequently encountered the challenge of finding a suitable equivalent and sometimes considered it impossible. Consequently, they argued that even with comprehensive descriptions, certain ideas might remain elusive and difficult to fully capture within a linguistic framework. Here are selected excerpts from the students' final discussion, presented in their original form:

> AP: It's like with the word Weltschmerz, so the pain of existence, you can express the same idea but you have to use many more words and in German it is just one word for that.
> MW: Sometimes I think that any languages are able to express any ideas but they just have more specific words or words that, I don't know, are better. For example, for me, like, we have word anxiety in English and in Polish it just translates to "lęk" and I think that English word is more precise and it's just better for me to use. Even in Polish, when I talk about anxiety, I prefer to use the English word. So Polish is able to express this idea but I think English in this case is more precise
> LR: I think it's because of the fact that people who use these different languages they need different words to express themselves and they differ. For example German people experience the Weltschmerz more than the other people so they need this one word to express them more quickly and freely. It's just the difference on perspective of the world probably.
> PS: It comes probably from the culture, like the Spanish - they have this siesta culture, after lunch conversations and it probably wouldn't make that sense as in Polish [..] in Spanish it's just shorter because it is something that they do frequently.
> PP: In my mind, in Italian we have a word, or maybe it's a phrase, but its Dolce far niente, and in English we have like a joy of doing nothing, and I think it's just up to their culture, they just can be happy at the moment.

JB: Yeah there are more words in Italian like these, for them it's more a state of mind than actual phrase. You have to sometimes dig in the culture to understand it. In Italian you have many of them.

PP True, we can say that it's just rooted in their culture.

Subsequently, students were prompted to reconsider their viewpoints on dialects. Several pertinent opinions are cited below, which elicited widespread agreement from the group, with many nodding in affirmation to indicate their support.

IW: I think it's not incorrect language, it enhances the value of the language because it shows us that it is still a living creature. People still use some forms of the dialects or other languages like Kashubian, so why not? If people who use that forms also can use the proper Polish form.

IR: […] this phrase incorrect version of the language is just an absurd to me cause I think that every single one of us sitting here uses a different version of every language that we speak. In Polish or English we use it differently and if just a group of people uses it more or less the same but still different individually, I feel like it's just incorrect to call it incorrect.

It can be concluded that the quotes convey a prevailing sentiment that embraces linguistic variations, encompassing dialects and regional languages such as Kashubian, as integral components of language. Speakers argue that labeling such variations as "incorrect" undermines the richness and vitality of language. Instead, they advocate for recognizing the diversity within languages and accepting all forms of expression as valid. They believe that language is dynamic and evolves over time, reflecting the diverse ways individuals communicate.

The fourth and final session, comprising a single meeting, aimed to develop an awareness that extends beyond the surface meaning of words and expressions. By identifying persuasive language techniques and trying to critically analyze the hidden functions of language, students were guided to perceive language as a multifaceted system that extends beyond a neutral conveyor of information.

The collective analysis of the final set of reflective notes reveals a considerable level of language awareness among the students, particularly in the context of the relationship between language and ideology. Firstly, there is a recognition of the power of language in shaping perceptions and behaviors. Students express an understanding of how media, commercials, and politics utilize language to manipulate and persuade individuals. They acknowledge that certain words and constructions are intentionally chosen to influence opinions and beliefs. Secondly, there is a growing awareness of the need to critically analyze language, especially in media and advertising contexts. Students express a sense of caution about blindly accepting information presented through language, recognizing the potential for manipulation and the importance of being attentive. Furthermore, there is a realization that language

serves multiple functions beyond simple communication, including persuasion and manipulation. This understanding underscores the students' awareness of the complex interplay between language and ideology in shaping societal norms and behaviors. Overall, all these quotes indicate a mature understanding of the power dynamics inherent in language use, with students acknowledging the need for critical engagement and discernment in interpreting linguistic messages.

> MW: Language has a huge power. With words you can not only express your mind and feelings, but also manipulate others. This lesson showed me that I should be more careful while talking with people and not believe in every word one says. This lesson was truly interesting.
>
> KŻ: Considering everything that we talked about, I jump to conclusions that I now understand many more ways to convince sm to do something. How you can use words to get what you want without this person knowing- it is interesting.
>
> MZ: Media and commercials are using key words which they know will entertain and manipulate to do or buy something what we even don't need but it says to do it.
>
> DP: I believe something changed in my thinking. Of course, I learn new things and became aware of them. I know that there are a lot of ways to manipulate people. We should be aware that we can't believe what we see in media.
>
> JT: Language is a tool used to express our feelings as well as ideologies. They way we speak and the selection of words we use can determine, whether we convince someone to our beliefs or not. Personally, never paid much attention to the language used in politics or in advertisements, but maybe I ought to change that.
>
> DR: Language is very often used to persuade someone to your own opinions and beliefs. It is also common in many commercials. People, who promote products are using specific words in their speech to persuade people to buy it. We also use these techniques in arguments.
>
> OŚ: Yes, something has changed in my thinking. I learned, that language has multiple functions for example manipulating. You can achieve the target by using different constructions. I see language very helpful in the context of the relationship between language and ideology. It is the most powerful tool for social media, advertising , political and everything. If you use language properly, you can achieve everything.
>
> WS: I think that we see the world differently, so we also see the language in different ways, Many people, commercials, companies, politics, etc. are trying to convince others to their statement. They are using special words to influence somebody's mind, and it works. Maybe not in every case, but the range of consumption shows us that they tricks are working.
>
> PS: I became more aware that we shouldn't believe in everything they say in media. Sometimes we don't know how they manipulate us and our minds. We should be more careful. Language have a big influence on us.
>
> AP: I have seen that there are many different ways to manipulate someone that I wasn't aware of. I see that language is a really useful tool in life and it can be really easy to persuade someone using the right vocabulary/method of speaking.

The second category of reflective notes captures a diverse range of attitudes towards language awareness among the participants. Some individuals acknowledged their prior familiarity with the discussed concepts, viewing the sessions as beneficial refreshers. Others expressed an absence of significant shifts in perception but conveyed a willingness to explore the topic further. Overall, these reflections align with the varying levels of language awareness observed at the

beginning of the session, with some students already demonstrating a high degree of awareness across multiple aspects of language.

> IR: I think that I've been aware of most things we've learned in classes. Some of them were a nice review because I don't think about them on daily basis. […].
> LR: After considering everything that was mentioned and explained in our two meetings […] my conclusion is that nothing really changed in my perception of these topics, although the material shown was very interesting and encouraging to probe the topic. In the light of the above I do not have any specific reflections. However, the topic is to be penetrated by me.
> JB: I haven't learnt anything special, because I`ve been into languages for a few years now, and since then I have read many articles, I`ve watched many videos, learnt a few languages and this have made many assumptions and observations myself.
> MS: Nothing really has changed in the case of awareness of language persuasion. I also think that there is a thin line between persuasion and manipulation. People need to be aware what function has the speech they are listening. […] When we will look deeper into language and try to see behind the words we can discover more interesting things, find an ideology and discover something more powerful than only words and sentences.
> IW: I wouldn't say that what we have talked about changed my thinking, but I do believe it made me more aware of unobvious functions of a language. I learnt about most common techniques that are used to manipulate people and that the way you convey information is equally important as the information itself.

Introducing another note that captures a broader perspective across all our meetings, it functions as a comprehensive summary of our collective exploration, however does not match previous categories. It reflects a broad appreciation for the discussions on language and ideology, particularly highlighting the significance of being mindful of the words we use and their intended purposes. Furthermore, the research participant acknowledges the diversity in linguistic usage, emphasizing that individuals' interpretations and associations with words can vary based on cultural and contextual factors. The speaker's recognition that there is no singular correct way to use language underscores a critical awareness of linguistic relativism – the idea that language is shaped by various factors and is inherently subjective. This understanding suggests a level of language awareness that encompass the broader socio-cultural implications of language use. In conclusion, the quote implies a sophisticated level of language awareness, characterized by an understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and ideology.

> PP: I can say that in general everything that we've been talking about was interesting. Especially today's lecture about the context of the relationship between language and ideology. I think that it's important to be aware of words we use and in what purpose. I also learn that images that we have in our minds when someone says "cheese" depend on the culture, country, people around us etc. That was helpful. My conclusions are as follows: everyone is different and everyone uses language differently. But there's no one way to say, what is correct and what not.

Finally, there are two reflections on language awareness worth considering:

IR: I think during this semester I've become more aware. I knew about everything that we discussed – I just wasn't aware that I've already known that. I'm sure what has changed in my thinking is that now I know that I know more than I thought. We (as a society) are aware about many processes – we just don't think about them either because we are simply not interested in the topic or we have more important things to think about.

WS: I feel like my language awareness was at a pretty decent level but ever since we started talking about it during classes it has noticeably improved. I pay closer attention to the way I use all 3 languages and each of them individually. I've come to realize that one language is capable of introducing a whole new, different perspective on the world, but most importantly myself. The improved level of my language awareness also made me feel more driven to learn new languages so as to broaden my view of the world.

Of particular interest is a first note where the student admitted to being aware of certain concepts previously but had not actively paid attention to them. This observation admits that language awareness is a gradual development process rather than an instantaneous discovery. It underscores the claim that individuals may possess tacit knowledge or understanding of language-related phenomena, which can be consciously realized through deliberate attention and exploration. The second quote provides an interesting reflection on the student's enhanced language awareness. The student observed a significant improvement in her language awareness as a result of participating in these discussions. She reports a greater sensitivity to linguistic nuances and variations, as well as an increased recognition of the impact of language on perception and self-identity. Furthermore, this participant notes that this heightened language awareness has sparked a desire to learn additional languages and a motivation to expand her linguistic skills to further broaden understanding of the world. This highlights the connection between language awareness, personal growth, and intellectual curiosity.

4.7.3. Stage three analysis

In the third stage of the research, students involved in the awareness-raising sessions were requested to complete the questionnaire once more, specifically sections two and three, which focused on assessing their level of language awareness and perception of success. The objective was to evaluate whether the participants' level of language awareness increased compared to the onset of the research project and, consequently, to determine if the students' perceptions of success in language acquisition changed. This included their approach toward native speaker competence, success in terms of communication abilities, grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency, satisfaction derived from their progress,

and their attitudes towards external measurements of success. By comparing the research results with the initial data, the study aimed to investigate any changes through the use of descriptive statistical analysis. Examining the same data over an extended period facilitated a longitudinal analysis, enabling the observation of how responses to specific questions evolved and identifying trends in students' attitudes and perceptions of success.

The analysis process for the third stage mirrored that of the previous stages outlined in sections B and C of subsection 5.7.1. The data collected from the questionnaire administered to the students were compiled into a downloadable dataset and subsequently followed by manual statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel. The coding process involved assigning significance to the proximity of responses, where closely aligned answers indicated either a high or low level of language awareness, with a neutral position falling between 2.50 and 3.50. To ensure clarity, responses were occasionally reversed in pairs of sentences to prevent suggesting a particular bias. Specifically, in four instances where the sentence pairs were reversed, student responses were adjusted accordingly to maintain consistency. In each case, numerical values of 1 and 2 indicated a low level of language awareness, 3 represented neutrality, and 4 and 5 suggested a high level of language awareness. The questionnaire was distributed to a cohort of 16 students who actively participated in the awareness-raising meetings. Responses were reviewed for completeness, as suggested by Kitchenham and Pfleeger (2003). Notably, each statement received 16 responses, ensuring consistency and uniformity in data collection.

4.7.3.1   Section II: Language awareness questionnaire

Turning to the analysis of the data, the arithmetic mean of the overall level of language awareness for the entire group was determined to be 3.61. This represents a modest increase of 0.09 points compared to the baseline level of 3.52 recorded prior to the session. Although the difference is not substantial, it is noteworthy that a score of 3.52 was only marginally above the medium level of language awareness, whereas a score of 3.61 corresponds to a distinctly high level of language awareness according to established standards.

Analysis of individual statement pairs reveals that the majority of responses reflect a high or medium level of language awareness, with only a single instance indicating a lower level of awareness. Specifically, eight statement pairs yielded scores ranging from 3.625 to 4.625, exceeding the established threshold for high language awareness, which typically starts at 3.51. Furthermore, a medium level of language awareness was observed

in four instances, with scores between 2.69 and 3.31. In one instance, the responses to a statement pair resulted in an arithmetic mean of 2.375, indicating a low level of language awareness among participants. Additionally, it is notable that in 6 out of 13 cases (specifically, cases 1, 8, 9, and 11-13), the most frequently selected value by students was 5, signifying the highest level of language awareness. In four instances, the mode was 4 (in SP#3 - SP#6), also reflecting a high level of language awareness. In two cases, students predominantly selected a neutral response, while in one case (SP#10), the most frequently chosen value was 2. This distribution underscores the predominance of high or neutral language awareness among students across different statement pairs.

A more detailed analysis of the results for individual statement pairs reveals that, on average, students uphold the belief that no two individuals express the same words with identical meanings (SP#1 – arithmetic mean: 4). Additionally, students overwhelmingly agreed that incorporating creativity and linguistic play is fundamental to language learning (SP#3 - arithmetic mean: 4) and that meaning in communication is determined contextually by individuals (SP#4 – arithmetic mean: 3.625). Moreover, students collectively acknowledged the inherent limitations of language, recognizing that not all languages can express identical concepts (SP#8 - arithmetic mean: 4.06), and that language rules are subject to variation even within a single linguistic community (SP#9 - arithmetic mean: 4.06). The highest level of agreement among students was observed in SP#11, which affirmed that no language form is inherently incorrect due to its dialectal nature (arithmetic mean: 4.625). Additionally, Statement Pairs 12 and 13, which explored the relationship between language and ideology, also received strong agreement from the students. They agreed that language is not merely a neutral tool for communication but is deeply connected to the beliefs, values, and worldviews of its users (SP#12 – arithmetic mean: 3.875). Additionally, students recognized the role of language in propagating ideological beliefs, including the use of propaganda techniques by various entities such as governments, political parties, and interest groups (SP#13 – arithmetic mean: 3.81).

The examination of statement pairs 2, 5, 6, and 7 indicates that respondents exhibit a moderate degree of language awareness, with a slight inclination towards a higher level of awareness. Specifically, in SP2, the arithmetic mean of 3.19 falls within the medium range but suggests a tendency towards a higher level of language awareness. Respondents acknowledge that language serves as a transmitter of both information and intentions/emotions, with a stronger inclination towards the latter, indicating an understanding beyond mere transmission. Similarly, in SP#5, while the mean score of

3.31 indicates a medium level of language awareness, the most frequently selected value by respondents is 4. This suggests that a notable proportion of respondents view grammatical rules as fundamental to language proficiency. However, the mode also reflects a general tendency to consider grammatical rules as supplementary elements that support and enhance effective communication, rather than as essential components. Conversely, Statement Pair 6, which addresses the components of speech, yields a mean score of 2.69, indicating a medium level of language awareness with a tendency towards lower awareness. Respondents demonstrate a basic recognition of the significance of speech components in comprehending language function; however, they exhibit a limited appreciation for more comprehensive analyses of language units. Finally, Statement Pair 7, which explores preferences in language instruction for EFL learners, reveals a mean score of 3.25, reflecting a medium level of language awareness with a slight inclination towards higher awareness. Respondents exhibit a marginal preference for teaching commonly used forms of communication over an idealized version. Nevertheless, the most frequent score of 3 indicates that respondents generally hold a balanced perspective on the optimal approach to language instruction.

Interestingly, SP10, which examines perceptions of language as tied to specific cultural communities, reveals a low level of language awareness, as indicated by an average mean of 2.375. This suggests that respondents tend to view language, especially international languages like English, as inherently associated with particular nations or groups. Consequently, they believe that acquiring the language requires an understanding of its socio-cultural context. This perspective implies that students perceive language learning as intrinsically tied to specific cultural contexts, potentially hindering their ability to recognize language as a global and universal tool for communication. Upon reviewing the materials and the course of the awareness-raising sessions, it became apparent that there may have been insufficient emphasis on the concept of English as an international language, which transcends national boundaries and serves as a means of global communication. While we focused extensively on the cultural aspects of language, we failed to adequately highlight that English is a broad and international language, making it challenging to attribute it to any particular community exclusively. This oversight may have contributed to the perpetuation of the belief that language is tightly linked to socio-cultural realities.

A comparison of the mean responses from the initial group before the reflective sessions with those from the selected group after the sessions reveals a noticeable

increase in language awareness. Prior to the reflective sessions, the arithmetic mean of responses from 5 statement pairs indicated a high level of language awareness, 7 pairs of statements indicated a medium level, and 1 SP indicated a low level. In contrast, after the reflective sessions, 8 pairs of statements reflected a high level of language awareness, 4 indicated a medium level, and 1 continued to show a low level. The detailed arithmetic mean values for each pair of statements, both before and after the reflective sessions, are provided in the subsequent table.

Table 2 - Arithmetic means of LA for SP before and after reflective session

SP#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
BEFORE	3,45	3,40	4,17	3.38	3,19	2,23	3,47	4,02	3,87	2,59	4,55	3,40	3,81
AFTER	4	3,19	4	3,625	3,31	2,69	3,25	4,06	4,06	2,375	4,625	3,875	4,08

As evident from the data presented, there is an increase in language awareness in 9 instances, with three statement pairs showing a shift from a medium to a high level of LA. In the remaining four cases, there is a slight decrease in the mean value, averaging two tenths, but still within the same LA category. It suggests that, overall, the reflective sessions had a positive impact on language awareness, as indicated by an increase in LA levels in the majority of cases. Even in instances where there is a slight decrease in mean values, the overall level of LA remains consistent within its respective category.

4.7.3.2 Section III: Success perception questionnaire

The final section of the questionnaire was distributed to students, who were requested to use a 5-point scale to rate their agreement with statements designed to assess their perceptions of language learning success after the awareness-raising sessions. Despite distributing the questionnaire to 16 students, only 15 responses were received, indicating that one student did not complete this section. The analysis of the responses begins with the examination of the first two statements, which address the criteria for evaluating language learning success: one advocates the assessment based on native speaker proficiency, while the other suggests evaluating the learner's accomplishments as a L2 user.

Graph 17 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 1

Language learning success should be evaluated based on native speaker competence.
15 responses
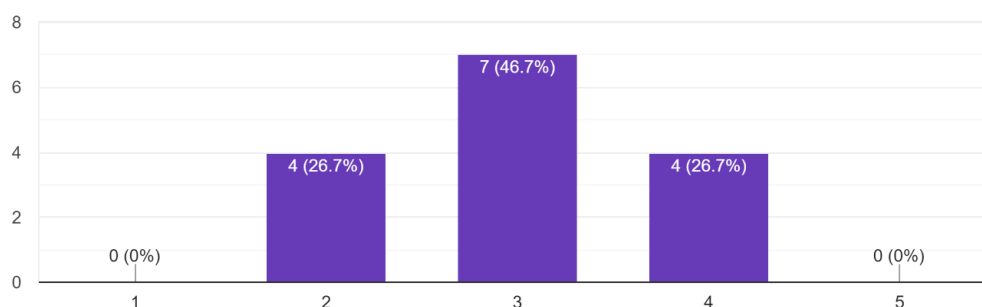
Graph 18 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 2

Language learning success should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a second language learner.
15 responses
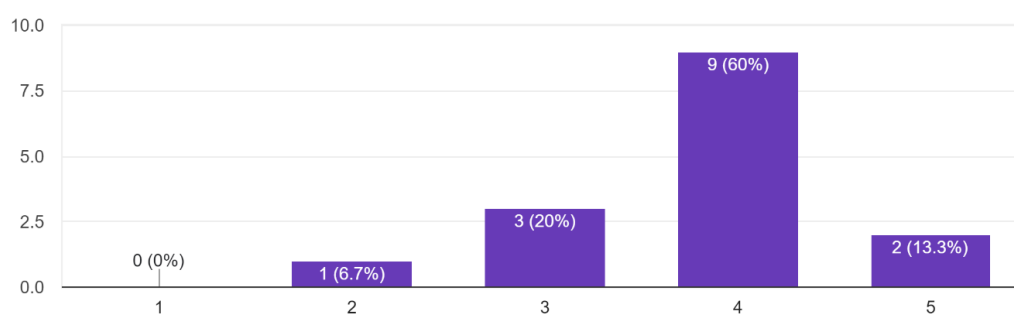
The results indicate a lack of consensus among respondents regarding native speaker competence, with no strong opinions on either side. Instead, the majority of responses are neutral, suggesting a range of perspectives or indecision on this issue, constituting nearly 47% of the total responses. In contrast, over 73% of respondents agree or strongly agree with evaluating language learning success based on the learner's achievements in acquiring a second language, indicating a clear preference. Only a minor proportion of 6.7% express disagreement, while 20% of respondents remain neutral.

The following two statements aimed to evaluate perspectives on success in language learning, particularly in relation to speaking proficiency.

Graph 19 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 3

I`ll achieve full success if I attain native-like fluency in speaking.
14 responses
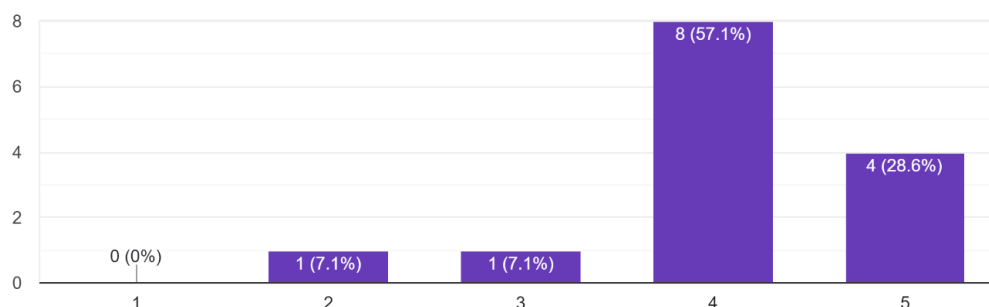
Graph 20 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 4

Being a proficient language user doesn't require speaking like a native speaker.
15 responses
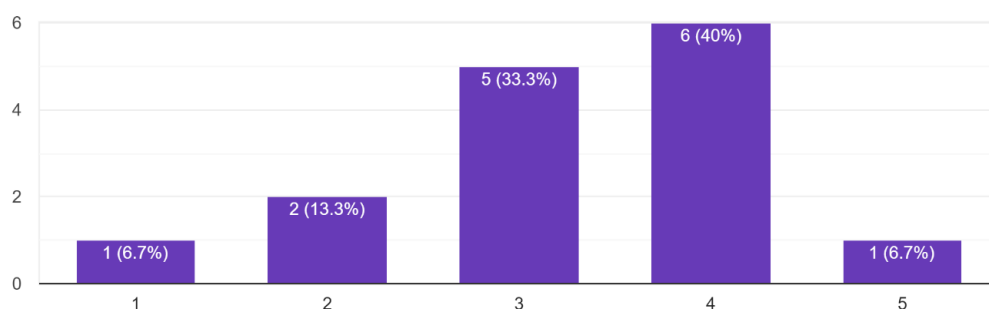
The findings indicate a strong consensus among the majority of respondents (12 out of 15), representing over 85% of the group, who supported the assertion that achieving native-like fluency in speaking is essential for complete success in language learning. However, in regard to the statement proposing that being a proficient language user does not necessitate speaking like a native speaker, the distribution of opinions was more balanced compared to the previous statement. While the predominant viewpoint supported the notion, with 7 respondents endorsing it, one-third of the participants (33.3%) maintained a neutral stance. This suggests that they believe speaking like a native speaker is not a prerequisite for proficiency in a language.

The perspective on language learning success, encompassing a broader spectrum of language skills such as speaking, reading, and writing, is addressed in the subsequent two statements.

Graph 21- Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 5

Language learning success is achieved when I can confidently engage in conversations, regardless of accent or minor errors.
15 responses
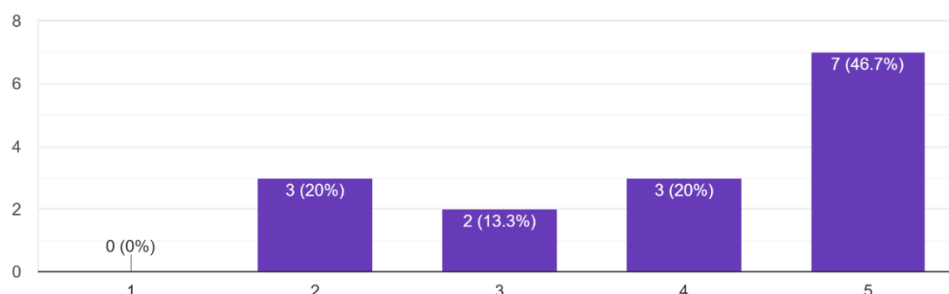
Graph 22 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 6

I consider myself successful in language learning when I can easily read and understand texts in the target language and write clearly, even if it is not perfect.
15 responses
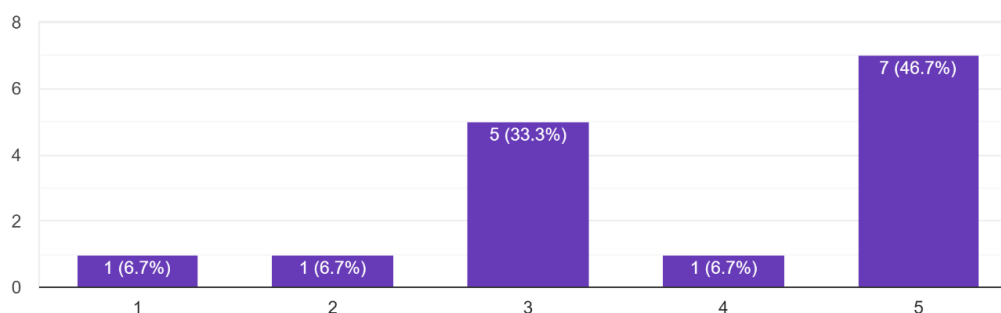
The majority of respondents, comprising nearly 68% (10 out of 15), expressed strong support for the notion that language learning success is primarily achieved through the ability to confidently engage in conversations, despite the presence of an accent or minor errors. This indicates a general consensus that oral proficiency is a key indicator of successful language acquisition. In contrast, the evaluation of language learning success in relation to reading and writing proficiency reveals a more diverse set of opinions. While over half of the respondents favor the idea that success is achieved when one can comprehend texts and write clearly, even if not perfectly, a significant portion (33.3%) remains neutral. Therefore, while there is widespread agreement on the importance of oral proficiency in language learning, perspectives on the role of reading and writing proficiency exhibit greater variability.

The following two statements investigate further dimensions of language learning success, each proposing a distinct criterion for evaluating proficiency. The first statement

underscores the importance of becoming comfortable with expressing thoughts and ideas, even if this involves minor errors or lacks stylistic refinement. In contrast, the second statement prioritizes the attainment of grammatical accuracy and stylistic sophistication as benchmarks for language learning success.

Graph 23 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 7

Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can comfortably express my thoughts and ideas.
15 responses
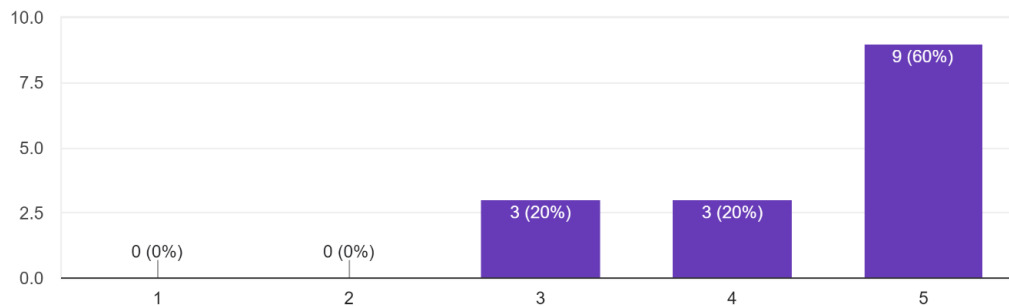
Graph 24 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 8

Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can express my thoughts and ideas with grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency.
15 responses
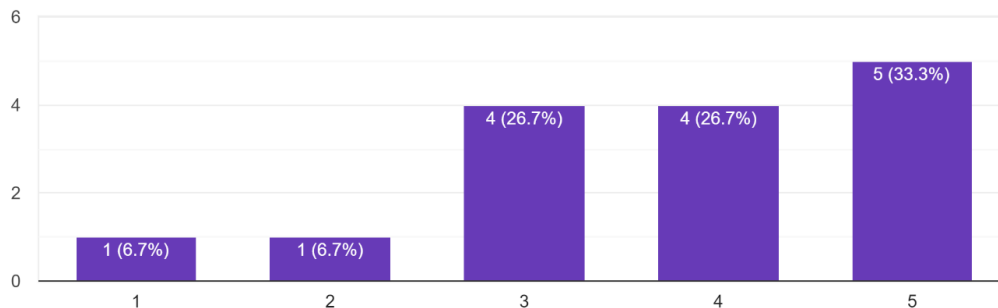
The results demonstrate a significant level of support among respondents for the first statement. Specifically, 60% expressed strong support, with a total of 80% in favor of the notion that success in language learning is achieved through comfortable expression of thoughts and ideas. Additionally, the absence of any opposition highlights a strong consensus on the importance of communicative ease as a critical indicator of language learning success.

Opinions regarding the second statement are more varied, reflecting diverse perspectives on the importance of grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency in

language learning success. While a significant portion of respondents (60%) supported the importance of these criteria, there was also notable opposition (13.4%) and a considerable amount of neutrality (26.7%). These findings suggest that opinions are divided, with some valuing grammatical and stylistic precision highly, while others do not regard it as central to defining language learning success.

Statements number 9 and 10 emphasize the continuous nature of language learning and the subjective nature of success. Both acknowledge the journey of improvement and growth over time, yet they differ in their emphasis. The former focuses on feeling successful through progress, while the latter suggests a perpetual dissatisfaction with one's achievements.

Graph 25 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 9

Language learning success is a continuous journey, and I feel successful when I see improvement and growth over time, regardless of reaching perfection.
15 responses
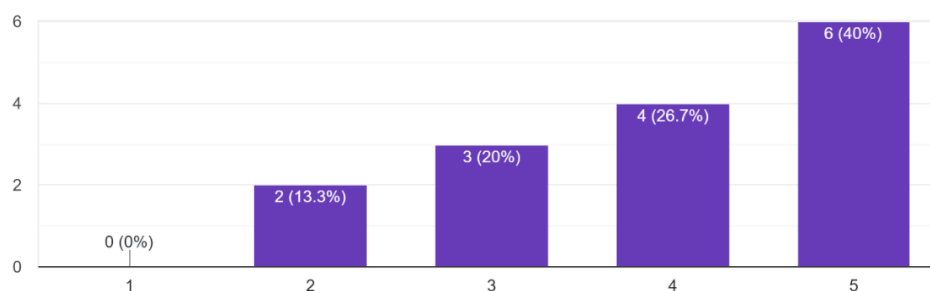
Graph 26 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 10

I will never be completely satisfied with my progress as there will always be aspects I haven't mastered.
15 responses
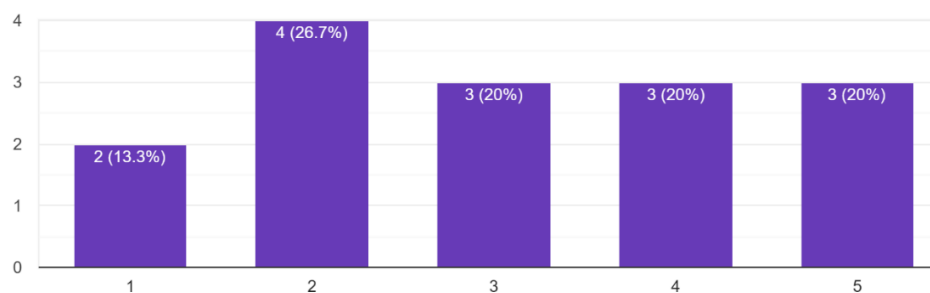
The data reveals that approximately 67% of respondents supported the view that success is associated with progress rather than perfection. In contrast, a relatively small

proportion, around 13.3%, opposed this perspective, while 20% remained neutral. These results suggest that, in general, students conceptualize success as an evolving process characterized by ongoing improvement rather than a fixed attainment of perfection. Responses to the second statement illustrate a range of opinions regarding the possibility of achieving complete satisfaction with personal progress, with no dominant viewpoint emerging. Exactly 40% of respondents were inclined to the belief that satisfaction can be attained even if some aspects remain incomplete, while a combined 40% expressed opposition to this notion. The remaining 20% were neutral regarding the idea that true satisfaction is unattainable due to the ongoing nature of learning and mastery. These results reflect a diverse array of perspectives on whether complete satisfaction with personal progress is achievable, with no prevailing consensus.

The final two statements address the concept of success in language learning from distinct perspectives, each emphasizing different criteria. The first statement focuses on internal indicators, such as personal feelings of confidence and satisfaction with one's progress, proposing a subjective evaluation of success based on self-assessment. Conversely, the second statement prioritizes external measures, such as passing exams and meeting specific requirements, advocating a more objective assessment grounded in institutional standards and measurable outcomes.

Graph 27 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 11

Success in language learning is about feeling confident and satisfied with my progress.
15 responses
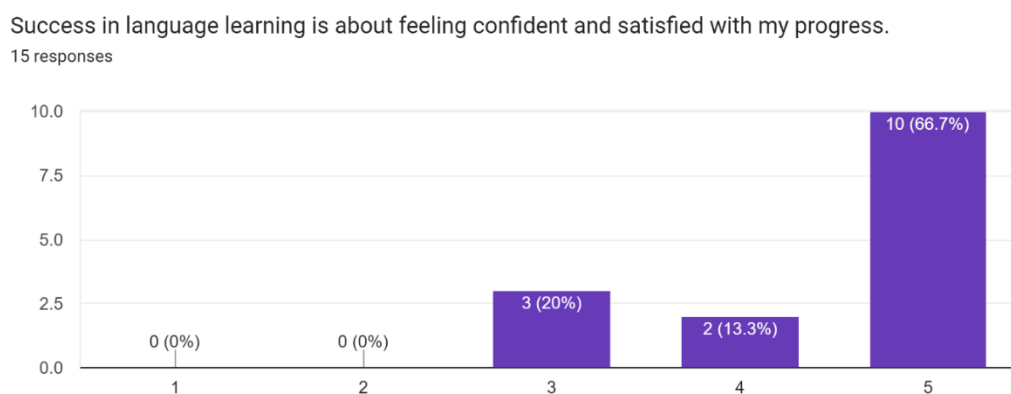
Graph 28 - Success perception after sessions: Responses to statement 12

Success in language learning is about passing exams and fulfilling requirements.
15 responses
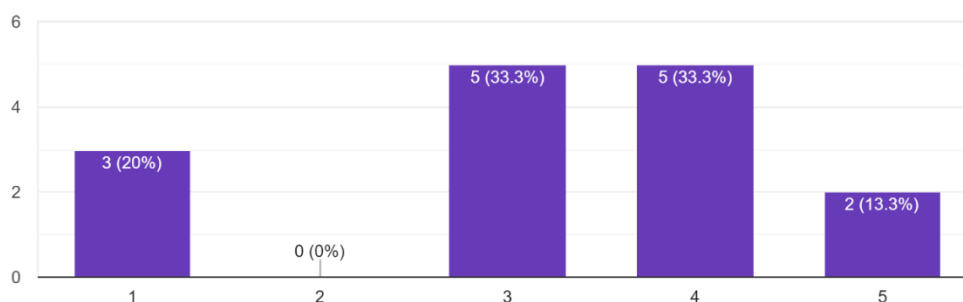
The data demonstrates a strong consensus among participants regarding the first statement. Specifically, a prevailing 80% of respondents believe that success in language learning is closely associated with feelings of confidence and satisfaction with one's progress. The remaining 20% of participants adopted a neutral stance on this issue. In contrast, the responses to the second statement reflect a more varied set of opinions. For nearly half of the respondents (46.6%), academic criteria such as passing exams and meeting specific requirements remain significant determinants of language learning success. In contrast, 20% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the idea that success in language learning is determined by external measurements, indicating a preference for self-assessment methods over objective academic criteria. Additionally, one-third of the respondents adopted a neutral stance, reflecting uncertainty or a lack of strong conviction on the issue.

4.7.4. Comparative analysis of pre- and post- reflective sessions

The subsequent phase of the analysis involves comparing the initial research findings with those obtained after the reflective sessions. This comparison aims to determine whether there have been any changes in how they perceive success, given their heightened level of language awareness. Utilizing Microsoft Excel, the mean (average response from all respondents) and the mode (the most frequently occurring, or repetitive, value) were calculated for each statement before and after the reflective sessions. Each statement will be now individually analyzed, comparing the aforementioned mean and mode. It is important to highlight that scores closer to one

indicate strong disagreement with the statement, while a score of 5 indicates strong agreement. The longitudinal analysis of each statement reveals the following trends:

1. Language learning success should be evaluated based on native speaker competence.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	3,04	3
AFTER	3,00	3

Before the reflective sessions, the mean response for the statement was 3.04, indicating almost neutral stance among respondents. The mode was also 3, further supporting the notion of neutrality. After the reflective sessions, there was a slight decrease in the mean response to 3.00, suggesting a marginal shift towards disagreement with the statement. However, the students' average rating is now perfectly neutral. The mode remained at 3, indicating that the most common response remained unchanged. The analysis suggests that there was minimal change in perception regarding the evaluation of language learning success based on native speaker competence before and after the reflective sessions. Given the marginal difference of just four tenths, virtually no change is observed here.

2. Language learning success should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a second language learner.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	3,72	4
AFTER	3,80	4

Prior to the reflective sessions, the mean response to the statement was 3.72, with a mode of 4, indicating a general consensus towards agreement among respondents. Following the sessions, the mean response marginally increased to 3.80, while the mode remained at 4, suggesting a sustained and slightly enhanced inclination towards agreement. This analysis reveals a consistent trend towards the belief that language learning proficiency should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a second language learner, both before and after the reflective sessions. The results indicate that participants perceive success in terms of their progress as L2 learners rather than by comparing their proficiency to that of native speakers. However, the

marginal increase in the average response, by a few tenths of a point, suggests only a minor reinforcement of this viewpoint.

3. I`ll achieve full success if I attain native-like fluency in speaking.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	3,51	4
AFTER	4,07	4

Before the reflective sessions, the mean response was 3.51, indicating moderate agreement, with the most frequently occurring value suggesting that full success in language learning is associated with achieving native-like fluency in speaking. After the sessions, the mean rose to 4.07, demonstrating a marked increase in agreement, while the mode remained at 4. This comparison highlights a significant trend towards supporting the idea that native-like fluency signifies complete success, particularly following the reflective sessions,

This, in turn, suggests that the sessions may have unintentionally affected participants' perceptions of language learning success in this regard, despite not targeting this objective. Conversely, the sessions did not emphasize the importance of achieving native-like fluency but rather highlighted the diverse nature of language proficiency. However, as previously acknowledged, the sessions did not emphasize that English is a global language spoken in various communities, which may have led participants to overlook this aspect. Given the group's evident dedication to mastering language skills, it can be inferred that they value native speaker proficiency, viewing it as a model for success. Furthermore, the post-reflective results suggest a strong emphasis on grammatical accuracy, reinforcing this assumption. This issue will be explored further through focus group interviews with the research participants to uncover the underlying reasons behind this perspective.

4. Being a proficient language user doesn't require speaking like a native speaker.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	3,68	4
AFTER	3,27	4

Before the reflective sessions, the arithmetic mean of responses was 3.68, with a mode of 4, suggesting a belief that proficiency in a language does not necessitate

native-like speech. After the sessions, the mean decreased to 3.27, reflecting reduced agreement with this view. However, the most common response remained at 4. The analysis reveals that, prior to the sessions, respondents predominantly felt that proficiency in a language did not necessitate speaking like a native. After the sessions, while this belief persisted, the strength of their conviction diminished. The overall trend has shifted towards a more neutral position regarding the idealization of native speakers.

The longitudinal analysis comparing responses before and after the sessions reveals a change in student attitudes towards a stronger preference for native-like proficiency. This shift is reflected in the rising agreement with the idea that achieving native-like fluency in speaking is crucial for attaining full success. Conversely, while participants still concurred with the statement, there was a decrease in agreement, indicating a shift towards a more neutral belief about the necessity of speaking like a native speaker for language proficiency. Overall, the longitudinal analysis implies a shift in student attitudes towards a greater preference for native-like proficiency. Although native-like fluency is still not seen as a strict criterion for success, respondents now exhibit a more neutral stance regarding its importance.

5. Language learning success is achieved when I can confidently engage in conversations, regardless of accent or minor errors.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	4,34	5
AFTER	3,93	5

An initial mean response of 4.34, with the most frequent value being 5, indicates a strong support for the perspective that successful language learning is characterized by the ability to communicate effectively, irrespective of accent or minor errors. Following the sessions, the mode remained at 5, signifying that the majority of respondents continued to strongly endorse this perspective. However, the decrease in mean suggests a slight shift towards more moderate support for the statement.

Overall, the analysis implies a modest decline in support for the notion that language learning success is defined by the ability to engage confidently in conversation, regardless of accent or minor errors. Despite the decrease in the average response after the reflective sessions, the persistence of the mode suggests that most

respondents continue to strongly endorse this definition of success. The result is particularly surprising, especially in light of the emphasis on the communicative function of language highlighted during the sessions. This shift may be again attributed to a focus on attaining native-like proficiency, particularly with regard to accent. However, this phenomenon will be examined more thoroughly in subsequent focus group interview.

6. I consider myself successful in language learning when I can easily read and understand texts in the target language and write clearly, even if it is not perfect.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	4,15	5
AFTER	3,80	5

Prior to the reflective session, the mean score suggested a relatively high level of support for the notion that students view themselves as successful in language learning read, understand, and write clearly in the target language, even if they are not flawless. The slight decrease in the mean to 3.80 after the session indicates a minor reduction in support. Nonetheless, the mode remained at 5 in both instances, indicating that the majority of students strongly endorsed this perspective both before and after the session.

Comparing the data reveals that increased language awareness led to a diminished alignment with the ideas that success in language learning is achieved through confident conversation despite accent or errors, and is linked to understanding texts and writing clearly, even if not flawless. These trends suggest that the reflective sessions may have prompted participants to reassess their criteria for language learning success, potentially shifting their focus from general competency towards mastery and accuracy. Despite the slight decrease in average scores, which reflects a shift towards a more neutral attitude, the mean remains relatively high, close to 4. This suggests that the research group continues to support these concepts and still perceive success within these categories. Although further investigation may be necessary to understand the factors contributing to this shift, the data suggests a potential tendency towards valuing perfection and precision in language skills.

7. Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can <u>comfortably </u>express my thoughts and ideas.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	4,36	5
AFTER	4,40	5

Before the reflective sessions, the mean score of 4.36 implied that participants were strongly in favor of the idea that success in language learning is defined by the ability to comfortably express one's thoughts and ideas. With the increased level of language awareness following the reflective sessions, the mean score slightly increased to 4.40, signifying an even stronger approval of this concept. Throughout, the most common response was 5, reflecting a strong consensus among participants. These results demonstrate that participants consistently believe that true success in language learning is achieved when they can articulate their thoughts and ideas with ease, a belief that was reinforced after the session.

8. Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can express my thoughts and ideas <u>with grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency.</u>

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	3,96	5
AFTER	3,73	5

The mean score close to 4 before the sessions implied that respondents generally associated success in language learning with the ability to express thoughts and ideas with grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency. Following the sessions, with increased language awareness, the mean score decreased by over two-tenths of a point, reflecting a slight shift towards a more neutral approach. However, the mode remained at 5, demonstrating that the majority of research participants continued to strongly support this view both before and after the session. It can be concluded that, while grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency remain important to students, increased language awareness seems to result in a somewhat decreased emphasis on these aspects, reflecting a more neutral stance in this regard.

The longitudinal analysis of these two aspects reveals that participants recognize the importance of both linguistic precision and communicative ease in language learning. However, following reflective sessions, there appears to be a subtle shift in their approach, indicating a change in priorities. While participants continue to value both aspects, there is a minor decrease in emphasis on grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency, as reflected by the mean score moving closer to a neutral stance. In contrast, the emphasis on the ability to express thoughts and ideas comfortably seems to have increased.

9. Language learning success is a continuous journey, and I feel successful when I see improvement and growth over time, regardless of reaching perfection.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	4,34	5
AFTER	3,93	5

A comparative analysis of the mean scores before and after the sessions reveals a nuanced shift in participants' perceptions of success in language learning concerning ongoing progress versus perfection. Initially, a mean score of 4.34 implied rather a strong support for the view that success is defined by continuous improvement and growth rather than by achieving perfection. After the sessions, the lower mean score reflects a subtle decrease in this perspective. Nevertheless, the mode remained at 5 in both instances, signifying that the predominant response was one of strong agreement.

The findings suggests that, although there has been a slight shift in attitudes, the predominant view continues to support the notion of success in language learning as being defined by the satisfaction derived from continuous progress. Nonetheless, the minor decrease in agreement and the trend towards a more neutral position suggest a growing consideration of perfection in the criteria for success.

10. I will never be completely satisfied with my progress as there will always be aspects I haven't mastered.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	3,34	2
AFTER	3,07	2

The initial mean score of 3.34 suggested a moderate inclination towards the belief that complete satisfaction with language learning progress is unattainable due to unmastered aspects. Following the session, the mean decreased to 3.07, approaching a neutral stance, which suggests a reduction in this viewpoint. Despite this shift, the most common response in both instances was 2, suggesting that on average respondents did not agree that they would never be entirely satisfied with their progress in language learning due to unmastered aspects.

The longitudinal analysis of these two statements reveals that while students continue to perceive language learning success as a journey characterized by continuous improvement and growth, their conviction in this view slightly diminished after the reflective session. there was a decrease in the tendency to agree with the notion that complete satisfaction with progress is unattainable due to unmastered aspects, suggesting a reduced emphasis on the need for mastery. The analysis of mean scores suggests that increased language awareness resulting from the reflective session has contributed to a shift towards a more neutral stance on perfectionism.

11. Success in language learning is about feeling confident and satisfied with my progress.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	4,38	5
AFTER	4,47	5

The data reveals that prior to the reflective session, strongly associated success in language learning with feeling confident and satisfied with their progress, as indicated by a mean score of 4.38. Following the session, this perception was further enhanced, with the mean score rising to 4.47. The mode remained at 5 throughout, underscoring a predominant and consistent view among participants. This trend suggests that, overall, research participants perceive success in language learning primarily as a matter of personal confidence and satisfaction with progress, with this conviction becoming more pronounced following the reflective session.

12. Success in language learning is about passing exams and fulfilling
    requirements.

	MEAN	MODE
BEFORE	2,47	1
AFTER	3.2	3/4

The final comparative analysis reveals the most significant shift in students' perceptions of success. Initially, with a mean score of 2.47 and a mode suggesting a lack of emphasis on passing exams and meeting academic requirements, the respondents generally did not equate personal success with these factors. However, following the reflective sessions, there was an unexpected rise in the level of agreement with this view. Although the mean score now reflects a neutral stance, the increase in agreement is notable. Additionally, the most frequent responses now include both neutral and agreeing positions, indicating a shift towards recognizing the importance of academic metrics in defining success.

The longitudinal analysis reveals a noteworthy shift in students' perceptions of language learning success. Following the reflective sessions, participants exhibited a more neutral stance towards the idea that success in language learning involves passing exams and meeting academic requirements. This marks a departure from their prior tendency to dismiss these factors. Concurrently, participants' belief in the importance of feeling confident and satisfied with their progress was reinforced, highlighting an increased emphasis on self-assessment as a crucial component of language learning success.

4.7.5. Focus group interview

To gain a more profound comprehension of the research findings, the author of the thesis opted to engage directly with participants. As a result, focus group interview was employed as an additional qualitative data source, specifically aiming to explain the underlying behaviors and motivations of the students. Thirteen students, who had previously participated in awareness-raising sessions, willingly participated in this interview, with full consent given for recording to ensure comprehensive capture of all dialogue. It is important to note that one student, identified by the initials KK, did not

participate in the language awareness sessions. However, KK was involved in the focus group interview as it was conducted as part of his mandatory class. KK is a highly diligent and academically strong student, demonstrating proficient language use and a strong emphasis on correctness in his speech. The author chose to include KK's opinions in the discussion, as they provide a valuable point of comparison.

At the outset, participants were informed about the objectives of the discussion and encouraged to share their viewpoints openly, with a particular emphasis on valuing diverse perspectives. They were reassured that all contributions would be appreciated, fostering an environment conducive to honest expression. A semi-structured interview format was adopted, characterized by a predefined set of topics and questions complemented by spontaneous contributions from participants. These contributions were considered essential for a comprehensive analysis

Before proceeding to the excerpts from the discussion and subsequent analysis, it is important to highlight that the literature has long conflated the terms group interview and focus group interview, as noted by Lankiewicz (2023: 214). More recent publications emphasize the distinction between these two methods arguing that they are fundamentally different and therefore should not be confused (Parker and Tritter 2006; Nyumba et al. 2017). Lankiewicz (2023) highlights that the key difference lies in the research dynamics. In a group interview, the researcher plays a central role, asking questions directly to individual participants, while in focus group discussions, the researcher takes on a more peripheral, facilitative role, guiding the discussion to encourage interaction among participants. This dynamic, inter-relational aspect of focus groups distinguishes them from the more rigid structure of group interviews, where responses are directed toward the researcher. Focus group discussions, now widely accepted across various fields such as social sciences, marketing, and health research (Morgan 2001), are valued for the rich, collective data they generate through participant interaction. The interview conducted in this study followed the focus group model, where participant interactions were central to understanding their perspectives on success in language learning. In particular, the focus group discussions served as a supplementary method to clarify and expand upon certain aspects that had emerged from the questionnaire analysis. By incorporating participant interactions, this approach enriched the interpretation of the questionnaire results, providing a more nuanced understanding of their perspectives and adding further depth to the exploration of the research questions. Such triangulation of methods, where focus groups complement quantitative data, is frequently cited in the literature as a valuable

procedure for gaining a more comprehensive insight (Morgan 1996; Fowler 1995; Lankiewicz 2023).

Therefore, the subsequent data analysis will adopt a thematic (content-oriented) approach, identifying key themes and categories that reflect Applied Linguistics students' perspectives on what constitutes success in learning English, in line with typical focus group interview analysis methods.

Initially, students were asked about their approach to selecting language learning materials, with the aim of identifying the factors that influence their preference for having teachers make these selections. This part of discussion aimed to understand their experiences and determine whether this preference stems from a lack of encouragement to participate in the selection process over the years or from low awareness of the benefits such involvement can bring. Furthermore, the discussion aimed to elucidate perceptions regarding the optimal degree of student involvement in the selection of learning materials. The following excerpts present the most relevant insights from this discussion:

> *Moderator: What is your approach towards language learning material selection? Basically, who should do this? Would you like to be involved in the process or would you leave it entirely for the teacher?*
>
> *AP: I think I'd like to be involved because our point of view is also important, what are our wrong sides or something.*
>
> *DP: I think also that we should be involved. Like it does not always have to be the teacher. When someone has some advice or maybe a topic that she, he deals with and wants to talk about or practice then why not?*
>
> *KK: I have a different opinion. I think it is not essential that students would choose what they are learning. It`s just up to the teacher right. The teacher is the one who teaches, he is the one who chooses the materials and he or she creates the syllabus. He or she picks the topics. Of course, they can ask the students what they would like to do but the ultimate decision is up to them.*
>
> *Moderator: And why do you think so?*
>
> *KK: Because students are the ones who learn here, not the ones who teach here. I think teachers know better what to do than the students.*
>
> *IR: Not all. Sorry. But also I think that sometimes professors or teachers are just older than students and they don't really know what students are interested in. So in my opinion, teachers should pick, I don't know, one or two or three books and then the whole group of students should decide which one they will choose because some books have for example more interesting materials for them. Most of them are generally about the same topics like nature, environment, animals so I think that maybe teachers should pick some part of the material but also let the students decide which one they are going to learn.*
>
> *Moderator: Ok, so have you ever had this opportunity to decide or co-decide what is done in your English classes?*
>
> *DR:: Not really*

PS: Not really

[laughter from the group]

IW: I mean the most we had was with you at the beginning of the year when we were given the opportunity to say which topics we like as well as all the questions we were asked. So that`s it as far as it goes for me.

KK: Well actually I did have some influence on what teacher was choosing but those were the private lessons (...) I was choosing the general idea, the topics not the way in which teacher taught me.

Moderator: Can you see how it affected you learning? Did you feel more motivated as it was tailored to your interest ?

KK: I don't think so. It was just a book (laughter). It may affected my way of speaking which might be a little old fashioned but all in all I think it improved my language.

IR: I also had this opportunity when I was doing private lesson but I`ve met this opportunity first with public schooling system on your classes because in high school generally teachers were supposed to follow the material because of the Matura exam (...).

[a few students reacted to this comment by expressing their agreement with phrases such as "Yeah", "Yes, that's true", or "Exactly"]

Moderator: Some of you have mentioned that I gave you this opportunity to decide but in fact you didn't use this opportunity much. Some topics maybe at much. So my question is why?

IR: I think I didn't know what to expect from these classes firstly. And we all as a group have just met so I didn't want to speak for the whole group or, you know, just give the idea that most group wouldn't be happy with. I don't know, I didn't have any ideas also. I just went with what you propose for us.

KK: In terms of your classes, I think the book you chose , it's like the best choice. I think there is no better book to practice how to pronounce things. There is nothing we can do about it, it's just the best one.

[…]

Moderator: Do you feel confident in your ability to choose suitable learning materials?

PP: In my individual learning? So yeah I know that I want to be good at communication because I really like to speak so I love to learn by listening and watching movies. So when it comes to learning by myself I know what to choose and in general I love to study by myself not in a group. I just study best when I`m alone.

MW: I don't know, really I don't know.

OŚ: Well it`s hard to say cause I`ve never really tried choosing the materials.

JB: Hmm I`m not sure. When I study on my own I know how to organize everything but at the Uni, well it`s different, I don't know, it`s just different.

Moderator: Can you think of any benefits of the situation when students are involved in the selection process? Is it any beneficial for you?

WS: The students may be more interested in the classes, that's for sure.

[different expressions of agreement from most of the students]

LR: They can be more interested but also learning comes easier when we are learning based on materials we are interested so we can learn faster.

The relevant theme that emerges from the excerpts of discussion presented is the involvement in the selection of teaching materials, with two categories identified: student input and teacher authority. More specifically, some students express a willingness to participate in the selection process, emphasizing that their perspectives and interests are essential to effective learning. For instance, AP and DP emphasize the importance of student input, suggesting that their individual experiences and interests should influence the selection of classes materials. KK, on the other hand, presents the opposite view, arguing that teachers should retain authority in the selection of materials as they have the knowledge necessary to effectively guide the learning process. This divergence of opinion highlights the difference between student autonomy and teacher authority in an educational setting. A potential compromise emerges from IR's suggestion that teachers could allow students to choose from the options they have selected. This reflects a negotiation between valuing student preferences and recognizing the need for teacher guidance.

The emerging themes also center around the significance of previous experiences with material selection as well as confidence in personal material selection. Specifically, a number of participants noted that they had never been given the opportunity to co-decide on the materials used in their English lessons prior to our classes, suggesting that such opportunities were typically reserved for private lessons, if they existed at all. The theme of confidence reveals varied opinions among students: PP expresses confidence in her ability to select materials for individual study, indicating a preference for autonomy. This contrasts with OŚ and MW, who express uncertainty regarding their capacity to choose suitable materials, suggesting a lack of experience or knowledge in this area. JB further complicates this theme by noting a discrepancy between his independent study habits and those required in a university setting, constituting third category.

Finally, the discussion stressed the benefits of involving students in the selection of materials. Among the potential benefits, students listed increased engagement and interest in classes which results in more effective and efficient learning, as the learning process becomes more tailored to their interests and needs.

It is worth noting, that the discussion reveals the influence of deeply ingrained practices within the educational system. Despite expressing a desire to participate in

material selection, students often fail to take advantage of this opportunity when it arises. This issue seems rooted in the Polish education system, as focus group participants acknowledged that they had not been given the chance to co-decide on the selection of materials or topics throughout their education until now. Having spent over a decade in various schools, their first opportunity to engage in such decisions occurs only at this final stage of their education. This lack of prior experience may contribute to some students' hesitation or uncertainty regarding their ability to choose suitable materials, leading to a preference for relying on teacher authority, even as they recognize the potential benefits of being involved in the selection process.

Although not explicitly stated, this discussion reflects students' perceptions of certain aspects of success in language learning Their reliance on teacher authority due to inexperience suggests that their perception of success may be linked to external validation and guidance. On the other hand, the recognition of the benefits of participating in materials selection – such as increased engagement and more effective learning experiences – indicates that students associate success with personal satisfaction and engagement in the learning process, extending beyond mere academic performance.

To address further concerns regarding the questionnaire results, students were asked about their attitudes toward self-evaluation and external assessments. This theme was deliberately elicited by Research Question Four, which pertains to the criteria for evaluating success and the students' inclination to prioritize external measurements. The objective of the focus group was to determine the significance they attribute to passing exams and fulfilling external criteria compared to the importance they place on self-evaluation in defining their success. Additionally, the discussion aimed to explore whether students have ever been encouraged to practice self-evaluation or taught effective methods to assess their own progress and learning. Lastly, to uncover potential underlying reasons, students were asked about their perceptions of the primary purpose of their classes in their final years of high school. The discussion elicited the following responses:

> IR: So, I was raised in an environment that was quite strict about this so I always had to have the best grades, always the best average score (...) so I always paid a lot , lot attention to that. So when I had Matura exam it just had to be perfect, otherwise I would just hate myself. And now it`s a bit different. I focus more on passing them, not having the highest grade but it`s nice to have good grades after all. So ...

> Moderator: So did you feel the pressure from family, teachers, friends?

IR: More from family and my older sister but also I think most of the pressure I actually put on myself. [...] but still it was strict environment [...] but now it`s much different.

LR: So my problem is that my motivation is the stress before. So I`m not ready to start learning before the stress kicks in [laugh]. And I don't know why it works like that. And I think it is important for me but I often realize that after [...] when I get my test back, the grade is not satisfying me I`m like oh, I should have done better, like started learning earlier but I have to wait till the stress kicks in to start learning so this is my problem. [...]

Moderator: And if the grade does not satisfy you, do you devote some time to revise the material just for yourself?

LR: No, no [laugh]

[laughter from the class]

Moderator: I can hear the laughter so I have to ask, does anyone do that? That you get back to vocabulary or some aspect of grammar to revise when you get a grade that is not good enough for you?

[various expressions of denial from most of the students: no / nothing/ not / never]

LR: No, I do absolutely nothing. I just get over with it. I`m like oh I should have done more and that's it.

In analyzing the provided part of focus group discussion, several key themes and categories emerge regarding students' attitudes toward self-evaluation, external assessments, and their perceptions of success in language learning.

In the context of pressure and motivation, three distinct categories can be identified. First, IR describes a strict upbringing focused on achieving high grades, indicating significant pressure from family members. This external pressure shaped her initial perception of success, equating it with perfect exam performance. Second, self-imposed pressure emerges as a significant factor. Students acknowledge that much of the pressure to excel originates from within themselves, suggesting a strong internal drive for academic success. Finally, stress-driven motivation is recognized. LR shares that her motivation often arises from stress, noting that she struggles to begin studying until the pressure becomes overwhelming, highlighting a reliance on stress as a motivator.

Another thematic framework that emerges from these excerpts pertains to students' attitudes toward self-assessment. Both IR and LR indicate minimal engagement in self-assessment after receiving grades. Similarly, LR explicitly states that she does not review the material after unsatisfactory grades, demonstrating a lack of reflection on areas that need improvement. The group's unanimous reluctance to revisit material after receiving poor grades highlights a prevalent attitude among the participants, with most expressing little to no motivation to review vocabulary or grammar following unsatisfactory results.

The final theme centers on the evolving perception of success, with two categories emerging: shift from grades to a broader understanding of success illustrated by IR's change in perspective and academic satisfaction as reflected in LR's dissatisfaction. To clarify, IR emphasizes a shift in her understanding of success, moving from a strong emphasis on high grades to a more balanced perspective. It reflects a broader understanding of success that extends beyond mere academic achievement. The nods from other students further suggest that many have undergone similar changes in their attitudes over time, recognizing that while grades hold importance, they are no longer the sole metric of their knowledge or skills. The discussion also introduces the category of academic satisfaction. LR expresses her dissatisfaction with her grades, which prompts her to critically reflect on her study habits. This underscores that success encompasses not only the attainment of good grades but also personal fulfillment.

Overall, the analysis suggests that grades hold considerable importance for most students, offering both a sense of satisfaction and reinforcing their self-image as successful learners. Despite this drive for academic achievement, there is a noticeable reluctance among students to engage in self-reflection or learn from their mistakes. When dissatisfied with their performance, students unanimously acknowledge that they do not revisit the material to enhance their understanding, reflecting a perception of grades as the ultimate goal rather than as opportunities for improvement and growth. This suggests a need for educational practices that foster self-evaluation and intrinsic motivation, empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey.

The following part of the focus group interview delves deeper into students' attitudes toward examinations, assessments, and self-evaluation, presenting another student's perspective, as well as some reflections on the final years of secondary school, particularly regarding the Matura exam. The discussion highlights diverse views on the significance of grades, the role of self-assessment, and the education system's focus on preparing students for standardized tests.

> JB: Well, honestly saying, I couldn`t care less about the exams. I mean, it`s just a grade and I`m aware of the knowledge I have you know, and for example, I didn't learn you know to prepare for Matura. I didn't learn at all. The whole year. Because [...] ok I know I speak English well, I know German and I didn`t really prepared. So you know, I managed to write these exams pretty well.

> LR: and he never gets the stress kick

> JB: Yeah, I mean, I don't really care.

PS: Never, I was sitting at my table at the Math's Matura exam and he comes to me and is like ok and so now we are going? And I was like stop talking to me [laughter]

JB: Yes because it doesn`t really stress me or affects me. […] I`m aware of my knowledge basically and then a grade is pretty much nothing to me. Obviously, 5 is nice and when I see 3 on a test I`m like oh maybe I could have done better but I`m like, at the end of the day, I couldn`t care less.

[…]

Moderator: Who has more or less similar attitude to [name of student identified here as JB]?

IR: no one [laugh]

WS: I think he`s just special

JB: Yes, I`m special treatment [laugh]. But no, honestly, I don`t want to be rude or something, but I always see before an exam people are stressing out and asking what should we learn for an exams and I`m like come on guys, it`s just an exam. […]

Moderator: So can we say that self-evaluation is way more important for you? […]

JB: Yes, yes, I let's say grade myself and I think about what I`ve learnt […] and I don't really need a grade to know what I know. I don't want to sound as if I could speak every language or speak English like a native speaker, I`m not saying this, but I`m saying that I`m sure of my knowledge and I don't see the need to be stressed out about the exam. You should just take it easy.

[laughter from the group]

MW: Yeah. We always stress before the exam and he is like no, come on.

[many voices overlapping; incomprehensible]

Moderator: but it`s probably good to have a friend like this to release the stress from everyone

Few students at the same time: no, no

DR: No, it`s not. It`s so annoying

IR: It`s good balance.

[laughter from the group]

Moderator: Ok, getting back to one sentence that you said. "I don't need a grade to know what I know". Who else can relate to that? Who feels the same way?

[silence at first]

PP: Maybe me. […] I would say I have half attitude like [name – student JB] because I think he is kind of stronger because I would like to think like that but it`s not that easy. But also I think that I don't care that much about the grades and about someone telling me like grading me because of something he wants me to know. Because I also know what I know [laugh].

WS: I think like the grade is not really important now and I`m just happy that I for example pass the test and sometimes I know I can do better. And for example last time I didn't pass the test from grammar but I was sure that I knew a lot of things

and it was just the harder test but, as I said , passing the test is more important than the grade.

IW: But I think that the thing is that the grade doesn't really tell you what you know but, for example, I have this feeling when I get good grade, I`m feeling quite good about myself. So [...] it`s a little bit more for me and I don't care about like me knowledge but I just feel better and my confidence is better cause you`re just feeling smart when you get a good grade and it's the feeling, it`s just good.

DP: I actually also agree with [names – student WS and IW] because concerning Matura for example I just wanted to prove myself that I can learn Geography from the scratch [...]. At the end the score was very satisfying to me but I was actually most proud that I did it by myself and had a good grade so grade makes you really feel nice [...] and also not always that important as the sole satisfaction that you did it.

IW: Also I think it`s different with the result from out Matura exam and after our studies because at the end of our studies no one is going to ask us what grade did we have from German or English [...]. It`s just the important thing after our studies will be that we have degree and not the grade we had. So I think that`s my attitude to grades [...]. I also didn't pass my test from grammar, but I know after these studies I will be just proud of myself that I just passed, barely, but I passed.

LR: Noone is gonna ask you what you had from passive [laugh].

[...]

Moderator: Have you ever been encouraged to do anything related to self-evaluation? Any kind of discussion to decide what you are good at now, what you need to improve, what your strengths and weaknesses are?

LR: Let`s move on [laugh] [...] You know it was always like material, test, grade and let's move on.

OŚ: If we are talking about public school, you know when you have private lesson there is a lot of self-evaluation but at school, there are many students, the teachers are tired and no one really cares.

Moderator: Has anyone ever been told about possible ways, possible strategies how to evaluate yourself?

[overlapping "no" voices]

Moderator: so one last question, looking back on your high school experience, do you feel that passing the final exam, your Matura exam, was the main goal of your classes? [...]

[voices overlapping: "preparing for Matura"]

DP: I would say mostly, but I had a great teacher from English [...] and we also watched some films and we discussed many topics that weren't in the book and they weren't particularly preparing us for Matura exam so mostly we did what was expected from us but we also did some other things what were more interesting for us.

WS: In my school the only aim was to pass the exam and on our English lessons we were just tortured for example to, I mean , our English teacher said us that if we don't have 75% she will be not satisfied and from the first classes of the second class of high school, we were pressed to do only exams, we had a lot of tests just from Matura exams and when someone got 4 or 3 she was like you have to retake

it, and you will be retaking it unless you get 5 or 4+. [...] For me it wasn't very stressful or anything because I knew that I will have to do it in school or at home but for some other students it was very tiring and some of them were crying but from the pass of the time I think it was for me good because I was very good prepared for the exam.

Moderator: and what about your passion for the language? Was it also developing?

WS: No, no. I was just going there because I had to and I was like oh another test, another day, tomorrow will be another test so let`s get it.

One of the key categories appearing within the theme of attitudes towards grades and exams is the issues of grade significance. JB's assertion that grades hold little relevance for him reflects a sense of indifference toward academic assessments. He expresses confidence in his abilities, stating that he does not need grades to validate his knowledge. This perspective highlights self-confidence, suggesting that personal awareness of one's capabilities is prioritized over external evaluations. However, this viewpoint is not common within the group, as evidenced by the humorous reactions and resistance from his peers, who underscore that JB's attitude is neither typical nor representative of the majority. Conversely, most students exhibit a more emotional response to grades. For instance, IW and DP reveal that receiving good grades enhances their self-esteem and confidence. For them, grades are closely linked to a sense of personal achievement, even if they acknowledge that, in the long term, grades will not matter as much as having completed their studies. This suggests that grades may serve both as a measure of external success and as a source of internal satisfaction, despite an awareness that grades are not the ultimate determinant of their knowledge or abilities.

Another emerging thematic framework is the excessive emphasis on exam preparation in high school, which may correspond to students' deep-rooted reliance on grades. The discussion centered on their high school experiences, where English classes primarily focused on passing the Matura exam, often at the expense of genuine interest in the language itself. For example, WS expressed feeling pressured by an English teacher who enforced rigid grading standards and concentrated solely on test exercises, resulting in a narrow, exam-centric approach. This focus on examinations appeared to change learning into a monotonous task rather than a meaningful or enjoyable experience, thereby reinforcing the perception of grades as the most critical measure of success. Additionally, the discussion revealed limited opportunities for self-evaluation in polish system of education. When asked about self-assessment practices, students unanimously agree that self-evaluation was never encouraged in their school environment. This lack of emphasis on reflection and personal development suggests a systemic focus on external

criteria, such as tests and grades, rather than fostering intrinsic motivation or independent learning skills.

In conclusion, the perceptions that students hold regarding success in language learning contrast with the principles of autonomous learning practices. While some students such as JB define success intrinsically, focusing on self-awareness and confidence in their knowledge, the majority continue to perceive success primarily through the lens of grades, which offer external validation and enhance self-esteem. This reliance on grades, along with a lack of self-assessment practices, reinforces a predominant belief that success is measured by external achievements rather than personal growth and understanding.

The next stage of the focus group intended to gain a deeper understanding of students' perspective on achieving native-like speaking proficiency as a measure of success in language learning. The questions aimed to uncover the potential reasons behind the preference for native-like competence, such as societal pressure, biases, discrimination based on accents, the perception of natives as ideal models, or simply the enjoyment of how the language sounds. The discussion among students yielded the following responses:

> JB: I find speaking properly and having a good accent quite important because, you know, you want to sound as close to a native as possible. But you don't necessarily have to know all these vocabulary or speak like be on C1 level or something like that. But I think having a good accent is quite important

> LR: I agree that it is quite important but the question is, is it essential to feel successful. So it is quite important but it`s not essential.

> JB: Hmmm

> LR: I think the key is that you have to be able to communicate well and understand what other people are saying and be able to like maintain the conversation about many topics and I think that having a pretty accent is pretty important, as you said, but I don't think it`s essential. And many people know English and like, it`s harder or easier for you to learn English and the pronunciation. It depends on the country you are from, all the languages are different from each other. So for example, there are some sounds you can`t pronounce because your tongue just can`t do it cause there are no such sound. So, I think, sometimes it could be even impossible to have the perfect pronunciation because your language doesn't have what it takes for you to be able to learn.

> […]

> JB: if you can pronounce everything correctly, the sounds. Obviously there are many ways to speak. You can speak as an [incomprehensible because of background sound], as American or the way Irish people would. So there are many ways but if you can pronounce like more or less everything correctly, then it is success I would say and obviously we as Slavic people have the easiest way of learning different language because our tongues are quite flexible, but I think even if you

are English speaker as a native you can also maintain some speaking, you know, you can learn to speak another language correctly and pronounce words just by practice. And I think it's not impossible for American to learn and speak polish well.

LR: But there will always be accent. They are not able to pop with our accent. It`s just impossible.

IR: They are Americans [laugh]

LR: And it depends if you`re talking slightly like mispronouncing English or are we talking about saying words like 'comfortable' [mispronounced on purpose - author's annotation] these are like two different things. If you just a little mispronouncing because your tongue can not do that in a proper way or you just like totally mispronounce the words like 'vegetable' 'comfortable' [again mispronounced on purpose - author's annotation] and so on, many others.

JB: I guess we`ll never know cause Americans are too lazy to learn polish properly and I guess we`ll never find out if they can.

IR: Do you believe that an American can speak polish and you would not tell? Like you always can tell that he is not a native. In my opinion a person can always sound like a native in English but not the other way.

Moderator: But the fact that you can hear that he is not originally Polish, does it exclude him being considered a successful Polish speaker ?

LR: No, it does not exclude him and that`s the point.

WS: I would actually admire any foreign person who would learn Polish because it`s like impossible. It`s like learning Chinese for us.

Moderator: Does it also work with English? If you were to tell about yourself. Is that "perfect accent" that important, or is it more about flexibility, being able to express your thoughts? Or any other things?

WS: I'm pretty ambitious so I would love to sound like a native. But it`s not that essential. I prefer to be understood and understand what other people say. It`s like my goal to learn the Limerick accent or understand Cockney or something like that. Understand not talk [laugh]. So it`s not essential but for me it`s important. But it`s my personal feeling

KK: First thing first, I would say that it`s highly personal whether someone wants to learn a particular accent or not. But I believe that certain level of accent is required for a successful communication, be it on C2 or A2 whatever. We must pronounce certain sounds correctly for them to be understood. And if we don't, we can be mistaken. There has to be some urge to learn a proper accent. And I don't mean learning the proper, proper accent like SSBE from the 20th century. I personally do try to sound best, to do my best. Well of course it may never happen that I will sound like a native speaker but this urge is what provides drive to me. To move on, to proceed and learn more and more. And I also don`t think there is one accent we should all learn […] . And in order to be a successful speaker I don't think one has to learn an accent entirely but just on basic level. Just to be understood.

Moderator: If you want to call yourself a successful speaker do you have to achieve this "perfect accent" or it doesn`t matter that much?

IW: I would say totally not because I think it`s important to sound as far as native speakers but we are learning at least two other languages than Polish and , for me,

if someone knows three foreign language on level B2+ it`s quite impressive […] so if someone knows so many languages it may be quite impossible to achieve native speaker like speaking so it`s not important.

The discussion reflects a balanced perspective on language proficiency, with students valuing both functional communication skills and the aspirational goal of native-like fluency. To be more precise, the focus group reveals diverse perceptions of success in language learning, particularly around the theme of pronunciation. Several participants, like JB, view native-like pronunciation as an important goal, particularly those aspiring to achieve advanced English proficiency with a native-like accent. However, this view is not universally shared. LR and others argue that while a good accent is desirable, it is not essential for achieving success in communication. The group dynamic also highlights how their views evolve as they respond to one another. For instance, LR challenges JB's initial statement by asking whether perfect pronunciation is necessary to feel successful. This interaction prompts a further discussion about the balance between achieving an idealized native accent and the practical need to communicate effectively in everyday situations. Through these exchanges, the group moves toward a consensus that functional communication may hold more importance in defining success than purely striving for a perfect accent.

Another key theme that emerges is the relationship between multilingualism and native-like proficiency. IW raises the point that achieving native-like fluency in multiple languages is nearly impossible, but knowing several languages at a high level is impressive in itself. This comment resonates with the group's acknowledgment that success in language learning might not require perfect pronunciation but rather the ability to navigate multiple languages effectively. Thus, for most research participants, effective communication remains the ultimate goal, and native-like pronunciation, although highly admirable, becomes a secondary consideration.

Subsequently, to uncover the underlying reasons behind the questionnaire results, students were asked about their motivations for aspiring to native-like pronunciation. The goal was to determine whether they see it as an ideal standard to emulate or if their preference stems from an appreciation of its sound. The following are the most relevant extracts from this part of the discussion:

MW: So I think, I try to speak with an accent, like British accent, I feel pretty fancy. Hm maybe fancy is not a good word but you know, that`s something that I really want to achieve to communicate with a British speaker in their accent. But I know that if I don't do it correctly, I feel a little bit embarrassed and this discourages me a

bit but I`ll try again and again and even if I make some mistakes I feel like this is the sound that I just like. It`s like my role model.

PP: I think it is very good to sound like a native speaker but it`s not the main point for me cause I want to be understood by people and I will understand other people but it would be really great if I could achieve this native speaker accent. […] I think I just do enjoy how it sounds. I`d feel better with myself.

WS: I don't know if there is even a person who wouldn't like to speak like a native to be honest. Like naturally have this accent. And, well, I also would like to sound like a native but just for a pure satisfaction of it. I love how British sounds, but it`s hard for me to pronounce these words in a true British accent. But I really want to learn it because it will be like , I would feel really successful and it would be very satisfying for me.

AP: I would also love to speak with a British accent but it`s hard for me […]. But it`s not necessary to speak with an accent but it would be great. Just for myself, for satisfaction. But if you don't have an accent but you can still communicate it is also ok I think.

As for the respondents' opinions, their reasoning regarding native-like pronunciation in language learning can be classified into three categories: personal satisfaction and sense of achievement, effective communication, and the challenges of attaining native-like pronunciation.

Firstly, many students are motivated by personal satisfaction and sense of achievement, particularly the desire to achieve a British accent. Participants like M.W. and W.S. found native-like pronunciation to be a source of personal achievement, enjoying the way it sounds.

Secondly, a recurring theme highlighted by numerous students throughout the entire interview is the belief that effective communication is their primary objective of learning. Despite their aspirations, participants like PP and AP stressed that being understood and effectively communicating is far more important than perfect pronunciation. The group broadly agreed that success in language learning is primarily measured by one's ability to communicate efficiently and use language in real-life situations.

Finally, participants discussed the challenges of achieving native-like pronunciation. MW acknowledged that making mistakes can be occasionally discouraging, yet this sentiment reflected a broader perseverance despite such difficulties. Overall, the group dynamics revealed a balance between individual aspirations and a collective understanding that communication, rather than accent perfection, is the true measure of success in language learning.

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The final part of our focus group session focused on grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency. It also aimed to understand students' perspectives on hyper-correctness in relation to success in language learning as well as the motivations behind it. The following are the most relevant quotations from which thematic analysis and the conclusion are derived:

Moderator: How important are grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency to you in the process of language learning?

KK: It`s one thing that actually grammar and style are the most important things when it comes to foreign language. You may omit the accent, you may sound like whoever you want and speak like a Russian with Russian accent or whoever, and you would be understood right? But if you use not standard grammar it would be difficult for other people to understand what you mean. Grammar is a tool, so we have to use it. It's the way words are organized, and sentences and we need to obey these rules in order to be understood correctly. If we mistake one word or one structure, it may still mean about the same. But if we make a lot of mistakes it basically becomes something different. Native speaker might be wondering what we need. Well…

Moderator: Ok, thank you. However, let's avoid focusing solely on extremes, such as whether the passage is completely understandable. Instead, let's discuss the idea that not everything is hyper-correct.

KK: So if not for the sake of being hyper-correct then I think that the only thing we need in foreign language is tolerable level of grammar. Well style is also important I think. If we only use simple words, you might be seen as someone who is not well educated, let's say, simple minded.

IW: In my opinion, we should cover the basics because at the end of the day the key point is to understand another English speaker and to be understood. So, even the English native speakers make mistakes, grammatical and stylistic. So I think it's important to cover the basics so other people could understand us. […] You shouldn't be really hyper grammatical correct. We will always make mistakes because English is not our first language.

LR: We also make mistakes in our language.

[laugh from the group and expressions of support]

LR: Especially, when you learn many foreign languages you can make more language mistakes than in your own language.

[…]

Moderator: So personally, do you strive to be hyper correct if you want to define you as successful language speaker

DR: For me, it depends whether it is in writing or speaking. Because when it comes to writing, I always triple check if everything is correct but when its speaking I don't really care that much.

Moderator: Do you have different attitude when you use spoken English here at the university for academic purposes and English for your personal usage?

LR: Yes, I feel it's exactly what it depends on. Because let's say I am at a job interview so I will be more conscious on my grammar because I want them to take me serious and make a good impression and for example if I'm abroad and I meet some people and we chit chat and drink something I won't be that focus on grammar because I know they will understand me and they won't care if I make a mistake specially if they are not native speakers in English. Then I would probably speak faster, not care that much and just enjoy the time and the talk is not focus if I said that sentences grammatically correct.

KK: I think it is a value point. But we have to consider whether we are linguists. And linguists have to use the language correctly. And I think is better to use it over-correctly than incorrectly.

IR: But don't you think that then it sounds artificial?

KK: It may sound a bit artificial. But it either sounds artificial or incorrect.

IR: Not true.

LR: So for example, if you meet some new people and you speak to them, do you concentrate on using sophisticated words to feel better?

KK: I don't focus on using sophisticated words but I think I use them anyway. What motivates me in being correct is the fact that I would like to be a translator one day. And translator has to understand the structures of a language and I fear that one day If I stop using correct sentences, it would become my habit to use incorrect language.

LR: It's obvious that you want to speak correct but we are talking about being hyper correct so like you are obsessed that the every sentence you say must be correct even though everyone understands you and I`m talking about casual situation and not here at the university , or as I said before, job interview. Like you know, meeting new people.

KK: Well it depends of course. If we are in a familiar situation or official place we have to speak some more official version. And of course I would like to emphasize that using informal structures is not incorrect. It is just informal.

IR: So do you say that you always want to sound formal?

KK: No, I`m not saying we should always sound formal, but we should always sound correct. Informality is not the same as incorrectness.

IR: Of course, I agree but still. In a casual situation, imagine, would you still use words like ubiquitous or .. Imagine you`re just having coffee with your friends. And you would actually focus more on your language than on them?

KK: No, no it`s not true. As I said, I do not focus on being correct, I just try to be correct and make a habit of it.

IR: But trying equals focusing

KK: I don't know if you get it right. If you make a good habit, you do not have to put any effort into speaking correctly. It just comes, it just flows.

LR: Yeah, but in order to make it habit. You have to get to the process. So first you have to focus and then after some time, I understand, it`s not a big deal, you speak correctly without even thinking about it. But before that, you have to make it your habit. So if you make friends, and instead of you know really

enjoying you think in the back of your head I`ll make this habit and processing whether something is correct and its perfect grammar

IR: I actually agree with (student's name: here LR) because I`m quite obsessed over the language so when I don't understand one word in a song I also check it out and whatsoever, but don't you think that we should adjust our language to the situation?

KK: Of course, we have to adjust our language. We are linguists and we should be able to adjust to whatever situation we are in. But you said you would not like to focus on establishing this new habit. I`m speaking personally and my habit is already established.

[….]

At this point of the discussion, the moderator chose to focus on concluding thoughts since the conversation was deviating from its intended purpose and involved mainly three students only. The main theme that emerges upon analyzing this segment is the definition of success in language learning, particularly emphasizing the balance between grammatical accuracy and effective communication. The categories include two primary viewpoints expressed by participants: communication vs. grammatical precision and real-life contexts vs. professional standards, reflecting the differing contexts in which participants perceive the relevance of language use.

Regarding success in language learning, students emphasize the importance of the ability to understand and be understood in conversation. Several participants, including IW and LR, highlighted that while grammatical and stylistic proficiency is important, the ultimate goal is to communicate easily in real-life contexts and engage in meaningful conversation without barriers. They argued that focusing too heavily on grammatical accuracy could detract from the enjoyment of conversation and hinder natural language use. Conversely, KK, who did not attend the awareness-raising sessions, maintained that grammar is essential, particularly for those who aspire to professional roles, such as translators. He argued that incorrect grammar can lead to misunderstandings and that linguists should prioritize correct language use as a professional standard. However, this position was challenged by other participants, who felt that hyper-correct language could sound artificial and that communication should be, above all, flexible, adapting to casual or formal contexts as needed. The group dynamics were marked by a respectful exchange of differing views, with some students advocating a balanced approach that values grammatical accuracy but allows for linguistic flexibility in informal settings. KK's perspective sparked a lively debate,

with others. pointing out that the process of making grammatical precision a "habit" is likely to detract from the natural flow of conversation, especially in casual interactions.

To conclude, the thematic analysis reveals a shared understanding that effective communication, not grammatical perfection, is the true measure of success in language learning. The students generally agreed that adapting language use to different contexts and maintaining the easiness of conversation is more important than achieving flawless grammar. However, they still place importance on grammatical correctness, especially in formal contexts such as university or job interview settings.

At the very end of the focus group interview, participants were asked to determine their final reflections on success in language learning. The final question was as follows:

> Moderator: […] How would you describe what success in learning the English language means to you personally?

> IW: Understand another English user and be understood.

> PP: I think that people who are most successful in language are those who are not afraid of speaking, and who are able to adjust their language to situation and to understand and to be understood.

> MW: So probably what was said, to feel comfortable to speak freely.

> OŚ: I also agree with [previous students names – authors annotation]. For me success in every field is to do the certain thing with hundred percent confidence also with language, for me the success would be to use it with hundred percent confidence and not think, like you know, about mistakes and anything. But to be 100% confident that I know this, I know what I want to know and the vocabulary I want to know and all that.

> WS: Well, my personal definition of success is, just as my friends said, to be able to communicate, to speak our mind and to understand whoever talks to us. And it doesn't mean using all the grammar and all the vocabulary necessary, but sometimes we have to go around something, use other words, other structures and this ability is my definition of success. To be able to say whatever you would like, in some way.

From the final part, where students were asked to freely interpret success in language learning, it can be concluded that success in foreign language learning emerges as the overarching theme, with practical communication, confidence, and adaptability serving as its categories, thereby enriching the overall understanding of success among first-year Applied Linguistics students.

First and foremost, practical communication is considered the primary measure of success by most participants, who many times emphasize the importance of effective interaction. They underscore that being able to understand others and be understood is

crucial, suggesting that practical communication skills hold more significance than traditional benchmarks of language proficiency, such as grammatical accuracy or native-like pronunciation.

Confidence is another category articulated by respondents in the context of factors affecting their perception of success in language learning. Participants believe that success entails using the language without the fear of making mistakes and feeling comfortable speaking freely. This self-assurance enriches their language learning experiences, enabling them to engage more fully in conversations and fostering a more effective learning process.

Lastly, adaptability in language use was frequently highlighted in the discussion regarding perceptions of success. Participants in the focus group interview emphasize that the ability to adjust their language to different contexts is paramount for maintaining effective communication. This flexibility often involves creatively conveying ideas, underscoring that the capacity to adapt to varying situations is a crucial component of successful language learning.

4.7.6. Hypothesis evaluation

Following the evaluation of the first three hypotheses, which was conducted immediately after the data analysis in section 4.7.1, this section aims to assess the fourth hypothesis. The last hypothesis is considered the most critical for this dissertation, given its broad scope and encompassing several aspects. The evaluation will be based on the analysis of the data from stage three and the focus group interviews. A thorough analysis of the survey data, focusing on learner autonomy, language awareness, and perceptions of success, distributed both before and after the reflection sessions, along with findings from the focus group interviews, facilitates the evaluation of the final hypothesis which posits that language awareness acts as a pivotal mediating factor in the relationship between autonomous language learning and personal perception of success.

The hypothesis suggests that students with higher levels of language awareness would place less emphasis on achieving native speaker competence, instead prioritizing the assessment of their progress as L2 learners. As the data analysis shows, the importance of evaluating language learning success based on native speaker competence slightly declined, while the focus on learners' achievements as L2 learners increased.

Although this shift was not statistically significant, it supports the hypothesis that students with greater language awareness tend to compare themselves to other L2 learners rather than native speakers.

However, the longitudinal analysis of speaking skills revealed a different trend. Students demonstrated an increasing preference for attaining native-like fluency, suggesting that they continue to equate success in speaking with native speaker standards. This suggests that, despite their belief that achievement should be assessed through the lens of L2 learner progress, they still place significant value on native-like speaking abilities. As discussed in the focus group, this preference primarily stems from an appreciation for the native-like pronunciation and the perception of native speakers as ideal role models whose speech learners aspire to replicate.

The hypothesis further posits that heightened language awareness correlates with a broader perception of success, extending beyond mere linguistic correctness to include proficiency in effective communication within English-speaking contexts. The analysis of the data, which focused on conversations, comprehension of texts, and clear, albeit not flawless, writing revealed a slight decline in agreement among participants. This suggests that as language awareness increases, students may place greater emphasis on mastery and accuracy, while still recognizing the importance of effective communication. Simultaneously, a subtle shift was observed where participants began to place greater importance on comfortably expressing thoughts, with a slight decrease in focus on grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency. This shift implies a more balanced approach, where proficiency in communication is valued alongside linguistic accuracy. O verall, the results support the hypothesis that heightened language awareness expands learners' perceptions of success to include effective communication and interaction within English-speaking contexts, while maintaining an emphasis on grammatical correctness.

Finally, the data analysis provides partial support for the hypothesis that language awareness affects the measurement of success, with higher levels leading to success being primarily based on personal progress and self-confidence. Participants generally associate success with feelings of confidence and satisfaction regarding their progress, a perspective that is reinforced by increased language awareness. They also exhibit a shift away from the claim of never being fully satisfied with their progress, indicating an acknowledgment of the dynamic nature of language learning. However, the unexpected increase in the emphasis on passing exams and fulfilling requirements post-reflection

suggests a growing valuation of external measures of achievement. Focus group discussions revealed that students, having been predominantly influenced by school and family pressures regarding exams and grades, have never been encouraged or taught self-assessment methods. Although students acknowledge that, with age, grades become less significant and they value their knowledge more, the perception of success tied to exam performance remains influential.

Thus, while higher levels of language awareness generally lead students to emphasize personal progress and self-confidence, there is also a notable tendency to rely on external measures of success. This reflects a complex interplay between language awareness and traditional metrics of achievement. It is important to recognize that language awareness, like an autonomous attitude towards learning, develops gradually, especially when long-standing values related to grades persist over such a long time. Consequently, the hypothesis is supported in terms of personal progress and self-confidence, but also reveals an enduring influence of external success metrics.

4.8.   Findings and discussion

This section provides an analysis of data gathered from all parts of the questionnaire, administered both before and after the reflective sessions, along with insights from the focus group interview. The objective is to achieve a thorough understanding of the relationship between language awareness and individual perceptions of success in autonomous language learning. The content is structured to address the previously outlined research questions.

4.8.1. RQ1 pertaining to learner autonomy

To address Research Question One, the behaviors and characteristics of first-year Applied Linguistics students were examined to identify those that align with traits commonly associated with autonomous language learners. The purpose was to gain a deeper understanding of the extent of autonomy demonstrated by research participants in their second language acquisition process.

The findings reveal that first-year students of Applied Linguistics, on average, demonstrate traits indicative of autonomous learning, though there is considerable

variability in their responses. A significant majority (66%) are situated along a continuum between autonomy and reliance on instructors. Within this group, over half tend towards autonomous behaviors, reflecting a spectrum where students, despite often maintaining a neutral position, may still favor self-directed learning. Interestingly, nearly one-third of participants clearly embody the characteristics of autonomous learners, showing a pronounced preference for self-guided learning. Additionally, out of the 47 students surveyed, only one predominantly exhibits traits and behaviors associated with non-autonomous learning. To elaborate further:

- 32% of respondents demonstrate clear autonomy, representing 15 students.
- 66% of respondents demonstrate a neutral stance, representing 31 students, within this group:
    - 34% of respondents lean towards autonomy = 16 students.
    - 4% of respondents remain neutral = 2 students.
    - 28% of respondents lean towards non-autonomy = 13 students.
- 2% of respondents demonstrate non-autonomous characteristics, representing 1 student.

The findings from the data analysis reveal that the research participants display behaviors and characteristics that align with those of autonomous learners as described in the literature. Specifically, these students demonstrate a commitment to taking responsibility for their learning process, a key element of autonomy highlighted by Holec (1981), Bound (1988), Benson (1997), and Little (2003). They also show an understanding that effective language acquisition involves actively processing, analyzing, and organizing information, as outlined by Benson (2001) and Blidi (2017). Moreover, these students engage in setting goals based on a clear comprehension of their language learning objectives, a practice emphasized by Reinders (2010), Klimas (2017), and Zając-Knapik (2020). Additionally, they exhibit a tendency to determine and apply the most effective learning strategies and methods, as noted by Kolber (2012), Wang (2016), and Marantika (2021), and actively participate in self-evaluation, a common practice among the respondents (Rafik Trad 2004).

Recognizing autonomy as a longitudinal process (Benson, 2011; Blidi, 2017, it becomes apparent that its manifestation does not occur instantaneously (Cirocki et al. 2019). Students need to undergo a maturation process, evolving into self-aware language

learners. his process involves acquiring experiences, crafting their personal learning pathways, and clarifying their educational goals (Little 2000; Chen and Li, 2014; Cirocki et al. 2019). While these first-year students already depict traits of fully autonomous learners in certain aspects, they are simultaneously transitioning towards a more dependent stance in other areas, such as selecting and evaluating language learning materials or seeking immediate, correct explanations when encountering language challenges instead of attempting independent problem-solving. This dual nature, where they demonstrate autonomy while still evolving in aspects of dependency, underscores the reason why many find themselves in the intermediate position, frequently adopting a neutral stance.

4.8.2. RQ2 pertaining to language awareness before reflective sessions

In response to Research Question Two, which examines the level of language awareness among first-year students before the reflection sessions began, significant findings emerged. An examination of individual mean responses revealed a predominant concentration around the mid-level of LA, with minimal deviations above or below a value of 3. This pattern suggests a general tendency towards neutrality in multiple aspects of language comprehension. The specific areas where students consistently demonstrated medium-range responses included views on language as an information transmitter, its role in expressing intentions and emotions, standardized structures, lexical items, and the application of grammatical rules. A notable high level of LA emerges in five instances where students demonstrate an appreciation for creativity and playfulness in language acquisition, question the universality of language, refute universal grammatical rules, recognize the influential role of language in conveying ideological beliefs, and endorse the notion that dialects do not inherently signify incorrect language forms. Low LA was observed in one instance, where students highlighted the importance of understanding parts of speech for comprehending language function.

Secondly, the analysis of individual mean responses provides the most comprehensive overview of students' initial levels of LA at the start of the research project. These findings accurately depict the range and distribution of LA demonstrated by first-year students before the commencement of reflection sessions, thus effectively addressing the RQ2 concerning their initial LA levels.

Thus, the majority of respondents, totaling 25 out of 47, demonstrate a middle level of language awareness, with varying degrees of inclination towards either lower or higher awareness within this spectrum. The remaining 22 participants exhibit a high level of LA, with a notable subgroup of four respondents achieving exceptionally high scores, exceeding a mean of 4. Notably, no student's score falls into the low level of LA category.

The table below provides the exact mean scores for all 47 respondents, offering a comprehensive overview of their general LA levels.

Table 3 - Mean levels of LA prior reflective sessions

Student	Mean level of LA		Student	Mean level of LA
	3,85		26	3,92
2	2,85		27	3,38
3	3,69		28	3,38
4	3,77		29	3,77
5	3,15		30	3,69
6	4,00		31	3,54
7	3,23		32	3,46
8	3,15		33	3,23
9	3,38		34	3,69
10	3,77		35	3,15
11	3,00		36	3,38
12	2,69		37	3,31
13	3,77		38	3,31
14	4,38		39	3,38
15	3,23		40	3,61
16	3,46		41	3,69
17	3,23		42	3,77
18	3,30		42	4,38
19	3,46		43	2,77
20	4,15		44	3,08
21	3,31		45	3,23
22	3,62		46	3,69
23	4,08		47	4,00
24	3,69			
25	3,31			

As evident from the table, the LA scores range from a low of 2.69 to a high of 4.38, reflecting considerable variability among the respondents. This wide spectrum suggests significant differences in LA levels, with some students displaying relatively lower awareness while others exhibit a high degree of comprehension.

4.8.3. RQ3 pertaining to perception of success before reflective sessions

The examination of responses from the survey's third section, which focused on perception of success in language learning among first-year Applied Linguistics students, revealed a diverse range of perspectives on how success is defined and evaluated. Employing a 5-point scale, participants were asked to assess their level of agreement with statements related to success in learning English as a foreign language. This analysis not only provided valuable insight into the varying attitudes and beliefs held by language learners but also addressed the Research Question Three concerning how first-year students perceive their success before reflective sessions. The findings underscored the multifaceted nature of success in language learning, highlighting personalized perspectives among first-year Applied Linguistics students, with some areas showing shared sentiments, while others exhibited divergent viewpoints across different criteria.

Firstly, several aspects of the students' responses did not imply a uniform perception of success, as their answers exhibited significant variability. One notable area of contention is the concept of native-like fluency in speaking. While a significant portion of respondents agreed that native-like fluency signifies success, an even larger percentage contested this belief, suggesting that proficiency does not necessitate mimicking native speakers. This contradiction highlights two opposing beliefs within the surveyed student group. Similarly, perceptions of success based on subjective satisfaction showed no clear consensus. Some students found it difficult to feel fulfilled knowing the areas they have yet to master, while others derived satisfaction from recognizing their progress, considering it sufficient for personal fulfillment. Responses ranged from moderate disagreement to total agreement, illustrating the diverse viewpoints among the students. Additionally, the idea of success being tied to meeting externally imposed requirements also revealed a lack of consensus. While many respondents disagreed with the notion that success is solely based on passing exams or fulfilling formal requirements, a substantial portion held opposing views. This variation indicates that individual perceptions of success are diverse, with no single prevailing viewpoint.

Conversely, despite the diversity of opinions on the aforementioned aspects of language learning success, there are areas where the surveyed students display unanimity. These shared perspectives provide valuable information on how first-year Applied Linguistics students perceive success in language learning, simultaneously addressing RQ3.

First of all, success is defined by proficiency in language acquisition as a foreign language learner, rather than by solely aiming for native-like fluency. This is demonstrated by nearly 62% of respondents who advocate evaluating success in language learning based on performance as a L2 learner. Second of all, students unanimously perceive success in language learning within the context of interaction with others, as well as comprehension in reading and writing. They emphasize that flawlessness is not obligatory; progress is still perceived as success despite minor mistakes or imperfections. This is evidenced by over 89% of respondents indicating that engaging in conversations, regardless of accent or minor errors, constitutes success. Similarly, a vast majority of research respondents, exceeding 80%, consider themselves successful in language learning when they can effortlessly comprehend texts in the target language and express themselves in writing, even if not flawlessly. This suggests that success is perceived as effective communication and comprehension, rather than perfection.

Furthermore, there is a strong consensus among students that success in language learning is achieved when one can comfortably express thoughts and ideas. This is supported by the results indicating a level of agreement of 85.1% among respondents. Additionally, over 87% of the surveyed students recognize language learning success as an ongoing process, expressing satisfaction with observing improvement and progress over time. It underscores a collective perspective of the dynamic and evolving nature of success in language learning, irrespective of imperfections in certain aspects. Finally, for 55,3% of surveyed group, personal fulfillment and confidence are crucial markers of success in language learning. This shared emphasis on subjective measures of success suggests a collective understanding among students that achievement in language acquisition extends beyond mere proficiency metrics to encompass individual satisfaction and confidence levels.

In summary, first-year students of Applied Linguistics perceive success before reflective sessions as the ability to freely engage in conversations and comprehend texts, even with minor errors. This recognition emphasizes the importance of practical communication skills and comprehension abilities over flawless execution. Furthermore, while considering success in language learning, they prioritize comfort in expressing thoughts and ideas, with less consensus on the importance of formal language proficiency determinants. Additionally, the findings imply that satisfaction in language learning derives from observing progress over time, highlighting the importance of continuous improvement. Finally, surveyed students recognize the subjective nature of success in

language learning, with over half emphasizing personal fulfillment and confidence as crucial indicators. This suggests a departure from traditional, externally imposed measures of success, such as meeting formal requirements or passing exams.

4.8.4. RQ4 pertaining to LA and perception of success in autonomous English learning

Analyzing the results obtained from the second and third parts of the survey, collected both before and after reflective sessions, alongside the findings from the first part regarding autonomous behavior among students, provides valuable input to address the Research Question Four. This question concerns examining the relationship between LA and students' perceived success in autonomous English language learning following reflective sessions. It is worth noting that the data collected prior to the reflective sessions are crucial in assessing the initial level of LA and perceived success in autonomous learning among students, as this initial assessment provides a reference point for assessing any changes or dependencies observed after the reflective sessions. The subsequent analysis of further collected data aimed to identify any shifts or developments in students' LA and perceived success in autonomous learning in order to consider whether the reflective activities facilitated a deeper understanding of language concepts and enhanced success perception. Various statistical techniques were employed to examine the relation between LA scores and perceived success ratings, providing valuable insights into the strength and direction of their relationship. Additionally, qualitative analysis techniques such as thematic analysis were utilized to explore students' reflective narratives, providing contextual understanding and detailed interpretations of the interplay between LA and autonomous learning success. It is believed that by employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches and considering relevant contextual factors, meaningful conclusions can be drawn to address the RQ4 effectively.

The research question regarding the relationship between LA and students' perceived success in autonomous English language learning after reflection sessions cannot be definitively answered in a straightforward manner. This relationship is complex and multifaceted, influenced by individual differences and various factors. However, acknowledging this complexity, it is possible to draw some conclusions and develop an

understanding of the interaction between LA and perception of success within the researched group. By breaking down the inquiry into more specific components, one can gain a clearer view of the different aspects of the relationship between LA and perceived success in autonomous English language learning. This structured approach will facilitate a more comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data collected during the study.

Examining the first relationship of heightened LA and perceptions of success regarding the main criteria taken into account while evaluating success and students' approach to measurements of this success, the findings reveal an interesting tendency. A modest increase in LA corresponds with a slight shift in success perception, typically by a few tenths, regarding the criteria for evaluating success. Consequently higher LA leads students to place less importance on native speaker competence as a measure of language learning success. Instead, heightened LA within the research group correlates with a stronger belief that success should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a L2 learner. Addressing the research question, it can be concluded that there is a consistent trend among students to move away from evaluating their proficiency solely on native speaker competence, instead favoring the evaluation of success based on their achievements as L2 learners.

This is in line with the literature, which suggests that the traditional notion of evaluating language learning success based solely on native speaker competence has become outdated due to various factors (Marlina 2018; Schuttz 2019; Tan et al. 2020). The evolution of English into a pluralized and internationalized language has prompted a departure from methodologies favoring a single national standard, such as Received Pronunciation in English (Rohmah 2005; Llurda 2004; Galloway and Rose 2017). Concepts like World Englishes, International English and Globish emphasize the diverse and subjective nature of English as a lingua franca, challenging the idea of a singular standard for success in L2 learning (Pawlak 2011; Lankiewicz 2024).

Additionally, the notion of multi-competence introduced by Cook (1991) has revolutionized research on multilingualism, recognizing plurilinguals as legitimate L2 users and questioning the relevance of native speaker competence as a as a point of reference (McKay and Brown 2016; Rao 2019). Plurilingual individuals exhibit linguistic transfer and interference, making the monolingual native speaker standard unsuitable for evaluating L2 learning success. Instead, literature increasingly advocates moving away from monolingual paradigms in evaluating language competencies, thus diminishing the emphasis on native speaker competence (Deterding 2010; Lankiewicz 2018). This shift

reflects a broader recognition of the diverse linguistic landscape and the autonomy of learners in navigating it. The acknowledgment of pluricentricity in language use underscores the need to reevaluate traditional measures of success, shifting towards an inclusive approach that acknowledges the varied linguistic backgrounds and experiences of language learners (Kubota and Ward 2000). This underscores the necessity for a more complex comprehension of success in autonomous language learning within a multilingual setting, highlighting the significance of personalized definitions of success (Ezzi, 2021; Pawlak, 2011; Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı, 2019).

Furthermore, an examination of students' tendencies towards external measurements reveals that within the researched group, heightened LA is associated with a greater inclination to define success in language learning as achieving personal confidence and satisfaction with one's progress. The analysis implies that this shift is significant, reflecting a trend where students increasingly view their success in terms of personal fulfillment rather than external benchmarks. This pattern highlights their autonomy-driven approach, wherein students take charge of their learning process and are inclined to set their own goals, informed by their awareness of their objectives in language acquisition.

This proactive version of autonomy, consistent with the depiction of autonomous learner behavior in the existing literature (Holec 1981; Benson 2001; Wilczyńska 2002; Little 2012; Klimas 2017; Pawlak 2017; Marantika 2021), emphasizes students' active role in guiding their learning process and adapting their goals accordingly, which resonates with the findings of this research. Moreover, As Lankiewicz (2024) emphasizes, the evaluation of success in language learning is viewed through the lens of subjective emotional well-being. Here, the emphasis lies on personal satisfaction derived from attaining self-defined linguistic benchmarks and learning objectives, closely paralleling the findings of this study.

Within the researched group, higher LA is paradoxically associated with an increased emphasis on external measurements, such as passing exams and meeting requirements, despite an overall shift towards a more neutral stance on these criteria. Initially, students did not support this view, but after engaging in reflective sessions and with heightened LA, they have shown a moderate agreement with the notion that success involves fulfilling external benchmarks. This shift contrasts with the typical expectation that self-assessment and reflective practices on language would lead to a diminished focus on external measurements (Harris and Brown 2018). Instead, it appears that even with

enhanced LA, students value traditional pedagogical practices that emphasize external proficiency tests. This suggests that, despite adopting a more autonomous approach to setting their goals, students still exhibit an inclination towards meeting established academic requirements and adhering to imposed guidelines. Typically, such external benchmarks are scrutinized and may be viewed with reluctance, as they often do not align with the individual needs and expectations of students (Tan et al. 2020; Lankiewicz 2024).

The focus group interview results reveal that this preference towards external requirements is rooted in the influence of the traditional polish school system, which has long emphasized evaluating linguistic and communicative competence through standardized assessments across various language skills and aspects, such as grammar, writing, or reading comprehension. Students collectively acknowledged that they have never been encouraged or guided towards self-evaluation practices. Instead, there has been a strong focus on examinations, with particular stress on the final high school exam. Furthermore, they noted that receiving good grades provides them with a sense of accomplishment and greater satisfaction, though they are uncertain about the reasons behind this feeling.

This reliance on external requirements is clearly rooted in the long-standing emphasis on examinations within the Polish education system, with students accustomed to these standards from the outset of their education. As noted in the 2014 report on the state of education and supported by Sitek (2015), there is a belief in the necessity of external quality assessment and monitoring of effects, with exams seen as effectively fulfilling this role. Despite ongoing reforms, the country continues to prioritize the outcomes of tests and examinations. Additionally, Popławska (2021) notes the opportunities for teacher autonomy brought about by education reforms but highlights the simultaneous imposition of strict supervision and control over teachers' activities, which includes adherence to numerous procedures, bureaucratization, and the integration of standardized tests and external examinations. She questions whether these changes genuinely promote autonomy or merely create an illusion of it, suggesting a contradiction between the aim of individualized education and the enforcement of uniformity in school practices. Finally, the author poses a thought-provoking question, that aligns closely with the findings of the present study: "Aren't these just declarative privileges, a semblance of teacher autonomy that de facto has no chance of being realized?" (Papławska 2021: 79) (own translation). Building on research conducted by Toporek (2021) on the autonomous approach to

English language learning and teaching in senior classes of secondary school, it becomes evident that although many students possess characteristics of autonomous learners, English classes typically do not operate on principles of autonomy. Instead, both student and teacher actions predominantly focus on achieving practical objectives, particularly passing the Matura exam, highlighting a preference for external measurements over the cultivation of autonomy.

Summarizing, this deeply ingrained dependence on teacher and test verification in our education system may explain why students continue to lean towards external measurements of success, despite an increasing awareness of autonomous learning practices. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that with their heightened LA, they overwhelmingly concur that success is primarily about feeling confident and satisfied with one's progress. Their perspective on success being tied to passing exams and meeting requirements is viewed neutrally, suggesting that these assessments hold a secondary significance in their perception.

The second sub question focuses on how language awareness impacts students' perceptions of success in mastering different language skills: speaking, writing, and reading comprehension. Firstly, the analysis of data concerning students' perceptions of success in relation to native-speaker fluency in speaking reveals interesting trends. As students' LA increases, they show a growing desire to achieve native-like fluency, even though they acknowledge that proficiency does not require native-like skills. This also underscores a certain inconsistency in the students' perspective. While they agree that their success should be assessed based on second language learner criteria, they simultaneously place a growing emphasis on attaining speaking skills akin to those of a native speaker. Despite not fully embracing this perspective, with heightened LA, their stance tends towards a more neutral position.

These findings partially challenge prevailing literature, which posits that the primary aim of language learners is no longer to attain a native-like accent as the increasing growth of English as an International Language has changed learners' linguistic needs and goals (Tan et al. 2020). Therefore, the researcher decided to investigate further the underlying reasons for this reasoning through focus group interviews. The findings from the discussion revealed that, for the majority of participants, the British accent of a native speaker serves as a role model not because it is perceived as the only correct pronunciation, but because they simply enjoy its sound. This accent represents the English they are accustomed to and their ideal goal.

They acknowledged that they are likely never to achieve native-like pronunciation and that fluent communication is of greater importance. Nevertheless, they still strive to imitate and sound like native speakers when using English. While much of the current literature suggests a departure from the native model, a closer examination reveals also numerous findings indicating a persistent preference among students for native speakers. In their relatively recent article, Choomthong and Manowong (2020) compiled research on learner attitudes towards English varieties in non-native English-speaking countries, consistently demonstrating participants' preference for English spoken by native speakers. For instance, in a study by Kanoksilapatham (2013), nearly 400 university students were surveyed regarding their attitudes and aspirations concerning pronunciation models. Contrary to teachers' and academics' expectations, the students exhibited more favorable attitudes towards native speaker models. Similarly, Pilus (2013) investigated students' preferences for various English pronunciation varieties, revealing a tendency towards British English. Pollard (2010) explored the perceived suitability of different English varieties, finding that participants favored General American English for its perceived intelligibility. Finally, research by Jindapitak and Teo (2012) suggested that non-native English accents were stigmatized as non-standard or inferior due to students' lack of tolerance for linguistic differences. Additionally, there are some scholars who are strict opponents of ELF. Sobkowiak, for instance, describes an ELF approach to pronunciation as one that will "bring the ideal [that is, Received Pronunciation] down into the gutter with no checkpoint along the way" (2005: 141). Similarly, Prodromou has described ELF as "a broken weapon" and its speakers as "stuttering onto the world stage" (2006: 412). Although the present research does not take as strict or controversial a stance, it adds depth to the ongoing discourse by emphasizing students' persistent preference among students for native speakers, challenging prevailing narratives regarding language learning goals and the significance of native-like fluency.

Secondly, when addressing reading and writing skills, it is crucial to note an important aspect. Namely, the reflective sessions failed to raise students' awareness about hypercorrectness, likely due to insufficient emphasis on the multilingual and international nature of English. Although the student group generally does not advocate for teaching the "correct" forms over the most commonly used ones, their awareness of this issue seems to diminish after the reflective sessions. This shift is evident in the average responses, which become more neutral compared to the initial results. Initially, students tended to oppose the teaching of an idealized version of the language, consistent with the

principle of hypercorrection "above all". However, following the reflection sessions, the mean responses indicate a more balanced stance on hypercorrection, with students neither supporting nor opposing it. This change in perception suggests a decrease in linguistic awareness after the reflective sessions. Therefore, when examining the impact of heightened LA on students' perceptions of success in acquiring language skills, it is essential to consider not only their overall LA but also specific aspects such as their awareness of hypercorrection. This consideration is particularly important when statements about success focus on achieving perfection in various language skills. And so, higher LA, particularly in terms of hyper-correction, leads students to believe that language learning success is achieved when they can confidently engage in conversations, with minor errors being insignificant. Similarly, success is perceived as the ability to read and understand texts in the target language and write clearly, even if not perfect. This aligns with existing literature, emphasizing the lack of a single standard form in the evolving world of English as an international language (McKay and Brown 2016; Rao 2019) The recent literature highlights, that English no longer exclusively pertains to native-speaking communities (Llurda 2017; Marlina 2018; Schuttz 2019), given that the population of non-native English speakers surpasses that of native speakers (Tan et al. 2020).

However, when considering overall LA, encompassing all aspects collectively, the results reveal a notable shift in students' perceptions of success. Initially, there was relatively high agreement with statements suggesting that success equates to confident engagement in conversation and ease in reading and writing, despite minor errors. After reflective sessions, students' responses became more neutral, suggesting a move towards a more balanced approach to achieving perfection. Instead of completely rejecting the pursuit of perfection, the researched group is generally open to it, recognizing its importance to some extent in their learning process, even if it is not their foremost priority.

Turning attention to the final point from RQ4, which concerns how LA influences whether students prioritize achieving language proficiency over recognizing language learning as a continuous process and the satisfaction they derive from their progress, offers further insights on perception of success in language learning. Specifically, within the researched group, a higher level of LA is associated with an increased recognition of the continuous nature of language learning and a greater appreciation for each small achievement along the way. When demonstrating a higher level of LA, the researched

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students reinforced their belief that success in language learning revolves around reaching a point where they can comfortably articulate their thoughts and ideas. This perspective underscores the practical application of language skills in real-life contexts, emphasizing fluency and confidence in self-expression. The strong consensus among students implies that individuals with higher LA are more likely to embrace a communicative and practical approach to language learning.

Furthermore, increased LA correlates with a reduced emphasis among students on the importance of grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency in expressing thoughts and ideas. Initially, students supported the notion of precise grammar and style, but reflective sessions and activities designed to enhance LA led to a diminished agreement with this view. As a result, students increasingly de-emphasize grammatical and stylistic accuracy, adopting a more neutral stance. This shift indicates that heightened LA impacts students' prioritization of language proficiency and their recognition of the ongoing learning process. Those with greater LA tend to prioritize ease of expression over strict adherence to grammatical and stylistic norms, demonstrating a more balanced approach to language learning that values fluency slightly more than accuracy in certain contexts.

Furthermore, increased LA, in the context of this research, correlates with a reduced emphasis among students on the importance of grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency in expressing thoughts and ideas. Initially, students supported the notion of precise grammar and style, but reflective sessions and activities designed to enhance LA led to a diminished agreement with this view. As a result, students place less emphasis on grammatical and stylistic accuracy, adopting a more neutral stance. This shift suggest that heightened LA impacts students' prioritization of language proficiency and their recognition of the ongoing learning process. Those with greater LA tend to prioritize ease of expression over strict adherence to grammatical and stylistic norms, demonstrating a more balanced approach to language learning that values fluency over accuracy. Similarly, as LA increases, students are less likely to believe they will never be fully satisfied with their progress, reflecting a reduced emphasis on achieving mastery. After the reflective sessions, the average agreement score decreased by nearly 0.3 points, indicating a shift towards a more neutral stance. This suggests that heightened LA may encourage students to adopt a more balanced perspective on their progress, valuing ongoing improvement and realistic expectations over the pursuit of absolute mastery. Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite

the observed shift in perception, students' responses still reflect a substantial recognition of the significance of both grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency, in addition to communicative competence. It signifies an understanding that language proficiency entails striking a balance between fluent self-expression and accurately conveying meaning through grammatically correct and stylistically appropriate language.

This longitudinal analysis suggests that heightened LA, prompted by reflective sessions, leads to a shift towards a more neutral perspective on perfectionism. Students with heightened LA tend to view success in language learning as an ongoing process, prioritizing ease of expression in thoughts and ideas, with perfectionism falling somewhere in between - not entirely dismissed, yet not considered the most crucial aspect of successful language learning.

Overall, this longitudinal analysis suggests that students with heightened LA are more likely to perceive language learning as an ongoing process. They prioritize ease of expression while still valuing grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency, resulting in a shift towards a more neutral stance on perfectionism. Within this research group, increased LA is associated with a balanced perspective that emphasizes personal growth and effective communication, while adopting a balanced approach to the pursuit of perfection in language proficiency.

4.9.   Discussion

The analysis presented in this thesis aimed to investigate four research questions concerning the relationship between perceptions of success and language awareness in autonomous language learning. This exploration also constitutes a primary objective of the present paper.

Establishing a definitive connection between these factors proves challenging due to their inherently subjective and evolving nature. Nonetheless, understanding this relationship remains vital for both Applied Linguistics and language education, especially within the context of today's globalized world. It can help educators develop more effective, personalized learning approaches, improving instructional practices, fostering learner motivation, and ultimately contributing to more meaningful and adaptable language learning experiences.

Upon examining the findings, it is apparent that the majority of surveyed students, constituting 66%, position themselves as neither fully autonomous nor entirely dependent on the teacher. Despite significant changes in teaching approaches, emphasizing learner activation and autonomy, and a shift in the perception of the teacher's role (Padzik 2021; Asgari et al. 2021), most students still maintain a neutral stance on autonomous learning. Even though 32% of the participants are categorized as autonomous, with just one student labeled as entirely non-autonomous, it is significant to acknowledge their advanced academic standing as university students approaching the conclusion of a decade-long educational journey. And yet, the fact that less than one-third of the group displays autonomy emphasizes the considerable effort needed to effectively promote autonomous learning. These findings clearly underline that, despite extensive discussions and theoretical understanding of autonomy, its practical implementation needs ongoing development and enhanced efforts within language learning contexts to achieve its potential benefits. Numerous publications (see Pawlak 2008; Pietrzykowska 2019; Komorowska 2020) have emphasized the positive impact of fostering autonomous attitudes among language learners, including increased motivation and effectiveness (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2013; Rahman 2018). Teachers play a pivotal role in creating opportunities for independent learning and fostering a student-centered environment that supports the development of autonomous learners (Oates 2019).

While students generally adopt a neutral stance, they tend to favor a teacher-dependent approach, especially regarding the selection of learning materials. Their responses suggest a frequent reliance on the teacher's judgment and a reluctance to make decisions about the materials used in class. Students perceive the evaluation of material usefulness and accuracy as the teacher's responsibility. Focus group discussion reveals that although students acknowledge the potential benefits of participating in the selection process, such as increased interest and motivation, they feel uncertain about choosing materials due to unfamiliarity with the class's expectations. Additionally, they are reluctant to make decisions on behalf of the entire group, and, most significantly, they have not had the opportunity to do so in their previous educational experiences. For the entire research cohort, the Practical English class in their first year of study represented their first encounter in a public school setting where they were given a possibility to co-decide on class topics and materials. Their past learning environments, where such opportunities were not provided may explain their hesitation and lack of familiarity with making collective decisions in an educational setting.

Encouraging students to actively participate in the syllabus development process may initially pose challenges for teachers and students alike, as it diverges from traditional practices. However, the benefits of a negotiated syllabus are manifold. By involving students in decision-making, teachers gain valuable insights into their preferences and needs, enabling them to tailor lesson activities and materials more effectively (Öztürk 2013). By incorporating topics that resonate with students, lessons become more engaging, fostering autonomy, motivation, and satisfaction. This collaborative process not only empowers students but also strengthens their commitment to the course, enriching the overall learning experience (Nation and Macalister 2010). Finally, negotiated syllabus transforms the conventional authoritarian teacher-student dynamic into a collaborative partnership. By adopting a more supportive and guiding role, teachers align with contemporary pedagogical ideals (Pawlak 2022).

Another significant finding from the research is the relationship between students' autonomy in self-evaluation and their views on success concerning self-assessment versus external evaluation. On average, the research sample is generally neutral about evaluation practices but lean towards an autonomous approach, displaying confidence in their ability to assess their own progress. However, they place considerable importance on meeting external standards, equating success with passing examinations. This is particularly surprising, given their tendency towards autonomous self-assessment and heightened language awareness, as they still prioritize adhering to exam requirements and established guidelines when defining success in language learning. During the focus group discussion, students were unable to clearly identify the reasons behind their attitudes. They recalled their past learning experiences as being marked by significant stress and pressure to succeed, driven both by family expectations and self-imposed standards. Despite acknowledging that their attitudes have evolved with time and maturity - leading them to recognize that grades are not always the most reliable or meaningful indicators of their knowledge - they still derive a sense of pride and accomplishment from achieving high grades, which remains important to them.

While it is acknowledged that self-evaluation is crucial for all language learners, its significance is particularly emphasized for autonomous language learners (Dickson 1987). Self-assessment allows learners to tailor their assessment approach to their study routine, monitor progress, and receive personalized feedback on learning strategies, methods, and materials used. Therefore, despite the reliance on traditional testing and

exams in the Polish education system, encouraging students to engage in self-assessment can significantly benefit their self-directed learning and skill development.

Furthermore, in the context of language awareness, the study findings highlight a notable level of understanding among students, with 47% exhibiting a high degree of language awareness even prior to the reflective sessions. While the majority of responses centered around a moderate level of language awareness, there were notable instances where students displayed unexpectedly high levels. Following the reflective sessions, with a recorded increase in language awareness in 9 cases, the group can now be confidently categorized as displaying a high level of language awareness. This advanced level is evident in their adept comprehension of concepts such as valuing creativity and playfulness in language learning, questioning the universality of language, rejecting universal grammatical norms, recognizing the significant impact of language in expressing ideological perspectives, and endorsing the notion that no linguistic form is inherently incorrect merely because it reflects a particular dialect.

From the analysis of the responses revealing a neutral stance, students recognize grammar rules as valuable for enhancing effective communication but not as absolute requirements. They tend to prefer teaching EFL learners commonly used forms in everyday communication over focusing exclusively on an idealized version. These findings align with the emerging understanding from students' reflective notes, highlighting the importance of mastering common language forms for effective communication, while recognizing that grammatical rules are important but not the sole focus. Overall, the perspective reflects a balanced approach that integrates both linguistic accuracy and practical communicative needs. Below are selected excerpts from the aforementioned reflective notes:

> *It's good to know the correct form, but there is no point in being hyper-correct.*
> *I do pay a lot of attention to hypercorrection, however I became aware that it's not always crucial to maintain it.*
> *Grammar and rules are important factors, but not the most important ones.*
> *It's important to focus on correction and common forms equally.*

Importantly, one student conveyed in a reflective note a strong sense of responsibility regarding the significance of grammar. This student feels that, given her field of study in linguistics, grammar should be of greater importance to her:

I believe grammatical rules aren't as important as they should be for me. As a linguistic student grammar should be important.

This perspective was reinforced during the focus group interview, where the group agreed with this view. Specifically, because their studies and professional goals necessitate a focus on language, students place a higher value on grammar than they might for personal use. However, they emphasized that in formal contexts, such as job interviews or academic settings, they place much greater importance on proficiency compared to everyday situations, where the emphasis is more on effective communication rather than strict correctness.

Another intriguing point is that within the research group, which consists of multilingual students fluent in at least two foreign languages, there is a belief that learning languages is deeply tied to various cultural contexts. Although it is acknowledged that the reflection sessions did not sufficiently highlight English as a global language, it is notable that language students do not see English mainly as an international language. Rather, they often associate it with particular nations or cultural groups. This belief might prevent them from viewing language as a universal means of communication.

Given these findings and the observed level of language awareness among students, the author of the present paper strongly advocates the continued promotion of awareness, particularly regarding the international character of the English language. Incorporating language awareness into the teaching process aligns seamlessly with a holistic perspective on language, offering students a deeper understanding of language study and its components. This approach not only fosters critical thinking about language but also enables teachers to cultivate a stimulating and inspiring learning environment. Harvey and Nuttall (2000) additionally outline four key benefits of language awareness: an appreciation of the complexity and sophistication of language communication, enhanced understanding of linguistic complexity, promotion of transferability crucial for developing intercultural communication skills, and a more comprehensive grasp of English at a practical level. Finally, as noted by van der Broek (2020), language awareness encourages students to recognize learning as a personal journey.

In examining perceptions of success in language learning among students, several trends emerge. On average, students prioritize a learner's achievements in acquiring a second language over attaining native speaker competence. While they acknowledge the

importance of achieving native-like fluency in speaking, they are neutral regarding whether it is essential for overall language proficiency, indicating that other skills also hold significance. Confidence in engaging in conversation, regardless of minor errors or accent, is considered a hallmark of success by students. However, when it comes to writing and reading, a significant portion remains neutral on the importance of flawlessness, suggesting a greater emphasis on perfection in these areas compared to speaking. Similarly, students view success as the ability to express thoughts and ideas comfortably, with varying perspectives on the importance of grammatical correctness and stylistic proficiency. They recognize the continuous nature of language learning and equate success with recognizing improvement over time rather than achieving perfection. Moreover, students associate success with feelings of confidence and satisfaction with their progress, indicating a subjective evaluation tied to personal fulfillment. There is a diverse range of perspectives on external measures such as passing exams, suggesting a more objective evaluation based on specific criteria or standards.

Finally, the comparative analysis of pre- and post-reflective sessions reveals varying degrees of shifts in perception regarding language learning success. First of all, there is a reinforcement of the belief that success in language learning is linked to the ability to confidently express thoughts and ideas, alongside feeling satisfied with personal progress. Furthermore, there is an increasing advocacy for considering the performance of second language learners in assessing success, while moving away from solely emphasizing native speaker competence. A more noticeable change in perception is observed regarding grammatical accuracy, stylistic proficiency, and flawlessness in language use, with a slight tendency towards a more neutral stance. Similarly, students leaned towards a more neutral standpoint when comparing proficiency to native-like speaking. Thirdly, there is a distinct shift towards a more neutral stance when considering language learning as an ongoing process, wherein success is perceived to arise from continual progress over time, irrespective of attaining perfection or mastering every aspect. A comparable rise in emphasis has been observed regarding the attainment of native-like fluency in speaking. However, the most notable change in perception occurs concerning external measurements of success. Students' opinions notably shift towards moderate agreement that success is defined by passing exams and meeting requirements.

4.10. Research significance: Theoretical and practical

The dissertation, through its research efforts, aims to enrich understanding within the domain of conceptualizing success in autonomous language learning. By exploring this area, the current research contributes substantially both theoretically and practically to the humanities, particularly in advancing the notion of autonomy in language learning and teaching as well as the relationship occurring between language awareness and students' individual perceptions of success. The outcomes of this research offer valuable recommendations applicable to both academia and practical settings, serving as beneficial resources for educators and language learners alike.

These recommendations extend beyond conventional approaches to learning, encouraging a critical evaluation of established norms. Moreover, the findings underscore the role of language as a tool for reflection, thereby advocating for transformative practices among educators and learners. This entails adapting to contemporary language usage realities and providing alternative learning strategies. Additionally, the research underscores the significance of cognitive processes in effective language learning and the attainment of success. Ultimately, the research demonstrates the complex relation between heightened language awareness and variety of aspects of perceived success in English language acquisition.

Whereas the discussion presented in the previous sections, inevitably involved referring to the implications of the reported study for theory, the following section briefly summarizes this information, before examining the practical implications arising from the research.

4.10.1.   Theoretical implications

The primary goal of this dissertation was to foster a critical understanding of the complexities in foreign language learning, with an emphasis on promoting learner autonomy. This focus remains relevant given the evolving educational realities and recommendations from entities like the Council of Europe, which underscore the importance of autonomous learning in language acquisition. Just as the communicative approach once revolutionized language learning, autonomy now plays a crucial role, influencing various educational concepts (Benson and Voller 1997). This shift has garnered significant interest from theorists, researchers, and practitioners, as reflected in numerous studies, conferences, and publications (e.g., Palfreyman and Benson 2019;

Oates 2019; Lamb 2020; Little 2020; Komorowska 2020; Pawlak 2022). As a result, fostering autonomy has become a key focus in the language policies of many European countries (Pawlak 2011), with developing students' autonomous behavior emerging as a primary educational objective (Little 2020).

The dissertation findings contribute to promoting autonomy among university students, especially in English language learning. The findings suggest that most students display a mix of autonomous and teacher-dependent behaviors, highlighting the need to further advocate autonomous learning and teaching approaches within theoretical frameworks. Despite numerous recommendations, over half of the students do not fully utilize the potential benefits of autonomous learning. exploit the potential of autonomous learning and the benefits it offers.

The findings enrich our understanding of learner autonomy, illustrating it as a multifaceted and gradually developing process (Benson 2013; Blidi 2017; Little 2020; Tyczka-Nowak 2022). Significant diversity in autonomy levels within a homogenous student group highlights its complexity. Participants exhibit varying degrees of autonomy across different learning aspects, often relying on teachers for material selection while being more autonomous in setting academic goals and learning strategies. This reliance indicates a need for further development of self-regulatory skills. The variability in autonomy among students suggests it is a continuum influenced by individual characteristics, social interactions, and environmental factors. This underscores the necessity for personalized educational approaches to effectively foster autonomy, recognizing that learners require varying levels of support and guidance. These implications will be further explored in the subsequent section on practical contributions to instructional design.

The present research provides also valuable theoretical implications by exploring the role of language awareness in foreign language education. The findings enrich our understanding of language awareness as a critical component of language learning and teaching, shedding light on its multifaceted nature and its impact on both learners and educators.

Firstly, the study highlights language awareness as a reflection tool, advocating its transformative potential for educators and learners. This aligns with contemporary trends in language education (Denham and Lobeck 2014) and supports the view that fostering language awareness can lead to a deeper understanding of language study and its components. This theoretical contribution emphasizes the importance of recognizing

language's critical role in the acquisition process, which can inspire more reflective teaching practices.

Secondly, the observation of high levels of language awareness among students, particularly in affective, cognitive, and power domains, suggests a readiness to engage with complex language concepts. This readiness supports the theoretical framework that posits language awareness as integral to developing critical thinking and reflective skills in language learners. Recognizing students' adept comprehension of creativity, language universality, ideological impact, and linguistic diversity provides a framework for understanding the dimensions of language awareness, informing future pedagogical strategies and contributing to ongoing theoretical discussions on language education and diversity.

Moreover, the study's findings regarding students' attitudes towards grammatical rules and everyday communication forms underscore the importance of a balanced approach to language instruction. The slight preference for teaching commonly used forms in everyday communication to EFL learners rather than an idealized version reflects a balanced approach to language instruction that values both linguistic accuracy and practical communication needs. It suggests that language awareness can help educators strike this balance, enhancing both theoretical and practical aspects of language teaching.

The perception among multilingual students that language acquisition is tied to specific cultural contexts, rather than recognizing English's global status, offers another theoretical implication. It highlights the need to address this perception in theoretical models of language education, emphasizing the universal applicability of English and the importance of teaching it as a global communication tool. This aligns with Jenkins' (2009) call for a multilingual approach that integrates language awareness education to help learners navigate the complexities of English as a global language. In an ever-evolving society where multilingualism, critical thinking, and creativity hold increasing importance (Nieveen and Plomp 2018), education must diligently prepare students for their roles in contemporary and future society (Van der Broek 2020). Theoretical models of language education can benefit from incorporating these findings, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of language awareness and its role in preparing students for the complexities of modern linguistic and cultural landscapes.

The dissertation aims to enhance knowledge in conceptualizing success in autonomous language learning by emphasizing cognitive processes essential for effective

language learning and understanding achieved success. It also investigates the correlation between language awareness and personal perceptions of success to inform educational practices and empower language learners. The findings contribute to existing literature by illuminating several key areas:

- The research highlights the growing recognition of assessing success based on the performance of L2 learners rather than solely comparing them to native speakers. Enhanced language awareness reinforces the belief that success is linked to confidently expressing thoughts and feeling satisfied with personal progress. This aligns with literature advocating assessing learners' performance based on individual growth rather than native-like proficiency.

- Contrary to prevailing assumptions in the literature, the findings suggest a growing emphasis on attaining native-like fluency among learners with heightened language awareness. Despite calls to move away from such comparisons, the desire to imitate native speakers persists, reflecting personal inclinations or perceived academic obligations. Supporting this, several publications examining learner attitudes towards English varieties in non-native English-speaking countries have consistently found a preference for English spoken by native speakers (Pollard 2010; Jindapitak and Teo 2012; Kanoksilapatham 2013; Choomthong and Manowong 2020). In line with these observations, the present research also highlights that increased language awareness does not necessarily exclude or even diminish the desire to imitate native speakers.

- Heightened language awareness is reflected in students' attitudes towards correctness. While prioritizing the ability to confidently express ideas, students also recognize the importance of grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency. This challenges the notion that learners solely prioritize communication over correctness, indicating a dual focus on effective communication and linguistic precision, especially in professional contexts where clarity and accuracy are paramount for them.

- A significant shift in perception with increased language awareness is the alignment with external measurements of success, such as passing exams and meeting requirements. This preference stems from the traditional Polish education system's emphasis on standardized assessments (Sitek 2014), highlighting the need to consider cultural and educational contexts when evaluating perceptions of

success. This observation contrasts with the usual link between language awareness and self-assessment (Harris and Brown 2018). Additionally, it challenges autonomy-driven methods, as external measurements like standardized exams are subjectively perceived and may not meet learners' individual needs and expectation (Tan et al. 2020; Lankiewicz 2024). However, Popławska (2021) highlights that the imposition of strict supervision and control over teachers' activities, including adherence to numerous procedures, bureaucratization, and the integration of standardized tests and external examinations, contributes to an illusion of autonomy in Poland rather than a genuine one.

These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of language awareness and its impact on perceptions of success. They underscore the complex interplay between language awareness, educational systems, and learner attitudes, prompting further discussions on the intricate process of foreign language acquisition and the multifaceted nature of language learning success.

4.10.2. Practical implications

In the field of foreign language acquisition, significant attention has been devoted to exploring concepts such as learner autonomy, language awareness, and success perception. While existing literature has extensively addressed autonomous approaches and language awareness in language learning teaching, the relationship between language awareness and the perception of success is still relatively underexplored. This gap in the literature presents a critical opportunity for enhancing language teaching and learning practices by examining the cognitive and affective factors that influence students' perceptions of success.

Understanding how language awareness shapes success perception holds immense significance for educators striving to create optimal learning environments for students at various proficiency levels. By bridging this gap, educators can gain valuable insights into the mechanisms through which language awareness impacts learners' attitudes, motivation, and learning outcomes. These insights carry significant pedagogical implications, guiding the development of tailored instructional approaches that enhance language awareness and cultivate positive attitudes toward success in language learners.

Moreover, uncovering the link between language awareness and success perception has broader implications for educational policies, significantly impacting students' engagement and effectiveness in their language learning process. By recognizing the factors that influence students' perceptions of success, educators and policymakers can implement targeted initiatives to support diverse learner populations and address achievement gaps. These initiatives not only foster a more engaged and effective learning experience but also empower students to thrive academically and personally in their language learning journey. This section will therefore discuss practical contributions stemming from the exploration of the correlation between language awareness and success perception, with a focus on initiatives to enhance language teaching methodologies, promote learner autonomy, and foster inclusive language learning environments.

The findings of this research underscore the urgent need to modernize current approaches to foreign language teaching. While the communicative language teaching approach is widely employed, its heavy focus on the four language skills and traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction (Wilhelm 2018) often results in student disengagement and a lack of perceived challenge (Jansen 2016) which was reflected in both group discussions during reflective sessions and individual reflective notes. Additionally, students encounter difficulties in reflecting on language and assessing their progress, demonstrating a growing reliance on external measures of success and teacher guidance.

In response to these findings, practical contributions to foreign language teaching are imperative. Educators must shift away from the traditional model of the dependent learner and expert teacher, prioritizing the development of students' awareness and independence. This entails proficiency not only in language but also in pedagogy, interaction, and the integration of modern technologies. As argued by Pountain (2019), modern foreign language education should encompass linguistic proficiency alongside awareness of linguistic structures, varieties, and sociocultural aspects. Therefore, the practical contribution of this study advocates for a more holistic approach to foreign language learning and teaching, one that integrates language awareness and cultural understanding alongside linguistic proficiency. Teachers play a pivotal role in this paradigm shift, emphasizing student autonomy, fostering diverse competencies, and creating dynamic learning environment that fosters independent exploration and

development. By embracing this approach, educators can better prepare students for the complexities of language study and empower them to thrive in a globalized world.

Autonomy is a crucial aspect of effective language learning, emphasizing students' ability to take responsibility for their learning and make independent decisions regarding their learning process. Recognizing the wide spectrum of autonomy among students highlights the need for personalized approaches to foster autonomy in education, recognizing that learners may require different levels of support and guidance to develop their autonomy effectively. It is essential to develop practical strategies aimed at promoting learner autonomy in language learning. Based on the research findings, following aspects seem to be of great importance:

- Educators should be encouraged to actively engage students in the process of selecting learning materials, highlighting the advantages of a negotiated syllabus. Utilizing surveys or questionnaires to examine students' preferences in topics, interests, learning styles, and activity types can serve as valuable input for material selection. Furthermore, facilitating discussions regarding the benefits of a negotiated syllabus and underscoring the significance of student involvement in material selection can foster motivation and engagement. Establishing digital platforms for resource sharing and demonstrating receptivity to student input are additional strategies conducive to cultivating a collaborative learning environment. Ultimately, a readiness to explore novel pedagogical approaches and incorporate student contributions into the curriculum holds promise for enhancing both engagement levels and learning outcomes.

- Educators ought to play an active role in guiding students towards self-assessment, thereby encouraging them to critically evaluate their progress in language acquisition. This proactive engagement serves to instill a heightened sense of responsibility and motivation among learners. Encouraging students to set specific and attainable goals at the outset of each learning period and providing regular opportunities for reflection can help in this process. Incorporating activities such as peer feedback sessions, group discussions, and individual tutoring, along with self-assessment tools, enables students to reflect on their learning journey, identify strengths, weaknesses, and employ effective strategies. Implementing these strategies empowers students to take charge of their language

learning, fostering their sense of responsibility, motivation and agency, ultimately leading to more effective language acquisition and proficiency development.

Additionally, it is essential to underscore the crucial role of integrating language awareness into language curriculum design within this practical contributions section. Among the different dimensions of language awareness, a particular aspect highlighted by the research findings is the tendency to undervalue the global importance of English, frequently linking it exclusively to particular countries or cultural identities. Therefore, it is imperative to incorporate LA principles explicitly into curriculum design and teaching methodologies. This involves developing lesson plans and materials that explore language diversity, challenge language norms, and analyze language use across various contexts. This integration can occur by educating students about the diverse varieties of English spoken worldwide and emphasizing the importance of intercultural communication skills. Additionally, cultural studies units and literary works from various English-speaking regions and cultures should be included in the curriculum to provide a more comprehensive understanding placing a higher priority on integrating this global perspective.

Ultimately, the practical contribution emphasizes the necessity for reforming assessments in language education. The advocacy leans towards a transition to more holistic and learner-centered assessment techniques. Rather than exclusively relying on standardized examinations, there is a proposal for the Polish education system to investigate alternative assessment strategies that comprehensively assess learners' progression, evolution, and communicative adeptness. This proposed shift carries the potential to inculcate within students a recognition of self-assessment's significance, diverging from conventional dependence on external benchmarks of achievement, such as teacher endorsement or examination outcomes. To facilitate this shift, collaboration among educators, policymakers, and assessment experts is essential. This collaborative effort should be directed towards reforming language assessment practices in order to promote a more inclusive approach to evaluating language learning outcomes. Additionally, policymakers ought to grant teachers increased autonomy in determining curriculum content, material selection, and assessment methods. Continuous professional development for teaching stuff, coupled with collaboration with publishers to update educational resources are also vital components in ensuring the ongoing relevance and efficacy of teaching practices within evolving educational context.

By implementing these practical contributions, educators and stakeholders can effectively translate theoretical insights into tangible actions that promote learner autonomy, enhance language awareness, and support the diverse needs of language learners in various educational contexts. Moreover, by shifting the focus from traditional measures of success to a more holistic understanding, we can reshape students' perceptions of achievement, fostering a mindset that values personal growth, self-assessment, and intercultural competence, thereby preparing them for the complexities and diversity of the world beyond the classroom.

4.11. Limitations and recommendations for future research

Several limitations of the current study are now considered and recommendations for future research are made. Such a self-critical reflection allows for learning from the experience of researching (Wallace and Wray 2016) and offers multiple opportunities for further inquiry in this area.

The relatively small sample size may raise concerns regarding the generalizability of the findings. This study involved a survey of 47 students from the first-year cohort of the Applied Linguistics program for the 2023/2024 academic year, with awareness sessions conducted with a subset of 16 students. Attendance at these sessions was inconsistent among participants due to various factors, which could lead to criticisms regarding the representativeness of the results for the broader population, thereby affecting the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, the context of the research supports this approach. To clarify further, the study's focus on first-year Applied Linguistics students ensured a relatively homogeneous sample in terms of language interest and educational background, which enhances the internal validity by minimizing variability within the sample. Additionally, the specific focus on a particular academic program and year level inherently limited the pool of eligible participants, justifying the choice of sample size within this specialized context. Conducting awareness sessions required significant time resources. Volunteers would be unlikely to engage in the study unless it was part of their normal course, making it challenging to recruit participants. Opting for a smaller sample size ensured the effectiveness of the intervention within the available resources. Applied Linguistics students represent a specialized population with unique characteristics and interests. This smaller, contextually grounded sample is aligned with the principles of

ecological validity (Greeno 1997), which emphasize the importance of the study's environment reflecting its intended context and the contextual relevance of the research setting (van Lier 2004). By focusing on a specific academic program and year level, the research maintains a high degree of ecological validity, ensuring that the intervention's effects are relevant and effectively captured within the natural educational setting. By maintaining this contextual relevance, the study ensures that the findings are valid and applicable within the natural educational environment, even if the sample size is limited. Thus, while the generalizability may be constrained, the research remains robust in its ecological validity and provides valuable, contextually grounded insights into language learning dynamics making the study both contextually appropriate and methodologically sound within its defined scope. Furthermore, the study's findings are supported by validity by analogy. Analogical reasoning involves identifying relational similarities between the study's specific educational context and broader language learning environments (Gentner and Smith 2012). By drawing such parallels, the study enhances the applicability of its results to analogous contexts, thereby reinforcing both the relevance and robustness of its conclusions.

In addition, the study group consists of students who engage in practicing their pronunciation skills as part of the Practical English classes taught by the author of this paper. This introduces the possibility of potential sampling bias. Since they are actively involved in the course of practical English class we have every single week, they may feel a sense of obligation or bias towards endorsing the importance of pronunciation skills. As a result, their responses may not accurately reflect their true perceptions or attitudes towards pronunciation. This bias could influence the results towards a more positive perception of the issue at hand, leading to an overestimation of their importance in the broader context.

To address this limitation, several measures were implemented. Firstly, participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses to encourage openness and minimize potential bias. Consequently, only coded initials are used in the analysis section when referencing specific students. Additionally, during the awareness sessions, the researcher emphasized the importance of providing honest and unbiased answers, reassuring students that their responses would not affect their regular classes. Additionally, throughout our regular classes earlier in the semester, the author of the present paper consistently emphasized the multifaceted nature of pronunciation, highlighting that there is no a singular correct way to pronounce words. Students were

encouraged to view the regular Practical English class as a reference point rather than a rigid standard, empowering them to adapt pronunciation to suit their individual preferences. This approach aimed to mitigate any inclination towards overemphasizing the importance of pronunciation skills and foster a more balanced perspective among participants.

The last limitation of the study concerns the design of the reflective sessions. As mentioned previously, these sessions lacked sufficient emphasis on English as a global language. The insufficient emphasis on the international nature of English, including its status as a lingua franca, may hinder participants' ability to perceive language as a universally applicable tool for communication. Consequently, this could shift students' focus towards cultural contexts of language acquisition. As a result, they may tend to associate language inherently with specific nations or cultural groups, potentially limiting their understanding of language as a diverse and adaptable means of communication across various contexts.

Indeed, the sessions were primarily designed to address other aspects of language and specific objectives set for each session. Given the nature of the study curriculum, it was presumed that multilingual students already acknowledged English as predominantly international. With their proficiency in both English and German, cultivated over several years of study, it was anticipated that they possessed a heightened awareness of English's multinational characteristics.

As for future recommendations, conducting a similar study with students who primarily study English as their only language, comparing their attitudes and perceptions with those of multilingual students in Applied Linguistics, could provide valuable perspectives. It would undoubtedly be advantageous, both in terms of practical application and theoretical insight, to investigate potential differences between monolingual and multilingual students in their levels of language awareness and perceptions of success. Additionally, a longitudinal study following the same cohort of students over their academic program could offer interesting insights into the development of language attitudes and inform evidence-based practices in language teaching and learning. Finally, further research could explore in greater detail the factors influencing the preference for native-like speaking skills among language learners, especially given the intriguing findings that contradict the existing literature. By exploring the underlying motivations and perceptions driving the preference for native-like speaking skills among learners, scholars can gain a better understanding of the

complex issue and inform the development of more effective language teaching methods and curricula.

4.12. Final remarks

To the best of the author's knowledge, there is a notable gap in the existing research exploring the relation between language awareness and students' perception of success in acquiring the English language. Thus, the objective of this study is to address this gap and contribute to the scholarly understanding of this relationship. In meeting the research objectives, the study has successfully contributed to both theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding perception of success in autonomous language learning and its correlation with LA, shedding light on related concepts and their complex interdependence. It is hoped that a number of important findings that emerged as a result of this study will inspire future discussion about the critical understanding of the complexity of foreign language learning. The relevance of this study extends beyond addressing specific research questions, encompassing a set of practical implications for the field of Applied Linguistics and language education. Furthermore, it raises promising lines of inquiry that require further exploration in future research projects.

Conclusions

Success in language education is a frequently discussed because of the character of the discipline itself, yet it remains a highly subjective and ambiguous concept, making it challenging to define precisely. The evolution of educational paradigms has profoundly impacted contemporary approaches to language learning. The very approach to foreign languages has changed, particularly with languages like English, which has assumed a global character. English is increasingly seen as a lingua franca, no longer solely the domain of native speakers but rather an international language. This global perspective, alongside the rise of multilingualism, alters how individuals view and interact with multiple languages. Incorporating autonomy and heightened language awareness further reshapes the concept of success. As learners exercise greater control over their own learning processes and develop a deeper understanding of language, their perceptions of success become more individualized and dynamic. Consequently, these developments contribute to a redefined understanding of success in language learning. Today, the concept of success is more complex and elusive than ever, reflecting the dynamic and multifaceted nature of language use.

Nevertheless, the primary objective of this dissertation was to explore the relationship between language awareness and personal perceptions of success in the era of autonomous language learning. The study aimed to investigate how increased language awareness influences first-year Applied Linguistics students' understanding of their success in learning English. Despite the inherently broad nature of success in language learning, the research findings offer several distinct insights. Within the research group, heightened language awareness corresponds to several key beliefs about language learning success:

- Language learning success should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a second language learner, rather than by comparison to native speaker competence.
- Achieving native-like fluency in speaking is considered an important aspect of success. While ease of communication is regarded as more crucial, students still view native speakers as role models and consider accent a significant factor in defining success.

- While grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency remain important, students adopt a more balanced perspective. In professional contexts, correctness is prioritized; however, for personal use, they emphasize open and fluent communication over strict adherence to grammatical norms.
- There is a strong preference for defining success in language learning by the ability to express one's thoughts and ideas comfortably and effectively.
- Success is increasingly associated with personal confidence and satisfaction with one's progress, rather than solely with passing exams and fulfilling academic requirements. Although test results maintain their importance, self-confidence and personal satisfaction are given greater precedence.

While these findings mostly align with the existing literature on autonomy in language learning and language awareness, there are several surprising aspects. According to the prevailing literature, given the global expansion of English as an international lingua franca (Llurda 2004; Galloway and Rose 2017; Tan et al. 2020), achieving a native-like accent is no longer considered the primary goal for English proficiency. The pursuit of "perfect" communication through native-like proficiency (Seidlhofer 2003) has diminished in significance, as multilingual learners no longer measure their skills against native speakers (Boratyńska-Sumara 2015). Moreover, traditional views of L2 learning success were shaped by teacher-oriented practices, defined by meeting predefined objectives and measured through assessments. Contemporary approaches, however, prioritize learner autonomy, encouraging students to assess their own progress (Benson 2001). This shift towards a subjective notion of success challenges traditional assessment methods, which may not capture the varied expectations and motivations of autonomous learners (Lankiewicz 2024).

However, the findings of the current research reveals a different reality. Specifically, students continue to place significant importance on achieving a native-like accent and aspire to sound like native speakers. While they emphasize effective communication, they still extensively value native-like pronunciation. Additionally, students continue to place considerable importance on external tests and grades. While they acknowledge that these assessments are less critical compared to their significance during secondary school, many still find personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement in earning good grades. This suggests that traditional measures of success continue to hold relevance in their language learning experience.

The focus group discussions revealed a notable discrepancy between modern pedagogical ideals and the practical realities observed in many public schools in Poland. Despite the emphasis on integrating autonomy in language learning, participants responses suggested that such autonomy remains largely theoretical. They reported a complete lack of encouragement and instruction in self-evaluation, with many having never been introduced to or informed about this practice. Furthermore, the Polish education system, coupled with pressures from home environments, emphasizes meeting requirements, passing exams, and achieving good grades. Consequently, much of their high school English education has primarily focused on final exam preparation, with no or little opportunity for negotiating content or exploring the language creatively. These long entrenched practices continue to influence their current perceptions of success in language learning.

In the context of exploring perception of success within autonomous language learning, modern foreign language learners ideally should be characterized as multilingual individuals with well-developed metacognitive skills. These learners are expected to embody traits of autonomy, taking responsibility for their own learning processes, setting personal goals, and independently evaluating their progress. Rather than relying solely on teachers, they should actively search additional resources and solutions to expand their knowledge. They should remain motivated and engaged in language learning within and beyond the classroom setting, excelling in both independent study and collaborative efforts. Moreover, they should exhibit a high level of language awareness, understanding that language is a dynamic and evolving system that extends beyond a mere tool for communication. Given the global prevalence of English, they should understand that there is no single standard form of the language, but rather adapt it to their own needs and contexts. Ultimately, they should view success in a highly individualized manner, aligning it with their personal values and expectations rather than external metrics such as tests.

In light of these recommendations, there is a clear need to adapt teaching practices to align with the evolving demands of language education. It is important to acknowledge that the idealized vision of the foreign language learner presented is, by necessity, somewhat aspirational. In fact, each learner is distinct, with a variety of internal and external factors influencing their language development. Autonomy and language awareness develop gradually and at different rates for each individual. Given this diversity, educators are likely to encounter numerous challenges in their efforts to teach

English effectively, compounded by various systemic constraints. Nonetheless, contemporary educators should adopt the best possible approach to create the most preferable learning conditions for students. To do so, teachers themselves must embody autonomy and possess heightened language awareness, coupled with a genuine passion for teaching, to inspire and guide their students throughout their learning process.

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Appendix

Instrument to Evaluate Autonomy, Language Awareness and Success Perception

I.   This section helps to define an **<u>autonomous approach</u>** to language learning. Mark on a 5-point scale which statement you are closer to:

Statement Pair #1

I am responsible for my own learning process.

the right teacher providing the knowledge is responsible for my learning process

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #2

Language learning mainly involves actively processing, analyzing, and organizing information.

Language learning mainly involves accepting new knowledge from more experienced individuals.

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #3

I define my own goals because I know what I want to achieve by learning the language

I focus on meeting exam requirements, syllables and imposed guidelines to achieve good results.

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #4

I follow the instructions of teachers and learn what is required from me to meet the necessary requirements.

I independently broaden my knowledge to develop my skills and reach my objectives

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #5

I want to take an active part in making decisions concerning the materials used during classes cause I can assess whether

the material will be suitable or useful for me.
It is the teacher's duty to provide the necessary materials for the lesson since I

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prefer to learn from materials provided
without evaluating their correctness or

usefulness

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Statement Pair #6

The best language material is the one
picked by a teacher as it originates from
the target culture and is always correct

Students should be able to decide on
learning materials to suit their interests
even if there are some mistake

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Statement Pair #7

I rely on the teacher's guidance to
determine how, when and where I find
the best way to learn.

I am confident about my ability to
identify the most effective methods,
timing, and setting for
my own learning

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Statement Pair #8

I learn consciously using strategies and
methods that are effective for me.

I learn casually, without employing
specific strategies or
methods

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Statement Pair #9

I prefer receiving immediate, correct
explanations when facing language
issues

I try to solve language problems
independently, even if it takes more time
and leads to mistakes.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Statement Pair #10

I can evaluate my own progress
effectively. know my strengths and
weaknesses, I know what I have to work
on.

I rely on someone more qualified. A test
or teacher`s verification is the most
valuable method to assess my progress.

II. This section helps to define your individual **perception of success** in learning a foreign language (English).
Rate your level of agreement using a 5-point scale:

Language learning success should be evaluated based on native speaker competence.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Language learning success should be evaluated based on the learner's achievements as a second language learner.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

I`ll achieve full success if I attain native-like fluency in speaking.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Being a proficient language user doesn't require speaking like a native speaker.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Language learning success is achieved when I can confidently engage in conversations, regardless of accent or minor errors.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

I consider myself successful in language learning when I can easily read and understand texts in the target language and write clearly, even if it is not perfect.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can comfortably express my thoughts and ideas.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Success in language learning is about reaching a point where I can express my thoughts and ideas with grammatical accuracy and stylistic proficiency.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Language learning success is a continuous journey, and I feel successful when I see improvement and growth over time, regardless of reaching perfection.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

I will never be completely satisfied with my progress as there will always be aspects I haven't mastered.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Success in language learning is about feeling confident and satisfied with my progress.

    1. strongly disagree   2   3   4   5. strongly agree

Success in language learning is about passing exams and fulfilling requirements.

III. This section helps to define your **Language Awareness**.
Mark on a 5-point scale which statement you are closer to:

Statement Pair #1

Within a given language, people communicate with each other because they mean and understand the signs in exactly the same way	There are no two individual people saying the same words and meaning always the same thing

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #2

Language serves primarily as an information transmitter	Language basically serves as a means of communicating people's intentions and emotions.

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #3

Playing with the language and being creative in using it should be an essential part of language learning	Playing with a foreign languages by e.g. creating neologisms is a waste of time, they are very rarely adopted in language anyway

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #4

Languages consist of standardized structures and words that must be mastered before they can be used in communication	People determine the meaning of structures and words during communication

◯◯◯◯◯

Statement Pair #5

Grammatical rules are the basis of language knowledge, without them one cannot communicate.	Grammatical rules are a complement to language knowledge, an additional element supporting and facilitating

correct communication, not a necessary   condition

○○○○○

Statement Pair #6

Without the concept of speech parts (adjectives, nouns, verbs etc.) it would be difficult to understand how language functions

Language can be divided into other units to analyze and understand it.

○○○○○

Statement Pair #7

EFL learners should be taught the most common form, used by people rather than an idealized version.

People should always be taught the right form, hyper-correction above all

○○○○○

Statement Pair #8

Any language is able to express any ideas

Not every language is able to express the same idea

○○○○○

Statement Pair #9

All native speakers have and respect the same grammatical rules

Language rules vary from person to person, even within a single language.

○○○○○

Statement Pair #10

I do not consider language (especially international one such as English) to be the property of a particular cultural community

Language is always associated with a particular nation or group of people, so it cannot be learnt without knowing their socio-cultural reality

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Statement Pair #11

Dialectal forms are incorrect versions of language

There is no such thing as an incorrect form of language just because it's a dialect.

○○○○○

Statement Pair #12

Language is a neutral communication tool to express ideas, free from the influence of the beliefs, values or worldviews of its users.

Language is not just a neutral means of communication; it is deeply intertwined with the beliefs, values, and worldviews of the individuals and communities that use it.

○○○○○

Statement Pair #13

Language serves as a powerful means to convey and promote ideological beliefs, including propaganda techniques employed by governments, political parties, and interest groups.

Language is a straightforward and transparent way to convey information and has no significant role in expressing or promoting any ideological beliefs, be it political, religious, or cultural

○○○○○

Abstract

Effective language learning and teaching practices have long been a central focus of research in language education, with numerous studies highlighting their positive effects on learner outcomes, language proficiency, and overall educational success. The existing literature typically adopts a contemporary, student-centered approach, reflecting the global status of English as a lingua franca and the multilingual competencies of learners, yet often resulting in an idealized portrayal of the educational system. Despite extensive discourse on learner autonomy and an increased emphasis on language awareness, there remains a substantial gap in the scholarly literature regarding their influence on personal perceptions of success.

This dissertation therefore addresses the challenge of defining the complex relationship between individual perceptions of success and heightened language awareness. By examining the current realities of language use, it draws attention to the need for a critical understanding of the complexities inherent in foreign language learning. This entails moving away from normative approaches and encouraging learners to critically engage with established linguistic norms, thereby enhancing language's role as a reflective tool with the transformative potential for language education.

Employing methodological triangulation, the research utilizes statistical analysis of data from questionnaires administered before and after reflective sessions, alongside qualitative data from reflective notes and focus group interview. This mixed-methods approach aims to investigate the relationship between language awareness and personal perception of success in the era of autonomous learning. This study specifically investigates how language awareness informs the foundational criteria that students use to evaluate their success. It examines the role of language awareness in shaping students' perceptions of achievement across various language skills. Additionally, it analyzes how language awareness fosters a perspective on language learning as an ongoing journey, emphasizing the importance of deriving satisfaction from progress rather than solely prioritizing proficiency.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for the fields of Applied Linguistics and language education. They advocate greater autonomy in language learning and teaching, alongside a stronger emphasis on language awareness, which

together redefine the understanding of success in language learning. The study provides both theoretical and practical recommendations aimed at enhancing educational practices within a rapidly changing learning environment.

Streszczenie

Skuteczne praktyki w nauczaniu i uczeniu się języków od dawna stanowią centralny temat badań w dziedzinie edukacji językowej, a liczne badania podkreślają ich pozytywny wpływ na osiągnięcia uczniów, biegłość językową i ogólny sukces edukacyjny. Istniejąca literatura przedmiotu zwykle przyjmuje współczesne, skoncentrowane na uczniu podejście, odzwierciedlające globalny charakter języka angielskiego jako lingua franca i wielojęzyczne kompetencje uczniów, często prowadząc jednak do wyidealizowanego obrazu systemu edukacyjnego. Pomimo szerokiego dyskursu na temat autonomii ucznia oraz zwiększonego zainteresowania świadomością językową, w literaturze wciąż pozostaje istotna luka dotycząca ich wpływu na osobiste postrzeganie sukcesu.

W niniejszej rozprawie podjęto wyzwanie określenia złożonej relacji między indywidualnym postrzeganiem sukcesu a podwyższoną świadomością językową. Mając na uwadze aktualne realia użycia języka, autorka pracy zwraca uwagę na potrzebę krytycznego zrozumienia złożoności nieodłącznie związanych z nauką języków obcych. Wiąże się to z odejściem od podejść normatywnych i zachęcaniem uczniów do krytycznej analizy ustalonych norm językowych, zwiększając tym samym rolę języka jako narzędzia refleksyjnego o transformacyjnym potencjale dla edukacji językowej.

Stosując triangulację metodologiczną, w badaniu wykorzystano analizę statystyczną danych z kwestionariuszy przeprowadzonych przed i po sesjach refleksyjnych, oraz dokonano analiz danych jakościowych z notatek refleksyjnych i zogniskowanego wywiadu grupowego. Zastosowanie różnych metod badawczych ma na celu zgłębienie związku między świadomością językową a osobistym postrzeganiem sukcesu w dobie autonomizacji procesu kształcenia językowego. Badanie koncentruje się na określeniu, w jaki sposób świadomość językowa kształtuje kryteria, którymi uczniowie kierują się przy ocenie własnych osiągnięć. Rozważana jest także rola świadomości językowej w kształtowaniu postrzegania osiągnięć w zakresie różnych umiejętności językowych. Ponadto badanie analizuje, w jaki sposób świadomość językowa przyczynia się do postrzegania nauki języka jako ciągłego procesu, podkreślając znaczenie czerpania satysfakcji z postępów, a nie jedynie priorytetowego traktowania biegłości językowej.

Wyniki przeprowadzonego badania mają istotne implikacje dla Lingwistyki Stosowanej i edukacji językowej. Wskazują na konieczność większej autonomii w procesie uczenia się i nauczania języków obcych, przy jednoczesnym zwiększeniu nacisku na świadomość językową, co pociąga za sobą konieczność redefinicji rozumienia sukcesu w nauce języków obcych. Niniejsza rozprawa przedstawia zarówno teoretyczne, jak i praktyczne zalecenia mające na celu poprawę praktyk edukacyjnych w dynamicznie zmieniającym się kontekście edukacyjnym.