



Didactic, Linguistic and Intercultural Benefits of Mutual Teaching Placements in the UK and Austria

Markus Wiesinger, Marlene Bauer, Gudrun Keplinger, Simone Schauer,
& Thomas Schöftner

Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz, Austria
markus.wiesinger@ph-linz.at

RECEIVED 25 JUL 2017

REVISED 25 SEP 2017

ACCEPTED 22 OCT 2017

The present article is the first in a series revolving around mutual international teaching placements, lasting between 2 to 4 weeks, which the Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz, Austria (*Private Pädagogische Hochschule der Diözese Linz, PHDL*) have been organising and running with our partners and affiliated schools in the UK (York/Edinburgh) and Austria (Linz/Bad Goisern) since 2007. The project, per se, can be considered a highly successful immersion programme for primary and secondary trainees alike, benefitting them not only in terms of their teaching capacity (methodology/didactics), but also as regards their second language proficiency and cross-cultural awareness. After a short outline of the history of the project, some light will be cast on the practicalities and workload involved, which is usually minimal for Austrian schools, but can be quite considerable for UK schools. Finally, in order to round matters off, the concept of the project's questionnaire design will be briefly introduced, which aims to place the project on a sound academic footing (research), evaluating the participants' experiences from a wide range of different perspectives (cross-cultural studies, linguistics, didactics and methodology, school systems).

KEYWORDS: international teaching placements, language proficiency, intercultural awareness, didactics and methodology, education systems, teaching styles

1. Introduction

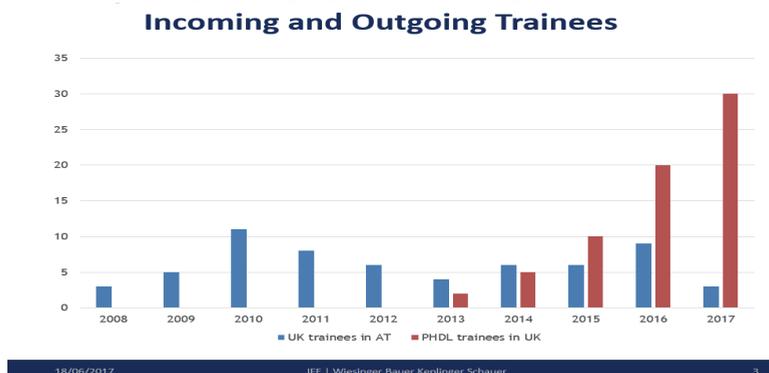
This article is the first in a series of articles and is part of a project revolving around mutual international teaching placements which PHDL have been organising and running with our partners and affiliated schools in the UK (York/Edinburgh) and Austria (Linz/Bad Goisern) since 2007. Basically, the said project is an immersion programme for primary and secondary students alike, which was designed to benefit the trainees' professional development not only in terms of their teaching capacity, but also as regards their second language proficiency and cross-cultural awareness. The research involved is based on a questionnaire British and Austrian trainees have to take before and after their placements abroad. The questionnaire is subdivided into

five categories warranting meticulous research, notably 'language proficiency', 'cultural studies', 'school/education systems', 'didactics and methodology' and 'efficiency of organisation'. The study, *per se*, rests on the hypothesis that participating trainees/students benefit enormously from this intercultural/didactic immersion programme and is underpinned by a number of research questions relating to the categories mentioned above. Presently, quite a few PHDL students are actively doing associated research – analysing the data for their own bachelor theses – and are thus contributing to the project as a whole. In the following sections, the project will be briefly introduced, casting some light on the practicalities and workload involved, and its position and relevance in the respective curricula will be specified. Subsequently, a systematic survey will be given outlining the project's research design and providing the reader with an insight into selected results and recent findings yielded by the questionnaire, supported by numerous illustrative diagrams, tables and statistics in order to confirm the validity and reliability of the data so far obtained.

2. The Project in Brief

It began as a joint project between the universities involved and the idea behind it was to specifically benefit students who, for a number of reasons, could not go on a proper Erasmus exchange (because of the costs involved and the duration of the stay), as doing a short stint, i.e. 2 to 4 weeks rather than a whole semester, was not an option in those days. Originally, the project fell under SOTS – short for 'Settings Other Than School' – which was a programme devised by York St. John University to encourage their students to take part in 'residentials' both in the UK as well as abroad. In other words, the Austrian organisers always had to make sure that UK trainees were allocated to schools that could indeed offer residentials (sports weeks, project weeks, field trips) during the time of their placements. The focus has now shifted from residentials to fully-fledged teaching placements, in that 'residential' are now considered a 'bonus', that is, if they coincide with the trainees' placements and can be easily organised, but are no longer the sole purpose of the 'exercise'. As can be seen from the diagram below, the numbers have increased considerably ever since the project started and it now caters for roughly 30 outgoing and about 5 incoming students.

Illustration 1 (see next page) shows that the ratio of incoming/outgoing students has always been a little 'lopsided'. Initially, there used to be solely incoming trainees and the number of outgoing students only gathered momentum after 2013. The pendulum has now swung back, which can be explained by two reasons: Brexit and the fact that we have now successfully managed to cut out the 'middleman' and deal with UK schools directly, so that the total of schools taking part in the project has increased, particularly in York.

ILLUSTRATION 1. *Incoming and Outgoing Trainees (Wiesinger et al., 2017)*

Duration

PHDL trainees' placements usually take place in March, consisting of 12 days of teaching practice, but the participants usually have three full weeks at their disposal. UK students usually come for 2 to 4 weeks either in June or in September. All of them will be 'employed' as native speakers, i.e. language assistants, teaching English or German, respectively.

Administration/Organisation

The application/signing-up process starts roughly one year in advance, taking the form of interviews in order to establish the participants' language skills and previous experiences in another English- or German-speaking country. Austrian trainees may also be asked about potential 3rd and 4th languages they speak and to what level, as certain UK schools do not offer any German classes but focus on other languages instead. After the application process, the data is shared with our partners so that the trainees can be allocated to their respective schools and host families. The paperwork involving UK schools can be quite considerable and therefore requires countless meetings/briefings with our students well before their stint, so as to sort out CRB/DBS checks, PVG¹ forms for Scotland, risk assessment forms, health and safety regulations, flights and airport transfers etc. and, eventually, also to instruct them in the code of conduct expected (dress code, professional distance etc.). English schools generally accept Austrian CRB/DBS checks, provided they are international ones, that is, they are in English. Students can usually obtain these reasonably 'hassle-free' and quickly from local authorities (town halls, village councils). These international CRB/DBS checks are issued at a cost of roughly € 20, i.e. if an 'addressee' can be provided, which is usually the case. The paperwork costs slightly more if the students cannot produce an addressee, i.e. their placement school has

1 CRB: Criminal Records Bureau; DBS: Disclosure and Barring Service; PVG: Protection of Vulnerable Groups

not been confirmed at that time. Matters are slightly more complicated for Scottish schools. As a rule, Scottish authorities do not accept Austrian CRB/DBS checks and insist that international students, e.g. Austrians, use the Scottish PVG forms provided for that purpose. The costs, roughly € 60, and paperwork involved are thus quite considerable. On the other hand, these PVG forms are valid for much longer and can be used again, should the students wish to go on another teaching placement in the future. It goes without saying that both CRB/DBS and PVG forms have to be fairly recent ones, so Austrian trainees are usually advised to have them issued two to three weeks before they go on their placements abroad.

Our pool of schools in the UK also comprises several private schools and, as with Scottish schools, the paperwork and bureaucracy involved can be quite cumbersome, requiring Linz supervisors and mentors to write numerous references and commendations for their trainee teachers, that is, on top of the usual briefings regarding the respective schools' health and safety regulations as well as other school policies. Amongst other things, students allocated to private schools will have to fill in so-called 'employment-history' forms to prove to the authorities that they have had a continuous record of studies and employment. They also have to take 'employment health questionnaires' and sign a 'disqualification-by-association' form. By comparison, the administration involving Austrian schools is reasonably 'mild' and fairly straightforward. All that is required of UK students to do is send their CVs and professional profiles to their respective head teachers and mentors in Austria well in advance while airport transfers/pick-ups and accommodation will be organised for them. Once everything is in place and the trainees have settled in, their academic supervisors will join them – usually in the second week of their placement to do some mentoring and observe their lessons. Traditionally, PHDL supervisors also organise field trips and after-school parties for their trainees while they are on placement in York or in Edinburgh, respectively.

Field Trip to Whitby © Wiesinger (2017)



The Costs Involved

Although the project would never have been possible without our Erasmus partners, the placements have never received any kind of funding, as, originally, EU funds were not provided for short 'stints'. Things have changed since and funds may now be available for projects of this kind, which is a possibility that definitely needs exploring in the future. For want of funds, we have always tried to keep the costs incurred by the students as low as possible. Flights range between € 150-250, accommodation in the UK including half-board can cost between € 14-27 per day, that is, depending on the exchange rate, and can be as low as € 10 for UK trainees staying in Austria. Public transport, airport transfers and field trips amount to roughly € 50, altogether, if planned well in advance. Airport transfers for UK trainees have traditionally been for free, as they usually get picked up by PHDL 'buddies' or by their Austrian supervisors themselves. The costs incurred by the supervisors when visiting (travel expenses, accommodation) are, of course, covered by Erasmus and the respective national agencies.

3. Evaluation

In order to place the project on a solid academic footing, a questionnaire has been designed to both evaluate the benefits of these mutual teaching placements and see how well immersed the trainees have become in the culture of their chosen destination. The research design seeks to cover a wide spectrum of intercultural, linguistic and didactic issues revolving around 5 selected aspects warranting further research, notably 'language proficiency', 'cultural studies', 'school/education systems', 'didactics and methodology' and 'efficiency of organisation'. The contents of the questionnaire are based on the relevant literature, state-of-the-art didactics and methodology and recent L1/L2 acquisition theories (Brown & Larson-Hall, 2014; Cook & Singleton, 2014; Legutke et al., 2012; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Mackey, 2012; Thomas, 2001; Wiesinger, 2016). Strictly speaking, there are three questionnaires – one aimed at UK trainees, the incoming students, as it were, and the other two targeting Austrian trainees, going either to York or Edinburgh. The respective questionnaires, which are predominantly based on multiple-choice questions, are available on the PHDL Moodle platform and any student participating in the project is required to take the questionnaire twice – before and after their stint abroad. Of course, providing the questionnaire online poses inherent dangers, as the informants can do it from home, at their leisure, as it were, and could look things up, thus possibly rendering some of their answers invalid. Meticulous care has therefore been taken that questions, especially those falling under language proficiency and cultural studies cannot be easily googled, whereas the other categories, i.e. 'didactics and methodology', 'school systems' and 'efficiency of organisation' require first-hand experience anyway.

Research Questions and Test Design in Greater Detail

The research design of this empirical study rests on the hypothesis that participating trainees/students benefit in a great many respects from this intercultural/didactic immersion programme and is underpinned by a number of research questions covering four of the five categories mentioned above, i.e. 'language proficiency', 'cultural studies', 'school/education systems' and 'didactics and methodology'. Category 5, the 'efficiency of the organisation', has been deliberately excluded, at least for the time being, as it 'only' yields feedback regarding the efficiency of the organisers and the costs involved. In other words, it does not really provide any conclusive academic insights and is, thus, not immediately relevant to an empirical study of this kind, even though highly interesting inferences can be made as to the impact of the economy on the costs incurred, e.g. the exchange rate, inflation etc., and the efficiency of the organisation, i.e. whether there is possibly room for improvement on the part of the organisers.

The relevant research questions together with some samples from the questionnaire(s) are briefly outlined below.

Research Question₁/Language Proficiency

To what extent does the trainees' language proficiency benefit from a placement in the UK/Austria, especially as regards everyday expressions, informal language, colloquialisms and phonological awareness (Thomas, 2001)?

A train arriving at 16.55 will be announced as

- five to five pm sixteen fifty-five pm sixteen fifty-five five to five

Tick the words that are pronounced with an /ʊ/ vowel sound, e.g. 'cushion', in a Yorkshire/Northern English accent

- mother butter butcher love

Which of these are informal Austrian expressions for saying "goodbye"?

- Pfiat di Ciao Servus Tschüss

Research Question₂/Cultural Studies

To what extent does the trainees' cultural/intercultural awareness benefit from a placement in the UK/Austria (Wiesinger, 2016)?

What do you have to be careful about when waiting for a bus at a bus stop or ordering a drink at a bar?

- your wallet pickpockets the invisible queue spongers

What are a 'toad in the hole', 'bangers and mash' and 'pigs in a blanket' usually associated with?

- animals farm life sausages rhyming slang I don't know

Austrians usually form orderly queues.

- I agree I don't agree I don't know

Research Question3/Education Systems

To what extent does the trainees' understanding of the education system benefit from a placement in the UK/Austria and which analogies can they draw in terms of the respective conventions, traditions and regulations?

Health and safety' and 'risk assessment' forms are a big issue in the UK.

- I agree I don't agree I don't know

As opposed to Austrian schools, public access to schools is heavily restricted and all visitors have to report to the reception desk on arrival.

- I agree I don't agree I don't know

Discipline is very strict at Austrian schools and 'detention' and 'doing lines' are still very common.

- I agree I don't agree I don't know

Research Question4/Didactics and Methodology

To what extent does the trainees' didactical and methodological awareness of foreign language teaching benefit from a placement in the UK/Austria (Brown & Larson-Hall, 2014; Cook & Singleton, 2014; Legutke et al., 2012; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Mackey, 2012; Wiesinger, 2016)?

UK schools are equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual aids (interactive whiteboards, PCs, laptops, tablets, etc.).

- I agree I rather agree I rather disagree I disagree I don't know

UK teachers regularly employ the above when teaching foreign languages.

- I agree I rather agree I rather disagree I disagree I don't know

In Austria, grammar is generally taught explicitly, involving a lot of parsing and the use of metalanguage.

- I agree I rather agree I rather disagree I disagree I don't know

Admittedly, the above is only a very brief extract of the potential data that the questionnaire(s) can yield. However, it certainly helps to illustrate that questions, especially those falling under categories 1 and 2, cannot be so easily looked up and, amongst other things, go to show whether the trainees have been properly immersed, i.e. have made an effort to mix with the locals and been absorbed in the target culture.

In the meantime, quite a number of students have joined this research project, actively analysing the data for their own bachelor theses – with their very own scope of research, of course – thus not only benefitting their own academic careers but also contributing to the project as a whole. A very recent and intriguing finding has, for example, been that Austrian teachers primarily rely on their coursebooks while UK teachers very often do without them (Schauer, 2017).

4. Some Recent Findings

In a current study, the scope of the research has been narrowed down to category 4 (didactics and methodology) focusing on the teaching styles that are in place in the two countries and revolving around four questions from the questionnaire (cf. Schauer, 2017).

Reasons for the Choice

The four questions that have been chosen for the study and the reasoning behind this decision are briefly explained below:

Q9: *Foreign language teachers in Austria/the UK almost exclusively rely on their textbook/coursebook*

Q11: *Foreign language classrooms in the UK/in Austria abound in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities*

Q13: *Learners are generally allowed to experiment with language (learning by doing/trial and error)*

Q14: *Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking*

Underpinned by a five-part Likert rating scale (1 = I don't know, 2 = I agree, 3 = I rather agree, 4 = I rather disagree, 5 = I disagree), the four questions aim to establish whether teachers in the UK/Austria follow the conventional 'grammar-translation method', also called the 'academic style' or 'get it right from the beginning' by some (cf. Cook, 2001; Lightbown & Spada, 2014; Wiesinger, 2016), and therefore teach grammar explicitly, or whether they subscribe to a more communicative style of instruction (Communicative Language Teaching, in short 'CLT'), thus teaching grammar implicitly.

Teachers who 'slavishly' follow the coursebook (see Q9) are hardly likely to be very innovative and open to new ideas. They tend to be traditionalists displaying a rather conservative approach to foreign language teaching and may, thus, subscribe to the 'grammar-translation' method in their classes. In short, feedback resulting in the informants' ticking the 'I agree' or 'I rather agree' option may hint at the fact that the 'academic' style is still paramount in these classes.

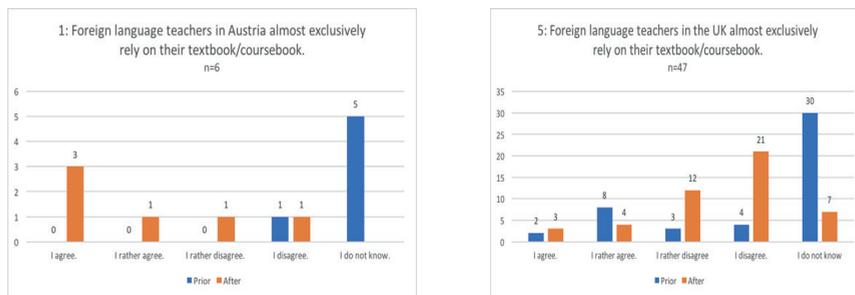
Conversely, if the foreign language classroom abounds in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities (see Q11), it can be safely deduced that the respective teachers prefer a rather communicative style of teaching. The same applies to Q13, as there is only truly room for language experiments and, thus, for 'mistakes and errors' without being sanctioned, in a genuine CLT setting. Q14, on the other hand, may yet again hint at the prevalence of the grammar-translation method, in that teachers who subscribe to this style of teaching generally expect their students to 'get it right from the beginning' and will therefore quite explicitly correct their learners' errors even while speaking. In a communicative style of language teaching, though, 'error correction' is considered an anathema, especially in speech, and is either not done at all, as it could prove detrimental to the learners' confidence and development of fluency, or done implicitly through so-called 'recasts', which involves reformulating parts or all of the students' output by the teacher without directly alerting them to the problem (Lightbown & Spada, 2014). Strictly speaking, some of the above questions could also serve as 'control questions', as the answers they yield should actually rule each other out.

The Results in Brief

Altogether, 53 trainees have taken part in the present study and the general trend reflected by the feedback obtained from the informants suggests that the grammar-translation method is still firmly entrenched in both UK schools and Austrian schools, as it seems to be practised in roughly half of the classrooms that have been observed. Even though Austrian EFL classrooms generally appear to be more lively and attractive than their English counterparts, learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking. In terms of 'language experiments', the informants' opinions have been fairly divided, as roughly 50% of Austrian informants 'agree' or 'rather agree' to have observed lessons where learners were allowed to experiment with language while the other half either 'disagree' or rather 'disagree' on the issue. Curiously, 85% of their English colleagues agree or rather agree to have witnessed lessons in Austria that allowed for language experiments while a similarly high proportion of English trainees (60%) state that learners in Austrian EFL classrooms usually get interrupted/corrected for the sake of an error, which, strictly speaking, is a contradiction in terms.

A similar and quite intriguing discrepancy can also be observed in the use of coursebooks/textbooks and the following two diagrams should help to illustrate this further:

ILLUSTRATION 2. Use of coursebooks/textbooks in Austria and the UK (Schauer, 2017, p. 47)



Apparently, Austrian teachers rely a great deal more on their textbooks than their colleagues in the UK, which is interesting insofar as a large number of Austrian trainees have been allocated to UK primary schools and, even though years five and six in UK primary schools overlap with years one and two at Austrian secondary schools, this implies that coursebooks play a more important part in lower secondary education than in primary education (Schauer, 2017, p. 58). To put it another way, this result does not reflect the quality of the teaching or allow any obvious inferences in terms of the teaching style followed in the UK.

On the other hand, the above result also casts a very interesting light on some of the practices followed in Austrian EFL classrooms and also helps to explain some of the inconsistencies encountered before, notably Austrian teachers giving their learners lots of leeway in connection with language experiments while constantly correcting their errors and mistakes at the same time. This contradiction in terms can be clarified by the relatively high status of foreign language teaching in the Austrian curriculum and the prestigious place it takes in the Austrian education system as a whole. In many respects, the Austrian curriculum for foreign language teaching can be considered most innovative and state of the art, in that it is perfectly in line with modern language acquisition theories, according to which the mechanisms and principles that are at work in L1 and L2 acquisition are fairly similar. Therefore, it subscribes to the so-called 'oral principle' and is quite specific in its emphasis on interaction involving communicative and multi-sensory approaches as well as task-based learning. Lessons should thus focus on learners' fluency and, as a rule, grammar has to be taught in meaningful contexts, i.e. implicitly (Wiesinger, 2017). In other words, the curriculum does not ban the 'grammar-translation method' outright, but certainly some of its defining properties, e.g. explicit grammar teaching, parsing and extensive use of meta-language. Coursebooks have to follow the curriculum to the letter so that they

can be approved by the respective schoolboards and authorities, which probably explains why most of them are so highly communicative and avant-garde in their approach. The aforesaid meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities that a great many English trainees seem to have observed in Austrian EFL classrooms may thus well have been suggested and triggered by the innovative design of the coursebooks rather than by CLT strategies devised by the teachers, as their constant interrupting and correcting of learners' errors quite clearly shows. Picking on learners' errors while they speak is like a 'throwback' to the past, i.e. very reminiscent of the grammar-translation method.

More importantly, however, the study uniformly demonstrates the opinion-forming potential of such placements and the net gain in experience the majority of informants have had during their placement abroad. This positive side effect of the project is also strongly supported by the battery of tests (Cronbach's α , normal distribution test, t-Test, parameter analyses) run to ascertain the validity and reliability of the data obtained (see below). For the purpose of this article and for simplicity's sake, the number of samples effectively tested has been reduced to the feedback given on the Moodle platform, ignoring the trainees that have taken the questionnaire in a 'Microsoft-Word' format previously (26). Except for some of the descriptive diagrams used, the number of informants scrutinized in the section below is thus not higher than 27, basically made up of the 27 Austrian trainees on placement in York and Edinburgh schools in March 2017. Irrespective of that, as can be deduced from the following sections, the general verdict remains the same: the test design is valid and reliable, so that the differences in the feedback obtained from the informants taking the test before and after their placement can be considered highly significant.

Testing the Reliability of the Scales Used

The tables below reflect the results of the items tested in the questionnaire on the basis of their reliability.

TABLE 1. *Valid cases tested*

Summary of the Processing			
		N	%
Cases	valid	27	100
	excluded ^a	0	,0
	total	27	100

a. Deletion based on all the variables used in the procedure.

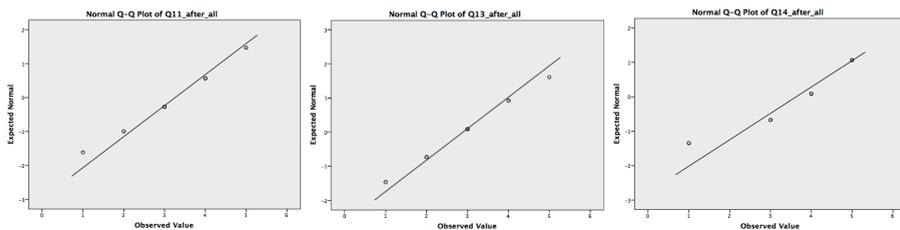
TABLE 2. Reliability analysis of the test

Reliability Analysis		
Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha for standardised items	number of items
,604	,619	8

The verification of the coefficient according to Cronbach has yielded satisfactory values, so that the reliability of the self-developed measuring instrument can be assumed to be valid. The alpha coefficient according to Cronbach amounts to $\alpha = .604$ and is thus consistent (Pallant, 2010, p. 97).

Normal Distribution Tests

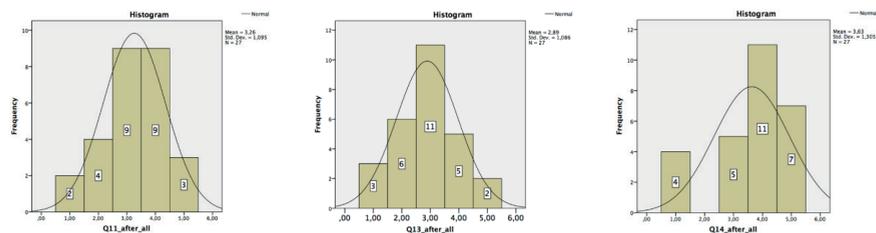
According to Maaß, Mürdter, & Rieß (1983, p. 23) a minimum sample of 25 subjects/informants is required in order to allow for a normal distribution of the data and these requirements are easily met by the questionnaire's design. Nonetheless, some results of the normal distribution tests are presented in the diagrams below.

ILLUSTRATION 3. Q-Q-Diagrams based on the questions

Q11: Foreign language classrooms in the UK abound in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities. – Q13: Learners are generally allowed to experiment with language (learning by doing/trial and error). – Q14: Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking.

In Q-Q-diagrams, the observed value for each value is plotted against the expected value from the normal distribution. An approximately straight line indicates a normal distribution of the data.

ILLUSTRATION 4. Frequency distributions (with normal distribution curve) based on the questions



Q11: Foreign language classrooms in the UK abound in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities. – Q13: Learners are generally allowed to experiment with language (learning by doing/trial and error). – Q14: Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking.

As can be inferred from above, the results of the investigated data are normally distributed in the questionnaire and the given distribution is not likely to deviate from the normal distribution. This means that the collected data can be used in the following parametric-statistical test procedures.

Parametric Analyses

The evaluation has been carried out by means of a point-by-point online survey based on a questionnaire composed of a five-part Likert rating scale. (1 = I don't know, 2 = I agree, 3 = I rather agree, 4 = I rather disagree, 5 = I disagree).

Question: “Q9: Foreign language teachers in the UK almost exclusively rely on their text-book/coursebook.”

TABLE 3. t-Test for dependent samples

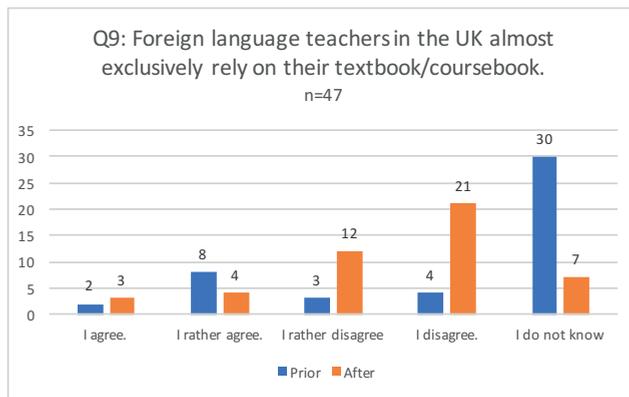
Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Q9_before_all	2,1481	27	1,51159	,29091
Q9_after_all	4,1852	27	1,27210	,24482

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Q9_before_all - Q9_after_all	-2,03704	1,99000	,38298	-2,82426	-1,24982	-5,319	,000	

Q9: Foreign language teachers in the UK almost exclusively rely on their textbook/coursebook.

A t-Test for correlated samples has been carried out in order to assess the informants' feedback as regards the questionnaire. Accordingly, there is a significant increase in the values of "prior" ($M_1 = 2.15$, $SD_1 = 1.51$) to "after" ($M_2 = 4.19$, $SD_2 = 1.27$), $t(26) = -5.32$, $p = .000$ (two-tailed), $p < 0.05$. The mean increase amounts to 2.04 with a 95% confidence level of -2.82 to -1.25. A great effect of $r = .72$ according to Cohen (1988, p. 287) can be observed. In addition, the standard deviation of $SD_2 = 1.27$, which is reduced to test-time "after" (post-intervention), should also be assessed as positive. The descriptive diagram below further confirms the results of the performed t-Test.

ILLUSTRATION 5. Diagram for question



Q9: Foreign language teachers in the UK almost exclusively rely on their textbook/coursebook.

On the basis of the analyses carried out, it can be assumed that a great number of informants have revised their opinion after their stint abroad and have come to the conclusion that foreign language teachers in the UK do not rely exclusively on their textbooks/coursebooks.

Question: "Q11: Foreign language classrooms in the UK abound in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities."

TABLE 4. t-Test for dependent samples

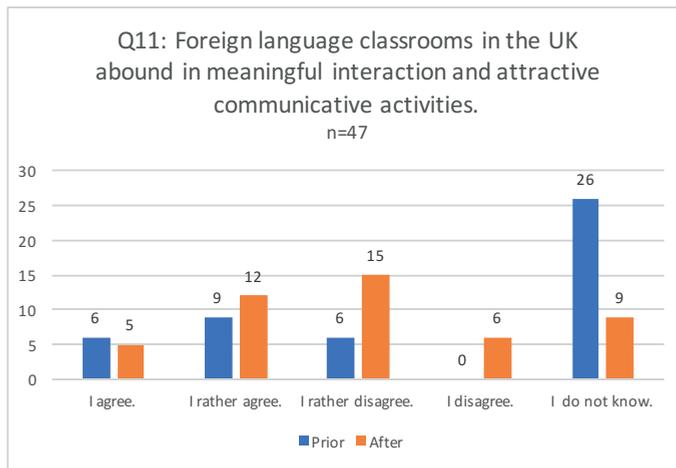
		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Q11_before_all	1,9630	27	1,01835	,19598
	Q11_after_all	3,2593	27	1,09519	,21077

Paired Samples Test											
		Paired Differences				t		df		Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						
					Lower						Upper
Pair 1	Q11_before_all - Q11_after_all	-1,29630	1,61280	,31038	-1,93430	-,65829	-4,176	26	,000		

Q11: Foreign language classrooms in the UK abound in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities.

A t-Test for correlated samples has been carried out in order to assess the informants' feedback as regards the questionnaire. Accordingly, there is a statistically significant increase in the values of "prior" ($M_1 = 1.96$, $SD_1 = 1.02$) to "after" ($M_2 = 3.26$, $SD_2 = 1.10$), $t(26) = -4.18$, $p = .000$ (two-tailed), $p < 0.05$. The increase in the mean value amounts to 1.30 with a 95% confidence level ranging from -1.93 to -0.66. Furthermore, with $r = .63$, a great effect according to Cohen (1988, pp. 287) could have been determined. The descriptive diagram below is thus verified by the results yielded in the t-Test.

ILLUSTRATION 6. Diagram for question



Q11: Foreign language classrooms in the UK abound in meaningful interaction and attractive communicative activities.

The above diagram shows that the experience gained by the informants during or following their placement abroad has led to an increased negative assessment, opting for "I rather disagree" and "I disagree", respectively, as far as Q11 is concerned. In this connection, it is also very pleasing to note that the informants' placement abroad has been largely opinion-forming.

Question: "Q13: Learners are generally allowed to experiment with language (learning by doing/trial and error)."

TABLE 5. *t*-Test for dependent samples

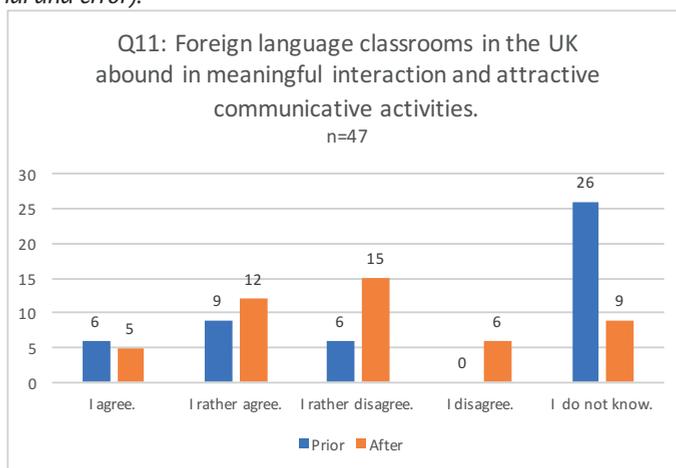
Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Q11_before_all	1,9630	27	1,01835	,19598
	Q11_after_all	3,2593	27	1,09519	,21077

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Q13_before_all - Q13_after_all	-1,07407	1,23805	,23826	-1,56383	-,58432	-4,508	26	,000

Q13: Learners are generally allowed to experiment with language (learning by doing/trial and error).

The *t*-Test for correlated samples has resulted in a statistically highly significant increase in the values of "prior" ($M_1 = 1.81$, $SD_1 = 1.04$) to "after" ($M_2 = 2.89$, $SD_2 = 1.09$), $t(26) = -4.51$, $p = .000$ (two-tailed), $p < 0.05$. The increase in the mean value amounts to 1.08 with a 95% confidence level ranging from -1.56 to -0.58. The calculated effect of $r = .66$ is huge according to Cohen (1988, p. 287). The diagram below reinforces the results of the *t*-Test.

ILLUSTRATION 7. *Q13: Learners are generally allowed to experiment with language (learning by doing/trial and error).*



The feedback given by the informants in terms of Q13 reflects again the 'opinion-forming' impact of the placements, as of a total of 30 responses (prior) for the scale value "1 I do not know" only 10 have ticked this option after their stint, which amounts to a drop by two thirds. Likewise, the value "3 I rather agree" has almost doubled after the informants' placement abroad from $n = 8$ to $n = 15$. This suggests that, according to the informants' experience during and following their placement, children in UK language classrooms are generally not allowed to experiment with language.

Question: "Q14: Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking."

TABLE 6. *t-Test for dependent samples*

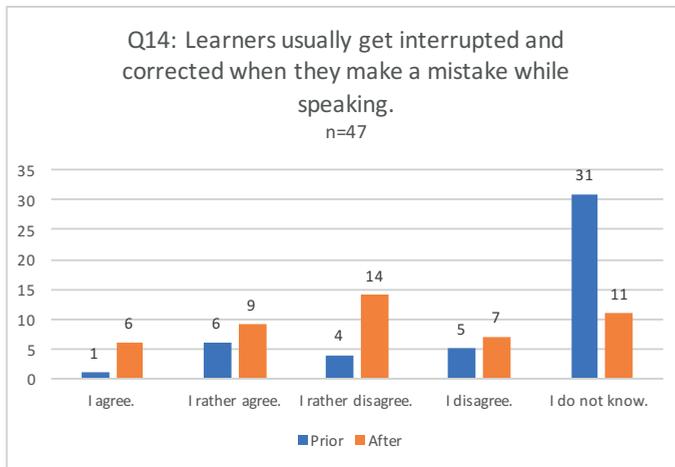
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Q14_before_all	2,1852	27	1,59415	,30679
Q14_after_all	3,6296	27	1,30526	,25120

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Q14_before_all - Q14_after_all	-1,44444	1,96769	,37868	-2,22284	-,66605	-3,814	26	,001

Q14: *Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking.*

Yet again, a t-Test has been performed to assess the informants' feedback in terms of Q14. Accordingly, there is a statistically highly significant increase in the values of "prior" ($M_1 = 2.19$, $SD_1 = 1.59$) to "after" ($M_2 = 3.63$, $SD_2 = 1.31$), $t(26) = -3.81$, $p = .001$ (two-tailed), $p < 0.05$. The increase in the mean value amounts to 1.44 with a 95% confidence level ranging from -2.22 to -0.67. The calculated value of $r = .60$ can be deemed as considerable according to Cohen (1988, p. 287). Furthermore, a standard deviation of $SD_2 = 1.31$ reduced to the test-time "after" can also be considered as positive, which is perfectly illustrated by the diagram on the next page.

ILLUSTRATION 8. Q14: Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking.



Concluding, it can be seen that, as far as Q14: Learners usually get interrupted and corrected when they make a mistake while speaking is concerned, informants have, for a large part, revised their opinion in that they have opted for the scale values 'I rather disagree' or 'I disagree' after their stint abroad. Additionally, two thirds of all informants have been able to form an opinion, as the scale value of "I do not know" has dropped from "prior" $n = 31$ to "after" $n = 11$. What is more, the t-Test carried out for correlated samples in connection with this particular question distinctly shows a significant increase in terms of the scale value "14 I rather disagree".

TABLE 7. t-Test for correlated samples Q14. Scale value "14 I rather disagree" (before and after)

		Paired Samples Test				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower				Upper
Pair 1	I rather disagree - I rather disagree	-,29630	,60858	,11712	-,53704	-,05555	-2,530	26	,018

As can be inferred from Table 7, there has been a significant difference between the values "prior" and "after", amounting to $t(26) = 2.53$, $p = .018$ (two-tailed), $p < .05$, with $r = .44$ displaying a medium effect size according to Cohen (1988, p. 287).

5. Conclusion

The battery of tests that has so far been performed to ascertain the test design's reliability and the validity of the data (Cronbach's α , normal distribution test, t-Test, parameter analyses) clearly shows that there is a significant difference between the

trainees' feedback before and after their stints abroad. It can therefore be presumed that these placements do, indeed, benefit the participating students considerably (Schöftner, 2017). As this is ongoing research with the number of informants steadily rising and as students effectively doing research continue to shift their focus of attention to other aspects of the study, it should be very interesting to see how results pan out in terms of the three remaining categories of the questionnaire warranting further analysis, notably 'language proficiency', 'cultural studies' and 'school/education systems'. Sadly, however, this project has come under serious threat due to the pending Brexit and recent changes in the curriculum for teacher training institutions in Austria, according to which teaching placements no longer feature as prominently in the syllabus as they used to. Let's hope for our students' sake that not everything in their future is 'doom and gloom'.

References

- Brown, S., & Larson-Hall, J. (2012). *Second language acquisition myths*. Michigan: Michigan University Press.
- Cohen, J.W. (1988). *Statistical power analytics for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cook, V. (2001). *Second language learning and language teaching*. London: Arnold.
- Cook, V., & Singleton, D. (2014). *Key topics in second language acquisition*. Bristol: MM Textbooks.
- Legutke, M. K., Müller-Hartmann A., & Schocker-v. Ditfurth, M. (2012). *Teaching English in the primary school*. Stuttgart: Klett.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2013). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maaß, S., Mürdther, H., & Rieß, H.Ch. (1983). *Statistik für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftler II. Induktive Statistik*. Berlin: Springer.
- Mackey, A. (2012). *Input, interaction and corrective feedback in L2 learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS* (4th ed.). Maidenhead: McGraw Hill.
- Schauer, S. (2017). *A comparative study of second language approaches in the United Kingdom and in Austria*. Unpublished bachelor thesis, Private Pädagogische Hochschule der Diözese Linz, Austria.
- Schöftner, T. (2017). *Bericht Inferenzstatistik*. Unpublished paper presented as part of an international academic conference entitled "PH Forscht 2" at the Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz. Linz: 25-04-2017.
- Thomas, B. J. (2001). *Advanced vocabulary and idiom*. Longman Group Limited.

- Wiesinger, M. (2016). *The gift of the gab – games and activities for the EFL classroom. Ein methodisch-didaktisches Handbuch für Englischlehrer/-innen bzw. Studierende*. Im Eigenverlag. ISBN: 978-3-200-04467-8.
- Wiesinger, M., Bauer, M., Keplinger, G., & Schauer, S. (2017). *Mutual teaching placements in the UK/Austria*. Lecture/PowerPoint presentation as part of an international academic conference entitled 'PH Forscht 2' at the Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz. Linz: 25-04-2017.
- Wiesinger, M., (2017). *Synergies between L1 and L2 and their practical implications for the EFL classroom*. Lecture/PowerPoint presentation as part of an international academic conference entitled 'PH Forscht 2' at the Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz. Linz: 25-04-2017.