INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS' LANGUAGE LEARNING DIARIES

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Abstract. *Language learning diaries have become a very popular source for collecting qualitative data in foreign language learning research. The data cannot be easily obtained in another manner since it involves the process of introspection. Since many aspects of language learning are not easily accessible or observable, introspection sheds light on the language learning process. The evidence which can be obtained by diary studies proves that students' experiences in learning a foreign language can significantly influence their attitudes and motivation for learning a foreign language. Furthermore, it can have major pedagogical and practical implications for the outcomes of foreign language learning. The aim of this paper is to identify the linguistic and non-linguistic factors from students' diaries which influence their learning process. In this study, the students' diaries were analyzed in terms of the themes (recurring patterns) which appeared most frequently. After the data from students' language learning diaries were categorized into themes, each theme was analyzed separately both in terms of the count of mentions (frequency) in the students' diaries (numerical/quantitative data) and qualitatively, by interpreting students' opinions, feelings, experiences, expectations and attitudes towards learning English.*

Key words: *language learning diaries, diary studies, introspection, linguistic and non-linguistic factors*

1. INTRODUCTION

Diary writing plays an important role in diarists' private reflections. In English language teaching and learning, it has become very important both as a reflective genre and as a research technique (McDonough & McDonough, 1997: 121). As a research technique, it can provide insights into better understanding of the interrelated factors which affect the language learning process. In foreign language learning research, diaries represent a type of an autobiographic narrative written by language learners usually as a response to teachers' (or researchers') requests and they represent "the first source of information about learners' beliefs and feelings" (Pavlenko, 2007: 165). The insights obtained from language learners' diaries reflect many aspects of the language learning process which cannot be observed directly. The data obtained through analyzing diary entries depicts the linguistic, social and psychological aspects of language learning (Nunan, 1992: 120). Since much of language

development occurs in the heads of the learners, language teachers (researchers) use diary studies to enter into the minds of their students. Diary study research has dealt with various topics, including the analysis of the use of diaries as a means of language exploration for the purpose of enhancing learners' language awareness (Desmond, 1998). Curtis & Bailey (2009) and Pavlenko (2007) discuss diary studies in terms of the procedures that can be used for collecting and generating data. These authors differentiate between two types of data analyses: primary (or direct, introspective) and secondary (indirect, non-introspective) (Ibid., 69). Our study focuses on the analyses carried out by the researchers (authors of the paper) and, therefore, the process in data analysis is secondary or indirect. Some of the first and most important studies in the field of language learning diaries which also use the secondary or indirect analysis were presented in papers written by Schumann & Schumann (1977), Schmidt & Frota (1986). In the former, the authors discuss the use of diaries as a technique for exploring the social and psychological factors which influence the acquisition of a foreign language and the possibility of using diaries as tools for making the learning process easier. The latter deals with a learner's development of conversational ability in Portuguese during a five-month period spent in Brazil. Halbach's article (2000) investigates the use of diaries as a tool for gaining insight into language learning strategies students use when learning a foreign language. The great potential of diary studies for the investigation of students' learning strategies and learning preferences is recognized by Nunan (1992), as well as O'Malley & Chamot (1990), and Oxford (1990). Tse's article discusses students' perceptions of their experiences in a foreign language class and the impact that they have on their linguistic outcomes.

The questions this study aims to answer based on the insights gained from the analysis of students' language learning diaries are the following:

   a) What are the most prominent linguistic and non-linguistic factors which influence students' learning processes based on their perceptions?
   b) What suggestions do language students give to their teachers concerning the teaching methods?

2. INTROSPECTION AND DIARY STUDIES

Introspection, as a research procedure, has been used in foreign language learning and teaching since the 1970s. Language teachers' and researchers' need to obtain knowledge about the inner processes which occur in students' minds and which cannot be easily observed allowed introspection to become one of the tools in researching students' foreign language development. Nunan (1992: 115) defines introspection as "the process of observing and reflecting on one's thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes, and mental states with a view determining the ways in which these processes and states determine our behavior". The term introspection refers to three concepts: *concurrent introspection*, *immediate retrospection* and *delayed retrospection*.[1] Introspection which occurs during the task or event about which the subject is introspecting (for example, 'think-aloud' procedures) is concurrent introspection, whereas immediate retrospection occurs after the event or task, and delayed retrospection occurs much later following the

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[1] A slightly different classification was proposed by Perry (2011 : 117) who refers to introspection as either *introspective* (describing internal processes which occur during an ongoing task) or *retrospective* (describing internal processes after task completion).

event (hours later or longer) (Bailey, 2015: 248). The most significant advantage of the introspective procedure is that it enables the researcher to enter as much as possible the minds of the participants. However, the question which arises is whether the participants are providing the researcher with correct information or information which the researcher wants to find out about.

Introspection is a qualitative research procedure. What distinguishes qualitative research from quantitative is the nature of the data collected. In qualitative research, the non-numerical data (i.e. words) are analyzed by methods which are not statistical (Dornyei, 2007: 24). Furthermore, the aim of quantitative research is to test certain hypotheses, whereas qualitative research aims at exploring whatever is present in the research context and allows the questions to arise on their own (Mackey & Gass, 2015: 163). In foreign language research, introspective data elicitation methods are commonly used and they include interviews, diaries, verbal reports, retrospection (Nunan, 1992; Taylor & Sobel, 2015).

In its broadest sense, a diary is a written account of experiences, feelings, thoughts, attitudes of the person who is keeping a diary. A distinction should be made between a diary as recording thoughts, opinions, feelings etc. and the concept of 'a diary study' which refers to a much more comprehensive term: writing of the diary, collecting and analyzing data from the diary and drawing conclusions based on the insights gained from analyzing the data. Diaries can concentrate on the teacher and the teaching, on the learners and the learning, or the interaction between teachers and learners, that is, teaching and learning (Nunan, 1992: 118-119). The focus in this paper is on a diary study in language learning which is defined as:

> "an account of a second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal. The diarist may be a language teacher or a language learner – but the central characteristic of the diary studies is that they are introspective: The diarist investigates his own teaching or learning. Thus he can report on affective factors, language learning strategies, and his own perceptions – facets of the language learning experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer." (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983: 189)

Although there have been criticisms and controversy created by using introspective methods for data elicitation, the importance of diary studies in revealing the inner processes occurring during language learning has been recognized, which is supported by numerous papers which deal with this topic (Schumann & Schumann, 1977; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Bailey, 1991, 2015; Warden et al., 1995; Desmond (1998); Halbach, 2000; Lally 2000; Tse, 2000; Carson & Longhini, 2002; Huang, 2005; Farrell, 2007; Pavlenko, 2007; Porto, 2007; Curtis & Bailey, 2009; Tanaka 2009, etc.). The criticism is concentrated on the external validity and it is reflected in the question about how conclusions "based on data from a single subject can possibly be extrapolated to other language learners" (Nunan, 1992: 123). In addition, the status of the data and its interpretation is questionable as to how realistically the diary entries actually represent what was happening at the time the recording of these entries were being made (Ibid.). In other words, are the diarists actually capable of verbalizing the thoughts they were having while completing a certain task? Nevertheless, this introspective method definitely has its advantages, aside from the possibility of

providing insight into the language learning process which would not be otherwise obtainable from the researcher's perspective only. The diarists can verbalize their impressions, attitudes, thoughts without being limited by a certain topic of interest. They also provide greater flexibility than other data elicitation methods (e.g. observations, interviews)[2] because "diary entries can be completed according to participants' own schedules" (Mackey & Gass, 2005: 178). Language learners (diarists) can be free in the topics they choose to write about, without having to edit themselves and they can also write at whatever time is fit for them. As any other method, however, keeping a diary has its shortcomings. One of them is that it requires the participants (diarists) to be committed to regularly write about their thoughts and experiences in language learning. Another one lies in the flexibility in diary writing which can produce very unstructured instrospective data and make the analysis quite difficult for researchers who need to find patterns in the obtained data. In other words, the advantages of this method can at the same time be viewed as its disadvantages.

3. DATA SOURCE, COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

For the purposes of this study, the data collected and analyzed are represented by diary entries written by 39 students who attended a Business English course at the Business School of Applied Studies in Blace. The students were instructed to write the language learning diaries in Serbian. The reason for this is that students can express their thoughts much better in their mother tongue and also the fear of being corrected is reduced so the students are motivated to write the diaries (Allwright & Bailey, 1991: 191). Parts from diary entries used in this paper were translated into English by the authors. The length of the course was one semester, starting from October – February, 2017. This study included only the students who voluntarily wanted to participate in this study, although a greater number of them also attended the course without participating in the diary study. At the beginning of the course, the students were asked to keep a language learning diary which they would hand in to the teacher at the end of the semester. They were instructed to write about their process of learning English. They were informed that the information obtained from their diaries would only be used for the purposes of this study. They did not need to sign their names and the data from the diaries were coded as student diary entry #1, #2, etc.

Since the students were not very familiar with the procedure of writing a language learning diary, the author decided to design some guidelines which would facilitate the writing and later the analysis of the data collected from diary entries. These guidelines included questions about their previous experience in learning English, their previous teachers, the difficulties and obstacles in learning English, questions about their feelings, attitudes and motivation in learning English, as well as their opinions about learning Business English. The list of questions was given to students at the very beginning of the course in order for them to get a clearer picture of what the diary entries should include and to avoid unsystematic accounts of their experiences and attitudes. These questions were only to be used as guidelines and the students chose themselves the questions which they wanted to answer. In addition to these questions, students were encouraged to write about

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[2] Although interviews can help researchers understand learner's experiences, feelings, opinions etc., the data collected using this method is often taken out of context in the sense that the responses are limited only by those questions that the researchers wants to ask (Adams et al., 2005: 80).

whatever is not covered by these questions and which they thought to be significant for the process of language learning.

The data collected from students' diaries (diary entries) were then analyzed for discovering the themes which emerged as the most dominant and they will be discussed in greater detail in the following section. After the identification of the most dominant themes, content analysis (McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Huang, 2005) was performed for interpreting data, by counting mentions of each of the identified theme in the diary entries. A similar approach was adopted by Huang (2005) who explored students' perceptions about the difficulties and constraints and their responses to them. The purpose of this procedure was to present data in terms of frequency of mention[3]. Along with this procedure, parts of diary entries were identified as evidence for the selected themes and they are presented in this paper and discussed together with the quantitative data in the next section. Some of the identified themes were very easy to recognize (for example, the students' self-evaluation of knowledge of English and the language skills which they found as the most difficult. However, in order to identify other themes, it was necessary to perform a much detailed analysis, by taking into consideration the whole entry and then making conclusions based on students' perceptions. It should be kept in mind that the excerpts presented in the following section are taken out of the context of students' entries for the purpose of categorizing themes which arose from students' diaries, although the themes were mostly interrelated and sometimes one of the factors which affected language learning influenced another and so on.

4. RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In this section of the paper, the results obtained from students' language learning diary entries are presented according to the theme to which they belong.

4.1. Difficulties identified by students concerning their language skills

In terms of their language skills, the greatest number of students expressed concerns about their previous knowledge of grammar (51.3%) and their (in)ability to communicate (35%). The third most mentioned difficulty was inadequate or insufficient knowledge of English vocabulary necessary for communication. The data in Table 1 is represented in terms of frequency and percentage. The frequency of mentions in the students' language learning diaries is based on multiple answers obtained from the entries. The students usually explained their lack of knowledge in these areas due to: no knowledge gained in elementary and high schools, bad teacher practice, difficulties in mastering grammatical

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[3] The fact that the results in this study were analyzed using a statistical method gives rise to the question of whether a mixed-method research was actually used in this study. However, using statistics in describing qualitative data does not necessarily make the study a mixed-method one. As Davis points out (1995: 444) a misunderstanding among foreign language researchers has occured because they had interpreted the use of some qualitative techniques (e.g. retrospection) within an experimetnal design as a mixed-method study. Similar holds true for this study where the quantification of data does not make it a mixed-method study, but rather the use of data quantification is used as a methodologically appropriate option for categorizing qualitative data.

structures and anxiety experienced during conversations because of lack of sufficient vocabulary. The difficulties listed in Table 1 were usually related to one another in the diary entries, but as we already mentioned for technical purposes of representing the data, they were separated in the table.

Table 1 Linguistic difficulties

Lingustic difficulties	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Grammar	20	51.3
Communication	14	35.9
Vocabulary	10	25.6
Pronunciation	5	12.8
No language skills mentioned	9	23.1

The following examples illustrate the linguistic difficulties experienced by students:

Excerpt from the student diary #2:

... I have been learning English for more than 10 years, in elementary school, high school and now at the Business School. I cannot really brag about my knowledge... If I had to point to what the most difficult area in English is, I would say grammar. It is interesting to learn grammar through examples, but it is much harder than, for example, reading or writing...

Excerpt from the student diary #7:
... My English knowledge is not so good. Before I started studying at the Business School, I had always had problems with this language. I am doing my best to learn as much as I can. What presents the biggest problem for me is insufficient vocabulary, and also not managing so well in speaking and writing. Grammar is not so hard for me and I think I could master it. I have taken private classes earlier so that I can improve my knowledge, however, that hasn't helped much. The teacher I worked with taught me about the tenses and the grammatical rules...

These examples illustrate some of the language skills which students identified as the ones causing them the greatest difficulties in learning English. Most of the excerpts do not explain why these students have difficulties with certain areas. However, as already mentioned earlier, this is due to the connection of this theme to other themes, such as: teachers who had poor teaching methods or anxiety caused by learning English. What is certain is that for most students grammar and communication in English presents the greatest obstacle. The students' need and the willingness to improve their knowledge in terms of grammar, communicative skills and vocabulary is present in these excerpts. This indicates students' awareness of the problems they are having which usually implies a step forward to reducing or eliminating these obstacles.

4.2. Students' prior experience with teachers and their practices

Prior experience in learning a foreign language plays a major role in students' attitudes towards the foreign language in question, as well as their motivation to continue learning the language. As Sawir (2005: 570) explains in his paper on the effects of prior learning experience on language difficulties experienced by students, all language

learners are greatly influenced by what they already know and the ways in which they have learned to learn. Students in this study mentioned previous experience with their English teachers and their teaching practice as a factor which greatly contributed to their current knowledge of English and their attitudes for continuing to learn English (Table 2).

Table 2 Teaching practice of previous teachers

Previous teachers	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Poor teaching practice	6	15.4
Frequent change of teachers and teaching methods	17	43.6
Good teacher and teaching methods	4	10.3
Nothing mentioned	13	33.3

Most of them mentioned frequent change of teachers and/or their teaching methods (43.6%) as a factor which, in most cases, negatively affected their attitudes towards English and their English skills:

Excerpt from the student diary #3:
... English teachers changed all the time and that made it even worse to learn English. As soon as we would start doing something more seriously, a new teacher would come with a different teaching method and plan. This happened a couple of times in elementary school. By the time I got to high school, I had very little knowledge...

Some students indicated bad teaching practice of their previous teachers as the main reasons for their poor knowledge. This would often lead to very poor communication between the teacher and the students which resulted in very poor or no knowledge:

Excerpt from the student diary #27:
... In elementary school I had a teacher who did not establish a good communication and relationship with the students so classes were spent mostly in arguing and warning instead of learning. Rarely anybody in class paid attentnion and she was not interested to teach us anything. Most of the time it went down to learning by heart the tests in order to have positive grades, but the outcome was that we would forget everything and start all over again...

However, we discovered in students' language learning diaries quite a few entries which described good teaching methods of their teachers as a very important factor which influenced their motivation to learn English. The effect of good teaching methods on students' motivation to work harder, to enjoy learning English and to improve knowledge is illustrated by the following diary excerpt:

Excerpt from the student diary #32:
... the classes are very interesting so we are not bored at all, it's even a lot of fun. The only problem I have which makes me feel awkward is that besides knowing certain words I am having a hard time in forming a sentence due to lack of grammatical knowledge. However, owing to great dedication of our teacher, through practice and explanations, it

is becoming easier every class. Therefore, I hope to improve my knowledge by the end of this course...

It can be seen from these excerpts that students with better experience have better language skills and are eager to improve their knowledge, whereas those with bad experience have worse language skills and are not very happy to be learning English. Concerning their prior experience, students are very aware of the mistakes their previous teachers made and they were able to identify the bad practices of their teachers. It can be concluded from these exerpts that the low quality of their teachers' teaching methods affected their English language skills.

4.3. The significance of learning Business English and General English

Since this study was conducted among students who learn Business English, one of the aims was to find out whether the students found Business English to be more important for them than General English, or vice versa. Business English, as an area in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), has been developing very fast in the past decades due to the fact that English has become an international language in doing business (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998: 53). In short, Business English can be viewed as the use of English for the purpose of one's occupation, professional need or institutional procedure (Čepon et al. 2014: 529). The students in this study belong to the group of learners with no experience (Johnson, 1993, Frendo, 2005) and the course intended for them is a general business English course and what makes it different from a course in General English is the dominant business vocabulary.
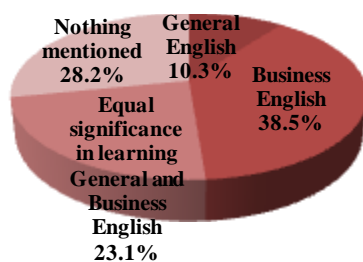

Fig. 1 Significance of learning Business English and General English

Figure 1 represents an illustration of students' mention of significance of Business and General English courses. As it can be seen from the pie chart, learning business English is seen by a larger number of students (38.5%) as much more significant than learning General English (10.3%). However, 23.1% believe that it is important to learn business English and General English equally. The reason why almost a third of them mentioned neither in their diaries is most probably due to the fact that the students are not really sure what the difference between these two is. This can be explained by the fact that most of them had not studied business English previously, although some students reported having learned business English in high school.

The following example illustrates the opinions a student who finds learning Business English to be more important:

Excerpt from the student diary #5:
… I would personally say that business English is more important than General English because I need it more… Business English is better and much more can be learned. It is more difficult in terms of communication, but I would still rather learn business English because I think that I will need it for my job…

However, this student believes that learning General English should be a priority:

Excerpt from the student diary #24:
… I believe that the dominance of General English is of crucial importance for our knowledge, whereas Business English is not very useful because once the general type is mastered, the difference only lies in the vocabulary for the type of job we are going to do…

An example of a student for whom both General and Business English are of equal importance says the following:

Excerpt from the student diary #29:
… Both General and Business English are important depending on the purpose: if you are on vacation, General English is necessary for communication, and if a job is in question, Business English is necessary… In my opinion, Business English is very difficult and I think that it is important to know it in order to have an opportunity in the future to find a good job…

Business English courses are supposed to be designed to enable students to communicate efficiently when doing business and to enable students to be involved in international trends of their professions (Blagojević, 2011: 837). Another point can be made from students' diaries about the emphasis they put on communication. Students who prefer learning General English mostly agreed that they need to be able to communicate in English first in order to learn Business English. The students seem to be unaware of the differences between courses in General and Business English because one of the aspects which make these two different is that General English is supposed to provide students with 'general communication skills', whereas Business English courses concentrate on 'professional communication skills' as well (Brieger, 1997: 15). Such an opinion can be related to their inability to differentiate between them since most of the students had not been acquainted with Business English during their previous education. Nevertheless, they are aware of the fact that they will most probably need to know English for the purpose of their future jobs.

4.4. Low self-evaluation results

Although evaluation as an external activity, that is, an activity performed by the teacher, was perceived as the only appropriate method for determining students' competences and self-evaluation as subjective and unreliable, it imposes a mutual responsibility for both the teacher and the student since they cannot observe things from

the same perspective (Oskarsson, 1989: 3). Self-evaluation involves students' perceptions about themselves and their accomplishments. Self-evaluation has proved to be very useful for both students and teachers of foreign languages because, as Blanche & Merino (1989: 313) explain, students need to know and let their teachers know what their abilities are, how much they have improved and what they can do with the acquired skills because they cannot efficiently learn a foreign language otherwise. Some oppose this view and believe that students with poor competences should not be allowed to self-evaluate because they do not have a reliable indicator with which to compare themselves (Lewkowicz & Moon, 1985: 51). Nevertheless, we believe that self-evaluation is a useful method for enabling students to think about what they know and define what they expect from the course in terms of the language skills that they would like to acquire or improve.

Table 3 Presence of low self-evaluation results

Low self-evaluation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	21	53.8
No	18	46.2
Total ($\sum$)	39	100.0

In this study, the students mainly evaluated their knowledge (both positively and negatively) without much elaboration. Table 3 is a representation of the frequency of mention of students' self-evaluation as low (53.8%) and those who did not mention low self-evaluations and those who self-evaluated themselves as average or high (46.2%). Some students self-evaluated their English knowledge in general, whereas others decided to grade themselves in terms of the language skills. In addition, some students made the evaluations in terms of grades, while others just described the level of their knowledge. This is the reason why the findings were grouped into two categories as it was impossible to make further categorizations due to mixed data (both numerical and descriptive). The reason for such various ways of describing their skills is due to the teacher's insufficient explanation of how the self-evaluation should be performed. Therefore, the results cannot be grouped or analyzed in any other manner but two categories. Some of the findings about self-evaluation from students' diaries include the following excerpts:

Excerpt from the student diary #1:
... I would evaluate my knowledge as advanced. My reading skills are good, writing should be improved but I cannot say I am bad at it...

Excerpt from the student diary #2:
... To be precise, I would evaluate my communicative skills in English 2.5, on a scale of 1 to 5...

Excerpt from the student diary #21:
... I am not very satisfied with my knowledge, I cannot handle studying English...

4.5. Anxiety experienced when learning English

A non-linguistic (psychological) factor which can greatly affect language learning is anxiety. Spielberger (1966: 363) defines anxiety as a subjective feeling of fear or tension followed by an increased alertness of the nervous system. This emotion often presents an

obstacle for students to learn a foreign language because it can prevent them from showing their knowledge or make their self-confidence worse so the results they achieve are not really a reflection of what they actually know and what they can perform in a foreign language. The problem of linguistic anxiety presents a great obstacle for students in reaching fluency in a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986: 126). The fear of making a mistake in class, not being able to perform well on a test, or the fear of being laughed at by peer students are some of the greatest concerns of language learners. Furthermore, the fear decreased the level of their accomplishments.

Figure 2 is an illustration of the frequency of students' mention of language anxiety experienced in language classes. Although in this study 56.4% is represented by 'no anxiety present' among students, it does not mean that students did not experience anxiety but that there was no mention of anxiety in their diary entries. This leaves us with a quite large percent of 43.6% of students who experienced anxiety.
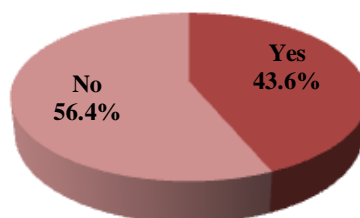

Fig. 2 Presence of language anxiety

Some examples from students' diaries concerning anxiety are the following:

Excerpt from the student diary #1:
… I would like to improve my pronunciation, as well as to be more relaxed in conversation with others because I still feel scared and insecure during a conversation…

Excerpt from the student diary #2:
... Sometimes I do not say anything at all because I am scared or because I feel ashamed...

Excerpt from the student diary #14:
... I realized that I can speak English well when I talked several times to people whose mother tongue is English without any problems, without the fear that they would not understand me or correct me and I was very proud of myself at those moments...

4.6. The significance of using communicative activities in Business English classes

The communicative approach in teaching foreign languages started being used in 1970s and, as Oller and Obrecht (1968: 174) concluded, communicative activity should take the central position from the very beginning in all phases of language learning. The communicative approach does not refer to a specific, unique teaching method, but as Richards (2005: 2-5) states, it represents a set of principles about the goals of teaching, the ways in which students learn a foreign language and activities which facilitate the learning process and the roles of teacher and students in class. The activities which are

communicative (e.g. role play, pair/group work, projects, presentations) are supposed to make learning much easier because students can participate in these activities in class and take responsibility for their own learning.

As it can be seen in Figure 3, students' mention of the importance of using communicative activities in class is illustrated in terms of being important, not being important and no answer present in the diary entry. A very high percentage (82.1%) of students who find communicative activities important indicates their recognition of the fact how much these activities improve their language skills.
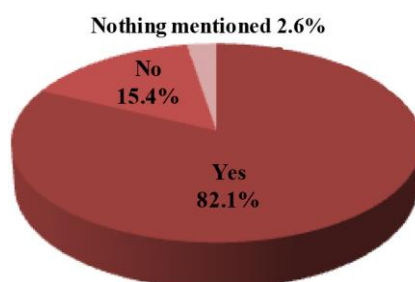

Fig. 3 Significance of communicative activities

In most of the students' excerpts group/pair work is mentioned as the communicative activity which facilitates learning. This is illustrated by the following:

Excerpt from the student diary #3:
… I like to work in groups… Today, we practiced a dialog and listening in groups. The dialog was very interesting and easy to understand. As far as listening is concerned, I could not understand almost anything. We were asked to write down some business vocabulary (phrases) and I managed to write down a few. I think that we should work more often in groups because we are motivated more and we are all included in the process. Such activities mean a lot to me and they should be used as much as possible because students could learn much more….

Excerpt from the student diary #12:
... I am motivated best when the teacher lets us practice in groups so we can exchange information with our colleagues... from my previous experience, I had to learn new words by heart and this is best done through communicating with others who can speak English well and they can correct you when you make a mistake or when you are not pronouncing something in the right way...

4.7. Integrative and instrumental motivation for learning English

When learning a foreign language, motivation presents one of the most important factors which influence foreign language learning in the sense of learning accomplishments (Gardner, 1985; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994, 1998; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Clement et al., 1994). In order for language learners to be successful in communicating, it is not sufficient to be intelligent and possess speaking skills. A psychological and social factor which prevents even those with outstanding abilities to be successful in accomplishing their long-term goals is motivation. In contrast, a high level of motivation can substitute

someone's low level language abilities (Dornyei, 1998: 117). Gardner and Lambert's (1959) distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation has greatly influenced the theory of motivation in learning foreign languages. Integrativity refers to students' attitudes towards the target language community, the possibility of being integrated into that community or to be interested for interaction with the target community. On the other hand, instrumentality implies practical results of learning a foreign language, such as getting a job or being promoted.

In Table 4, multiple responses by students were counted to find out about students' motivation for learning English. The results indicates that integrative motivation (28.2%), as an influential factor in foreign language learning, was mentioned more often than instrumental (20.5%). Surprisingly, a large number of students' diary entries did not mention either type of motivation (59.0%).

Table 4 Motivation (multiple responses)

Students' motivation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Integrative	11	28.2
Instrumental	8	20.5
Nothing mentioned	23	59.0

Some excerpts take from students' diaries which include mentioning of these two types of motivation are the following:

Excerpt from the student diary #21:
... I would really like to learn English because it would help me a lot for my future education and my future job...

Excerpt from the student diary #25:
... In my opinion, learning a foreign language is something beautiful, it creates an image of a man who is worth more. It makes a good image both visually and in written form (a diploma or so) for getting a job or many other opportunities which increase as your English skills improve...

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The themes which were identified in students' diary entries as the most dominant have been mentioned quite often in the existing diary studies. Nevertheless, our aim was to identify what the specific needs of the students which participated in the study are, which problems they are facing and to facilitate their learning process based on the insights from their language learning diaries. In terms of the linguistic difficulties they are experiencing, most of them expressed the need to improve both their grammatical and conversational skills. Students' diaries reflected their preferences as to how they would like to be taught and this is very useful for the teacher who can then design their courses and plan the language classes to fit their students' needs. This is especially important for these students, who belong to a group of students who are learning English for Specific

Purposes, as needs analysis is the starting point for creating an ESP course. ESP practitioners are interested in the gap that exists between students' current competencies and their target competencies which does not make them any different from other language teachers. However, ESP practitioners are interested in the target needs and not the general needs of their students, that is, they are interested mainly in what their students will need in the future (Belcher, 2009: 4).

The diary entries that were analyzed in this study show evidence for the much discussed field in foreign language learning that other non-linguistic (social and psychological) factors also have a great influence on the process of learning a language. Students' motivation, anxiety and attitudes have an impact on students' willingness to learn a foreign language. They can greatly affect student's self-confidence and slow down their improvement in learning a foreign language. Students' prior experiences also have an influence on students' future attitudes towards foreign language learning. They can create a positive attitude for those who were satisfied with their previous teachers and their teaching methods. However, they can be discouraged from learning a foreign language if their experiences have not been positive.

Diary studies can provide very significant insights into students' experience in the language classroom. Language learning diaries provide a lot of information about individual differences among the students in terms of their skills, experiences, opinions and the students' comments can provide insights which are not limited as in the case of using other research forms, such as questionnaires. As outlined in the themes which emerged from students' diaries, introspection is important in providing the learners with opportunities to express their thoughts and critical thinking.

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