

Teaching languages for specific purposes and competency building on the example of a dual study programme

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the article is to evolve the dual programme of studies conducted by the University of Czestochowa – German for business trading. For this purpose, the course design and its objective has been presented, as well as the concept of learning a specialised language, in this case *Wirtschaftsdeutsch*, which is based on a Task-Based Learning (TBL). The authors of the article have drawn attention to the essence of well-structured objectives of tasks based on the action competence with the areas of social-communicative competence, self-competence, methodological competence and professional competence. An important part of the studies are internships in the SSC. As a summary of almost 1,5 years of studies, a survey has been conducted among students, the results of which are described in detail in the article.

KEYWORDS:

- teaching languages for specific purposes
- dual study programme
- Task-Based Learning
- internships

1. Introduction

Economic development, technological and organisational transformation of enterprises, digitisation of products and services are factors that set new tasks for the higher education system in Poland, including language education. Therefore, it is only justified to analyse the requirements of the developing labour market awaiting university graduates, and to undertake work on adjusting curricula and teaching profiles to the expectations of the developing economy. The article aims at evaluating the dual bachelor's degree programme: German for Business Trading, implemented at Jan Długosz University in Czestochowa, prepared as part of a competition announced by the National Centre for Research and Development. The authors described the legitimacy of entering the competition, as well as the concept of language for specific purposes teaching, in this case *Wirtschaftsdeutsch*, using the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach. The results of a survey conducted among students of this field of study, summarising three semesters of study, are also presented.

2. Conditions for the establishment of the German for Business Trading programme

In Poland, after the political transformation, a rapid increase in the number of university students and graduates was observed. According to the data of Statistics Poland (GUS), in 1991 there were 56,000 graduates, in 1999 – over 210,000, and in 2011 their number reached almost half a million¹. However, negative trends could be noticed quickly: on the one hand, rising unemployment within this group (2.6% in 2000, 10.5% in 2011), and on the other, taking up jobs by university graduates in positions below their qualification level, as well as economic emigration (also often forcing those who left the country to seek employment not in line with their education abroad). The soundness of state budget expenditure on a system spawning unemployed graduates with a master's degree was questioned more and more often (cf. Kryńska, 2002). There was understandable frustration among graduates who took up studies hoping to obtain qualifications that would provide better opportunities in the labour

¹ bdl.stat.gov.pl/BDL/dane/podgrup/wymiary [access: 26.01.2022].



market. The need to change the system of higher education in order to adjust it better to the requirements of the labour market turned into an urgent social challenge. It was also soon noticed that it was necessary to adjust the course offer to the requirements of the developing economy and the expectations of future employers, as well as to depart from the rigid model of academic education to be able to respond faster and more effectively to the emerging needs.

The European Union's Vocational Education and Training (VET) policy is also part of efforts towards a better adaptation of the education system to the needs of the social and economic environment. This policy is a key element of the lifelong learning system which enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences needed in particular occupations and the labour market. VET is an essential element of an effective employment strategy and social policy that can increase the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises as well as foster research and innovation.

Promoting practice-oriented "on the job" training in all its forms (with particular emphasis on professional preparation and by stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship) involving social partners, enterprises, professional organisations as well as vocational education and training organisers was included among the goals agreed between EU institutions, social partners and European VET providers for 2015–2020².

To counteract the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the European Commission presented an employment and social policy agenda with an emphasis on skills acquisition and vocational training. The proposed initiatives for the implementation of the Recovery Plan for Europe (NGEU) are presented, inter alia, in the Commission Communication on the Skills Agenda for Europe. It includes 12 European Union measures aimed at supporting partnerships for skills, up-skilling and re-skilling as well as supporting lifelong learning. The fifth measure, relating to the cooperation of higher education institutions with economic entities under the Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes and to upgrading the qualifications of researchers, stresses that higher education is the primary tool in equipping students with the skills needed in their future professional career. The rapidly evolving labour market and social changes require better adaptation of educational programmes to the universities' economic environment, allowing graduates to obtain the education and skills required in the labour market (European Commission, 2020).

² ec.europa.eu/education/policies/eu-policy-in-the-field-of-vocational-education-and-training-vet_pl [access: 15.02.2021]

The future of university graduates in the labour market, and especially their struggles with finding adequate employment, is undoubtedly a complex problem depending on many factors, widely discussed and analysed by experts, primarily in the field of social policy (cf., inter alia, Buchner-Jeziorska, 2008, 2011; Jeruszka, 2011; Kabaj and Jeruszka, 2009; Kiersztyn, 2011; Kryńska, 2010). The studies emphasise the link between the economy and higher education. Economic progress and growth largely depend on the quality of education. Graduates should be the driving force behind innovative implementations and the introduction of new solutions and technologies to particular sectors of the economy. Researchers also analyse the expectations of employers who believe that the greatest shortcomings in the preparation of university graduates concern practical skills and work experience (Kryńska, 2010). Therefore, the importance of internships and work placements is emphasised, aimed not only at gaining practical skills but also at preparing students for company employment conditions, time management, and adapting to the rigour and discipline of work. Curricula should be adequately modernised in order to combine theory and work practice. As Urszula Jeruszka (2011, p. 5) points out: "The system of cooperation between universities and enterprises will enable the popularisation of dual vocational education. Combining school education with work-based education, theory and practice, learning with action – the essence of the dual education system – enables the acquisition of professional knowledge, including technical, economic and organisational know-how, practical and specialist skills, and affects the durability and transfer of acquired knowledge and skills".

The concept of dual studies was introduced to the Polish legal system in 2018 by an amendment to the Law on Higher Education and Science, known as the Constitution for Science, which defines this approach in fairly general terms by specifying the requirement of employers' participation in the provision of studies as well as the need to conclude a written agreement between the university and the employer in order to organise studies³.

In 2017, the National Centre for Research and Development announced a competition (POWR.03.01.00-IP.08-00-DUO/18) the beneficiaries of which were universities. Its objective was to co-finance projects that would develop a dual-degree study programme and implement one full cycle of classes. A total of 84 applications were submitted, of which 69 were positively assessed and qualified for funding. The authors of the article developed and submitted a project of the dual-degree programme of studies "German for Business Trading", combining learning

³ Article 62 of the act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668).



two foreign languages – German and English – with training in economics and accounting. The application was highly rated and ranked 16th on the list, even though the competition conditions favoured large universities. This was the only project that pertained to language education – other applications involved primarily polytechnic, economic, pedagogical and IT faculties.

The dual-degree programme of studies German for Business Trading was developed with the intention of including Jan Dlugosz University in Czestochowa – a university recruiting students mainly from Czestochowa and the region – in the system that provides higher education in response to local labour market needs. Work on the programme was preceded by the diagnosis of employers' expectations and study visits with representatives of ZF Group European Shared Services Centre based in Czestochowa, managing the financial and accounting processes of European plants of ZF Group. The objective of the meetings was to jointly develop programme assumptions and principles for internships offered to dual programme students. A framework agreement was signed regulating cooperation in the implementation of studies.

The programme, which departs from the rigid model of philological studies, has a modular structure. It consists of a module of general language skills and mainly LSP training (business language, the language of commercial and official correspondence, finance and accounting), a module of economic and accounting preparation, training of interpersonal competences and teamwork skills, as well as a module of internships (three months in each year of study) and apprenticeships (two months) (cf. Niemiec-Knaś and Skwara, 2019). The course of professional internships is governed by a tripartite agreement concluded between the university, the employer and the student, which strictly defines the conditions of internships as well as their programme and educational goals. The internships are to contribute to the development of English and German communication skills, the skill of recognising basic accounting instruments and teamwork skills. Students learn about the working conditions at ZF Financial Service Centre, acquire professional competences and, first and foremost, learn the practical application of theoretical knowledge gained during their studies and have the opportunity to verify practical language skills in a professional environment. The internships prepare the participants to function in a team, make them aware of the value of working in various positions and offer an opportunity to meet the demands of professional duties. The programme is supplemented with specialist courses designed to prepare students for internships with this particular employer and to use computer programmes, as well as to take the WiDaF exam (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache in der Wirtschaft*), testing the level of proficiency in German in business, often used by companies in the recruitment process.

The new field of study is a proposal for a specific target group. Before its launch, a promotional campaign was carried out that included organising information meetings with secondary school pupils from Częstochowa and the region, as well as posting announcements on the website of the university and the faculty. The social characteristics of the candidates who, for various but mostly economic reasons, cannot study at higher education centres outside Częstochowa, were considered. The programme gives them the opportunity to obtain targeted qualifications (i.e. those needed in a particular field and expected by local employers) and also makes it easier to find a job in other regions of Poland as the sector of global business services (shared services) has been rapidly developing in recent years.

A graduate of German for Business Trading also has the opportunity to supplement and develop competences in second-cycle studies in the field of management, accounting or language courses. According to the first graduates of dual-degree studies of the Silesian University of Technology, the best professional path after completing the first cycle of dual-degree studies is to find employment (naturally with an employer who offered the internships) and complete higher education in the extramural/part-time system. In their opinion, the offer of dual second-cycle studies should be addressed to graduates of non-dual first-cycle studies⁴.

3. The concept of LSP teaching – introductory remarks

The teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially LSP (e.g. business German – *Wirtschaftsdeutsch*) in the dual studies formula requires the development of a solid conceptual framework. The fact that students can (of course, in a random way) verify their linguistic skills during internships coping with language issues in a real-life professional environment, motivates researchers to formulate a relevant definition of language teaching and learning. When developing such a conceptual framework, one should accommodate factors determining the profile of specialist education, namely, as Elżbieta Gajewska and Magdalena Sowa (2014, p. 84) stated:

⁴ 4th Conference “Dual Education – EDUAL, Dual studies as a response to the needs of industry 4.0”, Gliwice, 2 March 2020. One of the conference panels was devoted to speeches by graduates of dual degree programmes on various aspects of studying in this mode.



- the field to which a given specialist discourse relates;
- the environment in which language is used (specialist or general);
- the level of professionalisation (professional qualifications) of training entities;
- the method of endorsing acquired skills.

In the case of students of German for Business Trading, professionalisation is out of the question as most of them are secondary school graduates, without linguistic or accounting skills. Already in the first year of study, during on-the-job internships, students could see that the knowledge of a foreign language in the professional environment, specifically in the field of shared services (accounting activities), is very important.

The content of teaching and learning is derived from the field of *Wirtschaftsdeutsch*. This type of classes, apart from natural science and technical content, most often concerns LSP education (Buhlmann and Fearn, 2018, p. 133)⁵. Especially in the 1990s, in the period of accelerated globalisation, *Wirtschaftsdeutsch* gained importance. Like technical German, it is not fully defined and should be treated as an umbrella term for various specialist languages – "Sammelbegriff für diverse Fachsprachen" (Buhlmann and Fearn, 2018, p. 133) in the original version – depending on the type of users and communication goals.

Undoubtedly, an important parameter that should influence the selection of the content of a language course is the level of professional reality (Gajewska and Sowa, 2014, p. 85). In the sector of Shared Services Centers (SSC), the business language *Wirtschaftsdeutsch* is used, but in various non-professional situations, the ability to use transversal competences is required. Therefore, combining a foreign language (FL) with language for specific purposes (LSP) seems to be a very important principle when building the concept of specialist language training. In LSP teaching, language competences are developed along with professional ones and are verified in action. Elżbieta Gajewska and Magdalena Sowa (2014, p. 139) believe that "competences cannot be separated from action because it is exactly in the course of action that competences and knowledge are formed and are subject to constant modification and evolution". Sambor Grucza clearly emphasises that language for specific purposes cannot be separated from general language: "Specialist idiolects are not, therefore, fully-fledged idiolects in the linguistic sense. From this point of view, each specialist idiolect is usually

⁵ "Neben naturwissenschaftlich und technisch ausgerichtetem DaF-Unterricht ist im Bereich des Berufs- und Fachsprachenunterrichts die Nachfrage nach sogenanntem *Wirtschaftsdeutsch* wohl am größten" (Buhlmann and Fearn, 2018, p. 133).

related in some way to the basic idiolect. Specialist idiolects connect with the basic idiolect on the level of its constituents, by means of, first of all, phonemics, graphics, morphemics, grammar and (non-specialist) lexis” (Grucza, 2009, p. 23).

What is important for the concept of language education is the way of teaching and learning specialist vocabulary that does not exist in general language. The complexity of this situation is noted by Joanna Kic-Drgas (2015, p. 19) in her considerations on difficulties in learning specialist terminology. Firstly, there are linguistic problems related to an insufficient command of a foreign language and the native language. Secondly, there is lack of or only partial knowledge of a given field. Thirdly, there are methodological difficulties, chiefly the lack of knowledge of learning strategies and techniques, as well as the improper transfer of specialist content (Kic-Drgas, 2015, p. 19). Referring to an article by Magdalena Sowa (2009), the author of the considerations emphasises the importance of appropriate teaching materials. In LSP teaching, as compared to FL teaching, the selection of appropriate materials is particularly difficult due to their insufficient quantity and quality.

When building the concept of teaching and learning specialist terminology, the view of Joanna Kic-Drgas (2015, p. 20) seems to be of key importance: ”It is therefore very important to be able to independently develop a strategy for working on specialist vocabulary, to search for appropriate sources and exercises”.

When building the concepts of LSP teaching and learning, one should use methodological solutions that allow for mastering the skills of using specialist language in a professional environment. In the dual education model, including specialist language teaching and learning, a task-based approach seems perfect. Task-oriented activities are perceived in modern foreign language teaching as a far-reaching methodological concept. This fact is emphasised by Jörg Roche (2006, p. 209) who confirms his stance by mentioning several methods and methodological techniques in which tasking plays a significant role.

Tasks have been present in foreign language teaching theory and practice since the era of reform in pedagogy. Its numerous representatives, such as Vietor (Budziak, 2013, p. 250) and Gouin (1892), emphasised primarily the authentic use of language, its practical application and the development of independence. The idea of a task is firmly embedded in the concept of project activity, students' needs-oriented classes and the station teaching technique. What is especially worth paying attention to is the project method developed by John Dewey (2014), rooted in American pragmatism and emphasising planned action, independence and the real context of action.

Task orientation can be found in creative writing. It is a multi-tasking process that, due to its complexity, often becomes a project-oriented activity. In language



for specific purposes teaching, the task-based approach is also used in case-based learning. We are dealing here with "teaching and learning by simulating real situations and processes in which a learner has to cope with the described problem situation, assuming the role of a decision-maker" (Breszka-Jędrzejewska, 2019, p. 72). A task, especially in LSP teaching, should be constructed in such a way as to reflect a problem related to a specific professional situation.

Thanks to a cognitive constructivist perspective on the learning process, a task gains significant importance unlike in the textbook-oriented perspective and exercise-based model of learning. It is important to acquire skills and knowledge with real-world applications, and to use learning techniques and strategies. Learners should work on issues they encounter in the real world, e.g. professional environment. Learners' ability to diagnose the learning process also plays a significant role. A task cannot be performed occasionally, it must be woven into a sequence of events, an example of which is the scenario method used in teaching general and specialist language.

All teachers and lecturers working remotely with pupils or students have realised the importance of task development skills. Exercises and tests in online (and classroom) teaching yield poor results in the case of foreign language learning. Better results are obtained from solving specific problems – these, however, must be "encased" in the framework of a task, as the effectiveness of LSP teaching and learning depends on the quality of this task.

4. Competency tasks

Knowledge about the features of tasks and their construction elements, which has been known since the 1980s, comes from the Anglo-Saxon tradition (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Willis, 1996). Task-Based Learning (TBL) is a continuation of the idea of pragmatism, assuming active participation of the student in solving problems rooted in reality (in foreign language classes this translates into visiting an office, a shop or a doctor's office). Activities proposed under the TBL label – developing the skills of searching for information, comparing and assigning content to appropriate categories, conducting debates (e.g. for and against, discussions) – show what didactic potential results from this type of approach (cf. Janowska, 2011, p. 80). For the purposes of LSP teaching, it is worth recalling Rod Ellis' (2012) conceptualisation of a task: "A task must have a specific goal. Learners will strive to achieve it using the target language seen as a tool, not an end in itself. A good task allows the student to focus on the meaning – on what one would like to say, while linguistic correctness comes second" (quoted from Janowska, 2019, p. 156).



Competency tasks were described in detail by the authors of this text in the article *Les tâches compétentiellles et le modèle de formation de l'enseignant de la langue de spécialité* (Niemiec-Knaś and Skwara 2020, pp. 198–199).

Professional work requires immediate reaction, communicating and problem-solving. Tasks must be structured in such a way that they can prepare a learner to act quickly, creatively and independently in the real world. Researchers dealing with the issue of task structure highlight (in various languages) its strong relation with the plan, the implementation of instructions and of the process:

A task is a work plan; A task involves real-world processes of language use.

(Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003, p. 7ff.);

Les tâches requièrent l'usage de la langue et s'organisent à partir d'une situation problème.⁶

(Dolz et al., 2002, p. 12);

Ein ‚Task‘ ist ein Arbeitsauftrag an einzelne Lernende oder Gruppen, der zu geistigen Tätigkeiten führt, die sich auf fremdsprachliche Informationen gründen und Äußerungen/Handlungen in/mit der Zielsprache auslösen.⁷

(Piepho and Serena 1992, p. 39ff.);

W dydaktyce językowej trudno również o konsensus: dla jednych pod wieloma względami zadanie utożsamiane jest z poleceniem, gdyż inicjuje ono działanie, dla drugich zaś termin ten oznacza proces realizacji samego działania.⁸

(Janowska, 2011, p. 172).

To be able to construct an action plan, one needs to set a goal. Goals in tasks define competencies. According to Klieme (2003, p. 72)⁹, competency in foreign

⁶ "Tasks require the use of language and are organised around the problem situation".

⁷ "A task is an instruction for individual students and groups that leads to intellectual activities based on information provided in a foreign language. These activities result in an action in the target language".

⁸ "In language didactics, it is also difficult to find a consensus: for some, in many respects, a task is equated with a command because it initiates an activity, while for others this term means the process of carrying out an action itself".

⁹ "A disposition that enables effective solving of various types of communication problems through the ability to perform linguistic and intercultural activities".



language teaching is: "Eine Disposition, die Personen befähigt, bestimmte Arten von kommunikativen Problemen durch interkulturelle, fremdsprachige Handlungsfähigkeit erfolgreich zu lösen".

Difficulties in LSP teaching may be caused by factors such as the expert or professional context, understanding of specialist texts that are not dealt with on a daily basis and understanding of cultural differences. The last factor is often more important in professional work than in everyday life and determines the correctness of communication, which may in turn be important when establishing and continuing business contacts.

The ability to formulate course learning objectives plays an important role in LSP and FL teaching. The taxonomy proposed by Robert Marzano and John Kendall can be useful in constructing objectives¹⁰ – it has a certain advantage over the cognitive taxonomy developed by Benjamin Bloom (1956) as it also integrates affective and psychomotor objectives, which are the foundation of the acquisition of competences, especially the ability to work independently and to apply methods and techniques learnt. The new taxonomy is more useful when developing tasks for LSP teaching. There are six levels to it:

- Level 1. *Abrufen* (retrieval): learners refer to their knowledge and apply it in simple tasks/exercises, they are able to assess simple information and answers and recognise strategies and processes;
- Level 2. *Verstehen* (comprehension): learners are able to distinguish between important and not so important information, they are able to present information (e.g. comparison of financial results of two companies) in a graphic form;
- Level 3. *Analyze* (analysis): learners are able to organise new information according to specific criteria, are able to perceive the similarities and differences in information, assess the importance of information and draw general conclusions accordingly, and create, for example, a set of rules;
- Level 4. *Wissensnutzung* (knowledge utilisation): learners use their knowledge in new situations and are able to evaluate its application. They become more independent, however, this requires the construction of complex tasks related to specific situations (e.g. a conversation between a boss and an employee on the extension of a leave). They use knowledge to formulate and verify hypotheses, to analyse new facts and new knowledge;

¹⁰ The New Taxonomy, bit.ly/3JrtCR5 [access: 14.02.2022].

- Level 5. *Metakognition* (metacognition): learners are able to monitor their own learning process, are able to set goals concerning acquiring knowledge and prepare their own action plan. They are able to observe their progress and determine the correctness of the information obtained;
- Level 6. *Kritisches Selbst* (self-system thinking): learners are able to defend their position, apply appropriate argumentation, assess their own competencies and understand cause and effect relationships in a given situation.

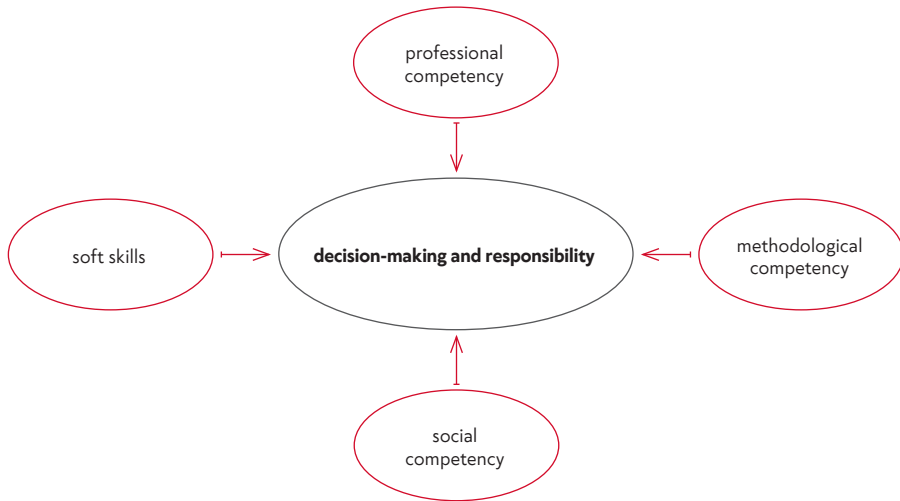
Already at Level 3, the need to construct an objective that requires a task-based approach is clearly visible. In order to achieve task goals according to the Marzano and Kendall taxonomy, the characteristics of competency tasks according to Feindt and Meyer (2010, p. 30) and their features can be recalled:

- cognitive activation of the pupil/student through a well-defined formulation of a task adequate to the requirements and situation;
- linking new material with the student's level of knowledge and skills;
- the so-called intelligent exercise (open forms of communication-oriented exercises, conscious and unconscious exercises e.g. through language games, small steps exercises, in pairs, positive reinforcement from the teacher, Video Scribe visualisation techniques, *Flemodidaktik*);
- applying the acquired skills in relevant real-world situations;
- reflection on progress, development of metatalk *Metakognition* (Bär, 2016, pp. 14–15).

Gabriele Lehmann and Wolfgang Nieke's (2000) competency model may be useful in building language for specific purposes classes.



FIGURE 1. COMPETENCY MODEL



Source: Developed based on Lehmann and Nieke (2000, p. 2).

In this model, the key is action competency (psychomotor domain), which enable to produce specific outcomes during task execution, e.g. a report or a description of the production process, which appear during the performance of a task. To produce an outcome, one needs the first component of action competency, i.e. specialist knowledge (cognitive domain), and in the case of LSP, also linguistic knowledge. By gaining this competency, the learner can: understand the content, recognise relationships, find similarities and differences, apply new knowledge, verify and assess the situation. Further important aspects are methodical and social competency and self-assessment skills.

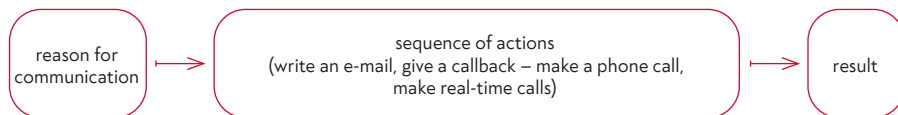
Methodical competency (affective domain) helps to organise knowledge by means of specific activities (assigning, sharing, finding information, deciding, shaping, planning, visualising).

Tasks are solved in pairs or in a group, which is why social competencies (affective domain and psychomotor domain) are so important. Learners should be able to listen, ask questions, discuss, cooperate, present, take responsibility etc. They should focus on the development of soft skills, extremely important in today's professional world. "Soft skills training in the LSP classroom offers

a unique opportunity for developing soft skills in a professional environment, with emphasis on individual needs"¹¹ (Kic-Drgas, 2018, 34).

The last competency listed in the model is self-assessment (affective domain). Without this skill, learners have problems with diagnosing progress, finding learning meaningful, exercising endurance or identifying with the content of classes.

When planning classroom tasks, it is worth considering three stages of their implementation. The first involves imitative activities (language games, repetition exercises) supervised by the teacher. The next stage is the transfer zone, i.e. putting information together, adequately responding to new information, solving a task problem according to the formula provided by the teacher (e.g. a telephone conversation, planning a business trip, description of a diagram, a product, a production process, presentation of a company). In the third stage, learners solve a new problem without a pattern, in a new situational context (e.g. comparing the profits of two companies, negotiating a new contract, discussing the organisation of trade fairs, planning, interviewing, preparing an order, an offer, making complaints according to specific criteria). These three stages illustrate the progression of learners' competency gained through tasks. The third stage is also a test of acquired skills, which can take the form of a scenario, e.g. according to the following scheme:



Specific competency profiles are implemented in this system, e.g. the learner is able to:

- set the date of an appointment by e-mail or by phone;
- understand job offers;
- write a job application and resume;
- introduce her or his competencies, present his or her professional experience (cf. Eilert-Ebke and Sass, 2014, p. 18).

¹¹ "Trening kompetencji miękkich w procesie uczenia się języków specjalistycznych jest wyjątkową okazją do rozwijania tych kompetencji w środowisku zawodowym, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem potrzeb indywidualnych" (translation into Polish: M. Niemiec-Knaś).



Comprehensiveness of LSP classes based on competency models and a task as a methodological measure is manifested in experience, instruction and construction (cf. Löttscher, Joller-Graf and Krammer, 2015). There is a strong emphasis on the relationship with reality. In the dual study model, it is visible in the didactic concept assuming contact with the workplace and acquiring experience by students during work placements. Transparency of learning outcomes consists primarily in the ability to function in the workplace, performing SSC (Shared Services Centre) tasks that require the correct use of a language for specific purposes: German and English. The possibility of verifying the communication (action) competency due to the task-oriented nature of teaching LSP at the university (including online tasks during internships), provides students with the opportunity to constantly reflect on the learning process, the development of language skills and the increase in specialist knowledge. This mode of work also contributes to the development of soft skills (especially as part of the internships, but also thanks to tasks performed during university-based classes), the importance of which is often emphasised in the literature concerning LSP: "Soft skills training should primarily introduce authenticity and be closely connected to a professional environment"¹² (Kic-Drgas, 2018, p. 35).

5. Student survey

In order to find out about the advantages of the studies conducted as an element of the project activity, the team of teachers (authors of the article) conducted a survey among students. The study involved 12 students out of 15 implementing the curriculum – 4 men and 8 women aged 22–24. The study objective was to obtain general knowledge on how project participants, after almost a year and a half of project implementation, evaluate the theoretical and practical components of dual-degree studies (which consisted of a six-week on-site internship in a company and a seven-week online internship). It should be noted, however, that the online mode of the internships was forced by the new situation of the pandemic crisis, as the company did not undertake the implementation of on-site training considering the circumstances.

Team members prepared – for the seven weeks of the online internship – a compendium of tasks in the field of LSP. The tasks concerned mainly a simulated own business in Germany and account keeping with the use of free

¹² "Trening kompetencji miękkich powinien być autentyczny i powiązany ze środowiskiem zawodowym" (translation into Polish: M. Niemiec-Knas).



software: EasyFirma and Rechnungsverwalter. Tasks were posted and assigned in the Trello – an easily accessible and user-friendly application – in order to facilitate online internship management. The content of the tasks was mainly in German and partly in English.

Most of the survey questions concerned internships, those completed in the workplace and online ones – carried out by the members of the project team. Some of them related to the curriculum and its effectiveness in the context of internships. The survey consisted of 14 questions – see the results below. Ten questions related to the internships carried out directly in the Centre. Questions 1, 5 and 6 related to the evaluation of the organisation of the internships in the company (conditions of their completion and the company's tutoring). Questions 2, 3, 4 and 8 concerned the evaluation of the use of linguistic competencies while performing tasks during the internship. Answering questions 7 and 9, students described the increase in knowledge in managing accounting documents and using software and applications for accounting activities. Questions 10 and 12 related to the evaluation of online internships. The survey focused primarily on assessing the quality of the internships carried out directly in the company – the main assumption of project activities.

FIGURE 1. RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE ORGANISATION OF INTERNSHIPS IN THE COMPANY

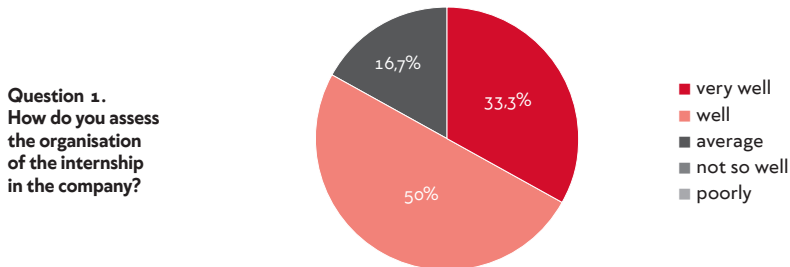


FIGURE 2. CONTACT OF RESPONDENTS WITH A FOREIGN LANGUAGE DURING INTERNSHIPS

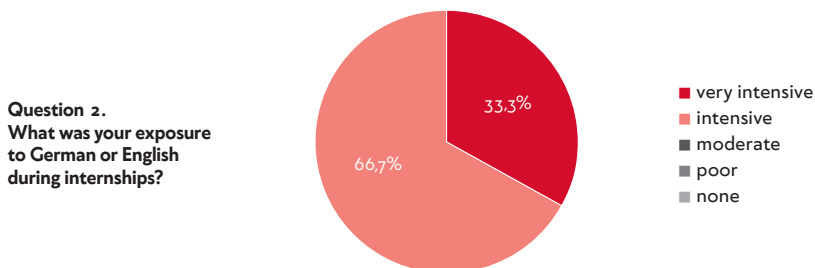


FIGURE 3. INDICATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS UNDERSTOOD FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTIONS DURING INTERNSHIPS

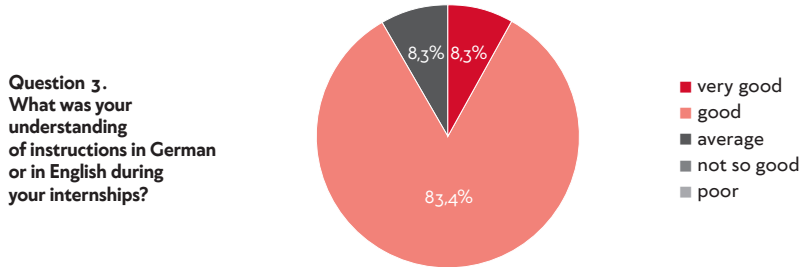


FIGURE 4. LEVEL OF APPLICATION OF UNIVERSITY LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE DURING THE INTERNSHIPS

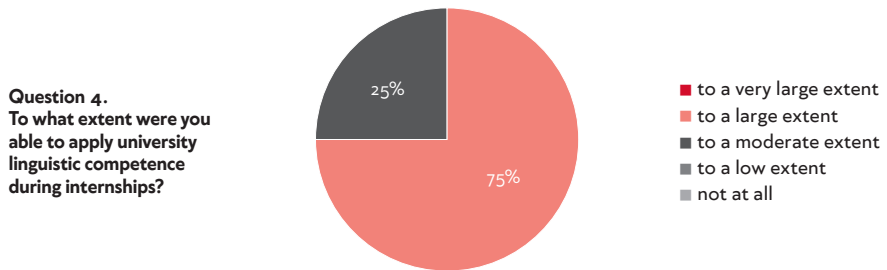


FIGURE 5. ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE OF INTERNSHIPS IN THE COMPANY

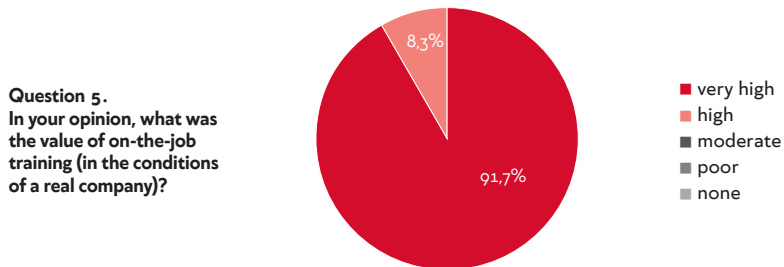


FIGURE 6. RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE ATMOSPHERE DURING INTERNSHIPS

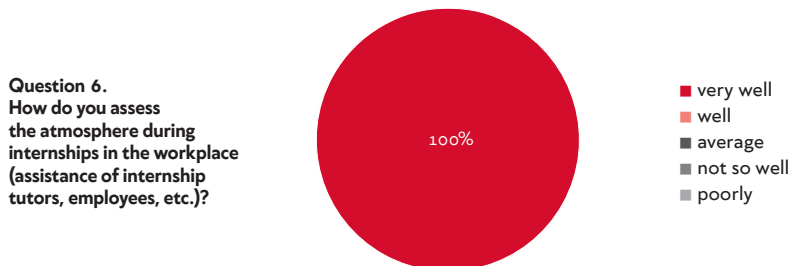


FIGURE 7. RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF MS OFFICE SUITE AND SPECIALIST APPLICATIONS, ACQUIRED DURING INTERNSHIPS

Question 7.
How do you assess your knowledge of the application of MS Office suite tools and accounting software during internships?

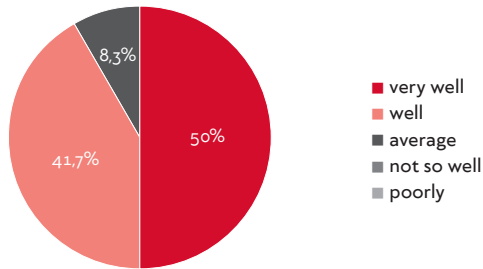


FIGURE 8. LEVEL OF APPLICATION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FOR PROFESSIONAL TASKS DURING INTERNSHIPS

Question 8.
To what extent were you able to apply your knowledge of a foreign language (German/English) in business correspondence, in drafting company documentation during internships?

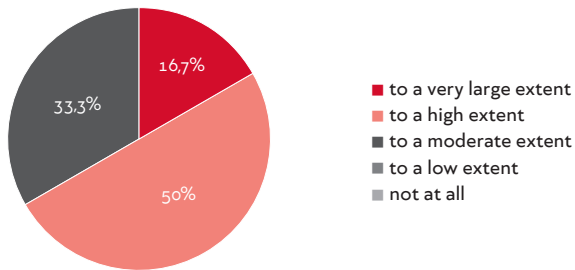


FIGURE 9. LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD OF ACCOUNTING ACQUIRED DURING INTERNSHIPS

Question 9.
To what extent did you become familiar with elements of the accounting system in the context of book-keeping activities (e.g. accounting and formal verification of financial documents, registration of economic operations, analysis of bookkeeping accounts)?

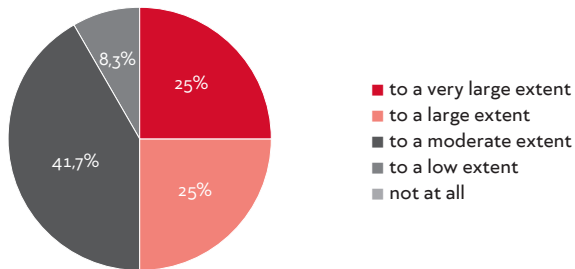


FIGURE 10. LEVEL OF THE USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION ACQUIRED USING SPECIALIST COMPUTER APPLICATIONS DURING ONLINE INTERNSHIPS

Question 10.
In your opinion, how useful is information acquired via computer applications (EasyFirma, Rechnungsverwalter) during online internships?

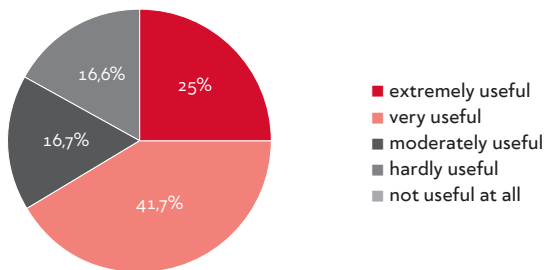


FIGURE 11. SCOPE OF REAL WORK CONDITIONS AND WORK PRINCIPLES LEARNT DURING INTERNSHIPS

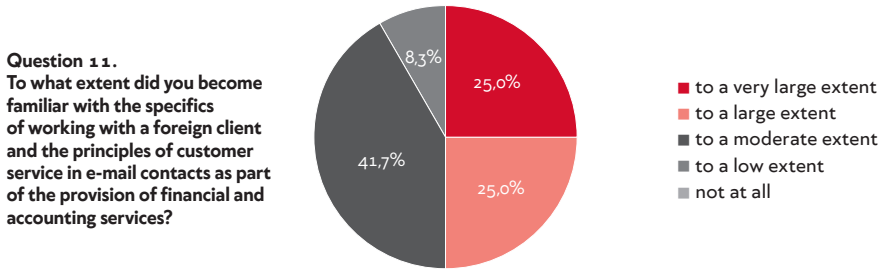
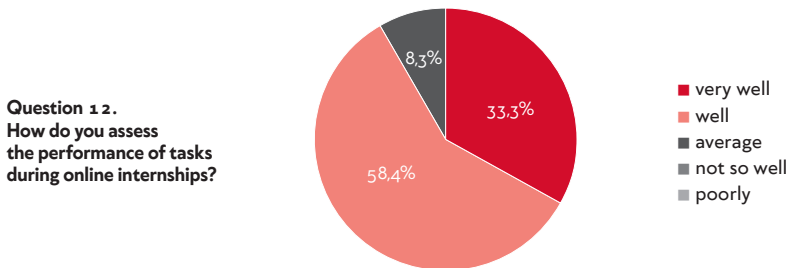


FIGURE 12. RESPONDENTS' ASSESSMENT OF TASKS PERFORMED DURING ONLINE INTERNSHIPS



Questions 13 and 14 were open-ended and concerned what students lacked during internships and what should be the focus of language education at the university. Referring to the internships carried out in the workplace, the respondents indicated that they expected more intensive contact with the German language.

Most of the respondents noticed that thanks to working directly with MS Office suite software as well as SAP and OneSb systems, they became proficient in using these tools. This opinion was confirmed by the answer provided by one of the survey participants: "As far as the internships in the company are concerned, I had no knowledge of how to use the SAP system. It was a nuisance that made it difficult to get into the specifics of work in the Master Data department. That is why I performed tasks that did not require knowledge of this system and were equally interesting, but I regretted that I did not get to work with all the employees of the department. However, I learnt how to use the OneSb system and upgraded my MS Office suite skills. [Next year] I would definitely like to take part in SAP classes but I don't know whether it's possible. It would definitely be very useful".

The students positively assessed the fact that owing to the online internships they expanded their linguistic competence: "Considering the online internships,

I can say that all the tasks significantly broadened my knowledge of the German language which I used a lot. My only regret is that I was not able to work with EasyFirma and Rechnungsverwalter applications, as neither [of them] ran on my computer for more than three days, so I was doing tasks in Excel or Word”.

To the question: “What should be the focus of language education at the university?” the students replied: “It is very good”; “There should be more emphasis on conversations and listening comprehension exercises”; “First of all, conversations in foreign languages”; “The curriculum is complete and meets my expectations. I learn the specifics of working in an office, specialist vocabulary, communication skills and listening comprehension skills – I do not see any gaps in terms of language. I would just focus more on learning economics and accounting in practice”.

The preliminary results of the survey confirm that the students are satisfied with both the internships and the curriculum of dual-degree studies German for Business Trading, provided both at the university and online. The online internships organised by the members of the project team also served their purpose. Comments on the curriculum and the method of its implementation were passed on to the entire academic staff of the dual-degree studies.

6. Summary

The idea of dual-degree studies, known in Germany and other Western European countries for several dozen years, is not that well-established in Poland – it has been more extensively practiced at the university level for only a few years. After a year and a half of implementation of the German for Business Trading programme, incorporating LSP classes into the curriculum of dual-degree studies seems to be a good idea. It is a particularly interesting offer for students who, for various reasons, do not want to take up philological studies but wish to learn a foreign language, especially a specialist one, in the context of its specific use in a professional environment. The implementation of the teaching concept based on building competency tasks, although not easy and time-consuming, can yield and already is yielding positive results. Competency models can substantially facilitate defining course objectives and contribute to creating satisfactory tasks that provide the professional context. Tasks teach students responsibility for their own learning process and shape their soft skills, so important in today's professional world. On-the-job training has already brought students tangible benefits, among which the following should be mentioned:

- learning about the company's procedures and policies in finance and accounting;



- getting acquainted with selected elements of work in the financial and accounting system applied both in the company and during online internships – EasyFirma and Rechnungsverwalter specialist applications;
- learning the practical use of MS Office tools (Excel sheets in particular) and SAP;
- becoming familiar with elements of the accounting system in the context of book-keeping activities (e.g. accounting and formal verification of financial documents, registration of economic operations, analysis of bookkeeping accounts, drawing reports);
- learning about the specifics of working with a foreign client, the principles of customer service in e-mail contacts as part of the provision of financial and accounting services;
- practical use of a foreign language (German, English) in business correspondence, in drafting company documentation, etc.

There are additional issues related to dual studies that need to be considered. In preparing the implementation of the task-based approach, lecturers must learn to shape the teaching and learning space both in the real and online world, which requires a lot of work. They should also have high-level teaching skills. Moreover, it is important to cooperate with experts and take care of individual development in the scope of LSP classroom methods and techniques.

The dual-degree study programme German for Business Trading was developed as the university's response primarily to the needs of the local labour market but also to the developing national economy. Positioning of the university in the context of this type of studies is undoubtedly an advantage as the proximity and close cooperation with the social and economic environment makes academic staff more open to changes, enabling them to adapt more easily both to the needs of the economy and to the expectations of prospective students. The project of dual-degree language studies, thanks to the development of relevant teaching tools and methods, is a specific testing ground and a contribution to further work on the LSP teaching programme.

It should be highlighted that the cooperation of the providers of dual-degree studies with various university units – the project office, accounting department, Dean's Office, institute managers – constitutes a very important factor in the success of the programme. Such projects, although they may seem to be mere experiments, can benefit both the students and the university itself. For this to happen, it is essential to draw on the expertise and experience of persons wishing to be involved in such initiatives and, first and foremost, support their efforts.

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