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■ DIGITAL MEDIA AND SLANG IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: HUNGARIAN ESL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' VIEWS

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Sleng je oduvek bio sastavni deo upotrebe jezika, što se ne sme zanemariti kada se ispituje svakodnevna razgovorna upotreba jezika. Pojavom digitalnih medija, uključujući društvene mreže, značajno su se promenili i trendovi u upotrebi slenga, što je važno istražiti ukoliko želimo da steknemo dublji uvid u ulogu slenga u ovom medijumu i lične stavove koji se sa njim vezuju. Cilj ovog istraživanja je dvostruk: prvo, da se stekne uvid u to kako mađarski učenici i nastavnici engleskog kao drugog jezika (ESL) koriste i percipiraju sleng; i drugo, da se proceni u kojoj meri je sleng prisutan u ESL učionicama. Istraživačka pitanja su se fokusirala na to kako su učenici i nastavnici ESL-a koristili svoje L1 i L2 u digitalnim (društvenim) medijima (1), koju su ulogu digitalni mediji i sleng imali u njihovim ESL učionicama (2), i koji su bili stavovi nastavnika i učenika o uključivanju slenga u ESL učionice u smislu praktičnosti i korisnosti (3). Rezultati su otkrili da se upotreba digitalnih i društvenih medija smatra važnom kao i sastavnim delom svakodnevne rutine učesnika, što rasprostranjeno i među nastavnicima i među učenicima. Nalazi su takođe pokazali ogromnu potrebu učesnika za poznavanjem i upotrebom slenga u svom svakodnevnom životu. Uprkos ovakvim stavovima, većina ispitanika je istakla i činjenicu da sleng nije prisutan u učionicama mađarskog ESL-a, te da ne dobijaju dovoljnu pomoć i podršku u školama kada su u pitanju neformalniji načini upotrebe jezika.

Ključne reči: sleng, digitalni mediji, ESL učionica, mađarski kontekst.

1. INTRODUCTION

Slang and the classroom have long been separated from one another due to slang's ephemeral and informal nature (Coleman 2014; Eble 1996). While national curricula in

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Hungary emphasize the importance of engaging in both formal and informal language learning, informal language learning and the implementation of digital media are rarely elaborated on, like in the case of the Hungarian NCC (2020). Due to the same issues, previous studies have attempted to experiment with incorporating informal language learning into formal language learning within the classroom in order to see if this novelty could bring about any changes in the language learning process and environment (Berg 2011; Krstic 2016; Robinson and Kakela 2006), since several actively used curricula rely on traditional tools. The results showed heightened motivation on the student's side and ensured less monotony in the syllabus, with more life-like language use in the classroom (Krstic 2016; Rets 2016).

Keeping the above in mind, the aim of the present study is to uncover how native Hungarian ESL high school teachers and their students interpret their social media activity and consumption, as well as the role of Hungarian and English slang, both in their everyday lives and in the ESL classrooms. An online Google Forms questionnaire was created in the summer of 2023, focusing on the participants' habits and views on the use of digital media and slang both in real life settings and the ESL classroom. To gain a deeper understanding of the experience of participants, they were further inquired on their language and slang preferences, L1 and L2 use, and how they regarded the role of slang in the ESL classroom. An additional section tested their slang knowledge and familiarity for the purpose of uncovering how well slang is integrated into their language use. In light of the above, we set out to do research on the topic, focusing on the following research questions: 1. "How do ESL students and teachers use their L1 and L2 in the digital media?"; 2. "What role do slang and digital media play in the ESL classrooms?"; 3. "What are teachers' and students' views on the usefulness of teaching slang in the classrooms?"

In the following section, we discuss some of the main findings and concerns voiced in previous studies about slang, the use of digital platforms as aids in language learning, and the Hungarian National Core Curriculum. Following that, section 3 introduces the methodology used to carry out the study, while section 4 entails an in-depth description of the findings, which are then interpreted in light of previous findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. DEFINING SLANG AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Slang has long been the topic of debate among linguists and teachers alike. Due to slang's ephemerality and context-sensitivity, it has been difficult to define it comprehensively (Coleman 2014; Eble 1996; Mattiello 2014). There have been collaborative attempts at defining this linguistic phenomenon either by focusing on slang's functions, users (most frequently youth), or the environments slang appears in (Coleman 2014; Eble 1996, 2009). In the broader sense, slang can be defined as a "linguistic expression of social affiliation" (Eble 2009: 82), that is an "extremely context-dependent and informal way of self-expression," whose "complexity can be attributed to the variety of social, environmental, and cultural factors that keep it in constant flux" (Kostic 2023: 14). The negative connotations inherent in slang's informal nature and prior association with lower social strata have contributed to its lack of incorporation

into curricula, which is often translated to the idea that the use of slang is discouraged altogether (Krstic 2016; Rets 2016). As of late, researchers have tended to foreground the advantages of slang use instead of only focalizing the disadvantages (Coleman 2014; Eble 2009; Krstic 2016; Mazer/Hunt 2008). For one, Eble's (1996, 2009) research demonstrated that slang comprises a vital part of language, despite the beliefs accompanying it, is used to signify belonging and solidarity, and is used primarily for the social function it serves.

Though many teachers are wary of the use of slang in the classroom, recent studies have documented instances of younger teachers who considered the implementation of slang into language classes more beneficial than detrimental (Mazer/Hunt 2008; Bardsley 2014; Krstic 2016; Kostic 2023), as long as those were appropriate to the students, bearing in mind their age and general social background. Mazer and Hunt (2008: 45) differentiated between positive slang ("to signal identification with the listener") and negative slang ("verbal obscenities—that listeners may perceive as offensive") in order to test out how their use affected students and their motivation. As Mazer and Hunt (2008: 46) argue, "the use of language [slang] and communicator style are central to developing a positive classroom climate and influencing student motivation and affective learning," which can be connected to Krstic's (2016) idea about bringing in real-life language use into the classroom, including slang (Richmond 2002). Mazer and Hunt's (2008: 55) division of positive (e.g., "What's up?") and negative slang (e.g., "How the hell are ya?") needs to be kept in mind when teachers are attempting to introduce slang into the classroom setting, as their findings also indicated a difference in student reactions and motivation, where negative slang use resulted in the students being less enthusiastic.

Defining social media might also seem like a difficult task: although the word itself has been around for a couple of decades, it has been given many different definitions. One of such definitions is the one given by Russo *et al.* (2008: 22), who stated that social media incorporates "those that facilitate online communication, networking, and/or collaboration." Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) argued that it can be interpreted as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." One of the most recent definitions was given by Carr and Hayes (2015: 48), who interpreted it as an "Internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content." While there is still no common agreement among scholars regarding the definition of social media, all of these approaches highlight the manifold social and communicative aspects and possibilities this digital platform provides for its users.

2.2. DIGITALIZATION: THE USEFULNESS OF DIGITAL MEDIA

The rapidly changing nature of the digital world not only affects our personal lives, but also our language-learning practices. To understand how the newer generations work and what teaching methods are more advantageous and resourceful, we need to take generational differences into consideration. As Prensky explains, nowadays "teachers have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students. This

doesn't mean changing the meaning of what is important, or of good thinking skills. But it does mean going faster, [...] with more random access" (2001: 4), which includes the use of tools that were previously unimaginable within a classroom setting. Online interactive platforms have been considered to promote the expansion of linguistic repertoires, as long as their users are in frequent contact with digital devices. The likelihood of developing digital literacies (the skills related to digital reading, writing, editing, and critical thinking, also referred to as *new literacies* in Berg 2011) is also high, which arguably enhances in-class performance and promotes creativity, motivation, and open-mindedness (Berg 2011). In her study, Berg (2011) found that students make use of all means and devices at their disposal, very often collaborating and engaging in new practices such as collective text editing, copying, and juxtaposing various forms of data into one cohesive whole, practices that have emerged with the digital era and comprise new literacies.

Prior to the widespread use of smartphones and computers, the main sources of information were the newspaper, radio, and television. Thanks to globalization and advances in technology, the birth of social media and the internet have opened up new possibilities for people, who can now come into contact with one another much more easily. At the same time, many more languages have also become available to consumers of the internet. Television shows (mainly series and cartoons) served similar entertainment functions as do TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram videos nowadays. Previous studies have found that students often spend a lot of their free time visiting social media sites and watching TV series in English instead of dubbed versions (Mihaljević Djigunović/Bagarić 2007; Hasund/Drange 2014; Chapelle 2017), especially Croatian (Mihaljević Djigunović/Bagarić 2007) and Norwegian EFL learners (Hasund/Drange 2014: 143). This latter reference shows results of students having "not only [...] high competence in English (including spelling), but also a high metalinguistic awareness and the ability to exploit the use of English for creative, expressive and humorous purposes." For the same reasons, language learning has also been promoted online, most recently on gaming platforms due to games' storylines that are rich in context (Godwin-Jones 2017). However, as Godwin-Jones (2017: 361) argues, it is still difficult to make use of informal language learning experiences and combine those with classroom learning. Online interactive platforms allow for collaborative language learning in a way that is effortless and intriguing for younger audiences who grew up on digital media and devices (Godwin-Jones 2017). According to Godwin-Jones (2017: 361), these collaborative gaming activities correspond to "current language pedagogy emphasizing shared knowledge construction through task-oriented interactions in a real-world setting," which makes a much more realistic and goal-oriented outcome visible to students and can act as a motivating force.

Lately, more and more streaming services (e.g., Netflix, Disney+, HBO) provide their users with the opportunity to choose between a variety of languages both in the case of subtitles as well as the language of the shows (i.e., dubbing) (Bergfelder 2005; Sánchez-Mompeán 2021). Countries like Luxembourg and Malta have preferred shows in their original languages, and while other countries like Germany, France, Austria, and Spain used to prefer dubbing, they are slowly starting to choose subtitled versions of shows over dubbed ones (Media Consulting Group 2007; Riggio 2010). Another important

region, Serbia, and the former Yugoslavia especially, is and was also more supportive of subtitling over dubbing:

Because of its multicultural character, federal system and less strict ideological system, there was a relatively diverse and liberal media system in former Yugoslavia with many regional and local media. TV channels broadcast a large number of Western programmes in their original language with subtitles.

(EUMAP 2005: 36)

As opposed to the former Yugoslavian (and current Serbian) and Croatian settings, Hungarian television rarely streams undubbed films and entertainment shows, which lessens the chance for children and teenagers in Hungary to come into contact with languages other than Hungarian (Nikolov/Csapó 2002; Mihaljević Djigunović/Bagarić 2007).

The widespread use of digital devices brings about constant connectivity and, simultaneously, digital platforms are now able to fill in this void and provide their users with a much larger amount of data and linguistic material than ever before (Mihaljević Djigunović and Bagarić 2007), which can be concurrently useful and overwhelming. Prior research stressed the importance of exposure to the first foreign language outside the classroom (Mihaljević Djigunović *et al.* 2008; Chappelle 2017; Godwin-Jones 2017), while also highlighting how the physical space is steadily turning into a more hybrid one, where digital tools are implemented in the language learning process (Massey 2005; De Groot 2017; Godwin-Jones 2017;) and are also the reason behind the expansion of new literacies.

2.3. THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM

While national curricula are updated regularly, including the Hungarian NCC (2020), where the acquisition of digital literacies is considered a vital outcome, not much emphasis is put on the process of how teachers should reach this goal. The Hungarian NCC (2020) emphasizes the importance of learning foreign languages nearly as well as the Hungarian native language, and states that a fluent and native-like language skills are expected at the end of the process (Petneki 2002; Mikusová 2020). However, language classes are still overpacked and lack digitalization (Mikusová 2020; Hollóy 2021), which often results in both students and teachers becoming overburdened with work and responsibilities (Mikusová 2020). The general approach to language teaching in Hungarian schools is still a traditional one with not much digitalization involved, which Mikusová (2020) argues might be the reason why the performance of Hungarian students is the lowest in Europe (see also Eurobarometer 2012; Csizér/Öveges 2020).

The Hungarian NCC (2020) further emphasizes how important it is that students are able to reach self-regulation by the end of their studies. Self-regulation in this sense refers to students' motivation and ability to self-regulate their time efficiently, which also includes actively learning and practicing their languages during their studies (Mikusová 2020; Csizér/Öveges 2020), while also working on upholding the language-learning process informally outside school hours (Mikusová 2020; Hollóy 2021). Interestingly,

the Hungarian NCC also touches on the subject of informal language use (claiming it to be a crucial aspect of language learning and use) but only mentions it in connection with extracurricular activities outside the school and classroom, which according to Hollóy (2021) would be very useful when incorporated into classroom activities. In addition, the NCC also recognizes that teachers play a crucial role in motivating students (Lesznyák 2000; Mikusová 2020; Hollóy 2021); however, if teachers fail to acknowledge the significance of informal learning, it could unintentionally discourage students from actively engaging in these activities.

Recent studies have also stressed there is a need for more authenticity in the classroom (Robinson/Kakela 2006; Mazer/Hunt 2008; Berg 2011; Krstic 2016), as current curricula rely on more traditional tools and techniques when it comes to teaching in general, and language teaching in particular. As a result, some researchers have attempted to test new methods that involve digital media, applications, and devices (Berg 2011; Rets 2016) along with more life-like language use in the classroom (often incorporating slang), and this has turned out to be fruitful (Krstic 2016; Mazer/Hunt 2008; Rets 2016). According to their findings (Mazer/Hunt 2008; Krstic 2016), the students partaking in the studies were not only more focused during classes, but also more motivated and interested in the material as opposed to previous class sessions where the lack of creativity in tasks resulted in monotony and loss of students' inspiration and willingness to participate.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. AIMS AND PROCEDURES

To gain a better insight into how native Hungarian ESL students and their language teachers view their social media use and the role of slang both in their everyday lives as well as in the ESL classrooms, an online questionnaire was constructed in the summer of 2023. A total of 45 participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire, out of which 14 were ESL teachers teaching at more than 3 schools in Pest County (14% male, 86% female) and the other 31 were students (39% male, 61% female). All of the participants were either teaching or studying English in Hungarian high schools at the time of the data collection. The participants selection happened within the county of Pest, Hungary, with all participants being native speakers of Hungarian. All teachers taught and all students learnt English as their second language in a school setting (with some of the students also receiving private tutoring in English). To begin with, the students (aged 16-17) all attended the same high school and knew one another as they were also classmates (year 10). The teachers were contacted prior to data collection and asked for permission and help in distributing the online questionnaire among one of their taught groups, as well as some of their colleagues, who also taught English at their school or other schools in the county. Of the 45 participants, 31 were female (19 students and 12 teachers) and 14 male (12 students and 2 teachers). Concerning their language learning history and experiences, the students reported on having previous experience with learning a third language (next to their second language being English), which was German. Their language learning experiences varied with English and German, as the students had been actively studying English for an average of 6-8 years, while German for an average of 2-3 years only. The students on average were on a B2 level in English, while there is

no precise information about their proficiency in their third language, German. On the other hand, the 14 teachers, of which 7 individuals taught another school subject as well (which was not another language subject), some reported on speaking another (third) language, but this was not as frequent as it was with the 31 students. On average, the teachers had work experience that ranged from 4 years up to 28 years, which meant that the majority of the teachers (11) were above the age of 35 and had been teaching for longer than 18-20 years, while only 3 teachers were below the age of 35.

The questionnaire was circulated in an online form to the participants, from the end of June to the beginning of July 2023, through Google Forms the platform. The online questionnaire contained 42 questions focusing on the use of digital media (specifically social media), and slang both in real life settings and within ESL classrooms. To get a more detailed picture of the different aspects of this issue, the questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first section explored the necessary educational, linguistic, and social background of the participants, and how they used different social media platforms, while the second section focused on their L1 and L2 use, their preferences regarding the two languages (online and in real life) and how they regarded the role of slang in the ESL classrooms particularly. The third section was designed to assess the participants' familiarity and knowledge of some recently circulating Hungarian and English slang expressions (collected from social media sites, mainly Facebook, blogs, and TikTok), with ten items each from English and Hungarian. They were then asked to indicate whether they knew the given expressions or not. The ten Hungarian slang expressions were *ezt adom* (*nagyon adom*) 'enthusiastically agreeing with something', *gyász* 'awful', *pacek* 'good, nice', *aszal* 'to laugh at someone', *zsa* 'let's go', *kajak* 'really, truly', *ez nagyon nagy* 'amazing', *nyomod* 'you're doing great', *bátya* 'a friend one refers to as 'brother', *stabil* 'good'. The English slang expressions were *ghosting* 'suddenly avoiding all communication with someone online', *lowkey* 'used to signal understatement of something', *cringe* 'embarrassing, awkward', *side eye* 'disapproving of someone or something by looking to the side without moving one's face', *spill the tea* 'share the gossip', *sus* 'suspicious', *crush* 'infatuation, admiration', *shook* 'shocked', *glow up* 'a person's physical transformation that is considered an improvement', *salty* 'irritated, angry'. The questionnaire contained Likert-type and multiple-choice questions as well as short-answer questions to assess the responses both qualitatively and quantitatively for a more in-depth analysis. The questionnaire's three sections elaborated on in the previous paragraph were constructed in light of the following three research questions:

- (1) *How do ESL students and teachers use their L1 and L2 in the digital media?*
- (2) *What role do slang and digital media play in the ESL classrooms?*
- (3) *What are teachers' and students' views on the usefulness of teaching slang in the classrooms?*

3.2. HYPOTHESES

With the above questions in mind, the following hypotheses were formulated before the questionnaire was administered to the participants.

(1) How do ESL students and teachers use their L1 and L2 in the digital media?

Based on the findings of previous studies on high school students' linguistic and digital habits (Mihaljević Djigunović/Bagarić 2007; Hasund/Drange 2014; Chapelle 2017) we hypothesized that Hungarian students would use both languages online to some extent, but for different purposes. Furthermore, we assumed that they would all communicate with other native Hungarians, therefore, this (communicative) purpose would be the most important when using their native language. However, as English is widely used as a lingua franca, we also expected students and teachers to report on the usefulness of their second language: stating that they watched films with English subtitles or played English games online. Here, not only would students encounter the language in games available in English, but they would also benefit from it where there were multiple international players. Therefore, in this case, they might encounter real-life language use as well as the scripts of pre-written games, which would allow for more variety and life-like encounters.

(2) What role do slang and digital media play in the ESL classrooms?

As explained earlier, in the Hungarian education system's output requirements (the version of the national core curriculum currently in use) (NCC 2020), the teaching of slang expressions is not included, because students are only encouraged to achieve native like pronunciation, as well as showing a deep understanding of the "native culture." This suggests that students are expected to use standard English and Received Pronunciation, and avoid other varieties of English, including slang expressions. Thus, we hypothesized that teachers would not place great emphasis on teaching slang to their students within the classroom. We also expected teachers to report on the lack of knowledge that they might have considering the slang expressions themselves.

(3) What are teachers' and students' views on the usefulness of teaching slang in the classrooms?

Although it was hypothesized that students and teachers would report on the lack of such materials which focus on teaching slang) in ESL classrooms, we also expected them to express the usefulness of slang. The inclusion of slang might be considered a novel but motivating way to teach new language elements which are useful in the students' everyday lives, as there are different purposes of using it. Knowing how to use the slang of a foreign language can help a lot in situations where the communicative aim is to blend in, make new friends, and become part of a community, whether that takes place online or offline in the physical world. The knowledge and ability to keep up to date with slang terms and expressions is in a sense similar to having certain pragmatic competence specific to a culture or group of people. Concerning the teachers, we hypothesized that they might put more emphasis on the disadvantages of teaching slang, as they might report on the difficulty of incorporating it into the material and the ephemeral nature of the slang terms.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

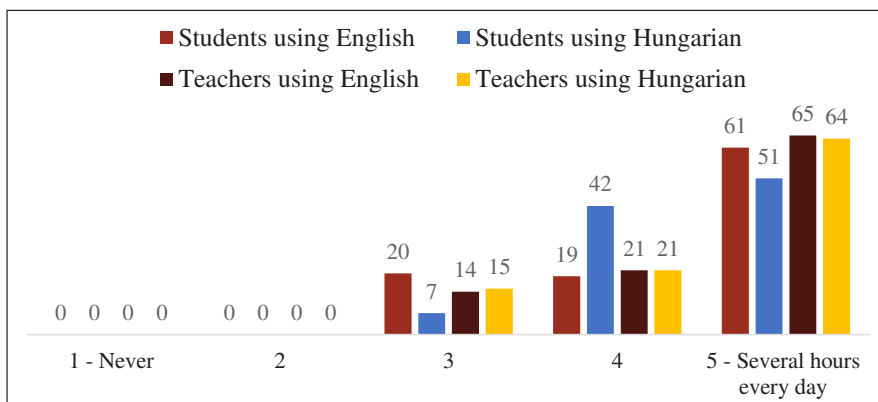
4.1. DIGITAL MEDIA HABITS

The results show the expected outcome formulated in the respective hypothesis: both teachers and students use the internet and digital media as an integral part of their daily lives. The results we discuss in the present section demonstrate the general tendencies of the two groups (teachers and students) separately in order to see if there are any particular and noteworthy differences.

To begin with, the participants reported on using the internet several hours every day (60% of students and 79% of teachers), very often (30% of students and 7% of teachers) or regularly (10% of students and 14% of teachers). On a five-point scale, assessing the frequency of internet usage among the participants, teachers claimed to use the internet with an average of 4.64, while students 4.42. Therefore, they reported on being a part of a digital world where both of their languages were present, although in different proportions. The purpose of internet use was very different regarding the two languages: in the case of English, most of the respondents stated that they used it for watching films (91%), listening to music (82%), seeking information (63%), or communication purposes and games (49%). The same tendencies were true for the two individual groups with only minor differences in percentages, therefore, these two areas have been expressed encompassing all participants, instead of dividing them into two. In contrast, Hungarian was used for fewer purposes: most participants claimed to use it for communication purposes only (98%), seeking information being a second most important purpose (76%), and only some of the participants mentioned games or films (9%).

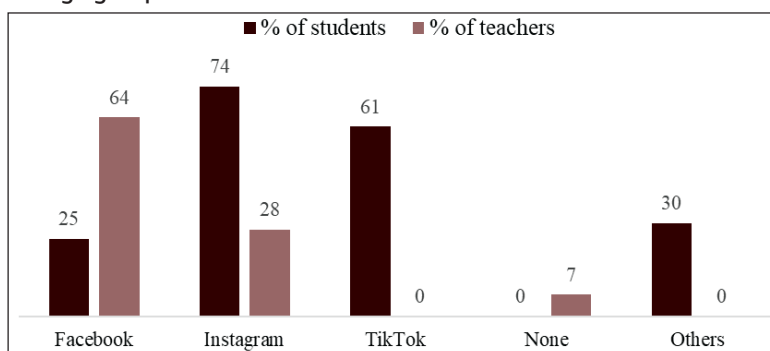
Connected to the question assessing language use on the internet Graph 1), the majority of the respondents reported on using English in the digital media every day (61% of students and 65% of teachers), very often (19% of students and 21% of teachers), and often (20% of students and 14% of teachers). Compared to the question focusing on Hungarian language use in digital spaces (Graph 1), we can clearly see a tendency of the participants strongly needing their second language, as most content on the internet is available only in English, making Hungarian less used in digital spaces. The respondents indicated that they did not use Hungarian as often as they did English, although all of them communicated with their friends online using their native language. Fewer people reported on using their L1 every day (51% of students and 64% of teachers), often (42% of students and 21% of teachers), and on rare occasions (7% of students and 15% of teachers).

The above results clearly show the usefulness of English in a real-life and digital setting as well, where most people encounter the language, even if they do not learn it in an ESL school setting. The percentages show that in most cases, the demand for English knowledge and use can be just as high, if not higher, than the need for their native language use, knowledge, and competence. The need for their L2 use is especially high in the case of Hungarian speakers, where the participants' native language is not widely used internationally, therefore, they must rely heavily on their English knowledge if they wish to enter and interact within the digital world, which is, according to the participants, inevitable. The inevitability is especially true in the case of the young students, who often spend a large amount of their free time playing online games, where they have to interact and communicate with other players, who are most often, not native Hungarians, and the most common language among them is English.



Graph 1. The frequency of participants using English and Hungarian on digital platforms (expressed in percentages)

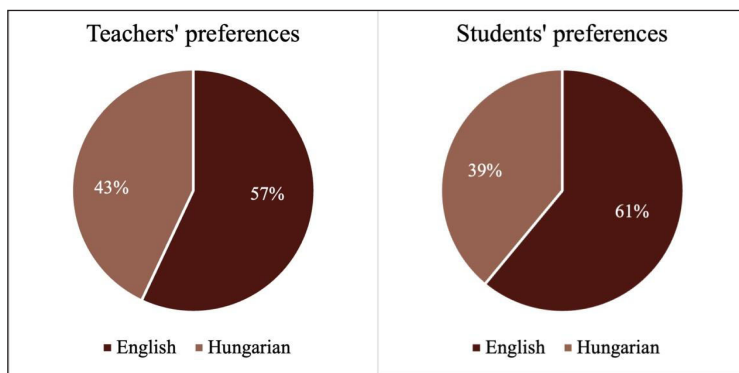
When asked which social media platform they used most regularly, teachers and students gave very different answers. It is apparent that the most widely used platform is Instagram (38%), followed by Facebook (22%) and Messenger, and TikTok (11%). However, when the answers were examined by separating the two target groups from each other, it was clear that there was a large gap between students and teachers. Out of the 14 teachers, 9 individuals (64%) said that they prefer Facebook to all the other social media platforms, 4 teachers also use Instagram (28%) as well, and 1 reported that they do not use any of these platforms. On the other hand, the majority of students (74%) mentioned Instagram as their preferred platform, followed by TikTok (61%), Discord and WhatsApp, and with Facebook only being sporadically mentioned (below 36%) (see Graph 2 for further details). The participants were given the option to choose “other”, with the opportunity to elaborate further, should they want to add other frequently used platforms to the above-mentioned ones. Some of these (not overwhelmingly popular) platforms mentioned were WhatsApp, Discord and Reddit. The average means of the two groups in the case of Instagram were 2.29 for teachers and 3.55 for students, while the average means in the case of TikTok were 1.86 for the teachers and 3.19 for the students. Therefore, the results suggest two major findings connected to social media use of the two different age groups.



Graph 2. The most frequently used social media platforms by students and teachers (expressed in percentages)

To begin with, the fact that students are more open to using different types of social media, and secondly, that the older generation is largely separated from them, by using the platform that is the least preferred by the students. Both the reluctance of trying out new, more modern platforms and the fact that they use digital media differently might be explained by the age gap between the two groups, as these groups are mostly homogeneous and they seldom interact with each other online, in their free time.

When asked which language (between Hungarian and English) participants prefer to come across and use on the internet (Graph 3 shows an average of the two groups) the answer was quite surprising, as 62% of students and 55% of teachers reported that they explicitly preferred English content. This was surprising, as the question did not focus on the ratio of English and Hungarian content they used on the internet, but the preference of using the English or Hungarian language. This result might be related to the fact that both students and teachers experience the quantitative difference between the content that is available on the internet in Hungarian and in English, and they prefer using their L2, with which they can simply find more (and sometimes more relevant and up to date) information on the internet.



Graph 3. Language preference of content on the internet: teachers and students

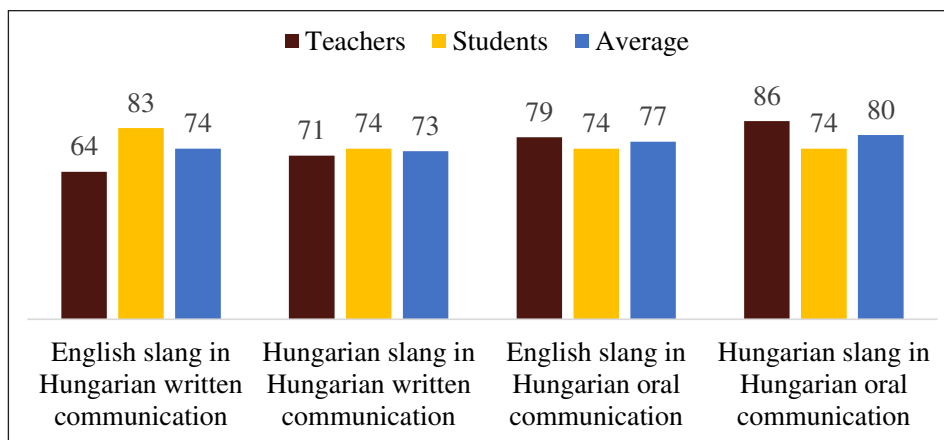
In conclusion, the results strongly suggest that in the 21st century, internet use and social media platforms are heavily relied upon, and the language that is present on them cannot be ignored if we aim to teach life-like, authentic English in the ESL classrooms, like previous studies have also found (Berg 2011; Krstic 2016; Robinson/Kakela 2006; Mazer/Hunt 2008). Moreover, the vast difference between the two age groups of teachers and students also suggests that a common understanding between them might be difficult to achieve in the ESL classrooms, as students and teachers view and use social media platforms and the internet itself in very different ways for different social, educational, and entertainment purposes. Nevertheless, like those of recent studies (Massey 2005; de Groot 2017; Godwin-Jones 2017), the findings in the present study also support the idea that both digital tools and digital language use, of which slang comprises a major part, cannot and should not be avoided in formal language learning settings as they could bring about an abundance of novel and practical tools and outcomes. Students should be given the opportunity to learn about slang as well as digital language use, while simultaneously learning to use digital tools to their advantage if they are to thrive in a world where the future is largely digital and requires people to adapt to changes quickly and accordingly. Even today, the majority of people are already engaging in

digital activities several hours on a daily basis, which requires a lot of patience, work, and adaptability.

4.2. USING SLANG IN THE ESL CLASSROOMS

The second part of the questionnaire connected to slang use asked the participants to report on how often they used slang in their everyday lives. Four questions focused on whether participants used English and Hungarian slang in Hungarian oral communication and Hungarian written communication, while the subsequent two questions explored the proportion of Hungarian and English slang met on social media by the participants. Graph 4 displays the proportions of both Hungarian slang and English slang expressions in Hungarian written and oral communication, where no major difference can be observed at first glance between the two ways of communication. Of the 45 participants, 74% claimed they used English slang in Hungarian written communication, and a slightly higher proportion of them indicated slang use in Hungarian oral communication (77%). However, when we looked at the two groups separately, we were able to see two cases where results differed: 83% of students and 64% of teachers claimed to use English slang in Hungarian written communication, while 86% of teachers and 74% of students claimed to use Hungarian slang in Hungarian oral communication, which are rather differing outcomes.

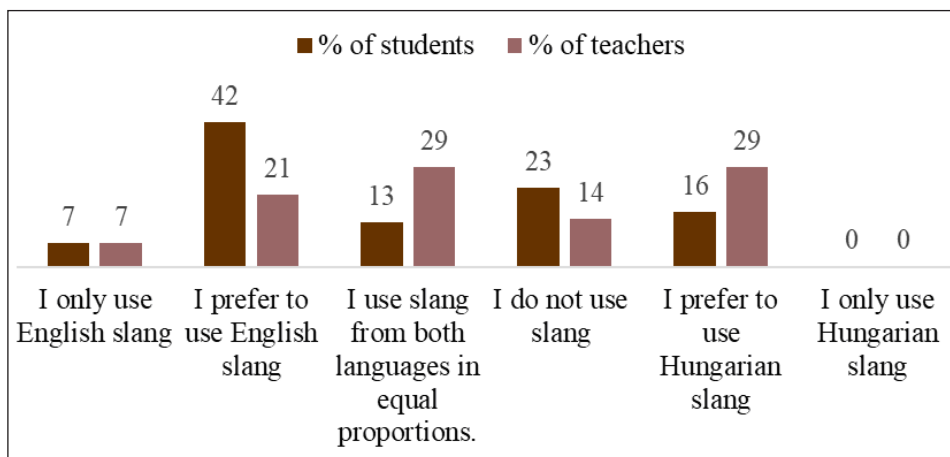
These results indicate that in real life settings, the majority of students (and to some extent teachers) use English slang, while in the case of Hungarian slang, 73% (separately: 71% of teachers and 74% of students) of all participants indicated that they used it in Hungarian written communication and 80% (separately: 86% of teachers and 74% of students) in Hungarian oral communication (see Graph 4 also). Both English and Hungarian slang use was slightly higher in Hungarian oral communication, which might be connected to the participants' perception of slang not being part of formal language and therefore being less acceptable in writing.



Graph 4. Tendencies of students and teachers on English and Hungarian slang use in written and oral Hungarian communication (expressed in percentages)

When asked whether they preferred English or Hungarian slang, respondents clearly highlighted the usefulness and frequency of English language use besides their native language. The biggest proportion of respondents (49% in the case of digital communication and 43% in the case of face-to-face communication) explicitly stated that they preferred English slang (and used it most frequently) to Hungarian slang. Another 22% of respondents in the case of digital communication and 43% in the case of face-to-face communication of stated that they did not use English nor Hungarian slang, while an average of 17% (16% in the case of digital communication and 18% in the case of face-to-face communication) reported on not differentiating between Hungarian and English when choosing to use slang in their speech or writing, and only an average of 16% (13% in the case of digital communication and 20% in the case of face-to-face communication) said that they only used Hungarian slang. Interestingly, when the two groups were analysed separately, differences arose. Graphs 5a and 5b show the difference between the two groups' slang preferences in both online and face-to-face conversations, where it shows that students in general (52%) prefer to use English slang a lot more than teachers (32%) in both digital and face-to-face communication.

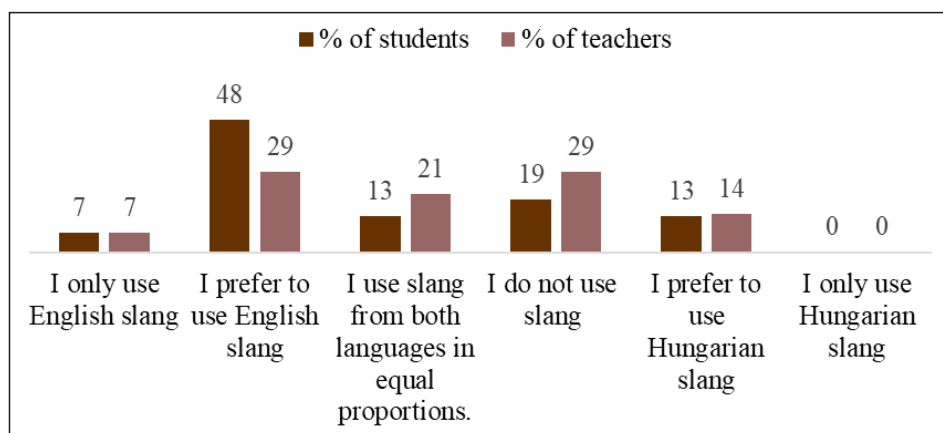
Moreover, it is also very interesting that no respondent chose the option "I only use Hungarian slang" and that a good percentage of teachers were the ones who preferred Hungarian slang to English slang (see also Graphs 5a and 5b). Further observations also indicate that Hungarian slang is used and preferred more in face-to-face conversations rather than those taking place digitally, while English slang is more freely used in digital spaces.



Graph 5a. Slang preferences of teachers and students in face-to-face conversations (expressed in percentages)

The above results indicate that not only is the use of digital media widespread among teachers and students (more so the students), but that the use of slang is also deemed important, especially by the students. As students and teachers come across and voluntarily use slang on many occasions, it would be highly beneficial to also teach them explicitly in high schools, to enhance L2 comprehension of both students and teachers alike, considering the feedback of teachers on their lacking slang knowledge. As has been elaborated on above in section 2, a number of countries choose to put subtitles

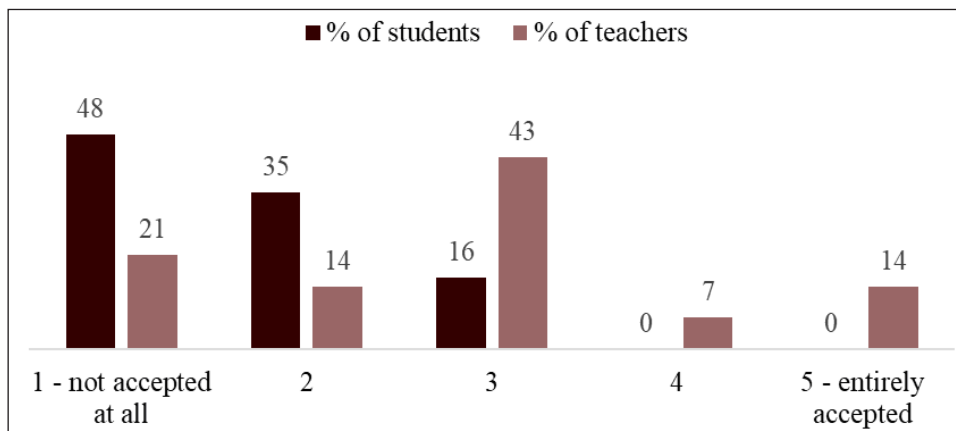
on shows while leaving the shows and films in their original language. Looking at the regions around Hungary, apart from Croatia (Mihaljević Djigunović and Bagarić 2007), Serbia too prefers to provide subtitles in Serbian, but keep the original (often English) version of films, which can comprise a vast percentage of the gained (often passive) language knowledge of those who watch television and browse national television channels online too. Very often, these media (nowadays expanded by social media as well) are the main sources of slang expressions and informal language use, which has also been mentioned by the majority of students partaking in the present study.



Graph 5b. Slang preferences of students and teachers in online conversations (expressed in percentages)

4.3. THE USEFULNESS OF TEACHING SLANG IN THE ESL CLASSROOMS

Even though the previously discussed results highlight the prevalence and importance of slang, the respondents stated that it is not present in ESL classrooms. When asked about their opinion on the acceptance and presence of slang in the ESL classrooms (Graph 6) and in the taught material, we can see two very opposing directions when it comes to the given answers. While teachers more or less found slang to be unacceptable within the classroom (21%) as did 48% of the students, 3 teachers expressed they did not find it unnatural or unacceptable to use slang in the classroom. While these 3 teachers only comprise 21% of the teachers in the current study, all of them belonging to the age group below 35 indicates that they too see and approach teaching differently than their older colleagues. The results indicate that the participants of the present study would be open and supportive of the idea of integrating slang into the classroom, considering that their answers state that slang comprises a large part of their lives. Both students and teachers expressed they saw slang's usefulness in teaching and have also acknowledged the lack of such materials in the educational system. What was even more surprising, was the proportion of people who think it would be beneficial to explicitly teach slang expressions (82.2%), with only 17.8 % of them saying that it would not be beneficial. One interesting finding is that while teachers find that slang is more or less accepted within the classroom (with an average mean of 2.79 of 5), students almost unanimously



Graph 6. Students' and teachers' perceptions of the acceptance of slang in ESL classrooms (expressed in percentages)

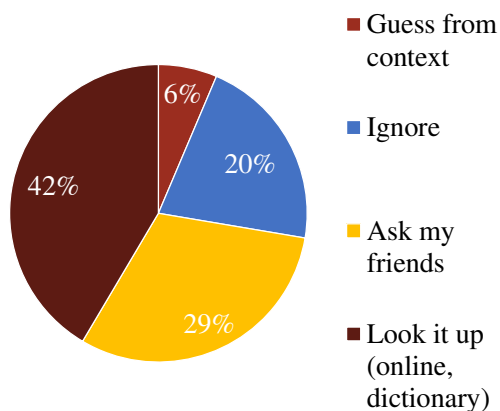
claim the opposite (average mean of 1.68). These numbers too point to the idea students and teachers experience the idea and use of slang in the classroom entirely differently.

To gain insight into the participants' own views on the usefulness of slang, we asked them two subsequent questions: a short multiple-choice question and the other item of the test provided them with the opportunity to give a longer explanatory answer about the reasons. The first question asked them if they thought it would be beneficial to teach slang in ESL classrooms (Yes/No answer), and the second question encouraged them to explain why they chose that particular answer. The majority of participants (82% total, of which 79% teachers and 84% students) stated that they thought teaching slang expressions would help the ESL learning process, enrich the experience, and ensure further benefits along with it. To elaborate on this, some of the benefits the students mentioned were connected to affective factors. For example, students mentioned that "it would be motivating" or "these expressions would be interesting", but also the fact that they need these words in their everyday lives ("I could understand the films better", "I usually come across slang expressions, and I don't know them", "they are part of the language"). Other students mentioned the cultural aspect of understanding native speakers and native language use ("If we go abroad, we meet other people and we would understand them better"). Some of the teachers also mentioned that it is an integral part of the English language and "as the language changes constantly, it is important to follow these changes in the classrooms as well." Affective factors included the relationship between teachers and students, for example, one teacher explained that "it would bring teachers and students closer to each other", which could also ensure a more positive and reinforcing environment, where students might be more inclined to speak and participate, which are two very important factors when it comes to learning a foreign language.

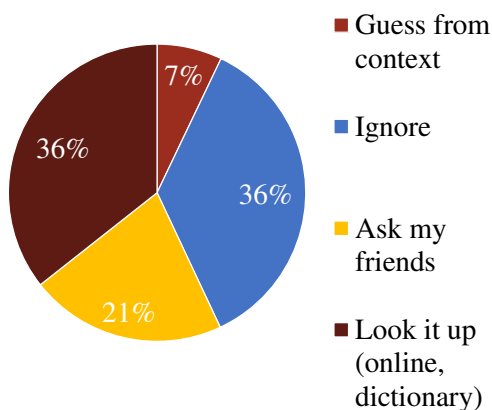
If we examine the answers given by those respondents who claimed it would not be beneficial to teach slang, we can find that some of these answers were not given because the participants truly considered the teaching of slang useless, but because they regard the teaching process difficult or not viable in the Hungarian educational system.

These findings are also in line with Mikusová's (2020) regarding the inflexibility of the Hungarian NCC. To name an example, one teacher stated that "teachers lack the type of knowledge to teach such things", and one student mentioned that "teachers do not understand slang." Lack of time and the fact that students are usually overburdened without additional extra items in the curriculum were also mentioned. These were given as explanations why they opted for the "not useful" option when answering the previous question; however, they cannot be treated as evidently negative answers, as the underlying reason behind them focused on the difficulty of implementation, not the usefulness of the material. One teacher also added an interesting aspect that slang and language varieties themselves help students find and present their own self, meaning that they would be able to express themselves more honestly and freely if slang expressions were incorporated into the English classes.

The subsequent question also highlighted the importance of teaching slang, as all of the participants responded that they occasionally came across words that they did not know (25% students and 35% teachers). Moreover, teachers (with an average of 3.36) claimed they experienced this more often than their students (average of 3.00), which also indicates that teachers are less familiar with newer slang expressions. This shows that there is a practical need for better understanding, and it would be advisable to help the learning process in the school setting, as the results to subsequent question suggest that most people do turn to reliable sources when coming across an unknown word. Graphs 7 and 8 show that when asked about their reaction on finding an unknown slang expression online, most participants (42% of students and 36% of teachers) stated that they looked it up (in either online sources, or in books).



Graph 7. What students do when they come across unknown slang expressions



Graph 8. What teachers do when they come across unknown slang expressions

The second most frequently used strategy was ignoring the words (20% of students and 36% of teachers), and the third, asking friends for help (29% of students and 21% of teachers). As the latter two cannot be considered as reliable methods of finding information, most respondents (62%) do not learn from this experience, although it would be a great learning opportunity if they had access to reliable information about these words. Another reason why teachers might be less familiar with slang can be that 36% of teachers claimed they ignored slang they did not know, while only 20% of students claimed the same, showing that they had more interest in slang words to begin with. Other methods of dealing with unknown words included guessing the meaning and using the context to find out information about it.

4.4. KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF HUNGARIAN AND ENGLISH SLANG EXPRESSIONS

The last section of the questionnaire focused on uncovering the participants' knowledge and familiarity with 10 Hungarian and 10 English slang expressions. The 20 slang expressions were collected from digital sources mentioned above, considering that the internet and more precisely social media is the primary place where these occur. As was stated above in section 2, slang can be found most easily online and between younger individuals conversing with one another either in private messages or publicly in the forms of comments and posts, most often taking place in English. While people (including the participants of the study) may encounter English slang more often on the internet, Hungarian slang seems to be more known among the participants. Hungarian slang was more familiar to both students and teachers, even though they claimed to consume a lot of social media and the language they most frequently came across on the internet was English. Apart from the Hungarian slang expression *pacek* 'good, nice' (with averages of 2.29 for teachers and 2.16 students, where the scale was a 1–3 one), in almost all cases, more students than teachers claimed to know the 10 English and

10 Hungarian slang expressions. The general averages for the students were 2.36 in the case of the English slang expressions and 2.56 in the case of the Hungarian slang expressions, while for the teachers, the numbers are slightly lower in each case of the Hungarian (2.47) and English (2.27) slang expressions. A further look at the averages can be taken below in Table 1.

Taking all our findings into consideration and interpreting them in accordance with Mazer and Hunt (2008) and Krstić's (2016) findings regarding the positive outcome of incorporating slang into the classroom, we can say that slang is also heavily present in the lives of both the teachers and students, who participated in the present study. Due to their deep involvement, a more modern and student-friendly approach should be taken into consideration when rethinking the schedule and curricula. Incorporating not only bits of informal language as well as more digital tools (de Groot 2017; Godwin-Jones 2017) into the classroom could bring about surprisingly positive results, hopefully along with bringing more enthusiasm, variety, and motivation to the students. More and more research is being conducted on the present topic, and many recognize that this type of approach to teaching has long been stigmatized and avoided, yet, recent findings prevail and indicate just how useful this novel approach to language teaching and learning could be (Berg 2011; Krstić 2016; Mazer and Hunt 2008; Robinson and Kakela 2006).

| English slang expressions | Students' averages | Teachers' averages |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>ghosting</i> | 2.65 | 2.71 |
| <i>lowkey</i> | 1.74 | 1.93 |
| <i>cringe</i> | 2.77 | 2.79 |
| <i>side eye</i> | 2.32 | 2.07 |
| <i>spill the tea</i> | 1.74 | 2.33 |
| <i>sus</i> | 2.42 | 1.79 |
| <i>crush</i> | 3.00 | 3.00 |
| <i>shook</i> | 2.00 | 1.93 |
| <i>glow up</i> | 2.77 | 2.57 |
| <i>salty</i> | 2.13 | 2.07 |
| Hungarian slang expressions | Students' averages | Teachers' averages |
| <i>ezt adom (nagyon adom)</i> | 2.84 | 2.71 |
| <i>gyász</i> | 2.52 | 2.33 |
| <i>pacek</i> | 2.16 | 2.29 |
| <i>aszalni</i> | 2.35 | 1.93 |
| <i>zsa</i> | 2.68 | 2.36 |
| <i>kajak</i> | 2.61 | 2.93 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------|------|
| <i>ez nagyon nagy</i> | 2.84 | 2.93 |
| <i>nyomod</i> | 2.71 | 2.93 |
| <i>bástyá</i> | 2.55 | 2.29 |
| <i>stabil</i> | 2.26 | 1.93 |

Table 1. Knowledge and familiarity with slang expressions: Students' and teachers' averages on the English and Hungarian slang expressions

5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The present study looked at Hungarian ESL teachers' and students' language and slang preferences, L1 and L2 use, and how they regarded the role of slang in the ESL classroom, simultaneously with the aim to uncover how well slang was integrated into their language use. Based on our findings, slang is considered an integral part of their language use, which the majority of our participants deemed necessary and useful both in real-life situations as well as more formal contexts. The findings of the present study are also in line with those of previous studies regarding the practicality of incorporating slang into the ESL or any language classroom (Berg 2011; Krstic 2016) in the regions around Hungary, as this act has been shown to bring about positive and fruitful results both for students as well as their teachers. As with every study, the current one has its own limitations. To begin with, the small number of participants and the lack of balance between the respondents (unequal number of participants from each group), also in terms of their gender, makes the findings less reliable and non-generalizable. Moreover, the lack of true in-depth data which could have been collected via interviews, and more adequate knowledge on the participants' language and, to some extent, educational background could have made the results more detailed and elaborate. Considering the rather positive stance and outcome of the present study, it would be interesting to look into the topic in different regions of Hungary with more participants involved. As Krstic (2016), Berg (2011), and Rets (2016) too have found, small but meaningful changes in the classroom could bring about students' willingness along with a much more enthusiastic approach to language learning. These minor changes could well be the keys to bringing about that ideal state of self-regulation the Hungarian NCC (2020) too speaks of.

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SUMMARY

DIGITAL MEDIA AND SLANG IN THE ESL CLASSROOM: HUNGARIAN ESL TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' VIEWS

Slang has always been an integral part of language use, which cannot be ignored when examining people's everyday conversational use of language. With the emergence of digital media, including social media, the trends in slang use have also changed considerably, which is important to explore if we want to gain a deeper insight into the role of slang in this medium and the personal views associated with it. The aim of this study is two-fold: first, to gain insight into how native Hungarian ESL students and teachers use and perceive slang; and second, to assess the extent to which slang is present in the ESL classrooms. The research questions focused on how ESL students and teachers used their L1 and L2 in digital (social) media (1), what roles slang and digital media played in their ESL classrooms (2), and what teachers' and students' views were on the incorporation of slang into the ESL classrooms in terms of practicality and usefulness (3). Results revealed that the use of digital and social media were regarded as important and considered as integral parts of the participants' daily routines, being widespread among both teachers and students. The findings also showed the participants' vast need for knowing and using slang in their everyday lives. Despite these views, most respondents also emphasized the fact that slang is not present in Hungarian ESL classrooms, and they do not get sufficient help nor support in schools when it comes to more informal ways of language use.

KEYWORDS: slang, digital media, ESL classroom, Hungarian context.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire: The use of digital media and slang among Hungarian ESL students and teachers

The target group of the survey includes Hungarian high school students learning English and teachers of English as a second language.

1.a. Please indicate which applies to you:

- ☐ I am a student studying English as a second language.
☐ I am an English teacher.

1.b. Age: ____

1.c. County of residence: ____

1.d. Years learning both English and German (question applies to students):

1.e. Number of years of teaching experience (question applies to teachers only): ____

1.f. Other spoken languages (number):

2. Your gender:

- ☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other

3. How often do you use the internet? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Never; 5 – Several hours every day
 1 2 3 4 5

4. How often do you use Instagram? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Never; 5 – Several hours every day
 1 2 3 4 5

5. How often do you use TikTok? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Never; 5 – Several hours every day
 1 2 3 4 5

6. Which social media platform do you use most often?

- ☐ Instagram
☐ TikTok
☐ Facebook
☐ Other: _____

7. How often do you use English while surfing the internet? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Never; 5 – Several hours every day
 1 2 3 4 5

8. How often do you use Hungarian while surfing the internet? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Never; 5 – Several hours every day
 1 2 3 4 5

9. Do you prefer Hungarian or English content on the internet?

- ☐ Hungarian
☐ English

10. Do you use English slang in Hungarian written communication?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. Do you use English slang in Hungarian oral communication?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

12. Do you use Hungarian slang in Hungarian written communication?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

13. Do you use Hungarian slang in Hungarian oral communication?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

14. In what proportion do you use English and Hungarian slang expressions in face-to-face communication?

- ☐ I do not use slang expressions.
☐ I prefer to use Hungarian slang expressions.
☐ I prefer to use English slang expressions.
☐ I use slang expressions from both languages in equal proportions.
☐ I only use English slang expressions.
☐ I only use Hungarian slang expressions.

15. In what proportion do you use English and Hungarian slang expressions in digital communication?

- ☐ I do not use slang expressions.
☐ I prefer to use Hungarian slang expressions.
☐ I prefer to use English slang expressions.
☐ I use slang expressions from both languages in equal proportions.
☐ I only use English slang expressions.
☐ I only use Hungarian slang expressions.

16. In your opinion, how accepted is the use of slang in English lessons at school? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Not at all; 5 – Totally accepted
 1 2 3 4 5

17. Would teaching slang help the English language learning process?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

18. Please explain your answer to question 17 above:

19. How often do you come across slang expressions you do not know? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – Never; 5 – Very often

1 2 3 4 5

20. What do you do in these cases?

- ☐ I ignore the slang expressions.
☐ I look them up (book, dictionary, online resources).
☐ I ask my friends.
☐ Other: _____

21. For what kind of online content do you often use your English knowledge? (Multiple choice)

- ☐ Movies
☐ Music
☐ Articles
☐ Homework (finding information connected to a topic)
☐ Communication
☐ Games
☐ Other: _____

22. For what kind of online content do you often use your Hungarian knowledge? (Multiple choice)

- ☐ Movies
☐ Music
☐ Articles
☐ Homework (finding information connected to a topic)
☐ Communication
☐ Games
☐ Other: _____

Do you know the following English slang expressions? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – No

2 – Not perfectly (I have heard of them but do not know their meaning)

3 – Yes

23. Ghosting

No Yes
1 2 3

24. Lowkey

No Yes
1 2 3

25. Cringe

No Yes
1 2 3

26. Side eye

No Yes
1 2 3

27. Spill the tea

No Yes
1 2 3

28. Sus

No Yes
1 2 3

29. Crush

No Yes
1 2 3

30. Shook

No Yes
1 2 3

31. Glow up

No Yes
1 2 3

32. Salty

No Yes
1 2 3

Do you know the following Hungarian slang expressions? (Circle the number that applies to you!)

1 – No

2 – Not perfectly (I have heard of them but do not know their meaning)

3 – Yes

33. Ezt adom (nagyon adom)

No Yes
1 2 3

34. Gyász

No Yes
1 2 3

35. Pacek

No Yes
1 2 3

36. Aszal

No Yes
1 2 3

37. Zsa

No Yes
1 2 3

38. Kajak

No Yes
1 2 3

39. Ez nagyon nagy

No Yes
1 2 3

40. Nyomod

No Yes
1 2 3

41. Bástyá

No Yes
1 2 3

42. Stábil

No Yes
1 2 3