Models of language teaching and learning
and their influence on the concept of Open Learning

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Abstract

In this paper, we want to introduce the concept of Open Learning and explain the theoretical background on which such a concept is based. Open Learning in a concept used for designing textbooks and tools for foreign languages for specific purposes, focused on practical usage in real-world situations in professional careers. In order to develop and design Open Learning material a careful study of psycholinguistic and methodological issues is necessary, to be able to design material which should be based on the knowledge of traditional and new models of language teaching and learning.

In the first part of the paper, we want to present a brief overview of historical psycholinguistic theories and how they influenced the development of the Open Learning concept to create a firm base of successful learning and teaching.

The second part introduces some of the successful models of language learning and teaching and their methodological influence on designing the professional educational material Open Learning. Before designing any textbook, it is necessary to understand both, the classical and modern approaches of language learning and teaching. We also want to explore the impact of ICT and multimedia teaching and learning on the Open Learning concept. This makes a crucial part of the basic knowledge when creating textbooks which should appeal to a variety of learners and open-minded teachers.

Another part of the paper investigates the impact of computer-assisted learning and new models and principles of integrated language teaching and learning and how this particular knowledge helps us when designing courses and Open Learning materials, which are partly learned and taught by using technology and online environment.

Last part is dedicated to the teacher´s training program we developed and its methodological basis, comparing old and new teaching models, as well as comparing a teacher of the past with a teacher of the future.

Key words: language teaching, learning, learning model, Open Learning, psycholinguistic theories, textbook design, online learning

I. Psycholinguistic background of the Open Learning concept

The Open Learning concept is a concept based on methodological and linguistic research in order to provide students who try to learn in this way, with a successful way of learning foreign languages. Open Learning enables efficient teaching and learning and controlling the whole educational process. It is also a

tool which helps the teacher or tutor observe student´s progress and, therefore saves time because no testing from the side of the teacher is needed. The immediate feedback provided by a sophisticated online system motivates the students to take their own responsibility for learning, and gives the teacher the possibility of personalized teaching. Due to the online system of Open Learning, a very thorough analysis of student´s mistakes is possible, which gives the teacher an opportunity to react individually and work with each student in the way that is tailored for each of them.

Open Learning also covers designing of educational language materials for different languages and for specific purposes. It is very closely linked to a development of online environment, certification of teachers and tutors, teacher´s training in professional terminology and methodological approach to teaching. In order to understand how this concept has developed so far, a brief overview of theoretical background is necessary.

Before creating the Open Learning concept as learning and teaching tool, it was important to think about certain psycholinguistic and linguistic approaches and models. We had to think about the theories of language acquisition and certain data from neurolinguistics to be able to design the textbooks and online system in an efficient way.

II. Historical theories and their influence on developing the Open Learning concept

Language acquisition has never been successfully explained. No theory is able to explain how language is attained. Most of these language theories go back to traditional linguists such as Skinner, Chomsky, Piaget and other. Each of them came forward with an interesting theory which they had been trying to implement. According to Skinner´s behaviorist theory, language could be treated like any other kind of cognitive behaviour, because language learning is a process of habit formation. Skinner believed that children learned by trial and error. (Demirezen, 1988, 135-140). When thinking about developing a system of learning, we tried to think about some of Skinner´s behaviorist theories and we created an online system using trial and error, exercises which have to be repeated until the last error is defeated. Each exercise in the online system has to be repeated as many times as it is necessary to master the learning objective.

Skinner also believed that listening and being exposed to spoken language is one step before real speaking and using of correct language. Many textbook designers have been using audio texts for a very long time and it has proved to be very efficient. In the Open Learning online system, we use audios in every text, in videos, even in vocabulary, glossary and useful phrases section. We want our

students to be exposed to spoken language as much as possible and, of course, we do realize that here it cannot be spoken of natural spontaneous language. To use spontaneous speech is not the objective, the objective is to fulfill the educative function of the online system and to show the students as many pronunciations as we are able to provide.

From studying Chomsky´s innateness theory, we believe in his claim that all humans are born with a natural predisposition to linguistic information and that everybody is able to develop a mechanism of understanding grammar rules. (Chomsky, 1975) That means if the student hears correct language more often, he is able to develop his own system of grammar understanding from the context. Therefore, we decided not to focus on grammar in the Open Learning system but we give the students the opportunity of reading, hearing, writing and speaking correct sentences in the context so often that they can naturally develop correct usage of basic grammar.

Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who believed that language emerges within the context of other general cognitive abilities like memory, attention and problem solving. (Castella, 2010). These abilities are parts of human intellectual development. As a child acquires its mother tongue, Piaget´s principles can also be adapted on second language acquision. From Piaget´s ideas, the mastery-based learning developed. Children, while acquiring the language, need to go through different stages. First, students have to master the basics before moving to another more complicated matter. In the Open Learning system, we created the units in each module in this way, we begin with simple topic, simple grammar used in the texts and simple tasks, in order to develop logical thinking and ability to draw more complex information by themselves.

III. Modern Theories and Models of Language acquisition

Tomasello described a usage-based theory of language acquisition (Tomasello, 2003), where the effect of repetition on cognitive representation is emphasized. "Usage-based linguistics holds that language use shapes entrenchment through frequency repetition of usage, but there are separable effects of token frequency and type frequency" (Doughty & Long, 2003). Token frequency means how often particular words of phrases appear, and type frequency counts how many different lexical items a certain pattern or construction is applicable to. We adapted this token theory into practice by creating exercises which can be repeated as many times as it is wished and the words that are supposed to be learned appear many times in the exposition texts, in audios, in videos, in tests, in the tasks, and they also appear in other units later.

We have a very high token and type frequency in order to ensure that words and phrases which should be learned will also be learned effectively.

IV. Models of language learning and acquisition and their methodological influence for developing the concept of Open Learning and Open Learning educational material

To design an effective, innovative and multimedia textbook, and online system that serves as an additional material to the textbook, we always have to consider that none of either psycholinguistic models or other "macro-methodological approached have been sufficiently reflected in terms of their consequences for textbook or exercise design" (Funk, 2012).

In the history of second language learning and teaching, there have been three main approaches, as Funk summarizes them:
- Grammar-translation based approach,
- Audio-lingual/audiovisual approach,
- Communicative language teaching.

In the Czech environment, the first two approaches are still taught at universities in teacher´s education. The grammar-translation method has definitely some positives but we must not forget that according to modern cognitive neuroscientific studies, the brain needs more connections to form "chunks" in order to understand the topic and apply the newly gained knowledge (Oakley, 2014).

At present, communicative approach to teaching common foreign languages such as German, English and French has been taught more often. The new century needs people who are able to speak the foreign language fluently and therefore, language production has been in focus of current textbook designs for a long time. In our opinion, the best way of designing a textbook is to combine some of the traditional approaches with modern ones and also to combine those with using modern technology to enable effective learning and teaching in the 21st century. As Funk emphasizes, all approaches have had successful learners and teachers but there is no proof that one is better than the other (Funk, 2012). Definitely, it is not easy to get the evidence of how a certain method works or not and why. In the Open Learning system, we have been collecting precious data from hundreds of students and teachers and we are going to analyze them in order to search for some answers in the problematic of what the most common learning problems are, and what the most effective types of exercises are.

We cannot say why a certain method is successful in one case and why not in another. In the classroom environment, it is even more difficult to say why some

students fail or succeed. There are too many variables to be considered and the psychological factor plays a very important role which is difficult, maybe even impossible to measure. There is one clear thing and that is that one method cannot prove its superiority and that we have to consider more methods and combine them, while designing textbooks. When designing exercises, we have to incorporate various methodological approaches and the context of such exercises is crucial.

When designing an exercise, we have to decide about the goals of the exercise and then we have to incorporate a suitable method. We know that different approaches lead to different results (Long, 2009).

We have decided that part of our exercises should have communicative goal and therefore some of them have been designed in this way, to elicit as much communication as possible by using correct phrases in practical real world situations.

For us, it is necessary to create social and topic-based interaction with focus on communicative tasks in some of our modules. We help teachers create real and virtual learning environment in order to motivate students more by using modern technology and online learning tools.

In the traditional classroom environment, too much room is devoted to reproductive exercises with focus on grammar, various fill-in-the-gap tasks which do not lead to communication. Little time is spent with oral skills, and, in our opinion it is due to the fact that teaching is too much teacher-oriented. This was described in more detail by Nation (2001), who is aware of the fact that many textbooks are full of cognitive fill-in-the-gap exercises which do not really have the communicative impact we need today. Therefore, we followed the approach of creating the texts and exercises from the end, which means, first we discussed the goal of each exercise, the learning outcome, and we asked ourselves the question what we wanted our students to be prepared for. By answering these questions we than choose methods and materials which will be efficient and lead to the goal.

Nation (2001) talks about the so called "the four strands" model. According to this model, a balanced distribution of activities into four areas provides the best conditions for successful results. He speaks about an "equal share" of activities. Because we designed and created different types of learning modules, we could not follow Nation´s model completely. We had to consider the use of materials, as they are meant for different professionals. When teaching engineering technology, the output is different from the module of services in the travel trade. Different professions need different approaches because the goals are different. While in the module "Services in the travel trade", the focus is on communicative

approach because people who work in travel trade are more in need of fluency practice, the focus in "engineering technology" is on the right terminology and right usage of the terminology. We do not expect such a high fluency practice from design engineers or assembly workers like from waitresses or receptionists.

Nation, as well as Swain (1995) believed that a task must be personalized and linked to the real-life situations and language experience of the students. This belief has been completely adapted to the Open Learning educational material, as this is one of the most important objectives of each module.

To be inspired by methodological models in order to design effective educational material is one thing, but all educators and authors must be aware of the fact that every learner has individual needs and goals and they have to adapt the models and methods according to their immediate needs. Therefore, we have been trying to develop many different types of exercises which also leave room for individual approach of each teacher or student. Absolutely crucial in this point is the right planning of each lesson, the thinking about implementing the material into school curriculum and the rethinking of textbook design and creating and developing of efficient online learning environment.

V. Multimedia learning and teaching

The impact of ICT in our learning and teaching lives has been enormous, multimedia learning and teaching has become an essential part of the educational process and we must reflect the changes that have been currently happening, in order to stay updated and not to get lost in the media, and to know how to use them effectively as a tool that makes our learning and teaching life easier.

The Open Learning learning environment involves the use of ICT; it is a multimodal course that has been trying to involve different sensory modes and different learning styles. Therefore, we included not only images but also animations, videos, experiments, simulations, audio material, interactive quizzes. The Open Learning material can be presented in a variety of modes, in both visual and aural form. For the learners, this approach should make the material better accessible, it should help them improve their performance, and it enables them to learn in their own pace at any place they feel comfortable to do so. We also included PowerPoint presentations, hyperlinked examples, so that the learners can also develop both their cognitive skills as well as their computer skills. The online learning environment which we have developed enables simulations and modeling (module plastic processing or engineering technology) that either describes the reality or enables simplification of a difficult process. We know that we cannot provide professional laboratory environment and teachers are not able to perform many things in an engineering works, and,

therefore, we offer modeling activities that would be either expensive or dangerous to perform in real environment.

Using ICT at schools today has also shown some weaknesses, the teachers very often do not know what objective should actually be achieved and how to use the technology as a tool that makes their life easier, not more complicated. On the one hand, teachers should know the possibilities of multimedia but on the other hand, traditional knowledge about learning types of students is also necessary in order to apply ICT in the learning process successfully (Birch & Gardiner, 2005).

The Open Learning concept draws from the knowledge of various learning styles and of the fact that learners are more comfortable learning when their learning style is reflected. For this reason, we use a combination of written and online material to suit to multimodal learners, as well as learners with some predominant style, such as visual, aural, kinesthetic etc. Morrison, Sweeney and Heffernan believe that "presenting a material in a variety of modes has been used to encourage students to develop a more versatile approach to learning." (Morrison, Sweeny & Heffernan, 2003). We reflect this opinion and we use the online learning environment to present a greater interactivity and multiple presentations of different topics.

VI. Computer-assisted language learning

When speaking about computer-assisted learning, we have to bear in mind that it really should stay "assisted" because a teacher who represents the face-to-face communication is, in our opinion, irreplaceable. Computer should be used wisely as an addition to face-to-face teaching and learning. The MOOC´s courses have shown that courses which are only lead online are not very efficient and the drop-off rate is very high (Stein, 2014). The study of the University of Pennsylvania show that MOOCs courses gain a very high number of students at the beginning of a course but usually after the first week, only 4% of the students actually finish the course.

Therefore, the decision to combine present study with a teacher and online self-study of the students seem to be the right one. Also, according to some principles of multimedia learning, we have been trying to create materials, both written and online, to contribute to student learning.

To be able to create efficient materials, a few principles of multimedia had to be followed. Here is just a brief summary of some of the most important ones:
- Students learn better from words combined with pictures. Therefore, we included not only written texts but also visual material, such as pictures, videos and simulations or animations. Sweller claims that using both text and

visuals lets the brain process more information in working memory (Sweller, 2005). Also Barbara Oakley in her Coursera seminar "To learn how to learn" presents this opinion.

- Learners must be focused. This means that the material presented should be visually presented in a way that students do not need to split their attention. We created videos and texts which can be seen on one page, so that the content is not visually too far apart. We do not want the students to open more windows in order to see texts and visuals at one place.
- Students learn better if they are in control of their learning process. The Open Learning concept is based on the fact that students are given the responsibility for their own learning. Research showed that when the learner has the ability to control the pace of the presentation material, learning is more effective (Mayer, 2003). The online Open Learning environment allows the students to interact with audios and videos, they can start and stop whenever they feel like it, and they can break expositions and videos into segments which enables them to reach a better understanding of the material.
- Learners learn better when their previous knowledge is activated. The units in the modules have been created in a way that old knowledge appears in the following units; it begins with the simpler and easier topics and tasks and continues to the more difficult ones. Therefore, students have to master the first topic to be able to move on to the next one.
- Learners are motivated if they receive feedback and they know what they are evaluated for.

The Open Learning online environment enables teachers to see what the student had been doing and where any difficulties may have been and they are able to give an immediate feedback to the student as far as tasks are concerned. The exercises and quizzes are evaluated immediately by the system itself, so that the students can immediately see what was right or wrong and why.

Multiple presentations motivate both the student and the teacher. In order to learn effectively, people need the knowledge related to their lives. The professional modules have been developed with help of professionals from different fields and areas, they are all related to real practice in companies, and this reconstruction of natural professional environment serves as a platform for language learning. We provided many different contexts for developing all language skills that are necessary for today´s professional life. Multimodality is important as it involves more than one sense. The usage of ICT leads to personalized and student-centered approach to learning and teaching. It also supports us in effective material design.

There are still questions about which types of multimedia are helpful for students with different learning styles. Also, there is the problem of teacher training, which must be supported by the government and the headmasters of schools, in order to be able to use the ICT and multimodal tools effectively. The technology is progressing very fast and the change of thinking of teachers, educators, authors of language materials, headmasters, and government officials must be changed. They must understand that using multimodality can help learners to learn more efficiently and it can help them to develop critical, cognitive understanding.

VII. Teacher training with Open Learning, the teaching models used

At present, in international methodological literature we read about the changing role of a teacher. It seems to be a new modern approach to teaching. The classic frontal teacher has been losing his importance in the last few years. The question is, is this really innovative? Using new teaching methods by implementing technology and online learning is maybe quite a new approach. But, even in Czech literature, we will find methodological and pedagogical recommendation for changing the frontal teaching approach. Maňák (2003) describes historical teaching models, such as the pedocentric model, where the student´s needs, activities and interests stand in the centre. According to Dewey (1859-1952), a student should learn in accordance with their own abilities, pace and preferences. Already in the 19th century, Dewey believed that teacher should be a guide, facilitator and helper. The pedocentric teaching concept stresses the importance of student´s own activity and independence and the need to teach in a practical way, so that students are prepared for real world (Dewey, 1910). This, of course, brought less traditional knowledge when compared to traditional school system.

Already Komenský believed that a teacher should function as a facilitator. As a reaction to the traditional encyclopaedical memorizing and knowledge, a new interactive communicative teaching model was developed. It stresses the cooperation of a student and a teacher. In the teacher, the student finds a partner and a manager, who helps him facilitate the student´s own learning process.

When did it actually happen that traditional schools focus only on the knowledge itself, regardless practicability or students´ interests, learning styles or preferences? In many didactical sources, we can find that it is not as innovative as we think, to use communicative approach, to turn the frontal teacher into a partner, facilitator or guide. The question is then: Why this has not been reflected for so many decades in the traditional school system? When did it

happen that the directive teaching approach had taken over the cooperative teaching approaches?

As Meyer (2000, p. 54) expresses in his book, a successful teaching can only be successful if mutual cooperation works. Currently, according to our experience and interviews with top managers or owners of engineering companies in the Czech Republic, the traditional school system has been constantly failing to provide graduates with a sufficient knowledge of a foreign language and soft skills.

The traditional directive model does have a very little active or communicative function, students are not able to identify their own learning styles, their key competencies for the 21st century, such as organization, cognitive and creative thinking, cooperation, communication and problem solving skills which have been lost somewhere on the way through traditional education.

There have been many teaching models developed (Chamot et al., 1999; Harris, 2003). All describe the importance of developing metacognitive understanding "of the value of learning strategies" (Cahmot, 2004) and the teacher should facilitate this. The older models were based on the idea that language learning is a product of transmission, where teacher transmits and learner is recipient.

Not only Maňák and Švec are persuaded that the student should be responsible, at least partly, for his own results, also Janíková (2011) believes in the autonomity of students, in learning by doing or in project methods. There is obviously one drawback, it requires more preparation time. We train the teachers in the ability of defining students´ language learning goals, to identify classroom activities with real-world situations. The teacher motivates and guides the student through the learning process, is still in control of students´ learning activities.

Every teacher should be able to reflect on himself or herself, it is not easy to move from the traditional teacher-centered model to the student-centered one. The teacher needs to think about perfect lesson planning, classroom management, group dynamics, assessment and other issues. Otherwise, there will be no change in thinking. We provide our teachers and tutors with the basic knowledge of how modern technologies can be implemented in their teaching models and we guide them through their first teaching experiences.

Open Learning concept focuses on teacher training, because to have trained and experienced teachers who are able to use modern technology, online learning environment, classroom management or the right planning, is absolutely crucial for successful learning and teaching with the Open Learning material.

When developing the teacher training program with the Open Learning concept, we were reflecting our own practical teaching experience, as well as the theoretical information about various teaching models. We compared some of the traditional directive models with communicative, humanistic and creative models to develop the methodological background for using the Open Learning materials in classrooms.

In the Open Learning concept, we do not apply this teacher-centered model, because learner´s role is very passive. We realize that changing the role of a traditional teacher requires not only an open mind but also the willingness to learn and to try new things.

For the Open Learning teacher, the student-centered model is significant, and we have been trying to train our tutors and teachers to accept this as their new approach to teaching. Language learning should be a process of discovery, teachers should not do the student´s work for the student. Both, the teacher and the learner share a certain part of responsibility for learning, they are both active participant, whereas the most active part is on the side of the student.

The teacher training program involves the practice of mentoring, because as a professional tool, teachers can help each other, support each other and give each other feedback. We also encourage regular meeting of all Open Learning teachers and tutors in order to exchange their experiences with others. We encourage them to talk about the problems they face while teaching, to share their positive feelings and experience. Open Learning teachers need to grow, to educate themselves, to become very skilled in using technology and modern methods of teaching. Regular meetings, training and webinars guarantee this.

VIII. Conclusion

In this paper, we have been trying to present the theoretical and methodological basis of the Open Learning concept that was developed in order to satisfy the needs of modern learners to be able to learn a foreign language for specific purposes effectively and in real-world situations.

The concept has a very firm theoretical background in applying some of the approaches from psycholinguistic methods, new communicative approaches and multimedia, therefore has been quite successful with hundreds of students from different branches, such as chemistry, engineering, business, services in travel trade and other. The design of textbooks and online materials for Open Learning has been a living organism since we developed it. We realize that none of the described method has been proved to be the best and the only one. No methodological approach covers all aspects of teaching and learning. As authors and educators, we need to think about various approaches, to find what is best

suitable for individual students, to observe our teaching and teaching of our colleagues, to know our students´ learning styles and strategies, to get feedback, to monitor and mentor others, to have a good planning and organizational skills.

In the Open Learning concept, planning and organization of the teaching and learning is crucial. Some of the Open Learning modules implement communicative teaching and learning more than the others, according to the field of study. Language is integrated with meaningful, relevant context. It is very effective because learners learn more efficiently when they are doing something practical and purposeful. All Open Learning modules can be very successfully implemented into CLIL teaching.

When designing new modules for various professions, we must take into consideration all of the theoretical and practical knowledge we have gained so far and implementation of multimedia into teaching and learning. The very fast change from print-based to more visually oriented presentations needs a fast response from teachers, authors, educators to be able to use all the advantages of media to engage students in learning

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Resumé

Příspěvek se zabývá teoretickým základem pro koncept Open Learning, který je metodou vývoje výukových materiálů pro odborný cizí jazyk, vzdělávacím konceptem a certifikačním programem učitelů a lektorů. Koncept Open Learning byl vytvořen na základě tradičních a moderních zjištění z oborů psycholingvistiky, neurolingvistiky, metodologie, pedagogiky a praxe. V příspěvku zdůvodňujeme výběr metod pro vytváření výukových materiálů Open Learning, podle kterých jsme se jako autoři konceptu řídili, abychom vytvořili materiály, které jsou efektivní a mohou sloužit mnoha typům studentů.

Využívání ICT považujeme za nástroj, který ulehčuje práci učitele, uvádíme příklady multimodálního modelu výuky a učení, abychom objasnili, proč jsou materiály Open Learning kvalitní a mohou sloužit jako důležitý nástroj a pomůcka při výuce a učení se odborného cizího jazyka. Počítače a digitalizace se ukázala jako dobrý nástroj při procesu výuky i učení, což je opět opřeno o dlouholeté studie o implementaci ICT do výuky.

Koncept Open Learning zahrnuje také vzdělávání učitelů. V příspěvku popisujeme funkčnost a potřebnost dalšího vzdělávání učitelů a lektorů neboť role učitele v digitálním věku v kterém momentálně žijeme, se velmi změnila. Poukazujeme na to, že změna učitele v rádce a průvodce, mentora není nová myšlenka, že tento postoj mělo mnoho pedagogů a myslitelů již dlouho před 21. století. Ve vzdělávání učitelů, kteří pracují s materiály Open Learning dbáme na posun myšlení učitelů a lektorů tak, aby byli schopni kvalitně a efektivně tyto materiály používat a zároveň používali moderních aktivizačních metod ve výuce. Jsme si vědomi toho, že měnit myšlení trvá roky a proto je nutné dále pokračovat v osvětě a podpoře samostatnosti a zodpovědnosti žáků a studentů.

Klíčová slova: učení a vyučování jazyků, výukový model, Open Learning, psycholingvistické teorie, design učebnice, online učení