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**THE VALUE OF PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING  
AS PART OF TEACHER EDUCATION SPECIALIZATION  
AS PERCEIVED BY THE STUDENTS OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

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**ПСИХОЛОГО-ПЕДАГОГІЧНА ПІДГОТОВКА  
ВЧИТЕЛІВ ЯК КОМПОНЕНТ РОЗУМІННЯ СТУДЕНТАМИ  
ПРИКЛАДНОЇ ЛІНГВІСТИКИ**

*Підготовка до професійної педагогічної діяльності вчителів різних предметів відбувається головним чином через спеціалізацію, пропонувану у межах навчального процесу на даній спеціальності. З аналізу компетентності вчителя іноземної мови виникає, що психолого-педагогічна підготовка є визначальною. У статті запрезентовано результати дослідження, проведені серед студентів спеціальності «прикладна лінгвістика» щодо доцільності проведення занять з психології та педагогіки на вчительській спеціальності.*

**Ключові слова:** *підготовка майбутніх вчителів іноземної мови, студенти прикладної лінгвістики, педагогіка, психологія, педагогічна діяльність.*

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*Подготовка к профессиональной педагогической деятельности учителей разных предметов происходит главным образом через специализацию, предлагаемую в рамках учебного процесса на данной специальности. Из анализа компетентности учителя иностранного языка следует, что психолого-педагогическая подготовка является определяющей. В статье представлено результаты исследования, проведенного среди студентов специальности «прикладная лингвистика» о целесообразности проведения занятий с психологии и педагогике на учительской специальности.*

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*Ключевые слова:* подготовка будущих учителей иностранного языка, студенты прикладной лингвистики, педагогика, психология, педагогическая деятельность.

### **Introduction**

Education could not exist without the widely understood notion of educators, i.e. teachers, lecturers, instructors, trainers, etc. An indispensable component which sets new standards of formal education for children and the youth are teachers – the specialists in various fields and from different education levels, from pre-school to post middle-school.

Those students who see their future in the teacher profession most often choose the teacher education specialization from the different specialization that their programmes have to offer. Formally, the purpose of education in the teacher education specialization is defined as «it entitles a person to teach the studied language», in case of foreign philologies, or to teach the subject which the person studied, i.e. natural sciences [21; 22].

However, it is obvious that the choice of teacher education specialization and obtaining teaching qualifications are not tantamount to the desire to be a teacher, to start working as a teacher or to strive at excellence at this profession. The issue of functioning and professional development of teachers has been the subject of multiple research studies. Extensive works on pedeutologic issues with further references to the literature of the subject can be found in the works of T. Lewowicki [11], J. Michalak [12], H. Kwiatkowska [10] and C. Plewka [16]. Despite representing different perspectives, pedeutologists agree that becoming a teacher is a process of development which encompasses also functioning aspects, which are outside scope of the pure professional role of a teacher. To picture the nature and complexity of this process, as well as to integrate in with the comprehensive functioning of a teacher as a human being, it is worth to quote one of C. Plewka's works «Professional development of a teacher is a long and directional process of changes, caused by factors of external and internal influence, in which one can single out regularly occurring stages of quantitative and qualitative changes (of developmental stages) which prove objectively that it is systematically going in the direction set by the sense of one's own life. The nature of such understood professional development is the gaining of teaching professionalism. At the basis of professional development lies fulfilling of needs and the meaning of life» [16, p. 71].

Preparing for such understood professional development requires including in teacher education of a wide area of psychological-pedagogic education, which is an insufficient part of particular didactics, specific for the studied field and its respective educational subjects.

In teaching education we can single out two trends of training – pre-school teachers and primary school teacher take regular, BA and MA courses

in pedagogy which give them comprehensive preparation in terms of knowledge as well as skills and competences in pedagogy and psychology sub-disciplines as well as in related disciplines connected with upbringing and education of a human in course of their life. The other group are the so-called 'subject' teachers, who graduate from a subject-specific programme, i.e. philology, mathematics, biology, etc. and gain their psychological-pedagogic qualifications, necessary to start work as a teacher, during either their teaching education specialization within their university programmes, or during post-graduate or qualification courses.

Consequently, despite the fact that both trends meet the formal requirements of teaching qualifications, they differ greatly with respect to the scope of psychological-pedagogical education of students, which stems from the difference in the hours of classes allotted for particular subjects as well as in the very number of subjects included in the curriculum.

In relation to the education of foreign language teachers-to-be, the current situation is described by M. Sikorska as follows: «for decades, the system of higher education had been dominated by a educational model in which the preparation for the teacher profession is just an additional element of neo-philological programmes which are focused mostly at literature, linguistics and culture» [18, p. 180]. This argument points to two issues; on the one hand, there is a need to modify not only the programmes for educating teachers-philologists but also the need to change the mindset concerning the preparation to the profession of a foreign language teacher. On the other hand, the argument stresses the role of academic teachers who teach non-philological specialist subjects (pedagogic and psychological) which are a part of the teacher education specializations.

The importance of the subject of psychological-pedagogical preparation in professional foreign language teaching and the need to integrate philological education with teacher education are argued by both the researchers of the university-level education process and teachers of foreign languages [6; 7], and by analyses of teacher competences [15; 20; 13].

According to E. Zawadzka [20, p. 110 – 111], a professional teacher should possess the following competences: 1) language, 2) psychological-pedagogical, 3) methodological, 4) educational, 5) knowledge about the country and culture, 6) organizational and 7) innovative-creative. This list shows that basically all competences, apart from purely linguistic, require a comprehensive extra-linguistic education of students.

Subject teachers-to-be, that is those students who choose teaching education as either their major or specialization, most often have their first contact with pedagogy or psychology as academic subjects and this is when they also gain systematic knowledge of these two fields. Such is the situation of, for instance, the students of the applied linguistics who prepare for the profession

of a foreign language teacher (the students of this subject specialise in two foreign languages).

The purpose of education in the specialization is to equip the students with tools necessary for proper realization the role of a teacher, i.e. skills and attitudes in pedagogy, psychology and didactics of a given subject. Because students are adults (most often in their early twenties)<sup>1</sup>, it seems legitimate to analyse the general purposes of education at teacher education specializations from andragogic perspective, i.e. understanding academic education as a component of all-life development of and formal learning of an adult. Thus, we can show the tasks which are given to the academic teachers of pedagogic and psychological subjects at teacher education specialization:

- creating conditions for gaining operative (not declarative) knowledge in a given field;
- forming of positive attitudes of students with respect to psychological-pedagogic knowledge and skills;
- introducing of self-education and self-upbringing (path to self-fulfilment) – personal development;
- forming of a proactive attitude with relation to broadening of knowledge in psychological-pedagogic issues throughout the entire professional career – professional development.

The discussion about the above characteristic of foreign language teacher education as well as the presented tasks for psychological-pedagogical education of teachers-to-be became a motivation to carry our research of students' opinions about the specializations they have chosen. The discussed research is diagnostic and conducive to further exploration of various aspects of «subject» teacher education within teacher education specializations.

### **Methodology and research results**

The value of the teacher education specialization will be rated on the basis of the answers the students of applied linguistics will give to the following questions:

- How do the students rate the usefulness of the psychological-pedagogic knowledge and of related subjects for their work as teachers and for self-development?
- Did pedagogy and psychology classes spark in them any interest in those fields and a desire for gaining knowledge? If so, then to what degree?
- To what degree did pedagogy and psychology classes strengthened in the students the motivation for work as teachers?

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<sup>1</sup> The problem of the nature of human development in the early adulthood was addressed, among others, in publications like Arnett [1], Brzezińska [4], Klimkowska [9], Klimkowska, Dudak [8].

The research has been conducted with the use of diagnostic survey. It used the techniques of questionnaire. The respondents were a group of 103 students of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of BA programme and the 1<sup>st</sup> year of MA programme of full-time studies in applied linguistics programme, major in teacher education. The students were from the following language groups: English-German, English-French, English-Russian and German-English. The subjects age span was 22 to 25. Because of the nature of the humanities programmes, i.e. their clear feminization, and due to the fact that majority of teachers are women, the respondents included 94 women and 9 men. The survey was carried out during the second semester of the academic year of 2011/2012.

In order to get to know the students better and determine what their plans were for becoming teachers, the author decided to first establish the motives behind their choosing teacher education specialization. It turned out (*Table 1*) that of all the surveyed teachers-to-be, only slightly over half intended to work in this profession.

*Table 1*

#### **Maim motive behind choosing the teacher education specialization**

<b>Motives for choosing the teacher education specialization</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Love for the profession of teacher and desire to work in that profession	27	26.2
To gain new qualifications and be able to work as a translator and as a teacher	26	25.2
Secure oneself against unemployment (just in case I don't find another job; but I don't want to work as a teacher)	35	34.0
Interest in pedagogy and psychology	7	6.8
By chance	8	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: the author's own research.*

However, nearly 40.00 respondent admitted that they do not see their professional future as teachers, having chosen this specialisation only as a back-up, in case their other plans fell through and they would be forced to find work as teachers.

The results may point to several issues. On the one hand, a quite high percentage of people who do not want to work as teachers may be the result of the status of this profession in Poland. Teacher, however difficult to overestimate,

is a profession of an average social esteem and is regarded as unprofitable and stressful [14; 5]. Thus, the common conception of the teaching profession can have a serious contribution in terms of the choice of professional paths of students prior to their transition to the labour market. However, the indecisiveness of the students, and their tendency to «play it safe», can be viewed in terms of development traits of the emerging adulthood, which is characterised by: 1) *the age of identity explorations*; 2) *the age of instability*; 3) *the self-focused age*; 4) *the age of feeling in-between*; 5) *the age of possibilities* [19, p. 34].

With regard to the first of the researched issues, it has been determined that the surveyed students find pedagogic as well as psychological knowledge very important element of teacher's competence and work (81.6 %) as well as of self-development.

**Table 2**

**Evaluation of the importance of pedagogic and psychological knowledge for professional work and personal self-development**

Category	In professional work		Personal development	
	N	%	N	%
Very important	60	58,3	32	31.1
Rather important	24	23,3	45	43.7
Difficult to say	9	8,7	21	20.4
Rather unimportant	7	6,8	4	3.9
Very unimportant	3	2,9	1	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: the author's own research.*

Somehow different results were recorded with respect to the issue of the usefulness of the acquired knowledge (Table 3). In spite of the fact that almost half (47.6 %) of the respondents admitted that the knowledge they have gained was useful, those who were not able to give any evaluation formed a group only little smaller (45.6 %). With respect to personal self-development, the recorded results were less optimistic still. Over 2/3 of the surveyed teachers-to-be had difficulty in evaluating the usefulness of the acquired psychological-pedagogic knowledge in their personal self-development.

It is worth stressing that only a few of the respondents gave explicitly negative answers as to the usefulness of the discussed knowledge in the teaching profession and in personal self-development.

Table 3

**Evaluation of the usefulness of pedagogic and psychological knowledge acquired in academic classes**

Category	In professional work		In personal self-development	
	N	%	N	%
Very useful	14	13.6	15	14.6
Rather useful	35	34.0	15	14.6
Difficult to say	47	45.6	71	68.9
Rather useless	4	3.9	2	1.9
Quite useless	3	2.9	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: the author's own research.*

Another problem taken up in the research was to determine if pedagogy and psychology classes realised as a part of the teaching education specialization were a factor developing the interests of the students of linguistics in the these fields as well as the need to broaden their knowledge of pedagogy and psychology. As can be concluded from the data presented in *Table 4*, pedagogy classes turned out to be somewhat less interesting for the surveyed students than psychology classes. One of six teacher-to-be admitted that thanks to the classes in teacher education their interest in pedagogy as a science has grown. The same response with respect to psychology classes was given by one of every three of the respondents.

Table 4

**Academic classes have sparked an interest in the discussed fields**

Category	pedagogy		psychology	
	N	%	N	%
Definitely yes	2	1,9	7	6.8
Rather yes	15	14,6	26	25.2
Difficult to say	55	53,4	52	50.5
Rather not	30	29,1	14	13.6
Definitely not	1	0,9	4	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: the author's own research.*

The most often given explanation of the responses was that psychology is a more down-to earth science and it refers to human life in general, not only in the context of education, while pedagogy was rather useful in work with children and teenagers, or when you are a parent yourself.

Half of the respondents were not able to rate the discussed classes with respect to their influence on the development of their interests. When explaining their stance on the issue, they said that they had not thought about it. For a part of the group of the surveyed students, these were only «attend and forget» classes, completely outside the scope of their interests, thus they had no expectations that these classes may interest them.

With regard to broadening of knowledge of psychology and pedagogy through self-education, about half (50.5 %) declared such intentions (*Table 5*). The responses of rest of the respondents were split almost fifty-fifty between a lack of interest in self-education in the discussed fields and the inability to specify their intentions on the matter.

*Table 5*

**Intentions of the respondents as to self-education  
in psychology and pedagogy**

Kategorie		
	N	%
Definitely yes	14	13.6
Rather yes	38	36.9
Difficult to say	24	23.3
Rather not	21	20.4
Definitely not	6	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: the author's own research.*

When substantiating their position, the students who intended to further develop their knowledge of psychology and pedagogy through self-study said that they were aware of the importance of that knowledge and that they felt unsatisfied. They said that this knowledge was necessary to become a good teacher and that it is expanding so quickly that self-education becomes the only way for them to keep up. They also admitted that they learnt a lot about themselves during those classes. They had learnt a new way to perceive people, their behaviour and development. They also said that thanks to classes in pedago-

gy and psychology they were able to ask themselves important questions and they knew that finding answers to many those questions would take them years.

The students who did not plan to broaden their knowledge of pedagogy and psychology said these were fields in which they had no interest. They did not make any plans for the future which would include becoming a teacher, thus they did not see any need for self-education in those fields. Moreover, the surveyed students showed that, although they are humanists, pedagogy is to them not a matter-of-fact field, and for a few of them it is simply boring. There were also responses which revealed that the philology students related pedagogy to almost only the education of children and teenagers, and because they intended to work with adults only, they thought that pedagogy and psychology of child development and upbringing would be useless to them.

The respondents who were undecided, fortunately, explained that because they did not know where they would work, they were not able to say exactly if they would need self-education in pedagogy and psychology.

The last issue that was included in the survey was the question if the pedagogy-psychology classes have changed the students' motivation to work as foreign language teachers. The recorded data (*Table 6*) showed that, in general, the classes in those two subjects had very little influence on the students' motivation to work as teachers. A majority of those respondents who began their teacher education specialization with very positive spirits and with the desire to work as teachers were still convinced that they had chosen their specialization wisely (39,8 %). Similar results were recorded in case of the group

*Table 6*

**Change of motivation for the teaching profession  
under the influence of pedagogy and psychology classes**

Response categories		
	N	%
Was positive and did not change	41	39.8
Was negative but changed into positive	3	2.8
Difficult to say	12	11.7
Was positive but changed into negative	12	11.7
Was negative and did not change	35	34.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: the author's own research.*

of students who chose teacher education specialization despite the fact that they were not interested in working as teachers. One in three students from that group admitted that they started their teacher education training with negative attitude towards this profession, and this attitude did not change. Only in three cases a change of attitude to positive was recorded, and one in eight respondents the attitude changed to negative.

The students with the positive motivation explained that the subjects discussed during their pedagogy and psychology classes allowed them to better understand the nature of the process of teaching children and teenagers. On the other hand, the respondents who declared their unwillingness to work as teachers explained that the classes, in tandem with the teaching practice at schools only strengthened their conviction of the fact that teaching is a profession that is too ungrateful and stressful for them to perform it.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up the presented results, it should be noticed that the pedagogy-psychological education as a part of the teacher education specialisation in the applied linguistics programme is viewed by the students mostly as valuable. However, this value is placed by different students in different aspects. The one issue the respondents were almost unanimous was that the major value in graduating from the teacher education specialization is gaining the qualifications to work as a teacher, which may become useful even if, at the time of their studies, the students do not plan to work as teachers.

Also, a clearly discerned by the surveyed students was the value of pedagogy and psychology knowledge, both in terms of professional work as personal self-development. However, it should be pointed out that there was a common difficulty to rate both the usefulness of the said classes as well as the personal intentions of the students to broaden their knowledge. As shown above, the indecisiveness of the students may be regarded as a developmental regularity typical for the emerging adulthood period [1]. However, with respect to the transition to the labour market [2; 17], the building of career capital [3] the problems with rating of the value of the gained knowledge, may be regarded as an omen of difficulties in the building of professional competences.

The research results also revealed the need to more strongly accentuate the meaning of pedagogic and psychological knowledge in relation of professional work as well as personal self-development. It is essential to develop in university students self-education competences which they will use after graduating, when the internal requirements of academic education no longer apply. The very fact of understanding the importance of knowledge is not enough for the student to develop it on their own. It is important to involve in the process of education of the teachers-to-be tasks in which systematic and comprehensive knowledge and skills in pedagogy and psychology will turn out to be indispensable for achieving success.

This research does not exhaust the discussed problems. Despite of its limitations in that they were performed only locally and based on a diagnostic, simplified model, this research has showed a certain picture of how the system of pedagogic-psychological education is perceived by teachers-to-be of foreign languages. The research may also be a spur to launch further, more comprehensive analyses. It may also be a pointer on how to improve the quality of teacher education.

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