

# DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING BY ENHANCING COMPENSATION STRATEGIES IN TEFL

## [ROZVOJ KRITICKEHO MYSLENIA PODPOROVANIM KOMPENZACNYCH STRATEGII VO VYUCOVANI CUDZICH JAZYKOV]

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### **Abstract**

The study focuses on supporting the use of compensation strategies in foreign language teaching and learning. First, the concept of foreign language strategies in general is explained. Then, the terminology linked to a special group of strategies, labelled either as “communication strategies” or “compensation strategies” is discussed in more detail in terms of their history and classification. The controversial approach of scholars related to the name and the concept is elaborated. The importance of enhancing these strategies in foreign language teaching and learning is highlighted, too. Further, the study provides meta-analysis of research conducted in compensation strategies. Finally, the study delivers results of a questionnaire survey aimed at investigating which compensation strategies secondary school teachers in Slovakia support in developing perceptive and productive skills of their learners.

### **Key words**

compensation strategies, communication strategies, foreign language teaching, meta-analysis, secondary school level

### **Anotácia**

Článok sa venuje podpore kompenzačných stratégií zo strany učiteľov cudzích jazykov na sekundárnom stupni vzdelávania. V teoretickej časti je vysvetlená koncepcia učebných stratégií vo všeobecnosti. V nasledujúcich paragrafoch je ozrejmenej terminológia, história a typológia vzťahujúca sa ku špeciálnej skupine stratégií označovaných ako „komunikačné stratégie“ a „kompenzačné stratégie“. Článok sa ďalej venuje dôležitosti podpory kompenzačných stratégií v cudzojazyčnom vyučovaní a autorka článku prezentuje metaanalýzu vybraných výskumov v oblasti podpory kompenzačných stratégií. V nadväznosti na metaanalýzu sú predložené výsledky dotazníkového prieskumu zameraného na zistenie podpory kompenzačných stratégií učiteľmi cudzích jazykov na stredných školách na Slovensku. Prieskum sa sústredil najmä na receptívne (počúvania čítanie s porozumením) a produktívne (rečový prejav a písanie) komunikatívne zručnosti.

## **Kľúčové slová**

kompenzačné stratégie, komunikačné stratégie, vyučovanie cudzích jazykov, metaanalýza, vyšší stupeň strednej školy

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### **1. Introduction into Communication Strategies**

For the purpose of this article a classification of language learning strategies is important as it should serve as a starting point for the analysis procedure. However, first the terminology and the concept of foreign language strategies in general should be explained. Foreign language strategies enable learners to take more responsibilities for their own personal development as well as for language learning, making the learners more independent and autonomous. The main purpose of foreign language strategies is to support the most important of skills - learning how to learn.

A special place belongs to the group of strategies which are labelled either as “communication strategies” or “compensation strategies”. The more commonly used term is “communication strategies.” The theoretical backgrounds of communication strategies are based on studies and analysis of learner errors in the early 1970s. Selinker (1972) introduced the term strategies of communication related to the errors coming from the learner’s inadequate grasp of the L2 system when supposed to express meaning in spontaneous speech. Khanji (1996) identified three components of communication strategies: 1) a communication difficulty owing to target language inadequacy, 2) student awareness of the problem, and 3) a solution to overcome it. Faerch and Kasper (1983) considered the communication strategy as an attempt to solve a problem while trying to achieve a language goal. Brown (1994) expanded the definition by including verbal and non-verbal categories for solving the communication problem.

Tarone’s (1977) typology of communication strategies was an influential and early one. Tarone (1981) highlighted the social aspects of communication and understood communication strategies as social interaction. In his classification, communication strategies fall into three types: (1) L2- based strategies (e.g., approximation, word coinage, and circumlocution), (2) L1-based strategies (e.g., translation, language switch, appeal for assistance), and (3) avoidance (e.g., word avoidance and topic avoidance).

The subsequent important typology by Faerch and Kasper (1983, 1984) were followed by various classifications of communication strategies by Stern 1983 and Poulisse 1987.

Faerch and Kasper (1983) adopted an alternative approach by considering communication strategies from the psychological problem-solving perspective and dividing communication strategies into two broad categories: (1) achievement and (2) avoidance.

According to Stern (1983: 411) communication strategies are “techniques of coping with difficulties in communicating in an imperfectly known second language”. Three characteristics associated with such strategies are that they are problem-based (used when communication problems arise), conscious and intentional.

In 1987 Poulisse termed communication strategies “conceptual” consisting of two subtypes: (1) holistic and analytic (2) and “linguistic.”

## 2. Communication or Compensation Strategies?

In 1990s the notion of “compensation strategies” gained attention through the work of Oxford. According to Oxford (1990), compensation strategies help learners to overcome knowledge limitations and to stay in conversations long enough to get sustained practice.

Compensation strategies are among the most important of language learning strategies for beginner or intermediate learners; however, they are also useful for more expert learners. While Oxford (1990) acknowledges that some experts classify compensation strategies merely being communication strategies that are not useful for learning, she defends her position that compensation strategies help in learning language. She (1990: ix) defines learning strategies as “actions taken by second and foreign language learners to control and improve their own learning”.

Even though such strategies are functionally different from communication strategies, the distinction is not so clear. The reason is that a big portion of language attainment takes place through active participation in communication, and communication strategies help learners to do so. Thus they assist in (a) obtaining practice, and (b) gaining new information by testing what is appropriate. Tarone (1981) mentions learning strategies as a third type of strategy in her classification. In fact, she (1980) points out that in actual use all communication strategies may serve also learning purposes. For this reason, Oxford (1980) included compensation strategies as one of the six main classes in her system of learning strategies.

Closely connected to the terminology and classification clarified in the aforementioned paragraphs, the question arises whether compensation/communication strategies are language *use* or language *learning* strategies.

Language learning strategies have been classified by many scholars and almost two dozen strategy classification systems have been established respecting different criteria. Foreign language learning strategies are generally divided into two main classes: strategies adopted for long-term *learning* and strategies adopted for *using* the language in a current contact situation. At this point a difficulty in putting compensation strategies into either of these categories occurs.

Among *language use* strategies a category labelled as communication strategies (Cohen and Weaver 2005) represents strategies that are used by learners to convey a message that is both meaningful and informative for the listener or reader when they do not have all the language they need. When language learners encounter problems or breakdowns in communication, they seek devices to remain in communication. They may use communication strategies to steer the conversation away from problematic areas by expressing their meaning in some other way. Students paraphrase words or concepts, coin words, or use facial expressions or gestures in creative attempts to communicate and to create more time to think. Learners can also compensate for gaps by using literal translation from their native language or

switching to their native language altogether. Finally, communication strategies can also include conversational interaction strategies such as asking for help, clarification or confirmation, and using fillers and other hesitation devices that are used by those fluent in the language (Cohen and Weaver 2005).

Oxford (1990) classifies learning strategies into direct (cognitive, memory, compensation) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective and social). Compensation strategies belong into the group of direct *language learning* strategies and consist of two strategies: (a) guessing intelligently in listening and reading, and (b) overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. The strategy “guessing intelligently” consists of two sub strategies which are “using linguistic and using non-linguistic clues”. The strategy “overcoming limitations in speaking and writing” contains eight sub strategies which are: switching to mother tongue, getting help, using mime or gesture, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the topic, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words, and using circumlocution or synonym. These strategies are used by learners to make up for their incompetence in the target language so as to continue the communication.

Compensation strategies are distinguished depending on whether they are useful by learners to overcome gaps in their language knowledge or, as Gregersen et al. point out (2001), their choice of strategies might hold them back in their foreign language acquisition process. Medina (2010) calls the first ones “forward strategies” and the second ones “backward strategies”. They correspond respectively to the terms achievement and avoidance strategies.

### **3. The Importance of Enhancing Compensation Strategies**

Bialystok and Kellerman (1987) agree that the use of communication strategies should be encouraged, but they do not consider teaching them: “It is one thing to encourage their use (and create the conditions in which they can be used) and quite another to actively teach communication strategies in the classroom” (Bialystok and Kellerman 1987: 172). Dorney (1995), on the other hand, implies that strategy training can be incorporated early in a foreign language teaching syllabus. In the following paragraphs several arguments for enhancing communication or compensation strategies are presented. Two most prominent arguments are the aspect of motivating learners and increasing their self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Teaching strategies to communicate ideas with limited vocabulary and grammar will likely improve test scores, increase conversation practice, and help students become more communicatively confident and competent. Moreover, maintaining or increasing student motivation is one of the challenges that teachers face that can improve language learning. Abdesslem (1996) argues that highly motivated students become wary of classrooms that tend to focus too much on form instead of enabling them to interact in the target language. In addition, students without high motivation can become motivated through successful experiences interacting in the target language.

Thus, teaching students compensation strategies can increase motivation and improve students` potential for success in learning the foreign language.

Further argument is that effective employment of compensation strategies can enrich students` experience of meaningful communication and boost the self-confidence and increase student self-efficacy. For these reasons compensation strategies are important skills to teach. It helps learners to apply the strategies that assist them in maintaining the conversation, better comprehending of the target language, dealing with vocabulary and grammar shortcomings, or obtaining a higher score in tests. Besides, when learners experience favourable communication in the target language in spite of their lack of knowledge, their self-confidence improves and this encourages them to achieve more active involvement in language learning tasks (Abdeslem (1996).

#### 4. Metaanalysis of Selected Research Studies on Compensation Strategies

The following section summarises the research conducted in compensation strategies in the course of 2001-2017. The criterion for the selection of the articles was that they should report studies that present original research in TEFL. The selected research studies (N=11) are (see Tab.1) Margolis (2001), Lloyd (2007), Medina (2010), Tajeddin nd Alemi (2010), Ljungberg (2011), Belén Cabrejas-Peñuelas (2012), Fazeli (2012), Budiman Sabri and Rushita (2013), Yaman and Çakici (2013), Karbalaei and Negin (2014), Sakarami, - Hajhashemi, - Caltabiano, (2017).

The Table 1 gives overview about the most important features of the analysed research studies such as brief details of the authors, year of publication, research nature, research sample, data collection instruments and communication skill or language system (when provided). The subsequent information is devoted to an analysis of the research aims and the key findings of the selected studies. The presented summary should deliver insight into the current state of knowledge in the field of compensation strategies and identify the direction in which future research should be heading for.

**Table 1.** Attributes of the research studies

Study	Research nature	Research sample	Data collection instrument	Communication skill/language system
Margolis, Douglas (2001)	descriptive quantitative	10 EFL students	checklist of strategies based on Oxford's list of compensation strategies	not given
Lloyd, Jennifer (2007)	descriptive qualitative	1 adult speaker of English as third	Oxford's SILL, observation, interview	not given

		language		
Tajeddin Zia and Alemi, Mino (2010)	descriptive quantitative	229 EFL adult learners	modified version of Oxford's SILL	listening reading writing
Medina, Beatriz López (2010)	descriptive quantitative	55 intermediate students of English language	questionnaire of compensation strategies	listening speaking reading writing
Ljungberg, Anna (2011)	descriptive quantitative+ qualitative	242 students of upper secondary level	survey	grammar and vocabulary
		10 students of upper secondary level	recorded introspection	grammar and vocabulary
Seyed Hossein Fazeli (2012)	descriptive quantitative	213 female university level learners of English language	adapted Inventory of Compensatory Strategies based on Oxford's (SILL), background questionnaire, NEO-Five Factors Inventory (NEO-FFI), and TOEFL	not given
Cabrejas-Peñuelas, Ana Belén (2012)	empirical qualitative	1 advanced English language learner	think-aloud protocols, writing plans, drafts, the video recordings of the writing sessions and follow-up interviews	reading and writing
		1 intermediate English language learner		reading and writing
Budiman Sabri Ahmada, Rushita Ismail (2013)	descriptive quantitative+ qualitative	30 adult part-time ESL learners	SILL questionnaire, demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interview	not given
İsmail Yaman and Dilek Çakici (2013)	empirical qualitative	60 first-year university EFL students experimental group control group	experiment, intervention, pre- and post-test for reading comprehension	reading

Karbalaei, Alireza , Tania Negin (2014)	descriptive quantitative	120 EFL language learners, 21-25 years old beginners	Oxford's typology of compensation strategies	speaking
Shakarami, Alireza et all (2017)	descriptive quantitative+ qualitative	107 undergraduate Net-Generation ESL students	questionnaire and in-depth interview	written communication

Out of the 11 research studies, only 2 were found to be experimental. The first one analysed the compensation strategies used by an expert and a less expert language learner, while the second one examined whether using compensation strategies makes a statistically significant difference in the students' reading performances. The remaining 9 studies were of descriptive nature and focused at identifying, mapping, determining, and describing compensation strategies in relation to different factors such as test scores, student gender, age, personality traits, language proficiency, language systems, and communicative skills. One study explored the relationship between compensation strategy use and Net-Generation ESL students.

Five studies applied quantitative instruments, three studies made use of qualitative instruments and three studies combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. The sample size in the analysed studies ranged from one subject to 242 participants.

After analysing the content of the selected articles, we identified two areas which open space for further research. It was found out that the research in the analysed studies was conducted mostly with university students and adults. Only one study explored the use of compensation strategies by students at upper secondary level. Another even more important outcome of the analysis is that none of the research studies focused on investigating the foreign language teachers and their active support of compensation strategies in the teaching process.

Therefore, a research study needs to be carried out which focuses on finding out whether foreign language teachers enhance compensation strategies. It might be also useful to investigate which compensation strategies are supported by the TEFL teachers.

## 5 Methodology of Research

The research presented in the research part investigates the support of compensation strategies, by teachers at Slovak secondary schools. Data for the current study were gathered through a standardised instrument, a strategy inventory for teachers, whose purpose is to detect, which learning strategies teachers support when teaching a foreign language both in and out of the classroom.

## 5.1 Research Aims

The aim of the research is to investigate:

- whether the secondary school teachers support preferably compensation strategies in perceptive skills (listening and reading) or in productive skills (speaking and writing),
- whether the secondary school teachers support strategies for overcoming limitations or strategies for guessing intelligently.

## 5.2 Data Collection Instruments

A background questionnaire queried teachers about demographic data such as their age and foreign language they teach, as well as the length of their teaching practice. The data derived from it was used to describe the research sample.

The Slovak translation of the inventory for secondary school teachers was used (Cohen and Oxford, 2002). The Inventory for secondary school teachers contains sixty-four items. The inventory comprises of six major sections - Listening strategies, Speaking strategies, Reading strategies and Writing strategies. The items are further subdivided into practice strategies, production strategies, comprehension strategies and compensation strategies. The compensation strategy section of the Inventory consists of 22 items:

- listening (N=8), reading (N=3), speaking (N=9) and writing (N=2)
- strategies for overcoming limitations (N=15), strategies for guessing intelligently (N=7)

## 5.3 Research Subjects

A randomly selected representative sample of 66 foreign language teachers at secondary schools in Slovakia participated in the study. The respondents are qualified in-service teachers whose teaching practice takes from 1 to 40 years, with an average of 13.8. They are between 26 and 67 years old, with an average age of 40. Out of 66 inventories 63 were completed correctly and could be submitted to processing.

## 5.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The respondents' reports of supporting the foreign language learning strategies were inspected using an inventory with closed question items. Respondents rated the extent to which the statements in the questionnaire described their actual support of each foreign language strategy using a three-point response format ranging from "I use this strategy and I consider it useful" (1), "I do not know this strategy but I find it interesting" (2) and "I do not use this strategy and I do not consider it useful" (3).

## 5.5 Research Results

This section presents the results of the inventory-based survey. Compensation strategies supported by teachers were classified using Oxford's (1989) compensation strategy categories and the classification into perceptive (listening, reading) and productive skills (speaking, writing). For easier understanding, the inventory items are arranged into strategy groups, strategy sets and actual strategies in the following tables.

Table 2 shows the overall results of the compensation strategies supported by teachers at secondary schools across main categories.

**Table 2.** Overview of Compensation Strategies Support by Teachers at Secondary Schools

Strategies in listening and reading			Strategies in speaking and writing		
Listening	Overcoming limitations	<i>Getting help</i> <b>4 out of 4</b>	Speaking	Overcoming limitations in speaking	<i>Selecting the topic</i> <b>0 out of 1</b>
	Guessing intelligently	<i>Using non-linguistic clues</i> <b>2 out of 4</b>			<i>Avoiding communication partially or totally</i> <b>0 out of 1</b>
					<i>Getting help</i> <b>1 out of 2</b>
Reading	Guessing intelligently	<i>Using linguistic clues</i> <b>2 out of 3</b>			<i>Using circumlocution or synonym</i> <b>1 out of 1</b>
					<i>Switching to the mother tongue</i> <b>0 out of 2</b>
					<i>Coining words</i> <b>0 out of 1</b>
					<i>Using mime and gesture</i> <b>1 out of 1</b>
			Writing	Overcoming limitations in writing	<i>Using circumlocution or synonym</i> <b>1 out of 1</b>
					<i>Getting help</i> <b>0 out of 1</b>

The secondary school teachers enhance eleven compensation strategies out of twenty. Most of them (6 out of 8) focus on listening. The second most enhanced compensation strategies concentrate on reading (2 out of 3). Further, teachers report promoting 1 out of 2 strategies in writing. Finally, the less supported are the compensation strategies in speaking (3 out of 9). Following the further distinction, the teachers support all itemized strategies for overcoming limitations and half of the strategies for guessing intelligently in listening. They enhance two thirds of strategies for guessing intelligently in reading. When it comes to the productive skills, the teachers support only

2 out of 9 compensation strategies for overcoming limitations in speaking. In writing half of the strategies for overcoming limitations are supported.

The subsequent Tables 3-6 present a detailed overview and description of each individual reported strategy following the more distinct classification into subcategories: listening (getting help, using non-linguistic clues), reading (using linguistic clues), speaking (using circumlocution or synonym, using mime and gesture, selecting the topic, avoiding communication, switching to the mother tongue and coining words) and writing (using circumlocution or synonym and getting help). The tables illustrate the percentage of teachers' strategy support. Those preferences which have reached more than 70% are considered relevant and are highlighted.

**Table 3.** Enhancing compensation strategies in the receptive skill Listening

Listening - Overcoming limitations		1	2	3
<i>Getting help</i>	<b>8. I recommend learners to ask a native speaker about unfamiliar sounds that they hear.</b>	<b>1</b> (2%)	<b>7</b> (11%)	<b>55</b> (87%)
<i>Getting help</i>	<b>24. I tell learners to ask speakers to repeat what they said if it was not clear to them.</b>	<b>2</b> (3%)	<b>6</b> (10%)	<b>55</b> (87%)
<i>Getting help</i>	<b>25. I tell learners to ask speakers to slow down if they are speaking too fast.</b>	<b>6</b> (10%)	<b>2</b> (3%)	<b>55</b> (87%)
<i>Getting help</i>	<b>26. I tell learners to ask for clarification if they don't understand it the first time around.</b>	<b>0</b> (0%)	<b>2</b> (3%)	<b>61</b> (97%)
Listening - Guessing intelligently				
<i>Using non-linguistic clues</i>	<b>21. I teach learners to make educated guesses about the topic based on what has already been said.</b>	<b>3</b> (5%)	<b>9</b> (14%)	<b>51</b> (81%)
<i>Using non-linguistic clues</i>	<b>22. I recommend learners to draw on their general background knowledge to get the main idea.</b>	<b>0</b> (0%)	<b>9</b> (14%)	<b>54</b> (86%)
<i>Using non-linguistic clues</i>	20. I teach learners to use the speakers' tone of voice as a clue to the meaning of what they are saying.	17 (27%)	34 (54%)	12 (19%)
<i>Using non-linguistic clues</i>	23. I recommend learners to watch speakers' gestures and general body language to help the learners figure out the meaning of what they are saying.	5 (8%)	25 (40%)	33 (52%)

From the results it is obvious that in listening comprehension all listed compensation strategies for overcoming limitations are greatly supported by the secondary school teachers. They are mostly related to getting help, which is a strategic behaviour that learners use when facing communication problems during interactional (two-way, collaborative) listening. These are strategies are applied when learners do not understand what someone says in the target language.

They are followed by two non-linguistic compensation strategies such as guessing (81%) and activating their previous knowledge or schemata (86%).

Surprisingly, the remaining two non-linguistic strategies, which should help learners to become more familiar with the sounds in the target language and are related to gestures, general body language (52%) and using the speakers' tone of voice as a clue (19%), are not supported in a sufficient way. To observe body language of speakers for better understanding in developing listening is important and it deserves more attention.

**Table 4.** Enhancing compensation strategies in receptive skill Reading

Reading - Guessing intelligently		1	2	3
<i>Using linguistic clues</i>	<b>70. I teach learners to make predictions as to what will happen next.</b>	<b>8</b> (13%)	<b>8</b> (13%)	<b>47</b> (75%)
<i>Using linguistic clues</i>	<b>71. I teach learners to guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the context of the reading material.</b>	<b>1</b> (1.5%)	<b>4</b> (6.5%)	<b>58</b> (92%)
<i>Using linguistic clues</i>	72. We use a dictionary to get a detailed sense of what individual words mean.	9 (14%)	13 (20%)	41 (65%)

As for compensation strategies in reading comprehension two strategies for guessing intelligently are significantly supported by the language teachers.

The strategy for making predictions should improve learners' reading ability is supported by 75% of the teachers. The strategy for guessing the meaning from the context which is applied when words and grammatical structures are not understood is promoted by 92% of the respondents.

The remaining non-linguistic strategy using a dictionary is enhanced quite intensively, but it has not reached the 70% limit.

**Table 5.** Enhancing compensation strategies in productive skill Speaking

Speaking - Overcoming limitations in speaking		1	2	3
<i>Using circumlocution or synonym</i>	<b>57. I teach learners to look for a different way to express the idea, like using a synonym.</b>	<b>0</b> (0%)	<b>4</b> (6%)	<b>59</b> (94%)
<i>Using mime and gesture</i>	<b>60. I teach learners to use gestures as a way to try and get their meaning across.</b>	<b>5</b> (8%)	<b>9</b> (14%)	<b>49</b> (78%)
<i>Getting help</i>	<b>56. I recommend learners to ask for help from their conversational partner.</b>	<b>6</b> (10%)	<b>12</b> (19%)	<b>45</b> (71%)
<i>Getting help</i>	54. I tell learners to encourage others to correct errors in their speaking.	21 (33%)	22 (35%)	20 (32%)
<i>Selecting the topic</i>	50. I tell learners to direct the conversation to familiar topics.	8 (13%)	18 (29%)	37 (59%)
<i>Avoiding communication</i>	53. I tell learners to try topics even when they aren't familiar to them.	12 (19%)	16 (25%)	35 (56%)

<i>partially or totally</i>				
<i>Switching to the mother tongue</i>	58. I teach learners to use words from their own language, but say it in a way that sounds like words in the target language.	31 (49%)	16 (25%)	16 (25%)
<i>Switching to the mother tongue</i>	61. I teach learners to switch back to their own language momentarily if they know that the person they are talking to can understand what is being said.	32 (51%)	15 (24%)	16 (25%)
<i>Coining words</i>	59. I teach learners to make up new words or guess if they don't know the right ones.	29 (46%)	20 (32%)	14 (22%)

The itemized compensation strategies in the productive skill speaking are quite plentiful and provide teachers with many opportunities to promote communication repair.

The compensation strategies for overcoming limitations by using synonyms (94 %) and asking for help (71 %) are among strategies supported by the teachers. The next strategy supported in a relevant way is the non-linguistic strategy for using gestures to try and get the meaning across. Apparently, 78 % of teachers advised their learners to observe body language of speakers for better understanding.

Further strategies for overcoming limitations such as asking others to correct errors in their speaking is (32%) or directing the conversation to familiar topics (59%) and coining new words if they do not know the right ones (22%) have found less teacher support.

A positive finding is the fact that the L1-based strategies for switching to the mother tongue such as using words from their own language, but saying it in a way that sounds like words in the target language or switching back to the mother tongue if they know that the person they are talking to can understand, are supported only by 25 % of the teachers.

**Table 6.** Enhancing compensation strategies in productive skill Writing

<b>Writing - Overcoming limitations in writing</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Using circumlocution or synonym</i>	<b>77. I recommend learners to find a different way to express the idea when they don't know the correct expression (e.g., use a synonym or describe the idea).</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b> (3%)	<b>61</b> (97%)
<i>Getting help</i>	82. I tell learners to try to get feedback about their writing from others, especially native speakers of the language.	7 (11%)	25 (40%)	31 (49%)

The section writing consists of two L2-based compensation strategies and the gap in enhancing these two strategies by the teachers is quite obvious. The strategy for writing an essay or academic paper recommending learners to find a different way to express the idea when they do not know the correct expression is supported by the majority of the teachers (97%), whereas the strategy to use after writing a draft of an essay getting feedback about their writing from others is reinforced by less than half of the teachers 49 %.

This phenomenon might be explained by the fact that writing is a skill practised in individual way and thus less interaction between the learners takes place. The solution could be organising the writing activities as a pair or group work.

## 5.6 Findings and Discussion

In the following section the findings of our research are summarised and discussed in the light of the information available in the studied literature. Not only the most promoted compensation strategies, but also some strategies which are either negative or caught our interest are described. First the receptive skills listening and reading comprehension are discussed, then the productive skills speaking and writing are reviewed.

The analysed compensation strategies in the listening skill evolve around areas: strategies to become more familiar with the sounds in the target language and strategies for when learners do not understand what someone says in the target language. The compensation strategies in the reading skill can be divided into areas: strategies to improve learners' reading ability and strategies for when words and grammatical structures are not understood.

It was found out that the surveyed TEFL teachers strongly support strategies for *overcoming limitations in listening* (4 out of 4), however they support only half of the itemized strategies for *guessing intelligently*. The majority of 63 teachers tell their learners to ask the speaker to help clarify what has been said if they did not understand. 55 teachers teach their students to ask speakers to slow down and to repeat what has been said if the learners need clarification. The majority of foreign language teachers teach learners to make guesses about the topic based on what has been said before (51) and on their previous knowledge (54). These strategies rely on other clues and encourage learners to make intelligent guesses. 55 teachers claim to recommend their learners to ask native speakers about unfamiliar sounds and pronunciation. Watching body language and prosodic features of the speakers are not strategies which are developed by foreign language teachers. These strategies are important compensation strategies as most communication is non-verbal and noticing body language and tone of the speakers can help learners to understand the verbal language.

It can be stated that the TEFL teachers also enhance compensation strategies for *guessing intelligently in reading* (2 out of 3). One compensation strategy is supported by the majority of the teachers to guess the meaning based on clues from the text (58). Two thirds of the teachers encourage their learners to make predictions. Both strategies are very helpful in understanding, but should be guided by certain clues and learners should not be guessing without any support from the text.

The compensation strategies in the speaking skill can be divided into areas: strategies to engage in conversations and strategies for when learners cannot think of a word or expression in natural situations. The compensation strategies in the writing skill are allocated to strategies for writing an essay or academic paper and strategies to use after writing a draft of an essay or paper.

Considering the outcomes of the research in *speaking*, only three out of nine compensation strategies for *overcoming limitations* are regularly Slavonic Pedagogical Studies Journal, eISSN 1339-9055, ISSN 1339-8660, Volume 9 Issue 2, 2020

developed by surveyed foreign language teachers. However, it has to be mentioned that three of the itemized strategies are so called negative strategies. They are related to avoiding communication in foreign language and to switching to the mother tongue. These compensations strategies are not very effective and do not help learners to develop their vocabulary knowledge or communicative competence. Therefore, it is quite encouraging that majority of teachers refuse to teach their learners to switch to the mother tongue. 59 teachers encourage learners to look for different ways to express themselves by using synonyms or description. More than half of the teachers support compensation strategies which help learners to express themselves by using gestures and body language (49). Body language is important in speaking and it deserves teachers` attention. Similarly, more than half of the teachers recommend learners to ask for help from their partner in conversation (45), support their learners to change conversation to a more familiar topic to them (37). Surprisingly as many as 43 teachers do not encourage their learners to ask for help by correcting them when speaking.

The last skill to be discussed is writing. One compensation strategy for *overcoming limitations in writing*, which is using a synonym or description, is supported by the majority of the teachers (61). They recommend learners describe their idea or use other expressions if they cannot find the right words. The compensation strategy for asking for feedback especially from native speakers is supported by less than half of the teachers (31).

## Conclusion

The compensation strategies in foreign language teaching are aimed at communication repair, a part of communicative competence, which plays an important role in the whole learning and teaching process. Learners should know how to signal non-understanding, ask for repetition, clarification, confirmation of understanding, spelling, writing things down, appealing for assistance and asking a speaker to slow down.

Two research aims were stated before the research itself took place. The first research aim was to find out whether the secondary school teachers support rather compensation strategies in perceptive skills (listening and reading) or in productive skills (speaking and writing). According to our research, teachers of secondary schools mainly enhance listening compensation strategies whereas the least supported compensation strategies are the writing strategies. At secondary schools the majority of the teachers use only 25% of writing strategies.

The second research aim was to find out whether the secondary school teachers support strategies for overcoming limitations or strategies for guessing intelligently. In listening the teachers enhanced all compensation strategies for overcoming limitations and half of the strategies for guessing intelligently. In reading comprehension two thirds of the teachers supported compensation strategies for guessing intelligently. The teachers enhanced three out of six positive strategies for overcoming limitations in speaking and did not promote any of the three negative strategies. One compensation strategy for overcoming limitations in writing was promoted by 97% of the surveyed teachers.

Finally, we can state that the TEFL teachers reported a significant support of the itemized L-2 based compensation strategies in listening, reading, and writing and tried to refrain from promoting L-1 strategies such as switching to the mother tongue or avoiding communication in speaking.

There is a demand in secondary education to follow Bloom's Taxonomy of learning objectives developing lower order thinking skills (remembering, understanding and applying) and higher order learning skills (analysing, evaluating and creating).

Compensation strategies in the presented inventory include some of the higher order thinking skills such as predicting, making educated guesses, or drawing on the general background knowledge. Pupils have to first understand the text, evaluate the key information to be able to construct their predictions. This strategy is used by 75% of the teachers. Same goes for guessing the approximate meaning by using clues from the context, a strategy supported by 92% of the surveyed teachers. The strategy for activating previous knowledge or schemata is also valuable and it is promoted by 86% of the participants.

One of the shortcomings of the present action research is the reliability of the reported data considering the number of participants (63). The outcomes of the presented questionnaire survey might not be generalized. The research should be understood as a pilot research which asks for more in-depth investigation and use of further qualitative research methods such as interview or in-class observation. We would also suggest conducting the research at primary school level to indicate whether there is progression from enhancing L1- and avoidance-based strategies to L2-based and guessing strategies. In spite of these shortcomings, we can state that the TEFL teachers at secondary school level try to promote compensation strategies which can help in foreign language learning.

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