

Needs analysis in a Polish EFL primary school context: Laying the ground for voice-assisted, mediation task-based homework

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Abstract: Foreign language (FL) examination principles have undergone a major change in Poland over the last three decades. The text mediation activities, which have been added to the FL primary and secondary school-leaving exams examination papers under the influence of the 2017 education reform, have proven a source of difficulty for students, as reported by Central Examination Boards. Despite a positive influence of voice assistance, which was combined with task-based language learning (TBLL) to enhance secondary school learners' preparation for New Matura, on their English as a foreign language (EFL) text mediation skills, it is not clear what the impact of such intervention on primary school learners would be due to the lack of analogical research. To address this gap, mixed-methods research into 36 primary school learners' needs involving both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis was conducted to identify the tasks typical of an English for general purposes context. The findings demonstrating the relevance of voice-assisted mediation tasks related to trivia and lifestyle enriched a limited understanding of primary school students' needs in technology-mediated TBLL and thus provided the basis for the instructional treatment to be examined in a different study.

Keywords: Needs analysis, TBLL, CALL, EFL, Voice assistance, Primary school, Text mediation

Introduction

The eighth-grader exam has been the first high-stakes foreign language (FL) exam taken by learners in the last grade of primary schools in Poland since April 2019. In contrast to the past similar FL examinations, such as the sixth-grader exam (CKE 2013) and middle school exam (CKE 2010), it has imposed stricter requirements on primary school learners' language performance in the wake of the 2017 education reform. Not only has the structure of the eighth-grader exam been changed to feature both closed- and open-ended exam questions and an obligatory writing component, but also the level of difficulty at which primary school students' competence has been assessed since 2019 has been increased to the A2/A2+ level (CKE 2017, 2025).

In line with the latest 2017 education reform trend, heightening the overall difficulty and intensifying the complexity of the eighth-grader exam in a FL, a number of analogical changes were made to *New Matura* (CKE 2021). For example, in addition to increasing the length of spoken and written texts in the listening and reading comprehension sections of the exam paper at the basic level, a decision was made to raise

the minimum limit in the writing exam activity from 80 to 100 words. Equally importantly, open-ended exam questions were added to the sections involving listening and reading comprehension as well as use of English, all of which consisted of closed-ended activities in the pre-reform period, that is until the 2021/2022 school year.

Interestingly, open-ended exam activities, which entail identifying selected information from source texts, both oral and written, and formulating it in Polish and English within the target texts, technically referred to as intra- and interlanguage text mediation activities (Janowska/ Plak 2021), have proven particularly challenging for Polish examinees. As demonstrated by Central Examination Boards (e.g. CKE 2024a,b), there has been a tendency for primary school learners and secondary school graduates to score lower in mediation activities as compared with other types of activities in which processing information is not tested.

To the author's best knowledge, three attempts have been reported in Poland to support English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in their performance of mediation activities (Gajewska 2025a,b,c). They were, however, limited to the secondary school context: the innovative application of the *Alexa* voice assistant (VA) within the task-based language learning (TBLL) by the learners therein helped to improve their ability to mediate. Nevertheless, despite the positive effect of this intervention in the secondary school setting, it is not clear what the effects of applying it among younger teenagers would be.

In view of the gaps in the TBLL research and Polish students' poorer performance of mediation activities, the investigation of the effects of integrating voice assistance with task performance on FL learning, especially text mediation skills, is more than justified. To provide the basis for the development of the instructional treatment, the current project aimed to identify the tasks typical of an English for general purposes context by investigating the needs of Polish EFL primary school learners.

1. Task performance in language learning

The widespread interest towards the task notion grew in the communicative era of language teaching at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s. The communication and tasks principles underlying the communicative language teaching (CLT) framework have been open to diverse interpretations in the context of the interventionist and non-interventionist perspectives. Depending on how the development of language learners' communicative competence was conceptualised – whether or not it is plausible for sub-components to be taught in isolation – CLT branched out into two directions: its weak and strong versions, each of which provides the basis for task-supported and task-based language teaching (TSL/TBLL) respectively (Littlewood 1981).

Even though TSL and TBLL approached the task role differently by either limiting its use to the pedagogical contexts (Skehan 1996) or assigning it a function of the learning tool (Krashen/ Teller 1983), the two put the concept of a task in the centre of attention mainly due to the action-oriented character of its performance, which facilitates learners' naturalistic language learning and helps them to transfer their knowledge and skills outside classroom surroundings (Norris 2009).

Learners' participation in syllabus design through a needs analysis (NA) is also said to support their active involvement in the learning process. The administration of an NA underlies learner-centred instruction, facilitating cooperation between language learners and teachers and increasing the former's autonomy (Watanabe 2006). Despite owing its origin to the traditions of teaching English for Specific Purposes, NA, defined as "systematic collection of and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum" (Brown 1995: 36), has been found central to decision-making processes in General English contexts.

To increase the credibility of information amassed within research on learners' needs in TBLL, it has been a widely recommended practice to triangulate the sources and methods of data collection. According to M. Long (2005), there are at least five sources of information on learners' needs, and they include published and unpublished literature, learners' perceived goals and wants, teachers' expectations, and domain experts' knowledge. On the other hand, the methods of data collection, which are generally divided into inductive and deductive ones (Berwick 1989), range from procedures relying on expert intuitions and involving observations and interviews, to those requiring the administration of questionnaires and tests (M. Long 2005).

2. Voice-assisted task performance in language learning

The performance of tasks with the help of VAs, defined as artificially intelligent software and applications which allow users to complete everyday tasks through voice control (Adamopoulou/ Moussiades 2020), in technology-mediated TBLL has suffered general neglect. So far, only three research studies have been undertaken to investigate the VA use within TBLL. The first two, including the pilot project (Gajewska 2025a) and the study proper (Gajewska 2025c), were conducted in Poland amid the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to facilitating secondary school EFL learners' out-of-class preparation for *New Matura*. The application of *Alexa* as source texts during intralanguage mediation task performance outside the language classroom not only proved to have a positive impact on the students' ability to mediate at within- and between-group levels, but it was also well-received. In order to verify these findings, the study was repeated two years later with another group of secondary school students (Gajewska 2025b). Again, the statistical analysis revealed a positive influence of the treatment on the participants' text mediation skills.

What provided the basis for the design of the instructional treatment that the experimental group students were exposed to in the three above-mentioned studies was the results of the research into secondary school learners' needs conducted in the 2021/2022 school year (Gajewska 2025c). According to this NA, in which methods of data collection and sources of information on learners' needs were triangulated, the performance of the mediation tasks related to pop culture and travel was the secondary school students' need as defined by T. Hutchinson and A. Waters (1987).

Based on the reports by Central Examination Boards, it has already been self-evident that the performance of text mediation tasks is Polish EFL primary school learners' lack. Nonetheless, the question of what their necessities and wants are has still not been addressed. In view of the research gaps concerning 1) the analysis of

primary school learners' task needs and 2) the effects of voice-assisted TBLL on their mediation skills, this project builds upon previous work on traditional TBLL (i.e., Long 2015), technology-mediated TBLL (i.e., Gonzales-Lloret 2014), and most importantly the VA application in task-based mediation practice (K. Gajewska 2025a,b,c) to identify the tasks typical of an English for general purposes context by investigating the perceived and self-perceived needs of Polish EFL primary school learners defined for the purpose of the current examination after T. Hutchinson and A. Waters (1987) as wants, understood here as activities they would like to (learn to) perform in English. In order to list the tasks, a multimethodological NA was conducted. The central research question and its sub-questions provided below have been formulated for that purpose: What are the task needs of Polish EFL primary school students?

- a. What are the wants of the participants as perceived by the students?
- b. What are the wants of the participants as perceived by their teachers?
- c. What are the wants of the participants as perceived by the administrators?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

To diagnose what Polish EFL primary school learners task needs were, mixed-methods (MM) research encompassing both quantitative and qualitative approaches was carried out. The triangular approach was adopted to gather information on the young learners' needs from different sources and via different methods (Miles/ Huberman 1984). Two MM procedures as described by Z. Dörnyei (2007) were followed for that purpose. The exploratory sequential approach, according to which the findings from the qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews (Stage 1) were used to inform the development of the questionnaire to be administered in Stage 2, was taken to strengthen the internal validity of the research. Also, the convergent parallel procedure was used to amass quantitative and qualitative data, whose comparison and interpretation enabled the author to ensure the accuracy of the research findings.

3.2 Participants

The sample taken from the population consisted of 36 Polish EFL learners, including 24 girls and 12 boys, from a public primary school in Starachowice, the town located in the świętokrzyskie voivodeship, who were selected in line with the convenience sampling strategy because of their easy accessibility. They were members of three intact groups and attended three forty-five-minute lessons of English per week within the seventh and eighth year of the eighth-year EFL programme offered by the school. The course was run at the A2 level by two Polish EFL teachers.

Before the data collection procedures were implemented on site, the author had obtained an oral approval to conduct the NA from the head of the school, teachers, and students. The quantitative and qualitative data subjected to examination were derived only from the participants who had agreed to participate in the current research.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection procedure for the current NA was established in conformance with the democratic philosophy (Stufflebeam 1977 as cited in Stufflebeam/ McCormick/ Brinkerhoff et al. 1985). The learners' perceptions of their needs were therefore juxtaposed with those of the teachers and administrators to provide a more comprehensive account of their needs.

Following M. Long (2015), open-ended data collection was first employed, followed by the implementation of closed techniques and additional procedures. The NA required the collection of data on their experiences with voice assistance and human-machine communication phenomena, which was necessitated by the implementation of technology, here VAs, in the treatment (Gonzales-Lloret 2014).

The first stage in the data collection procedure was qualitative. It involved a series of semi-structured interviews with volunteers (n=7) from the sample in the first week of February 2025. The interviews were conducted in Polish via *Zoom Cloud Meetings* and recorded with *Apowersoft* to elicit four types of information: 1) learners' bio-data; 2) reasons to study and use English; 3) tasks the participants would like to perform in English, and 4) experiences with human-machine communication established with VAs. J. Corbin and A. Strauss' (1990) open-coding analysis was carried out to categorise the qualitative data in themes via *Taguette*. To improve intercoder reliability, one of the interviews was transcribed and analysed by another EFL instructor.

Based on the findings from the interviews, two versions of the needs questionnaire (i.e., for the students and their EFL teachers) were developed in Stage Two and administered in the second week of February. The objective of this stage was to collect more detailed information on the self-perceived and perceived needs of the participants in the form of quantitative data. Twenty closed-item responses were organised into two sections, each of which utilising a six-point Likert scale moving from *extremely unimportant* (1) to *extremely important* (6). In Part 1, the respondents were asked to assess the significance of the tasks based on how desirable they found their performance. In Part 2, the learners evaluated the importance of tasks performed with the help of VAs. Similarly, the two English teachers were asked to express their opinions on the relevance of the same tasks for the students. The language of the questionnaire was Polish. Before its final version was released, the questionnaire was piloted with a group of eleven-year-old students (n=12) and the teacher of Polish from the same school. Minor corrections concerning layout issues were introduced. The data were analysed quantitatively to obtain the percentage of agreement scores.

In Stage 3, the qualitative data relating to the participants' wants for EFL task performance and VAs application were collected in the third week of February in the form of their written responses to two open-ended questions. Open-coding analysis (Corbin/ Strauss 1990) was carried out with the help of *Taguette* to identify cases in

which task performance was found desirable by the respondents ($n=23$)¹. Two students' questionnaires were checked by another teacher to improve reliability.

The final stage put the problem of the task-related wants into the administrators' perspective. This was achieved by examining the 2024 Core Curriculum for FLs (Journal of Laws 2024, Item 996, as amended). Its analysis helped triangulate the data obtained from the needs questionnaires by enriching the research with information on the task-related wants as perceived by the Ministry of National Education.

4. Results and discussion

The key findings that emerged from the semi-structured interviews indicated the following. The group of seven volunteers from the sample reported to have learned English as their first FL for 9 years. Three of them admitted having limited their English language learning mainly to the study of the EFL coursebook assigned by their teachers. The remaining students moved beyond vocabulary- and grammar-driven EFL learning, exposing themselves to written and spoken English while listening to songs ($n=3$), watching films ($n=1$), reading e-books ($n=1$), and using online English language learning platforms ($n=1$). The students' motivation to study English was instrumental as demonstrated by the interviewees' answers ($n=5$) in which they had stressed the importance of developing their EFL competence predominantly for the purpose of scoring more points in the eighth-grader exam, which, as one of them said, was their "to be, or not to be" in the context of their future secondary school admission. Other reasons listed by the primary school students presented below in order of their frequency included improving their ability to deal with written and spoken content on social media ($n=4$), understand films and series without subtitles ($n=3$), help parents and siblings run simple errands while at home and in shops in Poland and while travelling abroad during the holiday breaks ($n=2$), and live in an English-speaking country ($n=1$). As far as the contexts in which the five learners would like to use English were limited to their public and personal domains and involved the 1) surviving (i.e., communicating with English-speaking relatives, travelling abroad), 2) mediating (i.e., helping family members understand English) and 3) entertaining (i.e., accessing content on social media, watching films and TV series, listening to songs, playing video games) tasks. All the learners ($n=5$) were acquainted with human-machine communication facilitated by voice assistance via their mobile devices. Five of them had used it sporadically in English to perform the following types of technology-mediated tasks touching upon 1) weather (i.e., asking for the weather forecast), 2) cooking (i.e., asking for recipes), 3) life management (i.e., asking VAs to make a to-do list), 4) communication (i.e., asking VAs to send messages), 5) commuting (i.e., asking for directions), 6) entertainment (i.e., asking VAs to crack a joke), 7) lifestyle (i.e., asking questions related physical health, diet, stress), 8) celebrities (i.e., asking about the age of actors, etc.), and 9) trivia (i.e., asking about the oldest living person). One of the

¹ Despite reminders issued by their English teachers, 11 students failed to hand in the assignment. Additionally, two more learners did not follow the instructions and provided answers that were off-topic.

students was a VA-enthusiast using the *Google Assistant* software often and claiming to own a smart speaker at home to 10) control devices via voice.

The quantitative analysis of the students' responses (n=36) to Section 1 of the needs questionnaire showed the following trends. As far as their task-related wants are concerned, the participants considered *important* and *extremely important* the performance of such tasks as: accessing content on social media (61%), achieving a high score in the eighth-grader exam (53%), and helping family members understand English (47%). The tasks whose performance proved the least relevant, which they marked as *unimportant* and *extremely unimportant*, for the biggest number of learners was communicating with English-speaking relatives (58%) as well as travelling (50%) and moving abroad (67%).

Which of the examples of EFL task performance do you find most desirable? Assess their importance:	<i>Extremely unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Extremely important</i>
1. Communicating with English-speaking relatives	53%	19%	3%	0%
2. Helping family members understand English	6%	11%	31%	36%
3. Accessing content on social media	8%	6%	22%	42%
4. Watching films and TV series	6%	17%	11%	22%
5. Listening to songs	14%	11%	17%	19%
6. Playing video games	25%	14%	8%	17%
7. Travelling abroad	14%	25%	11%	6%
8. Achieving a high score in the eighth-grader exam	3%	6%	28%	33%
9. Obtaining a high grade in English classes	8%	11%	17%	14%
10. Moving abroad	31%	22%	3%	3%

Table 1. Significance of the selected task-related wants of English use as reported by the students (n=36).

The quantitative analysis of the students' responses (n=36) demonstrated the following trends related to the significance of the selected cases of voice-assisted task performance listed in Section 2. As evident in their choices of *important* and *extremely important* answers, the participants evinced particular interest in the performance of voice-assisted tasks, which involved asking VAs questions to find out about celebrities' looks and life (53%), lifestyle issues (55%), and fun facts (67%). The voice-assisted tasks whose performance was found *unimportant* and *extremely unimportant* by learners were asking for help during digital task performance (56%), voice calling and text communication (75%), and commuting (81%).

Which of the examples of voice-assisted EFL task performance do you find most desirable? Assess their importance:	<i>Extremely unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Extremely important</i>
1. Finding about the weather	28%	22%	8%	3%
2. Finding for recipes	31%	25%	3%	3%

3. Asking for help during digital task performance	36%	33%	3%	6%
4. Asking for help during voice calling and text communication	33%	28%	14%	11%
5. Obtaining directions	42%	31%	6%	3%
6. Findings about lifestyle issues	6%	8%	39%	33%
7. Gaining information about favourite celebrities	11%	14%	33%	36%
8. Finding fun facts	17%	6%	25%	22%
9. Interacting with VAs to have fun	22%	17%	28%	19%
10. Controlling smart home devices	61%	31%	28%	0%

Table 2. Significance of the selected participants' (n=36) wants regarding voice-assisted task performance.

The data obtained from the students' versions of the needs questionnaire (n=36) were triangulated with those of their EFL teachers (n=2) within Stage Two. Some of the instructors' choices of the task performance that in their opinion were considered vastly preferable by the students clearly overlap with the learners' answers listed above, with achieving a high score in the eighth-grader exam, accessing content on social media, and playing video games getting the highest *extremely important* scores of 100%. Interestingly, the teachers found the act of obtaining a high grade in English classes by the learners more important than what the analysis of the students' answers revealed, again having the highest *extremely important* score of 100%. Teachers' responses regarding the least important examples of EFL task performance were also roughly parallel with those of the students, with the former assessing travelling and moving abroad as well as communicating with English-speaking relatives as *extremely unimportant* (100%). What is surprising, however, is a teachers' notable lack of awareness of the role their students played in helping family members understand English, with this example of task performance obtaining two *extremely unimportant* choices (100%). As far as Part 2 of the questionnaire is concerned, its analysis was excluded from the investigation. The teachers admitted having no knowledge of voice assistance whatsoever, on the basis of which they refused to evaluate the importance of the examples of voice-assisted task performance.

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the primary school students' (n=23) answers to two open-ended questions in Stage 3 did not diverge markedly from the findings obtained in Stage 2. The students' expressed their preference towards performing tasks allowing them to 1) mediate for the purpose of helping their non-English speaking grandparents and younger siblings understand English; 2) survive while communicating with English-speaking gamers, gaining access to EFL social media content, receiving a high score in the eighth-grader exam; and 3) entertaining themselves while asking trivia questions, finding out about celebrities' looks and life, and interacting with VAs for fun. The contexts in which the participants considered their voice-assisted task performance desirable were limited to the entertaining dimension as opposed to the tasks not requiring the VA use, whose completion, with the exception of the gaining access to social media content theme, served a more "constructive" role.

		Theme	n	Example
1	What example(s) of EFL task performance do you find most desirable? Describe it/them and justify your choice(s).	1) Gaining easy access to EFL social media content relating to lifestyle	1 7	<i>I spent a lot of time online using social media platforms, especially Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube, to find some useful ideas connected with fashion and make-up trends, emotional well-being, etc. I sometimes find it challenging to understand everything that is presented therein in speech and writing. I would like to be better at it someday.</i>
		2) Receiving a high score in the eighth-grader exam	1 3	<i>I would like to pass my final exam well in order to get to the secondary school of my choice. However, I have some problems with grammar activities.</i>
		3) Helping relatives with poor EFL knowledge	9	<i>I often help my grandparents understand food and clothes labels and manuals that are written in English. They haven't learned English and this is why they keep asking me for help. I don't always understand everything and then I have to check some words in the dictionary. It takes a lot of time. I'd like it to be easier for me to translate the sentences and words for my grandparents.</i>
		4) Communicating with players while gaming	5	<i>My friends and I play online games with players from all over the world. We need English to communicate with them.</i>
2	What example(s) of EFL voice-assisted task performance do you find most desirable? Describe it/them and justify your choice(s).	1) Asking trivia questions	1 5	<i>If I decided to use Siri, I would do it to learn some fun facts. I like asking such questions. It's fun to see the answer displayed and hear the assistant read it out loud. I also like learning about the world.</i>
		2) Finding out about celebrities' looks and life	1 1	<i>I like reading gossips and spying on my favourite celebrities. It takes some time to type the question in the search engine. I don't have time for that. I would prefer to ask Siri questions and it would give me the answer effortlessly.</i>
		3) Interacting with VAs for fun	3	<i>I have asked Google Assistant once to tell me a joke. It didn't understand me at first. I had to repeat the question. But when it finally understood me and cracked the joke, I didn't understand it. I have no one to speak to English and it would be fun to kill time and play with the phone.</i>

Table 3. Students' (n=23) views on their (voice-assisted) task-related wants (Stage 3) (self-prepared).

The analysis of the 2024 Core Curriculum (Journal of Laws from 2024, Item 996, as amended) demonstrated that two types of requirements provided the foundation for the students' task-related wants as perceived by the Polish education authorities. They encompassed a set of five general and fifteen detailed requirements. Both of them highlighted the importance of Polish FL primary school students' ability to use English vocabulary, grammar, orthography, and pronunciation at the basic level, comprehend simple written and spoken language samples, produce in speech and writing simple and logical utterances, interact in speech and writing accordingly to the situation, and process spoken and written language samples in the context of thirteen thematic units (e.g., housing, education, job, tourism) at the A2+/B1 level of language proficiency.

It transpired from the analysis of the students' and teachers' responses to the needs questionnaires (Stage 2 and 3) and official EFL course-related document (Stage 4) that the performance of voice-assisted mediation tasks on the topics of trivia and lifestyle was the students' perceived and self-perceived need (see Table 1). As demonstrated by the bold font, certain task-related wants, namely gaining access to fun facts and lifestyle issues, supporting relatives in understanding English, and obtaining a good pass in the eighth-grader exam, kept reemerging in the data analysis performed in the context of three research sub-questions and therefore they were used to provide the cornerstone for the selection of the task needs.

Research question	Task-related wants
1. What are the wants of the participants as perceived by the students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ accessing content on social media, achieving a high score in the eighth-grader exam, helping family members understand English ▪ asking VAs questions to find out about lifestyle, celebrities' looks and life, and fun facts.
2. What are the wants of the participants as perceived by their teachers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ gaining access to EFL social media content relating to lifestyle, receiving a high score in the eighth-grader exam, helping relatives with poor EFL knowledge, communicating with players while gaming ▪ asking VAs trivia questions, finding out about celebrities' looks and life, interacting with VAs for fun
3. What are the wants of the participants as perceived by the administrators?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ achieving a high score in the eighth-grader exam, accessing social media content, playing video games, obtaining a high grade in English classes ▪ using English vocabulary, grammar, orthography, and pronunciation at the basic level, understanding and producing simple written and spoken texts, interacting in speech and writing, processing spoken and written language samples on the topics of people, housing, education, job, social life, food, shopping, tourism, culture, sport, health, technology, and nature

Table 4. Task-related wants as perceived by the students, teachers, and administrators (self-prepared).

The students' task-based wants were mainly limited to the reception of written and spoken language samples accessible through social media outlets. This tendency might have been reinforced by the fact that the students had been provided with little opportunities to interact in English outside school settings given their monolingual social backgrounds. As reported by the students, there were some cases in which their family members did not speak English at all, which might have been responsible for the students' lack of interest in using English for communicative purposes.

On the other hand, the poor level of EFL competence of learners' closest family members had created a number of opportunities for learner to engage in interlanguage mediation. Specifically, the students were involved in the translation of selected words and phrases from English into Polish to help their grandparents and younger siblings overcome the linguistic barrier and gain access to the EFL source texts they had not been able to comprehend without their support.

Also, given their younger age and therefore lower level of maturity, their task-related wants were mainly entertainment-driven, as they were related to miscellaneous

trivia and lifestyle issues, such as fashion trends and gaming. These findings contrast with those reported in the NA that was carried out within voice-assisted TBLL for the first time by K. Gajewska (2025c) in the secondary school context, according to which the sixteen- and seventeen-year-old learners opted for tasks targeting travelling and popular culture.

It cannot be ruled out that the geographical setting might have affected the financial status of their families, which in turn determined the number of opportunities to travel abroad the students had been offered. It is possible that the learners attending a private secondary school students in the city of Lublin were put into a more favourable position by wealthier parents as compared with those participating in the current NA who came mainly from rural areas located in the close vicinity to the suburbs of Stara-chovice, a town which is seven times less populated than Lublin.

The students' responses showing their interest in accessing social media and employing voice assistance during task performance are congruent with the digital native literature. Since representatives of Generation Alpha born between 2012 and 2024, "experienced a world with internet and smart devices, with trendy apps to have fun, communicate, learn and even work with (Drugas 2022: 4), it cannot come as a surprise that they would like to be more fluent with regard to using EFL social media and VAs to perform tasks, such as gaining information about celebrities and trivia.

By contrast, the two EFL teachers, which as stated earlier were in their mid-forties, standing here for digital immigrants (Prensky 2001), had failed to catch up with the latest technological trends. This was clearly reflected in their lack of familiarity with the voice assistance notion and their refusal to complete Part 2 of the needs questionnaire examining voice-assisted, task-related wants of the learners.

The approach towards Polish primary school learners' needs adopted by the Polish education authorities in the 2024 version of the Core Curriculum is consistent with European trends underlying the teaching of FLs (Kucharczyk 2013). To give an example, the organisation of the general requirements under the headings of language reception, production, interaction, and mediation within the Core Curriculum for FLs since the 2009 education reform (MEN 2009) have echoed the concepts of communicative language competences and activities as described by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment* (Council of Europe 2001).

5. Implications and conclusions

The main aim of this preliminary research into Polish EFL primary school learners' needs was to unravel the examples of voice-assisted tasks whose performance was considered desirable by the students, their teachers, and education authorities. Having triangulated the sources and methods of data collection to answer the central research question, we found that carrying out tasks involving language mediation related to the topics of lifestyle and trivia with the help of VAs were their task-related wants.

The findings revealing the young teenage learners' inclination to complete voice-assisted mediation tasks in the context of trivia and lifestyle do show how closely Gen Alpha learners' everyday life is intertwined with and shaped by technology and social

media. To take that into account, care should be taken to increase the authenticity of the learning process by, for example, combining items of technological equipment with target language learning. Even though it is not always practicable and permissible to use mobile devices on site in Polish instructed settings, cases of CALL can be supported to take place off site within voice-assisted task performance.

The current results have high research value given the gaps in technology-mediated TBLL. The data on learners' needs can be used to inform the design of task syllabus, which provides the basis for the instructional treatment involving out-of-class voice-assisted task performance in a primary school context to be later implemented and examined with an intention of filling in the TBLL research gaps. Since such a study has never been carried out, this examination could help to advance the understanding on the VA use in TBLL among younger and less proficient EFL learners.

The current project also has high pragmatic value. First, as opposed to the top-down approaches to Core Curricula development, which might lead to conflict between learners' needs and administrative decisions on what should be prioritised in language teaching, making teachers' and students' voices heard within NA underlies a democratic process of curriculum design. Second, conducting the NA in question is the first step to addressing the problem of Polish EFL primary school students' poorer performance of mediation exam activities. It is undoubtedly worthwhile examining the effects of the treatment involving voice-assisted TBLL in primary school settings since a similar intervention proved beneficial in a secondary school context.

Despite attempts made to ensure the internal validity of the current NA, the project suffered from limitations. The implementation of the convenience sampling technique excluded the possibility of eliminating sampling and selection bias that might have resulted in the under- and over-representation of the population (Cohen/ Manion/ Morrison 2000 as cited in Dörnyei 2007). Due to a relatively small sample size and an unsatisfactory number of written assignments handed in by the participants in Stage 3, the accuracy of the data that provided the basis for task selection might have been questioned. To overcome these limitations, similar future investigations could replicate the current procedure, yet preferably in addition to employing random sampling, recruit more participants to improve reliability.

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