

UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ



ISSN 0354-4702 (Print)  
ISSN 2406-0518 (Online)  
COBISS.SR-ID 98733575  
UDC 80+82

# FACTA UNIVERSITATIS

Series  
**LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE**  
Vol. 22, № 1, 2024



Scientific Journal **FACTA UNIVERSITATIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ

Univerzitetski trg 2, 18000 Niš, Republic of Serbia

Phone: +381 18 257 095    Telefax: +381 18 257 950

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The cover image design: **M. Ž. Randelović**

Publication frequency – one volume, two issues per year.

Published by the University of Niš, Republic of Serbia

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Financial support: Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia

Printed by ATLANTIS DOO, Niš, Republic of Serbia

Circulation 50

ISSN 0354 – 4702 (Print)  
ISSN 2406 – 0518 (Online)  
COBISS.SR-ID 98733575  
UDC 80+82

# FACTA UNIVERSITATIS

*SERIES LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE*  
Vol. 22, N° 1, 2024



UNIVERSITY OF NIŠ

**FACTA UNIVERSITATIS: *Series Linguistics and Literature (FULL)*** is an open access and double-blind peer reviewed international journal. It publishes original scientific papers, review articles and book reviews in various areas of linguistics, literature and cultural studies. Papers accepted for publication are selected with regard to scientific quality and scholarly standing. The journal is published in both print and online.

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Grazer, Brian, and Charles Fishman. 2015. *A Curious Mind: The Secret to a Bigger Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Thoreau, Henry David. 2016. "Walking." In *The Making of the American Essay*, edited by John D'Agata, 167–95. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.

Satterfield, Susan. 2016. "Livy and the Pax Deum." *Classical Philology* 111, no. 2 (April): 165–76.

Rutz, Cynthia Lillian. 2013. "King Lear and Its Folktale Analogues." PhD diss., University of Chicago.

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# FACTA UNIVERSITATIS

Series

**Linguistics and Literature**

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## TEACHING LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN THE POST-METHOD ERA

A decade ago, on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2014, the first one of biennial international conferences under the umbrella title *Teaching Languages and Cultures in the Post-Method Era* was held at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia. The first TLC 2014, themed *Issues and Developments*, looked into the area of teaching and learning language and cultures in the Balkan educational contexts. As pointed out by the editors of the TLC 2014 Conference Proceedings, it aspired to provide a relevant forum for discussing current issues of teaching and learning, bringing together language teacher educators, applied linguistics researchers, and language teaching practitioners, and thus aiming to bridge the proverbial gap between scientific research and classroom practices.

Ten years and four TLC conferences later, we can safely say that these expectations have indeed been fulfilled. Like the first one, being state-accredited teacher-development events, the subsequent two conferences – TLC 2016 *Developing Competencies, Re-thinking Practices* and TLC 2018 *Challenges and Perspectives* – continued to keep the exchange open between academics, scholars, and researchers on one side, and, on the other side, both experienced and novice language teachers from different backgrounds and different educational contexts, as an exciting and fruitful space for idea exchange and networking.

This special issue of *Facta Universitatis: Linguistics and Literature* (Vol. 22, No 1, 2024) offers a selection of papers presented at the Fourth International Conference *Teaching Languages and Cultures in the Post-Method Era: New Insights and Innovations* (TLC 2023), held, after a prolonged post-pandemic hiatus, on October 6 and 7 2023 at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. The goal of TLC 2023 was to provide, once again, a vibrant arena where current questions can be addressed, and new research findings and views exchanged. As both researchers and teachers witness the changing nature of learning and information gathering, and acknowledge that this has to be reflected in a joint effort of different disciplines to offer teachers new and redesigned means of teaching, one of the challenges particularly addressed at TLC 2023 was how these requirements influence the choices teachers make in terms of their professional development.

The issues discussed ranged from the changing nature of learning, over new technologies and language use in different formats and modes, to challenges of teaching and learning heritage languages. To illustrate this breadth, we present fifteen papers, grouped into five sections.

The first one, focusing on **Teaching**, is opened by Ema Živković Nikolić and Ljiljana Marković who present their analysis of the teaching practicum as an essential part of EFL teacher education. Their paper *Exploring the teaching practicum: Insights from mentors and pre-service EFL teachers* presents a qualitative analysis of the data obtained through two questionnaires based on a well-established model of mentoring for effective teaching. The analysis showed that the main aspects of the practicum were viewed in very similar ways by both teacher-mentors and pre-service student-teachers, with differences in the focus of their attention. This study, thus, informs pre-service teacher education, highlighting the points to address in their preparations for the teaching practicum.

New technologies are discussed in the paper *Insights into the latest innovations: University students' opinions and attitudes on using ChatGPT for educational purposes*, by Milica Vitaz and Sandra Vasković. The authors point out that this tool has a great potential if used appropriately in academic settings, and that it is crucial for both teachers and students to build awareness about the negative effects it can have on students' learning, but also about the ways in which it can be used to enhance and aid learning.

Predrag Niketić presents the *Use of environment-themed cartoons in ESP teaching*, to demonstrate that when used as materials for in-class work such cartoons prove to be a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition and grammar proficiency building, at the same time contributing to student's understanding of the pertinent concepts in the professional area of study, which is a particularly important aim in ESP teaching.

As an alternative to "traditional", i.e., rule-based grammar instruction, Marta Veličković and Jelena Danilović Jeremić propose an approach based on corpus analysis, presented through the example of definite article teaching. Their paper, titled *Raising awareness of the definite article in the EFL classroom: A corpus linguistics approach*, explores how the analysis of the language content presented in EFL coursebooks for elementary and high schools can be used to develop practical awareness-raising activities that would focus on the most frequent uses of the given grammatical point, in this case the definite article in English.

The next section shifts the perspective to **Learning**, i.e. the learners. In her paper titled *ESP students' metacognitive awareness deployed in making a language learning plan*, Maja Stanojević Gocić investigates students' individual engagement in planning their own learning. The paper presents a questionnaire-based study of how university students studying English for the legal profession use metacognition in planning their learning activities and fulfilling their learning objectives. The author points out that in contemporary student-centered teaching metacognition plays a crucial role, as it enables students to retrieve and deploy the strategies best suited to their particular needs. Therefore, it is important for the teacher to help students become aware of their preferred learning strategies, and to help them claim agency in the learning process.

Milevica Bojović explores the *Relationships between students' anxiety in foreign language learning and communicative language ability in higher education context*. In this study, the quantitative analysis of the data collected by means of three instruments – the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, the Communicative Language Ability Scale, and a speaking assignment – was employed to investigate this relationship, showing a moderate but steady negative correlation between the students' anxiety and their communicative ability, with no significant correlations with grammatical, textual, and functional competence. The ESP context that the author explores calls for more collaborative work to alleviate negative affective factors in oral communication.

In their paper *The use of metadiscourse markers in achieving persuasion in short advertisements written by ESP students* Tijana Vesić Pavlović and Danijela Đorđević investigate the use of English as a foreign language in the professional context, focusing on the use and importance of discourse markers enhancing the coherence and cohesion of the written expression, in this case particularly used for the purpose of persuasion. The analysed corpus of student-written advertisements showed that the most frequently used metadiscourse markers were from the categories of engagement and attitude markers, indicating that the students were aware of their crucial role in capturing the audience's attention, maintaining their interest, and ultimately influencing the audience's decisions.



Therefore, the authors point out the need for targeted practice enhancing students' pragmatic competence.

The third section broadens the perspective to different *Languages* learned and taught as foreign. To illustrate this, Danijela Vranješ presents a case study aiming to explore the development of the skill of writing in German as a foreign language. In her paper *Impact of writing strategies on text quality: A case study*, she investigates to what extent and in which ways an individual adjusts their writing process to the complexity of the writing task. The aim of this case study was to gain detailed insight into the students' individual writing process, so as to inform the teaching of this specific language skill in the foreign language classroom. The author foregrounds the focused practice of the choice of writing strategies to meet the task requirements as a way to both facilitate the writing process and improve the quality of the students' text.

Serbian taught and learned as a foreign language is addressed by Jelena Marković Nikolajeva in her paper *Synonymy in textbooks for Serbian as a foreign language*. The paper presents an analysis of textbook language materials aiming to highlight the problem of synonymy, which is present from the beginner level of studying Serbian as a foreign language. The author points out the often very complex relation between synonymous lexemes, which makes them difficult for the students to acquire. This is why it is necessary for teachers to be very well informed about the different types of synonymous relations, as they require different types of explanations and tasks, in order to provide an adequate approach to this paradigmatic relation in teaching.

A different view of Serbian, taught and learned as a heritage language is presented by Kristina Petrović in her paper *Teaching heritage language – Why so different? Issues in Teaching Serbian as a Heritage Language*. Defining the notion of heritage language, the author highlights the challenges and specificities of teaching bilingual and bicultural students and meeting their needs beyond just speaking the language, as this particular learning situation involves the issues of identity, interculturality and an array of psychological and social factors. Therefore, the author points out, it is essential for teachers to create, with the support of the language policy makers, a 'community-based curriculum' which would take into account students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral needs. The paper also describes some successful practices in a language school teaching Serbian as a heritage language.

The fourth section, titled *Language Use Contexts*, offers three studies relevant for teaching languages and cultures because they highlight specific contexts of contemporary language use, which need to be considered with respect to students' needs and teaching aims and objectives. Andrijana Kjose and Mira Bekar present a qualitative study of abbreviations and emojis as used by speakers of English as a foreign language in various social media. Their paper *Language economy: Abbreviations and emoji in social media* presents the results of a qualitative corpus study which showed that abbreviations and emoji were used by the exchange participants for the purpose of language economy, but also to enrich the emotional expression of their language, and to express emotional states.

Zorica Trajkova Strezovska and Milan Damjanoski investigate *Pragmatic and sociocultural adaptation in literary translation*, focusing on English as a foreign language for native speakers of Macedonian. Their study involved a pragmatic and rhetorical analysis of the pragmatic and sociocultural adaptations in student translations, as well as a questionnaire asking the students to reflect on the challenges of choosing the suitable translation. The authors point out that students need to develop an awareness of the differences between context-based and language-based problems, which is why explicit instruction is necessary in this area, too.

Lastly, in the paper *The use of metaphors in political speeches: Metaphors in the speeches of Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump* Anja Petrović investigates how metaphors are used as a linguistic tool for pragmatic and strategic reasons in political speech. The study explores how politicians convey their messages through the use of different types of metaphors – ontological, structural, and orientational, for the purpose of making complex concepts easier to understand by explaining them via bodily experiences and physical senses. The author points out that metaphors thus contribute rhetorically to mental representations, which makes them a relevant element in foreign language learning and teaching, as well.

The last section, titled *Teaching practice experiences*, offers two review papers which focus on specific issues and characteristics of particular learning/teaching contexts, presented from the perspective of teaching practitioners.

In their paper titled *Small group language teaching at tertiary level*, Elena Kitanovska–Ristoska and Natasha Petrova–Popovski combine a qualitative analysis and reflection to describe their experiences with teaching English to a cohort of English majors at the Faculty of Education in Bitola. They point out that teaching language and literature in small groups creates an interactive and engaging learning environment which promotes critical thinking, active learning, collaboration, and opportunities for individual expression.

Lastly, in a review paper, Dana Vučković describes the challenges of her experience with teaching English oral practice to first-year students at University Paris Nanterre (France). Titled *The subtle art of intentional improvisation: Teaching oral English practice at University Paris Nanterre*, her paper focuses on the main problems and issues that arose in this teaching context – both formal, regarding the syllabus constraints, and content-wise, regarding academic register, the interplay of oral and written proficiency, motivation and speaking anxiety. The author also describes the successful methods and practices that helped students overcome their difficulties, for instance, contextualizing topics in familiar settings, and preparing for oral presentation through different tasks.

\* \* \*

With the wide array of topics presented here, our aim in this special issue is to present to a wider audience the variety of TLC conference topics, and to present empirical research discussed from various methodological, theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. We hope that in this way we may incite broader interest in this kind of academic exchange, and motivate a wider circle of colleagues to take part in the TLC events in the future.

May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024

Nina Lazarević & Tatjana Paunović, Guest Editors

**Acknowledgement.** This special issue was prepared and edited within the project *Scientific Findings in English Linguistics and Anglo-American Literature and Culture and Teaching Applications*, conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Philosophy (No. 336/1-6-01)

## EXPLORING THE TEACHING PRACTICUM: INSIGHTS FROM MENTORS AND PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS

UDC 378.147.111:811.111'243

Emā Živković Nikolić, Ljiljana Marković

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, English Department, Niš, Serbia

ORCID iDs: Emā Živković Nikolić  
Ljiljana Marković

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0323-9469>  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6412-9266>

**Abstract.** *This study explores the teaching practicum (TP) at the Niš English Department during 2022/23 by examining the perspectives of both teaching mentors (TM) and pre-service teachers (PSTs). To understand their experiences, a set of two questionnaires partly based on Hudson's model of mentoring for effective teaching (2004) was compiled: one for TMs, and the other for PSTs, one largely reflecting the other. The study employed a qualitative analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the TP as perceived by the two groups. It investigated several key areas, including TMs' role in providing support to PSTs, modeling teaching practices, and fostering relationships, PSTs' preparedness for the TP as well as TMs' insights into the benefits and challenges of mentoring. The results showed that TMs provided both cognitive and affective support, with PSTs valuing affective support more. PSTs generally described their relationship with TMs as supportive. Additionally, the results highlighted that while TMs were concerned with being a good model to PSTs, exhibiting enthusiasm and introducing a variety of activities, PSTs were unaware of those; they were mostly focused on their own confidence and personal performance.*

**Key words:** *TEFL Methodology, teaching practicum, teaching mentors, pre-service teachers, effective mentoring, teaching practice*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The teaching practicum (TP) has become an important component of the initial teacher education (ITE) worldwide. It represents a complex segment of ITE, the success of which depends on connecting pre-service teachers' (PSTs') theoretical knowledge gained at university with practical teaching in classroom settings. It allows PSTs to apply teaching methods and principles, instructional techniques, and classroom management strategies in a real classroom environment, providing invaluable hands-on experience. The crucial part

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Submitted April 29, 2024; Accepted May 16, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Emā Živković Nikolić

University of Niš

E-mail: [ema.zivkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:ema.zivkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

of the TP is mentoring, which involves experienced teachers - teaching mentors (TMs) - working closely with PSTs and supporting their professional growth. The success of the TP depends on the collaboration of university instructors, TMs and PSTs, with TMs doing the greatest part of the work (Ambrosetti 2014). This collaboration is essential for providing a comprehensive learning experience for PSTs.

Different aspects of the TP have been subject of research: from the selection and preparation of TMs (Ambrosetti 2014; Nasser-Abu Alhija and Fresko 2014), through the roles of TMs and PSTs (Ambrosetti and Dekkers 2010; Hall et al. 2008) and their mutual relationship (Hudson 2013; Izadinia 2015a), to the factors influencing the effectiveness of the mentoring process (Albakri et al. 2021; Hairon et al. 2020) and the development of PSTs' professional identity (Izadinia 2015b). While the TP has been studied from the perspectives of both TMs and PSTs, "more research is needed to explore the ideas, values, expectations and understanding of mentors and mentees" (Izadinia 2015a, 2). Examining both perspectives provides a comprehensive view of the TP experience. It can help identify the strengths of the TP, as well as reveal underlying challenges and issues that may not be apparent from a single point of view. The present study, therefore, investigates several aspects of the TP from the perspectives of both TMs and PSTs at the Niš English Department in Serbia with the aim of identifying similarities and differences between their perceptions. By understanding the needs, challenges, and successes from both sides, TMs, course instructors and educators in general can improve mentoring approaches and practices, and ensure the development of motivated and competent teachers. Bearing in mind that the TP can have a different place in the ITE in different countries and that it can be structured and organized in different ways, it is worth investigating how the TP is conducted under the characteristics of a local context not previously investigated and if and how that impacts the attitudes and behavior of the main participants – PSTs and TMs.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. PST mentoring

The mentoring process during the TP "constitutes a critical factor in [PSTs'] professional development" (Leshem 2012, 413). It has been "promoted as a meaningful way for neophytes to begin to learn about their profession as it provides pre-service teachers with the required basic skills and professional knowledge to face the uncertainty associated with the complexity of practice" (Mena, Hennissen, and Loughran 2017, 48). The goal of mentoring is to support the professional development of PSTs, helping them navigate the challenges of teaching and improve their teaching skills.

As Ambrosetti and Dekkers note, TMs "consider their role to be mainly one of providing support for mentees" (2010, 47). Abdullah et al. (2020) list different types of support TMs provide to PSTs. *Cognitive support* refers to the help TMs provide "in the acquisition of new knowledge or the expansion of existing knowledge" (Abdullah et al. 2020, 341). It encompasses guidance that directly relates to the skills and knowledge necessary for effective teaching, such as assistance with lesson planning, classroom management, time management, teaching resources, modeling effective teaching practices, etc. By providing concrete examples and explanations, TMs can help PSTs bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

TMs further provide *affective support* in the form of encouragement, motivation, empathy and a positive attitude, which is crucial to creating a “conducive learning environment that ultimately would optimize [PSTs’] learning progress” (Abdullah et al. 2020, 343). Similarly, other studies have found that effective TM support should also include emotional support (Israel et al. 2014; Popescu-Mitroi and Mazilescu 2014). Affective support contributes to an environment where PSTs feel safe to express their thoughts and ask questions, which makes them feel more confident in their abilities.

Finally, *social support* involves TMs establishing rapport with PSTs (Abdullah et al. 2020, 344). It focuses on creating a welcoming environment for PSTs and building a trust-based relationship. Literature further shows that this relationship should be both professional and personal, open, based on mutual trust and respect (Ambrosetti 2014; Ambrosetti and Dekkers 2010; Ellis, Alonzo, and Nguyen 2020; Hudson 2013; Hudson and Millwater 2008; Izadinia 2015a). It is often emphasized that the TM and the PST will benefit if the relationship is non-hierarchical, dialogic in nature with both parties participating in “a reciprocal exchange of ideas and joint construction of knowledge” (Ellis, Alonzo, and Nguyen 2020, 3). Building and sustaining such a relationship depends on the positive attributes and attitudes of both parties; however, due to their different social roles respectively, it is the TM who “need[s] to be proactive in facilitating the relationship” (Hudson 2013, 8) and create “a setting that will foster and nurture a collegial relationship” (Ellis, Alonzo, and Nguyen 2020, 5). As a result, the PST will develop more confidence and will feel empowered to get out of their comfort zone, try new teaching strategies and activities, deal with challenges, thus maximizing their professional development. Conversely, if the TM and PST do not build a good relationship, there can be little if any progress in developing the PST’s professional identity. Therefore, it is important for educators and ITE providers to collect information on how the two parties perceive their mutual relationship.

Based on everything above, it can be concluded that being a TM is a complex and challenging role. Yet, there are always teachers who are prepared to accept the position. When asked why, some TMs report they find benefits in their own professional development, renewed reflection on their own teaching and enthusiasm for the job, while others want to contribute to the profession and help younger colleagues (Ambrosetti 2014; Jewell 2007; Li, Sani, and Azmin 2021; Walkington 2005). At the same time, TMs are aware of the challenges, such as: additional workload, more responsibilities and stress, insufficient support from the school and/or university (Ambrosetti 2014; Walkington 2005). However, the benefits seem to outweigh the challenges.

## 2.2. Hudson’s mentoring model

The present study partly relied on the mentoring model developed by Hudson (2004), which includes five main factors that can guide effective mentoring. First of all, in order to build a strong relationship with PSTs, TMs need to exhibit *personal attributes* such as being “encouraging, affable, attentive and supportive” (Hudson 2004, 142). The second factor relates to TMs’ knowledge of key *education system requirements*. TMs should guide PSTs on issues such as curriculum standards, school policies, professional conduct, etc. Thirdly, “the mentor’s *pedagogical knowledge* is a key reason for providing field experiences [...] within preservice teacher education programs” (Hudson 2004, 142). This includes expertise in lesson planning, classroom management, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and subject knowledge. The next factor emphasizes the importance of TMs *modeling effective*

*teaching practices*. It involves demonstrating PSTs how to conduct lessons, manage classrooms, engage students and build rapport with them. Finally, TMs need to provide constructive and timely *feedback* to PSTs. They should observe PSTs' lessons and review their lesson plans, as well as provide encouragement and positive reinforcement, as this can "contribute to instilling confidence in the mentee" (Hudson 2004, 143). The model outlined here has been used in many studies exploring mentoring practices (see, for instance, Albakri et al 2021; Haas, Hudson, and Hudson 2022; Vásquez Carrosa, Rosas-Maldonado, and Martin 2019) and it served as a useful framework in designing the survey and analyzing aspects of the TP in the present study.

### 3. PRESENT STUDY

#### 3.1. Aim

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, analyze and compare TMs' and PSTs' perspectives on the TP at the Niš English Department in 2022/23, with the aim of identifying similarities and differences between the two groups' responses. The research questions addressed in the study were:

1. How do the two groups – TMs and PSTs – view the TP?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the views of the two cohorts?

The qualitative analysis of the gathered data aimed to obtain a holistic comprehension of the TP, as perceived by both TMs and PSTs. By analyzing the participants' insights, the study aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge on TP experiences and inform future improvements in ITE programs, particularly bearing in mind the characteristics of the local context and the position, structure and organization of the TP in it.

#### 3.2. Research context

At the English Department in Niš, Serbia, there is a clear division between two TEFL Methodology courses. The first one is a preparatory, theoretical course, which involves extensive reading on different teaching methods and approaches, as well as limited practical work, mainly the basics of lesson planning, lesson observation, and peer microteaching. The second course focuses on the TP conducted in schools in Niš, where students spend about three months.

Education in Serbia at the elementary level is compulsory and covers grades 1 through 8. The age range for students typically spans from 7 to 14. After completing elementary schools, students can enter grammar schools or vocational high schools, which typically have a duration of 4 years. Grammar schools provide a general secondary education (including General English courses) and their graduates often continue their education at university. Vocational high schools, on the other hand, offer specialized education and training in specific professions, and they typically include General English and ESP instruction. PSTs can decide whether they would teach both segments or only General English.

The TEFL Methodology course instructors try to accommodate PSTs' preferences by allowing them to choose where they want to complete their TP whenever possible, whether it be in an elementary, grammar or vocational high school. PSTs are hosted by TMs, who are not assigned by any educational body but are volunteers closely cooperating with university instructors.

During their TP, PSTs work in groups of three or four students. Their tasks include observing their TM's lessons, observing their group members' lessons as well as teaching in pairs and individually. During the TP, PSTs keep a portfolio, which documents their professional development. It consists of TM and peer observation lists, lesson plans for the lessons they conduct as well as the materials they use, and reflection sheets where they can analyze and evaluate the experience they gained during the TP (Lazarević 2018). The final exam consists of a 45 min lesson held by one group member, observed by the other group members, and a follow-up discussion about the lesson and the TP with the whole group. The final exam is assessed by the TEFL Methodology course instructors, which is crucial for the relationship between TMs and PSTs because it provides a greater opportunity for open and honest communication between them. Removing the role of the assessor contributes to creating a supportive environment, where TMs can focus on overseeing each PST's individual professional development, monitoring them, and providing feedback and guidance (Ambrosetti 2014).

### 3.3. Participants

The study comprised two groups of participants: 20 TMs and 36 PSTs from a total of 23 TMs and 77 PSTs who took part in the TP in Niš schools in the spring of 2023, which means that the response rate for TMs (87%) was higher than for PSTs (47%). The participants completed the questionnaires in October 2023.

TMs were teachers of English working in elementary, grammar and vocational high schools in Niš, Serbia. The majority of them reported extensive professional experience, with 95% of them working as teachers over 10 years. Over half of TMs had more than 10 years of mentoring experience (see Table 1). All TMs had an MA in English and most of them attended mentoring courses held by the English Department instructors in the late 1990s and 2017. Each participant in this group was coded as TM01, TM02, TM03, etc.

**Table 1** Overview of TMs' experience

	How many years of work experience do you have?		How long have you been a mentor?	
0-5 years	0%	0	45%	9
6-10 years	5%	1	25%	5
11-20 years	55%	11	25%	5
21-30 years	35%	7	5%	1
over 30 years	5%	1	0%	0
Total	100%	20	100%	20

PSTs participating in the study were third-year students of the English Department at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. The majority of them completed the TP in elementary schools, making up over 70% of the group. Each participant in this group was coded as PTS01, PTS02, PTS03, etc.

### 3.4. Instrument and procedure

In order to obtain a holistic comprehension of the TP as perceived by TMs and PSTs, a set of two questionnaires was compiled: one for TMs, and the other for PSTs, one largely

reflecting the other. The questionnaires were in part guided by Hudson's model of mentoring for effective teaching (2004) with some adaptations to suit the local context. This model was chosen because it offers a comprehensive understanding of the mentoring process with five clearly defined factors. The adaptations to the local context were necessary due to the specific structure and organization of the TP within the ITE at the Niš English Department, which include: the (lack of) an educational body that sets standards for and oversees appointing the mentoring position to a teacher, the status of the TP within the ITE program, the scope and duration of the TP, to name but a few.

Each questionnaire contained questions referring to different aspects of mentoring and the TP aiming to elicit views of PSTs and TMs. Due to space constraints, this paper will provide a brief overview of only the most significant ones: TMs' support, modeling of teaching practice, the relationship between TMs and PSTs, aspects of teaching that PSTs were well-prepared for, and some benefits and challenges of being a TM. Each aspect was covered with two or three questions. The first one was a multi-select multiple-choice question followed by a ranking or an open-ended question which allowed the participants to provide clarification or feedback on the issue investigated by the multi-select question.

The questionnaires were distributed in the form of online Google forms.<sup>1</sup> Given that some students who participated in the study were still taking courses with the researchers, it was crucial to make it clear that participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

Once all the data were gathered, they were analyzed qualitatively. An in-depth content analysis involved investigating and comparing the answers of the two groups in order to identify similarities and differences. Quantitative data, which involved responses to multiselect questions, were organized using Google Forms. All extracts provided in the following section are original in terms of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. TM support

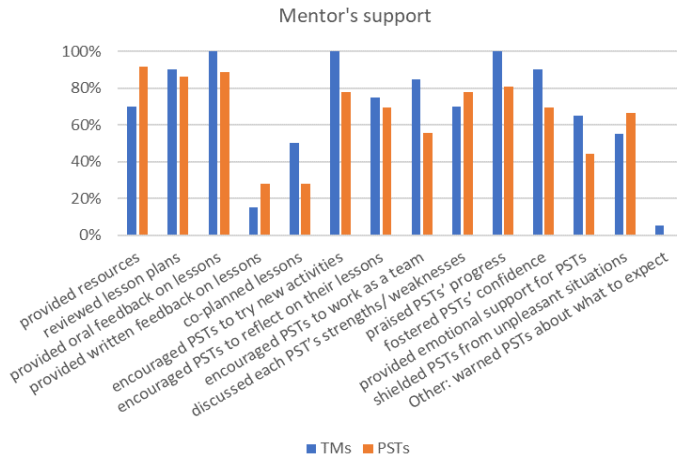
The first multi-select question referred to the support and guidance TMs provided to PSTs in their professional development during the TP. TMs were asked to select all the answers that applied to them, and they could also add other types of support not present on the list if they considered it necessary. PSTs were asked to select the types of support they believed their TM provided to them. Figure 1 shows the participants' answers. In a follow-up question, they were then asked to select the three types of support they considered to be the most important and elaborate on their answer if possible.

According to the participants' answers, TMs provided cognitive support in the form of feedback, which is one of the main tasks of a TM. Hudson considers feedback to be crucial to the mentoring process, as it "allows mentors to articulate, in a constructive manner, expert opinions on the mentee's development towards becoming a teacher" (2004, 143). "A quality mentor should provide the PST with regular, timely, critical and actionable feedback which relates to practice" (Ellis, Alonzo and Nguyen 2020, 8). Constructive feedback from TMs helps PSTs identify areas for improvement, it guides their development as teachers, and it prompts them to reflect on their practice and critically evaluate their teaching methods.

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<sup>1</sup> The questionnaires are available upon request at [ema.zivkovic.nikolic@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:ema.zivkovic.nikolic@filfak.ni.ac.rs).





**Fig. 1** The participants' answers regarding TM' support and guidance during the TP

Based on the participants' answers, it seems that TMs valued providing oral feedback on PSTs' lessons highly as most PSTs and all the TMs report they included it in their practice. Furthermore, both groups of participants chose this type of support as the most important. As PST08 highlighted, *the feedback that we got after we had our class was very useful, the mentor would say what could be enhanced, why something should be done more differently and eventually what is on paper is one thing and what happens in reality is something else. That is why we were encouraged to adapt to the class rather than stick to the plan.* The same feeling was shared by PST02, who said *it was important for us to get feedback from our mentor after every class so we know how to better ourselves and which thing needed to be worked on.*

Feedback was also given in the form of reviewing PSTs' lesson plans. The data show that both groups of participants agree that most TMs reviewed PSTs' lesson plans, although the answers to the follow-up question regarding the most important types of support showed that PSTs placed higher importance on this type of support than TMs did, especially when it comes to areas PSTs were not confident about or felt needed improvement. As PST08 noted, *when it comes to feedback to our lesson plans, it was very important for us because we were not sure whether the plans were suitable for particular classes. We had an elementary school, very young students and we were not used to writing lesson plans for that young students.* PSTs repeatedly emphasized they appreciated the feedback because their TMs recognized their strengths and provided guidance for improvement: *We are extremely thankful that our mentors took their time to review our lesson plans and to give us feedback regarding the activities they would modify or replace (PST28).*

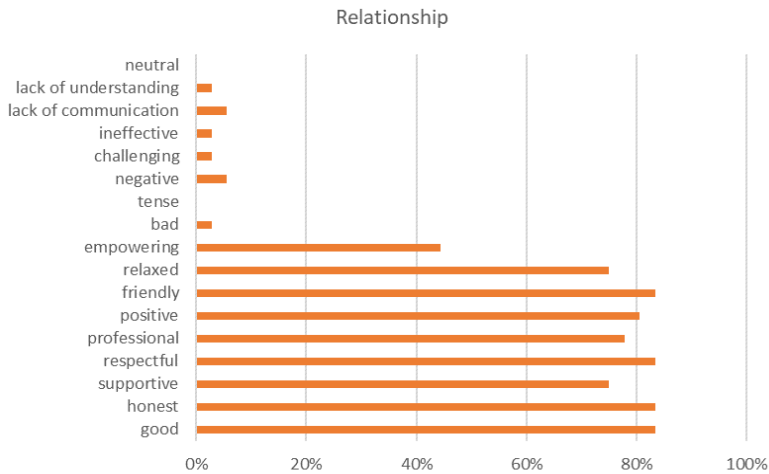
Apart from providing cognitive support such as giving feedback, reviewing lesson plans and sharing resources, the data further suggest that TMs provided affective support in the form of praise, motivation and encouragement. Figure 1 shows that both groups agree TMs praised PSTs' progress during the TP. However, the participants' answers to the follow-up question indicate that PSTs, unlike TMs, consider this type of support to be essential to their professional growth. Recognition of PSTs' progress can contribute to instilling confidence in PSTs and building self-assurance in their teaching abilities. It encourages them to continue putting in the effort to improve. As PST26 notes, *it was important for our*

mentor to praise our progress throughout our practicum because it motivated us to try to be even better and we felt proud of ourselves.

Figure 1 also shows that both groups agree that TMs encouraged PSTs to try new activities in their lessons. This time, however, TMs considered this type of support as crucial, while PSTs did not recognize it as such. These results are further corroborated by TMs' reports about PSTs shying away from incorporating new activities in their lessons. This is understandable, given that using familiar activities can provide a sense of comfort for inexperienced PSTs, while novel activities can be perceived as challenging. TMs tried to explain, though, that introducing *NEW activities and techniques will keep the lesson lively and interesting; it keeps minds alert and enthusiasm high* (TM17). Some TMs further encouraged exploring new activities and exposure to diverse teaching methods in order to *emphasize that learning doesn't stop after getting a degree but is a long-life process* (TM07).

#### 4.2. TM/PST relationship

Another question focused on TMs providing PSTs with social support. The question centered on the nature of the relationship between PSTs and their mentors. Since it is generally agreed in literature that it is the TM, as the participant with higher power in the relationship, who is responsible for building and nurturing the relationship with the PST (Ellis, Alonzo and Nguyen 2020; Izadinia 2015), this question was posed only to PSTs: we wanted to investigate the perceptions of those with less power in the relationship. As seen in Figure 2, PSTs were offered a range of descriptors to evaluate the relationship: from negative ('lack of understanding', 'lack of communication', 'ineffective', etc.) through 'neutral' to positive ones ('empowering', 'relaxed', 'friendly', etc.).



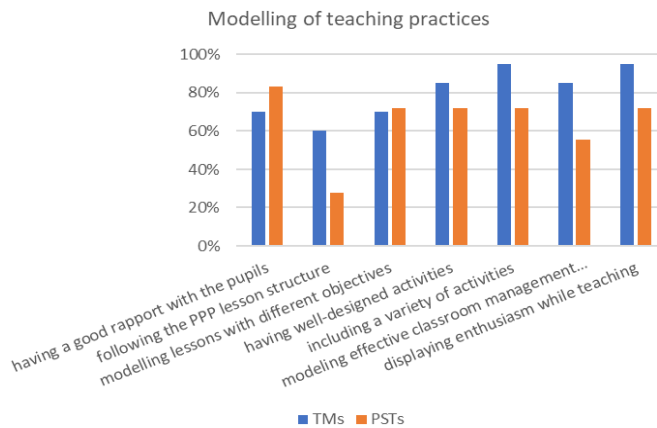
**Fig. 2** PSTs' answers regarding their relationship with TMs

Almost all PSTs described their relationship with TMs in positive terms, using the descriptors: 'good', 'honest', 'respectful' and 'friendly' most frequently. It is evident that TMs managed to establish a positive relationship with PSTs and provide a welcoming environment during the TP. This is an important (and for PSTs' university instructors, a satisfying) finding because "a relationship built on trust and openness ensure[s] that the

PST's developmental needs [will] be met" (Ambrosetti 2014, 38). Only two respondents (PST19 and PST25) described their relationship with the TMs in negative terms ('lack of understanding', 'ineffective', 'negative'). From their answers to other questions about the communication and cooperation with their TMs, it can be inferred that their TMs provided them with extremely limited professional support and guidance and that these PSTs felt this had hindered their professional development. Though these PSTs' answers diverged from the answers of the other PSTs in this area, their answers regarding other areas (e.g., characteristics of students doing the TP, preparedness for the TP) were not much different. Although the number of such PSTs is small, the university instructors should investigate the issue further in order to avoid similar situations in the future.

### 4.3. Modeling of teaching practices

The next question referred to the areas that TMs paid special attention to when modeling their lessons observed by PSTs and areas PSTs observed in their TMs' lessons. The results are shown in Figure 3. The participants were again asked a follow-up open-ended question related to whether any discussions took place after the lessons to help PSTs analyze and reflect on the observed lessons.



**Fig. 3** The participants' answers regarding TMs' modeling of teaching practices

According to Hudson (2004), modeling is a central aspect of mentorship. It allows PSTs to bridge the gap between theory and practice since by observing TMs' lessons they learn how to apply theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings. As Albakri et al. (2021) note, "it is important that the mentor models effective instructional practices as tangible evidence for the pre-service teachers to see clearly successful teaching practices" (650). In other words, teaching "effectively with well-designed, hands-on lessons that display classroom management strategies and exemplify a rapport with students" allows PSTs "to conceptualize effective teaching practices towards developing their own knowledge and skills" (Hudson 2004, 143).

When it comes to some specific teaching practices modeled by TMs during the TP, both groups of participants agree TMs paid special attention to including a variety of well-designed activities, which equipped PSTs with an extensive toolkit they can use in different classes with diverse objectives and with students who have different needs and learning

styles. Furthermore, as noted by TM07 in the previous section, it reinforces the idea that teaching is a lifelong journey of continuous learning. Both groups further agree that TMs displayed enthusiasm while teaching and had a good rapport with pupils, which is in line with Hudson's model (2004): enthusiastic TMs create an environment where learning is an exciting experience and they foster positive relationships with pupils, thus inspiring PSTs to approach their own teaching in the same way.

Figure 3 shows, however, that while many TMs tried to incorporate the presentation-practice-production (PPP) lesson structure in their classes, this is not what most PSTs observed in lessons modeled by their TMs. There might have been cases where TMs wanted to demonstrate different lesson structures that PSTs were not familiar with (since PPP was the only lesson structure covered in the TEFL Methodology 1 course) or cases where unexpected situations in the classroom prompted TMs to diverge from the PPP structure. Another explanation, however, might be that PSTs simply did not recognize certain activities as demonstrating the practice or the production stage of the lesson because they might not have the tools and experience to identify the PPP structure in action. It might also be the case that PSTs are used to having clear breaks between the activities in a lesson plan and were not able to identify the PPP structure in a class where there was a smooth transition between the activities.

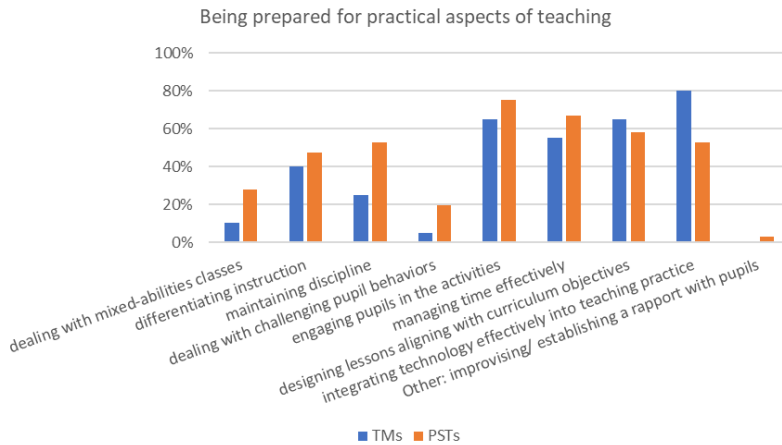
The discrepancy between TMs trying to incorporate the PPP structure and PSTs not recognizing it in observed lessons highlights a significant challenge for PSTs in making connections between theory and practice, which is not unique to this study or this specific context (Hennissen, Beckers, and Moerkerke 2017; Korthagen 2010; Yin 2019). Therefore, studies such as this one are crucial in exploring the TP and identifying areas where PSTs need additional support and guidance such as further instruction on lesson planning and structure or more opportunities for lesson observation and reflection.

Since lesson observations represent "a useful tool for mentors to elicit mentees' reflection, and produce learning points for constructive discussions" (Hairon et al. 2020, 111), the participants were asked in a follow-up question whether TMs included any discussions to help the PSTs analyze and reflect on the observed lessons. Almost all the participants answered affirmatively, which was expected given that TMs in general encouraged PSTs to reflect on lessons they observed and held (see Figure 1). According to TMs' reports, in the post-lesson discussions, PSTs were usually expected to *talk about the lesson they had observed; try to come up with different ideas; discuss what they considered good or/ and bad parts of the lesson* (TM20), to *analyze and reflect on the activities, timing, pupil engagement, what worked and what didn't, what could have been done in a different way and how* (TM13) or to *identify the strong and the weak points of the classes and list all the possible ways for improvement* (TM16). Such *reflection sessions* (TM16) are essential for PSTs' professional growth as they allow PSTs to think critically about their own decisions in the classroom and brainstorm solutions for similar situations they might encounter in the future.

#### **4.4. PSTs' teaching before and after the TP**

Another set of questions referred to the aspects of teaching that PSTs were well-prepared for at the beginning of the TP and those where they made the greatest progress during the TP. When asked in the multiple-choice question about the aspects of teaching PSTs were well-prepared for at the beginning of the TP, the two groups mostly offered similar answers with a slight difference in their ranking (Figure 4). Both groups think that

PSTs were well-prepared for: ‘engaging pupils in the activities’, ‘designing lessons that align with curriculum objectives’ and ‘managing time effectively’.



**Fig. 4** The participants’ answers regarding PSTs’ preparedness for the TP

However, there were also aspects of teaching that the two groups expressed certain disagreements about. Thus, 52.8% of PSTs believed that they were well prepared for ‘maintaining discipline’, while 25% of TMs shared this opinion. Similarly, some PSTs believed to a considerable extent that they were well-prepared for: ‘dealing with mixed ability classes’ (27.8%) and ‘dealing with challenging pupil behavior’ (19.4%), while only 5% and 10% of TMs respectively believed that PSTs were prepared for these aspects of teaching. Finally, the two groups viewed differently the aspect of PSTs’ ‘integrating technology effectively into teaching practice’. While this answer topped the TMs’ list, it shared positions 4 and 5 on the PSTs’ list. Considering TMs’ teaching and mentoring experience, we can assume that the difference can be attributed to belonging to different generations: TMs mostly belong to the generation of “digital emigrants”, while PSTs to “digital natives” (Prensky 2001), but the matter needs to be investigated further.

When asked in the follow-up open-ended question where they noticed their greatest progress during the TP, PSTs replied ‘time management’ most frequently. They also mentioned ‘maintaining class discipline’, ‘gaining confidence’ and ‘being more relaxed’. For a few PSTs, better communication with pupils was of particular significance. They felt good because they became *the authority to pupils* (PST20), they could *[connect] with the students* (PST27) and *manage the whole class of young teenagers* (PST26). As a result, PSTs became *more relaxed and friendly with students* (PST01) during classes and could even *improvise during [the] activities whenever it is needed* (PST28), i.e., divert from the strict script of the lesson plan and adapt their behavior to the situation in the classroom. Finding and designing activities was not as prominent on the PSTs’ list, but thanks to TMs’ insistence on including new activities, that was mentioned by some PSTs: *I improved with ... figuring out what activities fit what lesson* (PST10), *I became ... able to see which activities are actually effective and useful for the students* (PST25), *I have learned to ... make more effective exercises for certain grades* (PST33).

Generally, PSTs' responses show that they were mostly focused on their own feelings and communication with pupils, which is a common finding in literature especially if PSTs are at the beginning of their teaching career. For example, Ambrosetti found that first-year PSTs – those at the beginning of the practical part of the ITE – “focused on gaining confidence ‘in front of the class’ and in ‘managing learning experiences’ which corresponds to limited time spent in their professional placement” (2010, 125).

In their answers to the open-ended question about PSTs' progress during the TP, TMs agreed with PSTs that PSTs made progress in the aspects of ‘gaining confidence/ being confident’ and ‘time management’, but they also added ‘dealing with mixed-ability classes’, which was not as prominent on the PSTs' list. As TMs were particularly focused on using a variety of well-prepared activities in their own teaching, they referred to this aspect in their comments about PSTs' progress as well, although it was not frequently mentioned by PSTs. TMs noted that PSTs *developed suitable activities for the students' level* (TM01), *used well designed activities* (TM08), *[chose] proper activities for students of different age* (TM14), *[chose] adequate warm-up activities* (TM17) and *[found] activities outside the book* (TM18).

Basically, when talking about PSTs' preparedness for the TP, PSTs and TMs did not show great difference in the ranking questions, except for the use of technology and maintaining class discipline. Furthermore, PSTs seem to have been more focused on developing their teacher identity, building confidence and communicating with pupils while aspects such as dealing with mixed-ability classes and choosing and designing different activities were not really of primary importance to them at that moment. These differences in perceptions between the two cohorts can be ascribed to the difference in experience and stages of professional development.

#### 4.5. Benefits and challenges of mentoring

The final multiple-choice questions in the TMs' questionnaire referred to the benefits and challenges of being a mentor. As for the benefits, 100% of TMs chose the item: ‘contributing to the profession by sharing my knowledge and skill’, which is in line with the findings reported in other studies (Jewell 2007, Walkington 2005). This one is followed by ‘renewed enthusiasm and inspiration’ and ‘refreshing my own teaching and enhancing my professional development’ (85% each). As for the challenges, the only answer that had the response rate over 50% was ‘difficulty to balance between my regular teaching workload and mentoring students’ (65%). Next on the list were ‘unpaid additional workload’ (40%) and ‘difficulty to balance between being too demanding and being too lenient’ (35%).

Finally, when asked which aspect of mentoring they cherished the most, TMs gave a range of answers: from *[i]t gave me enthusiasm, inspiration for further work, personal and professional satisfaction. It made me feel useful. I got an opportunity to step out of the everyday teachers' routine* (TM02) and *...mentoring is a mutual development based on cooperation and positive feelings* (TM17) to *[a]ssisting young people to develop the skills and mindset for continuous learning and self-improvements as a teacher* (TM20) and *[h]elp young people with their future professions whether it is in teaching or other. Teaching is the most demanding and yet most fulfilling work and managing it can help students in any other future profession* (TM06).

As we can see, TMs in this sample are well aware of both benefits and challenges of being a mentor and hosting PSTs during their TP; however, the positive aspects seem to outweigh the challenges, which may be one of the reasons why many of them have accepted to be mentors for years.

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated TMs' and PSTs' views on the TP organized by the Niš English Department in 2022/23 and realized in a specific local context – in Niš schools. Referring back to the research questions, the results of the study suggest that there is a high degree of agreement between the two groups. Both groups state that TMs provided both cognitive and affective support to PSTs (although PSTs valued affective support more), which was important for PSTs to build confidence and be better prepared for the teaching process. The differences in opinions on some segments of the TP result from the participants being in different social positions and at different stages in professional development. While TMs are more concerned with being a better model to PSTs, exhibiting enthusiasm for teaching and trying to introduce a variety of activities, PSTs seem to be unaware of those; they are mostly focused on their confidence, personal performance and communication with students.

As for the limitations, most of them result from using the questionnaire as a data collecting tool, making it impossible for the researchers to ask any follow-up questions or ask for elaboration or clarification. The use of focus groups or semi-structured interviews in some future research might be helpful for getting a deeper insight into TMs' and PSTs' views on the TP. Another limitation is a relatively low response rate, particularly among PSTs. The fact that not all groups of PSTs were represented in the sample calls for the question of “selection bias” (Ball 2019). This fact also explains why it was not possible to match and compare the data provided by each group of PSTs with their respective TM's and why the findings were presented globally for each group respectively.

The findings of this study suggest that TMs and PSTs greatly agree in their views of the TP, but also that there are no gaps between what PSTs learn at university and what they learn during the TP. This may suggest that at the Niš English Department the selection and preparation of TMs, and the organization and structure of the TP are in line with the TEFL Methodology courses at university and that university instructors, TMs and PSTs do share a common philosophy of teaching. The contribution of the study, however, goes beyond the local context as the findings add to the representation of diverse perspectives in international ITE research. By exploring the TP experience from the perspectives of TMs and PSTs in Serbia together with research from other countries, researchers can make comparisons, identify similarities and differences, and gain insights into the effectiveness of different TP models.

**Acknowledgement:** *Prepared as a part of the project Scientific Findings in English Linguistics and Anglo-American Literature and Culture and Teaching Applications, conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Philosophy (No. 336/1-6-01).*

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## ISPITIVANJE MIŠLJENJA MENTORA I STUDENATA ANGLISTIKE O METODIČKOM PRAKTIKUMU

*Ovo istraživanje ispituje mišljenje nastavnika-mentora i studenata anglistike o metodičkom praktikumu koji je realizovan na Departmanu za anglistiku u Nišu u toku 2022/23. U tu svrhu sastavljena su dva upitnika - jedan za mentore, a drugi za studente - koji se u mnogim aspektima podudaraju. Upitnici su delom zasnovani na Hudsonovom modelu mentorstva u cilju efikasne nastave (Hudson 2004). U istraživanju se koristi kvalitativna analiza da bi se na sveobuhvatan način razumelo kako ove dve grupe vide praktikum. Upitnik ispituje nekoliko ključnih oblasti, kao što su: uloga mentora u pružanju podrške studentima, upoznavanje sa praktičnim aspektima nastave i razvijanje odnosa između mentora i studenata. Pored ovog, istraživanje se bavi pripremljenošću studenata za praktikum, kao i mišljenjem mentora o dobrim i lošim stranama mentorisanja. Rezultati pokazuje da su mentori pružili studentima i kognitivnu i emotivnu podršku, mada su studenti više cenili onu emotivnu. Studenti su generalno koristili pozitivne termine da bi opisali svoj odnos s mentorima. Rezultati ukazuju da su se mentori trudili da iskažu entuzijazam i koriste raznovrsne aktivnosti kako bi bili dobar uzor studentima, ali da su studenti više bili usredsređeni na sopstveno samopouzdanje i ponašanje kao nastavnika.*

*Ključne reči: Metodika nastave engleskog jezika, metodički praktikum, nastavnici-mentori, studenti, efikasno mentorstvo, praktična nastava*



# INSIGHTS INTO THE LATEST INNOVATIONS: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES ON USING CHATGPT FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

UDC 004.89:378.14

Milica Vitaz<sup>1</sup>, Sandra Vasković<sup>2</sup>


<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>2</sup>Technical Faculty in Bor, University of Belgrade, Bor, Serbia

ORCID iDs: Milica Vitaz

Sandra Vasković

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6694-9212>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1624-841X>

**Abstract.** *Browsing research papers regarding the subject matter of AI and ChatGPT, one infers a plethora of articles on the topic. Given that ChatGPT is a large language model (emphasis on the language), it is no surprise that many of discussions and debates are in the domain of education and language learning. A significant number of those refer to the position of such technologies in tertiary education. We present and comment on the opinions of university students on using ChatGPT, observing the following: 1) how familiar the students are with ChatGPT; 2) their thoughts and opinions on chatbot; and 3) what they would use it for. We have conducted a survey with English majors, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University who filled in an open-ended, anonymous questionnaire, containing the abovementioned questions. The analysis helps place the attitudes of Serbian students within a broader spectrum of similar research being conducted elsewhere. It provides insights into the potential of ChatGPT as an educational tool and its integration into university curricula. Additionally, this study offers recommendations for optimizing the usage of ChatGPT, addressing concerns and limitations identified by participants, which should lead to making informed decisions about the implementation and use of ChatGPT.*

**Key words:** *ChatGPT, AI, university students, opinions*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We would like to start by discussing AI in general, and ChatGPT in particular as a type of AI available freely to our students and us. We will try to define these concepts, discuss their place in the domain of education and point out their advantages and disadvantages.

When trying to define AI, we had to step out of our comfort zone, and borrow insight from other fields of research. Cugurullo (2020, 2-3) states that a single definition of AI

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Submitted April 3, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Milica Vitaz

University of Belgrade

E-mail: [milica.vitaz@fil.bg.ac.rs](mailto:milica.vitaz@fil.bg.ac.rs)

does not exist, but that we could explore its meaning through dismantling it into the two components, the two sub-concepts that make up its name: artificial and intelligence. “By combining the two sub-concepts, artificial and intelligence, we can broadly understand an AI as an artifact able to acquire information on the surrounding environment and make sense of it, in order to act rationally and autonomously even in uncertain situations,” claims Cugurullo (2020, 3). Further thinking about AI inevitably leads to the question of its consciousness, i.e. whether it can think and to what extent. Although this is an intriguing and highly debatable topic, it falls out of the scope of this particular research.

As we attempt to describe and understand AI in all its different forms, it is not surprising that we compare it with another entity we assign intelligence to, human beings. Korteling and associates (2021, 5) mention 5 ways in which humans differ from AI: 1) structure (a biological system compared to a digital one), 2) speed (computers being so much faster than people), 3) connectivity/communication (humans having more intricate and less direct ways of communicating compared to machines), 4) updating (with very few constraints in AI and a lot of obstacles in humans), 5) energy (humans need it far less than machines to operate successfully). It is notable that in some aspects AI has the upper hand, while in others it is the humans who are advantageous.

AI has, and will continue to have, an undeniably significant place in the field of education. González-Calatayud et al. (2021, 3-4) broadly divide its application in this field into AI for tutoring and AI for assessment. Given that the participants of our study were students, there is no surprise that their comments and impressions relate to the use of AI in the domain of tutoring and not assessment.

In November 2022, when Open AI launched a new conversation chatbot, we witnessed the birth of ChatGPT (Ali et al. 2023, 42). Since then this tool has become extremely widespread and popular, especially with young people, our potential students (Stepanechko and Kozub 2023, 298).

Most authors, educators, researchers and the like, mention how this new tool will be both our blessing and our curse, how it has its strengths and weaknesses: Mollick and Mollick (2022), Ali et al. (2023, 42), Stepanechko and Kozub (2023, 298), Baskara and Mukarto (2023, 347), etc.

Let us focus on the positive aspects first, and highlight some of the benefits of ChatGPT that researchers and educators have recognised. This is a tool which replicates human conversation, and in terms of language learning and teaching, this is an amazing opportunity which needs to be explored (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou 2023, 2). Furthermore, it has the potential to assist students during the writing process, aiding writers who face a barrier, or it can provide a fresh perspective on a certain topic (Gill et al, 2023, 4).

Some authors (Baskara and Mukarto, 2023, 344) recognize the need for more detailed investigation into ChatGPT in the domain of higher education. Stepanechko and Kozub (2023, 299) warn us about the following feature of ChatGPT – given the exact same task, it will produce different, but correct answers. This can potentially have a massive impact on students’ cheating and taking short-cuts when completing their assignments. However, we have consulted with several colleagues who were suspicious of their students’ using ChatGPT while completing their homework. Their general opinion is that a teacher could observe patterns and similarities in the students’ answers which were generated by the chatbot. Still, there remains the problem of proving beyond doubt that there was any wrongdoing on behalf of the student.

As we are dealing with a very recent invention, we recognize the need for it to be explored and analysed. Only then can we expect to find good use for it, as well as become aware of the potential risks. As Baskara and Mukarto (2023, 353) have put it: "It is essential to consider the impact of ChatGPT on language teachers, learners, and society. Investigating the ethical and social implications of using ChatGPT for language learning will contribute to a better understanding of its role in higher education." Our own research tries to uncover the ethical implications of this tool through analysing the answers given by our research participants.

## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

A lot of research has been conducted recently in the domain of AI as a broader concept, and ChatGPT as a more specific concept. González-Calatayud et. al. (2021) have conducted a comprehensive research on the papers written on AI and its role in education, focusing on student's assessment. While their investigation may not align entirely with our own research parameters, some of their conclusions remain relevant to anyone studying this phenomenon. For instance, they claim that the use of AI in education is not so widespread, mainly due to the lack of knowledge on behalf of the user (González-Calatayud, 2021, 11). Three years have passed since this claim was made, and that may be a long time when it comes to technology and its rapid development. This means that some of the statements previously made might not be relevant to a degree. However, as technology advances swiftly, it is imperative that we keep pace with its development and adapt our utilization accordingly.

Most papers that explore and/or describe ChatGPT are very recent in date, with the majority of them having been written in 2022 or 2023. This is understandable, given the launch date of ChatGPT. These papers mainly describe the online chatbot and share people's views and opinions on the tool. Consequently, our research has taken a similar route. Below are brief summaries of some of the more relevant articles on the topic of ChatGPT.

In their analysis, Mollick and Mollick (2022) single out three ways or strategies ChatGPT can assist learners in higher education contexts. They talk about improving transfer, breaking the illusion of explanatory depth and training students to critically evaluate explanations. The article includes ready-made examples on how to achieve each of these goals.

Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou (2023) provide us with insights into the diverse applications of ChatGPT. Going through the list of their suggestions and ideas may certainly be beneficial to students and educators alike. Some of the concepts they highlight are the following: helping learners understand the meaning of words in context, their translation, identifying and explaining language mistakes, generating various types of text, etc. (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou 2023, 3). However, these authors emphasise the importance of posing clear and specific questions when communicating with the chatbot, so as to obtain correct, accurate and relevant answers (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou 2023, 8). As the main concerns that are voiced, the authors discuss such problems as students potentially cheating, the chatbot's cultural bias or the accuracy of the data (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou 2023, 8-9).

Similar to the aforementioned paper, Baskara and Mukarato (2023) discuss the pros and cons of ChatGPT, while also delving into its potential usage. The fact that ChatGPT has the ability to produce responses that resemble human language proves highly beneficial for language learning, the authors say (Baskara and Mukarato, 2023, 346). It can write dialogs, it

can produce writing prompts, it can do translation, give feedback to students on their written work, and so on (Baskara and Mukarato, 2023, 347). Furthermore, it can use incomplete prompts to give personalised and contextualised feedback to users (Baskara and Mukarato, 2023, 347), at the same time taking into consideration the level of the students, their interests and learning objectives (Baskara and Mukarato, 2023, 349). Personalisation is the key advantage of this language model, and the authors refer to it as ‘a hallmark of ChatGPT’. (Baskara and Mukarato, 2023, 349). On the other hand, this language model possesses some drawbacks which may cause concern. These are some of the drawbacks highlighted by the authors (Baskara and Mukarato, 2023, 348): first, ChatGPT may struggle with more complex, abstract notions and concepts; next, the generated content might be inappropriate, biased, racist, etc.; finally, there is concern among educators regarding the impact of this language model on their employment.

One relevant paper predating the release of ChatGPT examines why using various types of technologies in education is harmful (Alhumaid, 2019). The author points out that technology and education have been merged and are now inseparable, with students being native users of technology and so many subjects being taught through the use of technology worldwide (Alhumaid, 2019, 11). The paper primarily critiques the impact of technology on the socio-humanistic aspect of education. Namely, using technology in education creates a divide between a student and a teacher, as well as among the students themselves and it creates a divide between those who have access to technology and those who do not (Alhumaid, 2019, 13). An ominous assertion can be found on this very topic: “teaching has been ripped from the realm of human endeavours and morphed into a technological leviathan that is slowly usurping the soul of the profession.” (Kemp et al., 2015, 4). Although these opinions predate the release of ChatGPT, we should not ignore the warnings expressed here.

A paper written by Ali et al. (2023) examines the connection between ChatGPT and students’ motivation. It explores the motivation levels regarding the different language skills, both micro and macro. The data shows that ChatGPT could be highly motivating when it comes to developing reading and writing, whereas the participants had a neutral attitude on its effect on listening and speaking (Ali et al., 2023, 44). This does not come as a surprise, given the fact that the current format of the most available version of ChatGPT is written. Also, participants believe that the two micro skills, grammar and vocabulary, could be improved through the use of ChatGPT (Ali, et. al. 2023, 45).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The survey method used in this study, conducted in September 2024, was designed to capture a broad range of student perspectives. The questionnaire, which consisted of eight questions, included demographic information such as gender, age and year of study, followed by questions on awareness, usage and perceived usefulness of ChatGPT. Both closed multiple-choice and open-ended questions were asked in order to gain differentiated insights. Data collection was conducted electronically outside of class to ensure anonymity and convenience for participants. A total of 61 students from the Department of English participated in the survey, providing a representative sample for analysis. Initially, a total of 148 students were asked to take part in the research and to fill out the questionnaire. Given that more than half of the students did not choose to participate in the research, thus limiting its outcome, some strategies could be developed to ensure better participation in the future.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey, conducted among English majors at the Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University, aimed to determine the awareness, usage and perception of ChatGPT, an AI language-processing model developed by OpenAI. The results of the survey provide valuable insights into students' attitudes towards this technology and its potential impact on their academic activities. This section discusses the results in detail, focusing on various aspects such as demographic analysis, awareness and usage of ChatGPT, first impressions, perceived usefulness, and pedagogical impact.

### 4.1. Demographic analysis

The demographic profile of the survey participants shows that female students (75.4%) outnumber male students (24.6%). In terms of age distribution, the majority of participants were between 20 and 25 years old (70.5%), followed by those younger than 20 years old (25%) and a minority older than 25 years old (5%). In terms of academic year, first-year students formed the largest group (62.3%), while second-year students made up about 20%, with third- and fourth-year students accounting for 13% and 5%, respectively. It is noteworthy that all participants belonged to the Department of English, indicating a homogeneous sample with a common academic background.

### 4.2. Awareness and use of ChatGPT

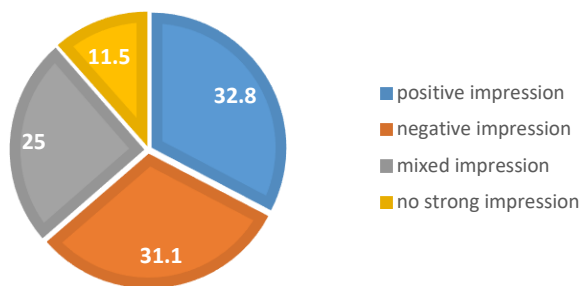
The results of the survey show that the majority of students (93.4%) do not use ChatGPT in their daily lives. Of those who were aware of ChatGPT, the main source of information was the internet (59%), highlighting the role of online platforms in disseminating knowledge about AI technologies. Relatively few students reported learning about ChatGPT from teachers (11.5%), friends (15%), or family members (8.2%), suggesting that they rely on digital channels to obtain information. Despite widespread awareness, a significant proportion of students (around 6.5%) had either never heard of ChatGPT or were encountering it for the first time.

### 4.3. Perception of ChatGPT

The analysis of the students' first impressions of ChatGPT revealed different views, which were categorized into positive, mixed, negative and uncertain/no firm opinion groups. In the positive impressions, ChatGPT was emphasized as a useful tool that offers exciting possibilities and is a helpful and interesting innovation. In contrast, negative impressions included expressions of horror at the capabilities of AI, concerns about the potential negative impact on literacy skills, and fears about the perceived threat to future professions.

Mixed impressions reflected a mixture of optimism and caution. They recognized the benefits of ChatGPT but also saw the potential drawbacks. Some students perceived it as scary but potentially useful, while others recognised its benefits but feared its limitations.

The proportion of respondents who had a positive impression (32.8%) was almost identical to the proportion of respondents who had a negative impression (31.1%). Around 25% expressed mixed impressions, while 11.5% were unsure or had no clear opinion, suggesting that the possibilities and implications of the technology need to be explored further.



**Fig. 1** Perception of ChatGPT (*What were your initial thoughts on ChatGPT?*)

#### 4.4. Usefulness of ChatGPT in the academic environment

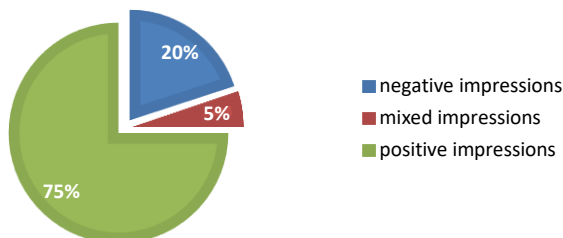
The students' perception of the usefulness of ChatGPT in an academic context was explained based on the responses, which were categorized into different areas: support in understanding and learning (32.8%), research and information retrieval (25.0%), support in writing and composing essays (23.6%), mixed impressions (5.0%), and negative impressions (20.0%).

The majority of students expressed optimism about the potential of ChatGPT to enhance learning by helping to explain difficult topics and clarify curriculum content. They also welcomed the role ChatGPT plays in expanding their vocabulary and providing examples of complex grammar exercises.

In terms of researching and retrieving information, students saw ChatGPT as a tool that speeds up the search for specific details, summarises information efficiently and provides quick answers and ideas.

For essay writing and composition support, students expected ChatGPT to help them write essays and answer questions about various topics. They also hoped for help with brainstorming ideas and checking grammar and spelling. Furthermore, the participants thought the chatbot would be helpful in providing them with suggestion for synonyms and antonyms to help them paraphrase their writing content.

Whilst the majority of students had a positive attitude towards ChatGPT, there was also a group who had mixed impressions. They recognised the potential usefulness of the chatbot, but remained cautious due to its error-proneness and perceived limitations. In addition, some students had a negative impression. They feared that ChatGPT could trivialise learning by completing tasks on behalf of the students, providing incorrect information and having limited utility, thus questioning its effectiveness in an academic setting.



**Fig. 2** Usefulness of ChatGPT in the academic environment (*In what ways could ChatGPT be useful to you during your studies?*)



#### **4.5. Limitations and suggestions for further research**

As is the case with any research, it is important to be aware of the limitations of one's work. However, these limitations could be taken as starting points for further research.

In this study we have focused on surveying students of the English language and on exploring their attitudes and opinions about ChatGPT. This choice was made since it correlates with our field of interest and line of work. There is no doubt that expanding the research to include students of other languages, as well as students at other faculties, would yield more relevant results.

Next, the research could have benefitted from a larger participant pool. Out of the 148 students invited to complete the questionnaire, only 61 did so. Despite ample time provided and the minimal time commitment required, nearly two-thirds of the students opted out. To mitigate this in the future, various strategies can be employed. One approach could involve making research participation a prerequisite for exams or midterm tests. Alternatively, incentivizing participation by offering additional points may yield higher engagement. Another effective method could entail conducting the survey during class time, ensuring higher attendance and participation rates. All of this, of course, should be done in agreement with the relevant department and the exam committee.

The time when we conducted the study is certainly an important factor. Since we were investigating a new technology which is still in its infancy, we have to be aware of how quickly it is changing. What must change with it, are also people's opinions and the way the technology could be used. As a result, continuous study of the phenomenon should be maintained. These findings have significant implications for its use in the classroom. As ChatGPT and similar technologies evolve, educators must adapt their teaching methods to effectively integrate these tools into the learning environment. Continued monitoring and evaluation of student perceptions and usage behaviour is essential to ensure that these tools are meeting the needs of students and teachers alike.

Finally, we feel like we have only scratched the surface with a more general analysis of our students' opinions. There is no doubt that conducting a more comprehensive survey would give detailed input about how students feel and what they use ChatGPT for.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the survey provides a valuable insight into student perceptions of ChatGPT and highlights the perceived benefits, limitations and ethical considerations. While a significant proportion of students are unaware of or sceptical about ChatGPT, the vast majority recognize its potential to enhance learning, research and academic writing. The diversity of opinions emphasises the need for nuanced approaches to integrating AI technologies into education to address concerns while harnessing their transformative potential. Furthermore, the findings emphasise the importance of educational and awareness-raising initiatives to promote the conscious use of AI technologies by students. Ultimately, the usefulness of ChatGPT, as with any other tool, depends on its prudent and responsible use. This highlights the need for ethical guidelines and pedagogical frameworks to maximise the benefits while minimising the risks.

Perhaps, in the true spirit of education, it could be suggested that both teachers and students learn as much as they can about this tool. Teachers ought to be trained on how to utilise it effectively and identify plagiarism, whereas students need to understand to which

extent ChatGPT can aid them when learning, but also understand the potential impact it can have on the credibility of their work (Gill et al., 2023, 7).

All in all, it is crucial to find a way to exploit the many benefits that ChatGPT can have on students' learning, but at the same time be aware of the negative effects it may cause (Stepanechko and Kozub, 2023, 300-301). The first step one needs to take, be it a teacher or an educator, is to learn about the phenomenon (Gill et al., 2023, 2).

### Questionnaire

1. Gender
  - male
  - female
2. Year of study:
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - senior undergraduate (a student who has finished attending all his lectures but has NOT graduated yet (i.e. taken all his exams))
  - master student
3. How old are you:
  - <20;
  - 20-25;
  - more than 25
3. Major:
4. Do you use ChatGPT in your everyday life?
  - Yes
  - No
5. Briefly explain how you found out about ChatGPT:
  - Friend
  - Internet
  - Family
  - Teacher
  - Other
6. What was your initial thought on ChatGPT?
7. In what way would you use ChatGPT in your learning process?

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## ISTRAŽIVANJE NAJNOVIJIH TRENDOVA: MIŠLJENJA I STAVOVI UNIVERZITETSKIH STUDENATA O KORIŠĆENJU CHATGPT-A U OBRAZOVNE SVRHE

Danas se ogroman broj naučnih radova bavi temom veštačke inteligencije uopšte, i ChatGPT-om konkretno. Kako je ChatGPT veliki jezički model, (naglasak na jezički), ne iznenađuje što se većina ovih radova i diskusija vodi na temu obrazovanja i učenja jezika. Značajan deo tih istraživanja se odnosi na mesto ovakvih tehnologija u visokoškolskom sistemu. U ovom radu predstavljamo mišljenja univerzitetskih studenata o korišćenju ChatGPT-a. Konkretno, ispituje se: 1) u kojoj meri je studentima poznat ChatGPT; 2) koja su njihova mišljenja o njemu; 3) u koju svrhu bi ga koristili. Istraživanje je sprovedeno sa studentima engleskog jezika na Filološkom fakultetu Univerziteta u Beogradu. Korišćen je anonimni upitnik otvorenog tipa. Analiza odgovora smešta stavove studenata iz Srbije u kontekst sličnih istraživanja u drugim sredinama. Takođe, ovo istraživanje nudi preporuke za optimalno funkcionisanje ChatGPT-a u pomenutim uslovima, i ukazuje na strahove i ograničenja koja su ispitanici identifikovali. Razumevanjem stavova studenata, nastavnici i istraživači moći će da donesu relevantne odluke o implementaciji i upotrebi ChatGPT-a u akademskom kontekstu.

Ključne reči: ChatGPT, veštačka inteligencija, univerzitetski studenti, mišljenja



## USE OF ENVIRONMENT-THEMED CARTOONS IN ESP TEACHING

UDC 378.147:[811.111'276.6:331.45]

**Predrag Niketić**

Faculty of Occupational Safety, University of Niš, Serbia

ORCID iD: Predrag Niketić

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5500-9112>

**Abstract.** *In Serbia, as in many other countries, humour is frequently integrated into General English instruction in primary and secondary schools, but less frequently so in higher education, especially in specialized study programmes offering ESP courses. The present discussion concerns students enrolled at the Faculty of Occupational Safety (FOS), University of Niš, Serbia, particularly those in the environmental protection programme, but may also benefit students in analogous programmes at other higher education institutions. This paper investigates the potential of illustrated cartoons / comic strips as tools for English language instruction tailored to the field of environmental studies. The analysis of these cartoons assesses their prospective advantages for students regarding vocabulary acquisition, grammar proficiency, and a deeper comprehension of pertinent environmental concepts. The latter aspect is emphasized as FOS students are required to take the English Language course for only one semester during their freshman year, well before they encounter more specialized science and engineering coursework. Their familiarity with environmental terminology and fundamental concepts is thus likely to be limited, so pre-exposure to these concepts could prove particularly advantageous for their subsequent studies. Ideally, the inclusion of humour should enhance both their linguistic competencies and their grasp of the specialized subject matter.*

**Key words:** *ESP, environmental protection, humour, cartoons, environmental studies*

### 1. INTRODUCTION – ESP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

One of the key attributes of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is that it is tailored to the requirements of adult learners who seek proficiency in English in order to use it within their different professional domains, such as business and economics, science and technology, industry, engineering, or medical practice, or in an academic or educational setting. An ESP course design should be based on a needs analysis, as every ESP course, or LSP course for that matter, is aimed towards meeting specific needs, whether they are

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Submitted April 10, 2024; Accepted May 9, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Predrag Niketić

University of Niš

E-mail: [predrag.niketic@znrfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:predrag.niketic@znrfak.ni.ac.rs)

the needs “of the learners, the community, the language program itself, the university, international trends, or any number of other factors, or indeed, a combination thereof” (Trace, Hudson and Brown 2015, 7). This paper is based on “what learners need in order to operate in the target communicative situation” (Woodrow 2017, 21), wherein “all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning” (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, 19).

The present discussion concerns the application of specific teaching materials in an ESP course as a form of pre-investigation, the aim of which is to later utilize the said materials as efficiently as possible to redesign an ESP course for students of environmental protection. More precisely, environmental protection comprises only one part of the entire course. The course in question, titled simply English Language, is taught at the Faculty of Occupational Safety (FOS), University of Niš, Serbia as a required course during the second semester of the first year of bachelor studies. While ESP courses generally target a single professional or academic field, the course taught at FOS actually targets three. Namely, the course is taken by students of three different study programmes: occupational safety, environmental protection, and fire safety, so it needs to focus on the needs of all three groups of students. In a manner of speaking, the entire course may be regarded as a three-in-one ESP course. The analysis of students’ needs has shown that a new coursebook is in order, as the FOS curriculum has significantly changed since the current coursebook was published in 2002 and was specifically written for the course that was taught for as many as four semesters.

This paper discusses only the environmental-protection portion of the course, which is designed to familiarize students with the basic environmental protection vocabulary as well as some key environmental concepts. The course is designated as ‘general academic’ according to the Serbian classification, the same as some other first-year courses, such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Sociology. The main challenge of the English course pertains not so much to the linguistic aspect, but rather to the conceptual preparation of the students to take a wide variety of specialized science and engineering courses, beginning in their second, and especially in their third and fourth year of studies. This was less of a challenge during the late 2000s and the early 2010s, when English Language was a required third-year course and the students were already familiar with many of the concepts related to their field of study. In 2014, the new accreditation relegated the course to the first year to be taught to fresh-out-of-high-school students who were not entirely familiar with any of the three major fields studied, as these are rarely, if at all, taught in Serbian secondary schools. With regard to environmental protection specifically, there is a need to familiarize students with the concepts they will encounter as they progress through their studies, for instance air, water, and soil pollution, energy use and global warming, waste management, endangered species, and sustainability. Such concepts are best imparted upon the students by relying on the subject areas they learned in school, particularly biology, chemistry, and social sciences.

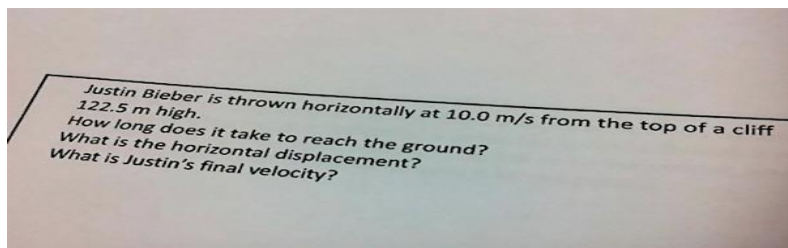
Linguistically, the biggest challenge is how to accommodate the many different English proficiency levels of FOS students, as these range from beginner and even ‘blank-slate’ level to considerably high proficiency. Of course, such extremes are a rare occurrence and the majority of the students could be classified somewhere in between. There are other higher education institutions that deal with this issue by offering a beginner level General English course as an elective and the required ESP course afterwards. Unfortunately, this is not the case at FOS, for reasons that fall outside the scope of this paper.

To tackle these challenges, one idea worth considering is to use humour as an instructional tool, since humour is a universally used mechanism to facilitate social

interaction and university classes can easily be regarded as a form of social interaction. In Serbia, humour has long been a staple in General English classrooms in primary and secondary schools, at first because of the distinctive and globally well-known characteristics of English humour and in more recent times owing to the ubiquity and mass availability of humorous content from English-speaking parts of the world. The humorous instructional tools discussed here as potential materials for the environmental protection ESP course include environment-themed illustrated cartoons and short comic strips. They were chosen for consideration because their presentation is less time-consuming than that of typical jokes or animated cartoons (an important factor for a single-semester course) and yet they offer the best of both worlds – a humorous effect and a visual reference. The following sections will focus on instructional humour in general, followed by the pros and cons of using cartoons in the classroom and by several examples of cartoons/strips analyzed for how much linguistic and environment-related information can be extracted from them.

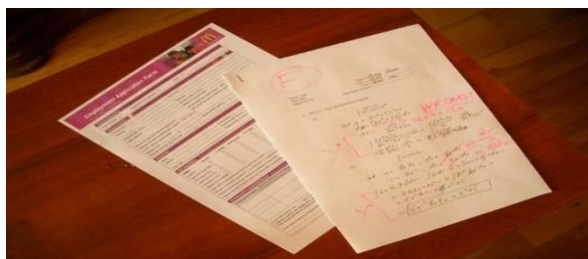
## 2. INSTRUCTIONAL HUMOUR

In general, humour has been used as a teaching tool throughout the world in various educational settings and across all education levels, making it a universal form of communication. To a layperson, humour is perhaps most frequently associated with language teaching and learning due to the prominent verbal component of jokes, as joking is commonly metonymically used to refer to humour in general. However, humour is far from language-learning specific, as exemplified by Fig. 1. Even though nowadays no one would be in the least surprised at being told that teachers use humour in the classroom, the main question is why. If humour is such a common occurrence in classrooms, it would be reasonable to assume that its use is somehow beneficial to learning and to learners. Yet, previous scholarly research does not seem to support the said assumption as a general truth. Instructional humour has been studied empirically for at least 50 years (Attardo 2020, 368), and to date there is yet to be a strong, empirically well-founded consensus regarding the instructional benefits of humour. According to Bell and Pomerantz (2015, 101), “[g]iven the current evidence, the most robust argument for using humor in education is affective.” Admittedly, the literature contains more publications in support of the claim that humour is beneficial to learning than those that are on the side of doubt. Despite the inconclusive evidence to unequivocally support the instructional benefits of humour, many teachers still resort to using it and will most likely continue to do so. As Attardo concludes, use of humour “probably will not do any serious damage to our students” as long as teachers remember that humour is not a cure-all for education and that it “will not lead to massive improvements of learning and retention. It may improve the students’ attitude and perception of the learning experience and that’s obviously a good thing” (Attardo 2020, 379-80). The key takeaway is that humour comes in many shapes and forms and may be used in an infinite number of ways. It is also important to note that classroom humour need not always be intentional (see Martin 2007, 14-15). This paper obviously focuses only on intentional humour.



**Fig. 1** Humour used in a physics class

Banas et al. (2011, 125) reviewed the (at the time) four decades worth of research on humour as a teaching tool and found that “the relationship between instructional humor and educational cannot be understood without taking into account the type of humor used, particularly regarding appropriateness and offensiveness.” The appropriateness and inappropriateness of humour as a teaching tool are dependent upon students’ perception of the humour, and the line between the two may often be blurred (Fig. 2). Martin et al. (2003) introduced four categories of classroom humour: affiliative, self-enhancing (as positive uses and therefore appropriate), aggressive, and self-defeating humour (as negative uses and therefore inappropriate). In one study, a typology of appropriate and inappropriate instructional humour was devised, the result being that students were more likely to benefit from appropriate forms of humour, but their perception of the categories offered did not overlap; for instance, sarcasm and irony were perceived as appropriate by some and as inappropriate by other students (Frymier, Wanzer and Wojtaszczyk 2008). The benefit of appropriate humour over inappropriate was confirmed in a Saudi Arabian study (Fadel and Al-Bargi 2018), whereby the students’ perception of humour appropriateness differed substantially from the aforementioned American study owing to general cultural differences. It is worth noting that both studies were conducted on university students. Indeed, some of the environment-themed cartoons presented here may be deemed inappropriate insofar as they appear to disparage humanity as a whole or at least big corporations for being the chief culprits responsible for most environmental issues.



**Fig. 2** Classroom humour generally considered inappropriate – a failed student test returned with a McDonald’s employment form

Through literature review, three main criteria have been identified as they pertain to the present topic. The first one is that humour should be used in such a way as to facilitate learning. Secondly, in order to have any benefit at all, humour has to be understood by the



students, or otherwise it could have the opposite effect. Finally, humour needs to be properly placed to have a positive effect.

The first criterion is the most general one and involves several aspects. Teachers will often use humour for purposes other than learning, for example, to relieve the tension during a test or exam or to lighten the mood before the lesson. These notions will be discussed below in relation to the third criterion. However, the most important reason should be to enhance learning (Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin 2010, 2). Another aspect is that humour can be manifested in myriad ways, so not every humorous manifestation will be suited to every age and level of students. Regarding foreign language teaching, strictly verbal humour, spoken or written, would typically be better suited to learners with higher proficiency, while visual tools such as funny pictures or cartoons would be more suited to younger or less proficient learners. Furthermore, the humorous medium to be used should also fit the teacher, as individual differences among teachers, such as gender, sense of humour, cultural background, or degree of immediacy (i.e. “the degree to which the teacher makes a close personal connection with students, as opposed to remaining distant and aloof” (Martin 2007, 353)), have been shown to affect the delivery of a lesson using humour (see Banas et al. 2011, 125-129).

The criterion that students need to understand humour to benefit from it is perhaps the most obvious one. On the other hand, it is a particularly difficult aspect when working with larger groups of students with many different proficiency levels. Even if students understand the humour, there is still the issue of how the students will interpret the humour, as not everything is funny to everyone, and if they will interpret it as appropriate or not. The risk of ‘missing the mark’ is ever-present for every teacher, but thorough preparation and familiarity with one’s students should reduce the risk of humorous material ‘misfiring’.

The most nuanced of the three criteria is the proper placement of humour during a lesson. There are two distinct categories with regard to humour placement – contiguous humour and integrated humour. The former “is humor that is not tied to the content of an educational message in an integral manner, is separated from an instructional message by time, and can be related or unrelated to core content” (Markiewicz, 1974; Vance, 1987), while the latter “is humor that is embedded in instructional lessons or activities (Vance, 1987), and occurs when humorous information is incorporated into core instructional messages” (Bolkan, Griffin and Goodboy 2018, 146). Wanzer, Frymier and Irwin (2010) proposed the Instructional Humour Processing Theory to examine why the use of humour by teachers sometimes benefits learning and sometimes does not. They found that integrated or, as they termed it, related humour, correlated with enhanced learning, while it was inconclusive whether contiguous, or unrelated humour impacted learning, as it was not connected to the taught material. Similar findings were reported by Kaplan and Pascoe (1977). On the other hand, Bolkan, Griffin and Goodboy (2018) found that contiguous humour was more likely to enhance learning, since it is used to reduce boredom among students and to motivate them to engage in class activities, which promotes better lesson retention. Conversely, students exposed to integrated humour were shown to have decreased retention compared with students who were exposed to course material in a serious manner. Although none of the above studies incorporated cartoons/comic strips into the experiments, the contrasting findings further underscore the importance of strategy concerning humour placement.

Provided that the said three criteria have been met, relevant literature suggests that there are five main benefits of instructional humour: (1) it attracts attention and interest; (2) it facilitates content acquisition; (3) it creates a positive learning environment; (4) it strengthens the student-teacher relationship; and (5) it develops divergent (lateral) thinking

skills (see Banas et al. 2011; Opplinger 2003; Aylor and Opplinger 2003; Schmidt 2002; Ziv 1983; Ziv 1988).

Considering that humorous cartoons are the main topic of this paper, the following section will focus on their use as a teaching tool.

### 3. INSTRUCTIONAL HUMOROUS CARTOONS

The idea to use humorous illustrated cartoons/comic strips extends both to classroom use and to coursebook inclusion. Their use has been a fairly common practice in educational and academic coursebooks and lessons. The usefulness of humorous illustrations in academic textbooks was studied over forty years ago by Bryant et al. (1981), with some less than motivating findings. Namely, they generally concluded that “[g]raphic humorous embellishment of textbooks is rather clearly a ‘mixed blessing.’ On the positive side, such humor usage makes the text more enjoyable and potentially more marketable. In terms of educational value, humor appears neither to help nor to hurt. Looking at the negative, if the author has a point to make, his or her persuasive potential tends to be impaired by employing pictorial humorous illustrations” (Bryant et al. 1981, 56). This seems to be a precursor to Attardo’s conclusion given above (sec. 2, p. 3). Martin (2007, 357-358) reached the same conclusion. Similarly, another study showed that students supported the use of cartoons in textbooks but no improvement in material retention was recorded compared to groups who were taught without cartoons (Özdoğru and McMorris 2013). Humorous cartoons did seem to be beneficial to readers of bestselling academic books according to a study by Chua (2014), but the study was conducted on a convenience sample via e-mail and did not focus on a university setting. Doring (2002) found that a careful selection of appropriate humorous illustrations can help students relax and gain confidence in developing flexibility of thought. Thus, cartoons have been shown to improve the affective aspect, i.e. students’ attitude towards the material, but not so much the cognitive aspect, i.e. students’ retention of the material. One study did, in fact, show that humorous cartoons facilitate memorization, but only compared to those same cartoons but modified with image description instead of the original caption or with added drawings to make the cartoon “weird” instead of funny (Schmidt 2002). The majority of the above findings are in stark contrast with the previously mentioned idea that the primary use of humour in teaching is to enhance learning. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the findings are readily applicable to ESP teaching, as the literature on cartoons in ESP coursebooks is prominently lacking. The presented studies were mostly conducted on psychology students rather than foreign language learners.

Satisfying the criterion that students need to understand humour for it to be beneficial may also be problematic when cartoons are concerned, because “the widely held view that cartoons are a direct and easy way of conveying a message [...] is admittedly put into question. Cartoons can be rather complex and not so easy to decode, after all, due to the variety and the interaction of the humorous mechanisms involved in the production of each one of them”; furthermore, “the decoding of a cartoon requires and presupposes detailed knowledge of the social and cultural information exploited for the production of humor” (Tsakona 2009, 1186).

### **3.1. Humorous Cartoons in Environmental Education**

The present discussion is supposed to benefit students of environmental protection studying for an engineering degree, and there are, in fact, several studies from related or matching disciplines focusing on cartoons. Diehl (2018) reported his own experience teaching an engineering class using cartoons that he himself had created. He did not measure the degree of students' retention of the concepts, but he did observe that the inclusion of humour improved the student-teacher rapport and promoted class discussion. There is, however, an extensive study conducted on first-year secondary school students that tested if and how cartoons helped students resolve environmental issues during Environmental Education classes (Toledo, Yangco and Espinosa 2014). The study showed that utilizing cartoons significantly enhanced the students' environmental issue resolution skills compared to traditional cartoon-less methods. Furthermore, two pertinent studies focusing on cartoons in environmental courses were conducted on Turkish secondary school students. The first one explored the impact of instructional comics on the cognitive and affective learning about environmental issues and found that comics positively influenced both the students' academic achievement and their attitudes about the environment compared against the control group (Topkaya 2016). The other study investigated how educational comics impacted lessons on environmental issues and environmental organizations in a social studies course; again, the findings were in favour of the experimental group exposed to comics, both cognitively and affectively (Topkaya and Doğan 2020). The last three findings clash with the previous ones, which may warrant a future hypothesis that the benefits of instructional humour depend on the discipline or subject matter being taught.

### **3.2. Humorous Cartoons in EFL/ESP Teaching**

There is also a scarcity of studies pertaining to cartoon use in EFL/ESP teaching, especially with regard to higher education. For instance, Bahrani and Soltani (2011) wrote favourably about the use of cartoons in language classes for primary school students, for both the affective and the cognitive aspect, but their discussion seems to include predominantly animated, and to a lesser extent, illustrated cartoons. They stated, however, that cartoons can be replicated across different learner groups and teaching situations, including higher education (Bahrani and Soltani 2011, 21). Similarly, Nazar et al. (2019) found that animated cartoons in an EFL course enhanced primary school students' comprehension level and vocabulary acquisition, with the added benefit of increasing their motivation to learn.

A study that is more germane to the present discussion was conducted by Gamage (2019) on Sri Lankan students of architecture who learn English as a second language. By using illustrated cartoons, which she carefully selected so that they do not in any way promote her own points of view or in any way be considered offensive, Gamage found that discussions about the cartoons enhanced students' speaking skills. Based on her results, she listed three relevant points concerning the use of cartoons: (1) "use of cartoons in ESL classrooms needs to be contextualized in relationship to their core subject fields"; (2) "[c]artoons can be used to initiate classroom discussions, debates, role playing, dialogues and essay writing to promote a deeper level of engagement with issues via 'critical thinking'"; and (3) "[s]tudents need to be exposed to extended academic opportunities by instructing them to draw a cartoon based on their own issue" (Gamage 2019, 115-16). In theory, all three points should also apply to an ESP course focusing on environmental protection, with point number three probably being the most difficult to implement within a 15-week course

duration, which is usually reduced to 13 or 14 weeks due to national holidays. The most topic-relevant study was conducted by Nigmatzyanova et al. (2019), who used illustrated environmental cartoons on a variety of environmental topics, such as deforestation, climate change, pollution, waste disposal, etc. as a part of the ESP course for students of ecology at a Russian university. As in the previous study, the results indicate that such cartoons proved highly beneficial for developing the students' speaking skills. Yet, it must be noted that the cartoons were not used as supplementary tools but constituted the entire lessons. The authors identified the following benefits of the cartoons: they "are appealing and interesting from the professional point of view;" "they enhance students' motivation, foster a positive attitude to learning, particularly to developing speaking skills in ESP classes;" they "have a positive effect on students' concentration and behavior in class;" and they "have a polemical focus, promote critical thinking, [and] trigger [an] emotional response encouraging students to speak out" (Nigmatzyanova et al. 2019, 4093). They recognized that the material should be adapted to the students' proficiency levels and background knowledge, while acknowledging that their study was limited by a small sample of students (n=22).

#### 4. ENVIRONMENT-THEMED CARTOONS – POTENTIAL COURSEBOOK MATERIAL

The cartoons presented in this section to be used in the ESP course for environmental protection have been selected based on the assessed needs of the FOS students studying to become environmental engineers and the needs of the FOS itself, while taking into account all the relevant arguments discussed in the previous sections. The cartoons are intended for use solely as supplementary teaching tools, without taking too much time from the main lessons, but, ideally, further clarifying some of the major points and facilitating students' retention of the lesson. In addition to environmental issues, cartoons also target vocabulary and grammar. The cartoons are thus considered as integrated/related humour and they do not display any aggressive or offensive content, i.e. they are appropriate. In addition, they are primarily aimed at enhancing students' comprehension of the taught material and secondarily at enhancing their learning experience. Because of the length limitation of the paper, only several cartoons will be analyzed below based on the vocabulary, grammar, and environmental concepts that can be extracted from them and presented to the students. Depending on what kind of benefits the cartoons offer, their placement will also be suggested.



**Fig. 3** Co-existence



**Fig. 4** The umbrella species

The cartoon shown in Fig. 3 offers a plethora of environmental issues, all of which affect a wide variety of animal species, and two of them, a lion and a tiger, dwell on the notion of co-existence, which is in turn an important concept for understanding how our planet is dependent on biodiversity. The dialogue also makes an indirect reference to humans through a list of detrimental human activities, which are useful both as environmental concepts and as vocabulary items. Other vocabulary points include the use of *neither* when referring negatively to two entities and the use of *into* with a double meaning: being involved in something and being enthusiastic about or interested in something. Grammar-wise, the lion provides a typical example of question formation using only intonation without an inversion. The cartoon should be placed after the main lesson, when a broader context for the issues listed in the right bubble has been provided.

In Fig. 4, the most prominent benefit is drawn from the joke regarding the umbrella species, which refers to “species that are selected as representatives of their ecosystem when conservation plans are being made”, because through their protection “other species that are a part of their ecosystem will also benefit under the same conservation ‘umbrella’” (Rhode 2021). Even though the cartoon joke relies on the literal meaning of *umbrella*, the protective relationship between an umbrella species and other species in an ecosystem remains evident. The joke introduces students to a previously (most likely) unfamiliar concept and also broadens their vocabulary. In this author’s previous experience, students have often benefited from being reminded that the noun *species* has the same singular and plural form, as the form *\*specie* is a common mistake, although the word form exists with a different meaning. Furthermore, the cartoon presents an ideal opportunity for students to be creative. The words spoken by the animal on the left (mostly reminiscent of a squirrel) are obviously a response to a question posed by the animal on the right. Students could work individually or in groups to come up with the best worded question. This cartoon should also follow the main lesson, after the students have been familiarized with the word *species* and the concept of endangered species.

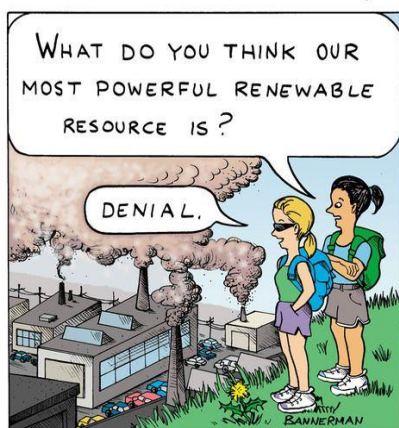


Fig. 5 Denial



Fig. 6 Green industry

With regard to environmental concepts, the cartoon in Fig. 5 offers two major concepts. The first is renewable resources, such as solar energy, wind, biomass, or water currents, which can immediately be juxtaposed to non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels, which are depicted in the cartoon. The second concept is denial, a word with which many students would be unfamiliar but could learn through the context of climate change / global warming denial. This means that many of the students would not be able to understand the punchline initially, which seems to go against the second criterion of humour benefitting the learner mentioned in section 2 above – humour has to be understood. However, the criterion does not specify the order of understanding. *Denial* could then be extended to the agentive noun *denier*. In terms of grammar, the cartoon lines showcase the use of superlatives and embedded questions, the latter being more suited to students with higher English proficiency. The cartoon should also be placed after the main lesson as it relies on complex environmental issues and contains vocabulary with which more students are expected to be unfamiliar.

The cartoon in Fig. 6 should perhaps most easily meet the criterion of students having to understand humour, since it relies on the ambiguity of the adjective *green*, referring both to the colour and to the quality of not being harmful to the environment. Most students should be familiar with the latter meaning. Other vocabulary items include the noun *factory*, which could be extended to its synonyms – *plant*, *mill*, and *works*. Likewise, students can learn / be reminded how to use *waste* as a noun (waste disposal; a waste of time) and as a verb (to waste money, to waste water, but not to *dispose of waste*). Another benefit may be derived from the use of *most* as opposed to *much/many*, because FOS students often mistranslate *most* by mistaking it for *much/many*. Regarding placement, this cartoon contains an easily graspable concept and is not particularly demanding in terms of vocabulary and grammar, which makes it ideal as an introduction to the main lesson concerning green practices, pollution, and/or waste management.



Fig. 7 Consideration

Linguistically, the most important aspect of the cartoon in Fig. 7 is the ambiguity of the verb *consider* – to think about something carefully on the one hand and to look or gaze attentively/reflectively at something on the other. Again, few students are expected to be familiar with the latter meaning, so the joke would need to be explained through vocabulary building. This cartoon would, in fact, be best suited as a supplement to a lesson on the environmental impact, such as soil and water pollution, of numerous everyday activities.

The printing example can be used to remind the students of the fact that printer cartridges greatly contribute to pollution. Not only do the ink and the toner contain chemicals that have a serious impact on the environment, but the cartridges are also made of non-recyclable and non-biodegradable metals and plastics. Even though it contains a higher-level ambiguity, the cartoon could still be placed before the main lesson if the idea is only to introduce the topics of soil/water pollution or waste management. However, if it is used as a discussion starter on how students as individuals can contribute to or harm the environment, it should be placed after the main lesson, when the students have been exposed to different ways humans impact the environment.

The analysis of the cartoons presented in this section combined with the major points taken from the literature review has resulted in the formulation of three main guidelines for including illustrated cartoons and comic strips as supplementary materials in an ESP course. The first one is that cartoons should be relevant to the topic of the lesson taught, as exemplified by the few, albeit various, environmental topics in the analyzed cartoons. Secondly, they should target specific learning needs, which means that they should contain specific vocabulary pertinent to the field of study, ideally accompanied by grammatical points covered during the students' previous education. This is why cartoons with added text would be preferable, whether one-liners or exchanges. Thirdly, cartoons/comics should be carefully and properly placed during the lesson, usually after or before the main lesson, depending on the cartoon content and on the specific lesson target. In this author's opinion, cartoons of this type should not be used in the middle of the main lesson as they would most likely distract the students from the main lesson content.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The paper presented a literature review of the use of humour in general and humorous illustrated materials in teaching a wide variety of subjects across all levels of education. Higher education and EFL learning received the most prominent focus because the purpose of the entire discussion was to filter relevant information that will facilitate the inclusion of cartoons / comic strips in a university ESP course/coursebook related to environmental protection. The discussion showed that teachers cannot expect a guaranteed improvement of their students' knowledge simply by adding humour to their lessons, as there has been no conclusive evidence to suggest that humour will necessarily improve information retention compared to the more serious methods. Nonetheless, humour was not found to be detrimental to students' learning and performance, either. Moreover, there is a sufficient number of studies suggesting that the use of humour did in fact enhance students' learning (cognitive aspect) as well as their motivation to learn (affective aspect). Such cases serve as justification for using humour as a teaching tool, the limitations of most of these studies notwithstanding.

One of the uses of humour during classes is to lighten the mood and to establish a rapport between the teacher and the students, but this paper primarily focused on the strictly instructional aspect of humour, regarding which several conclusions can be made. In an ESP course, supplementary instructional cartoons should contain appropriate humour, i.e. not aggressive or offensive, as they are not meant to elicit a negative emotional response from the students but to facilitate learning of the course material. This also means that whatever the specific purpose of the ESP course is, the cartoons need to reflect that. For instance, a cartoon, however funny, dealing with mathematics or business economics would be ill-suited

for an environmental protection ESP course. A teacher needs to determine what the students need from the ESP course and base the selection of cartoons on those needs. Cartoons also need to be understood by the students, but this is not always feasible with large groups at different proficiency levels. Thus, explanations of the jokes are sometimes in order and should not depreciate the humorous value if there is any. Finally, once cartoons have been carefully selected, the teacher has to consider their placement in relation to the main lesson. The most beneficial placement appears to be either before or after the main lesson, depending on specific needs and lesson targets. If the curriculum allows it, cartoons can themselves be the main lesson, but with shorter, single-semester courses, it would be ill-advised.

In order for this discussion to become an empirical study, the future coursebook/syllabus needs to be completed and a sufficiently large sample of students needs to be secured to ensure validity. A practical investigation of the theoretical considerations proposed here is indeed a future plan, but whether it will come to fruition remains to be seen.

**Acknowledgement:** *This paper is supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia pursuant to agreement № 451-03-66/2024-03/ 200148 with the University of Niš, Faculty of Occupational Safety.*

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## UPOTREBA ŠALJIVIH SLIKA I STRIPOVA NA TEMU ŽIVOTNE SREDINE U NASTAVI ENGLESKOG JEZIKA ZA POSEBNE NAMENE

*U Srbiji, kao i u mnogim drugim zemljama, humor je često sastavni deo nastave opšteg engleskog jezika u osnovnim i srednjim školama, ali ređe u visokom obrazovanju, naročito u okviru specijalizovanih studijskih programa i kurseva Engleskog jezika za posebne namene. Prikazana diskusija tiče se studenata Fakulteta zaštite na radu (FZNR) Univerziteta u Nišu, Srbija, posebno na smeru Zaštita životne sredine, ali može biti korisna i za studente u srodnim poljima na drugim visokoškolskim ustanovama. U radu se razmatra potencijal šaljivih slika i kratkih stripova kao sredstava za nastavu engleskog jezika prilagođenog studijama zaštite životne sredine. Analizom slika i stripova procenjuju se njihove prednosti za studente po pitanju sticanja vokabulara, gramatičkih veština i dubljeg razumevanja relevantnih pojmova vezanih za životnu sredinu. Naime, studenti FZNR obavezni su da pohađaju kurs Engleskog jezika tokom samo jednog semestra na prvoj godini studija, mnogo pre nego što se susretnu sa specijalizovanim naučnim i inženjerskim kursovima. Pretpostavka je da je njihovo poznavanje terminologije i osnovnih koncepata životne sredine ograničeno, pa bi rano izlaganje ovim konceptima moglo da bude od posebnog značaja za njihovo dalje studiranje. Idealno, uključivanje humora u nastavu trebalo bi da poboljša kako jezičke kompetencije studenata, tako i njihovo ovladavanje specijalizovanim gradivom.*

*Ključne reči: engleski jezik za posebne namene, zaštita životne sredine, humor, šaljive slike i stripovi, studije zaštite životne sredine*

## RAISING AWARENESS OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: A CORPUS LINGUISTICS APPROACH

UDC 371.67:811.111'36  
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Marta Veličković<sup>1</sup>, Jelena Danilović Jeremić<sup>2</sup>


<sup>1</sup>English Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš,

<sup>2</sup>English Department, Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac

ORCID iDs: Marta Veličković

Jelena Danilović Jeremić

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6039-9373>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3880-3848>

**Abstract.** *To date, corpus linguistics has been used to study a variety of different grammatical structures, including the definite article (e.g. Conrad and Biber 2009; Yoo 2009; Crosthwaite 2019; Gözen and Köroğlu 2022). Since the corpus-based approach appears to be under-researched in the EFL context, the aim of this paper is to explore its potential use with EFL learners. This approach will be offered as an alternative to what can be referred to as the 'traditional' approach to definite article instruction, which focuses extensively on lists, rules, memorization, and exceptions. By relying on Conrad and Biber's findings (2009), we will explore how high school EFL coursebook content can be used to develop practical, awareness-raising activities that center around the most frequent uses of the definite article.*

**Key words:** *corpus linguistics, the definite article, teaching materials, EFL acquisition*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons why articles are such an important field of study in the ESL/EFL environment is that they are among the most frequently occurring words in the English language. The definite article in particular is in fact the most frequently occurring individual word of the English language (Master 1997). This leads us to two points of interest: one brings home the point of how relevant the use of articles is for ensuring no misunderstandings or miscommunications take place, and the other poses the question of why, despite the clear frequency of exposure, L2 English article production is not at a higher level of accuracy. There is a further comment to be made pertaining to the frequency of occurrence of parts of

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Submitted April 10, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Marta Veličković

University of Niš

E-mail: [marta.velickovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:marta.velickovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

speech of the English language, which is that, in academic speech, the noun is the most frequently occurring category (Conrad and Biber 2009). Despite this, errors in article suppliance persist until later stages of proficiency (Ionin and Montrul 2009). Such a situation provides us with the opportunity to consider the potential implications for the EFL process and whether they could lead to any innovations.

The existing, widespread and usual approach to instructing English language learners (ELLs) on article suppliance is referred to as the ‘standard approach’, which by its nature is quite formal. Its main features include the following: considerable emphasis is placed on the morpho-syntactic features of nouns (whether they are atomic or not, singular or plural, countable or uncountable), and its focus is on the three criteria which regulate the occurrence of the definite article, and which are mostly hyperonymous in the overall hierarchy of the definite article use: uniqueness, identifiability, and familiarity. This approach, though mainly favored by coursebook designers the world over, unfortunately lacks any sort of reference to contextualization, i.e. how context affects the use of articles. The emphasis in the standard approach is mostly on anaphora, and almost not at all on cataphora, or the requirement to focus on referential relations in discourse which includes taking lexical items such as synonyms into consideration when choosing whether or not to use the definite article; no reference is made to the discourse space involving the two interlocutors; very little attention is paid to the associative context which allows us to link various referents which, even though they are not explicitly and directly mentioned, can still necessitate the use of the definite article; and finally the lack of reference to naturally occurring language which is even reflected in the somewhat artificial nature of the individual examples of article use for which this approach is known. In sum, without referring to ongoing discourse, where referential relations span across sentences, and without the exclusion of single-sentence examples, as EFL instructors we will continue to find ourselves in a situation that is not favorable for accommodating all the uses of the definite article.

In our opinion, there are two volumes that provide the most adequate illustration of the standard approach: Lyons’s *Definiteness* (1999) and Huddleston and Pullum’s *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002). Published a few years apart, the classifications of the uses of the definite article are quite similar, consisting of several overlaps. An overview has been provided in the following table, along with the appropriate examples (Table 1):

**Table 1** An overview of the classification of the definite article use according to the standard approach

	Lyons (1999)	Huddleston and Pullum (2002)	Example
	Situational use	Sensory features	<i>Pass me the torch.</i>
	General knowledge	Non-linguistic knowledge	<i>The Prime Minister has resigned.</i>
	Anaphoric use	Prior mention	<i>I have a brown bag and a gray one. The gray one is my favorite.</i>
Accounts of the definite article use	Associative use	Through association (with the object-referent)	<i>I don't know what the problem is, but I think it has to do with the keyboard.</i>
	Preceding-following information	Modifier relative clause	<i>I know the person who committed that crime.</i>
	Anticipatory-anaphoric use	Predication property	<i>The responsibility of every parent is to keep their children safe from harm.</i>

However, it is not merely in general reference works that we find the aforementioned shortcomings of the standard approach to article instruction. Something similar can be noted in the coursebooks used in the L1 Serbian linguistic environment (but is by no means restricted solely to it). Coursebooks which have to date been subjected to analysis have been found to provide infrequent reference to theoretical accounts of (in)definite article use (Veličković 2021; Danilović Jeremić and Veličković 2024). The methods of instruction which were included provide no explicit instruction, leaving it up to EFL learners to implicitly deduce why a particular article was provided in a particular sentence, or to memorize instances of occurrence by heart, which leads to overgeneralization, article omission and substitution, and potentially miscomprehension (Huong, 2005; White, 2010). In the classification of definite article use, prior/second mention is the one that receives slightly more attention in the EFL coursebooks in Serbia, the primary one being the use with superlatives. These findings are based on an analysis of 20 elementary school EFL textbooks for grades 5 through 8, all of which had been approved by the Serbian Ministry of Education (Veličković 2021). The findings also showed that these coursebooks include few explicit explanations of how articles are used; provide illustrations for article use with (un)countable nouns, superlatives, generic and specific meaning only; contain an insufficient number of explanations, which were found to taper off at higher levels of proficiency; offer frequently uncontextualized examples, listed in the form of single sentences; and do not provide any instruction on how to account for definite article uses such as *Have you heard the news?*.

## 2. A CORPUS LINGUISTICS APPROACH TO ARTICLE INSTRUCTION: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The initial findings on which we based this analysis indicate the possibility of applying a frequency-based model of learning, which is specific to the field of Cognitive Linguistics, to article instruction. The advantages of such an approach were outlined by Epstein (2001) and a decade later by White (2010). These two authors proposed approaches that take the discourse space into consideration, contextualize article use, incorporate mental spaces, Idealized Cognitive Models, and by extension semantic frames and figure and ground, and expand on the existing morpho-syntactic classification of the standard approach. Epstein (2001) proposed the addition of three supplementary uses of the definite article, which although much fewer in number, were proposed as they accounted for an increasingly greater number of definite article uses than did the standard approach: discourse prominence, shifts in point of view, and the role/value distinction. The effects of basing an article-instruction program on just these three uses provided quantifiable effects, with a 37.6% increase in accurate article suppliance (Veličković 2017), which unfortunately showed no long-term effects (Rohrer and Pashler 2007; Veličković 2017). Since some improvement was made, the conclusion to be drawn is that additional changes in the instructional process were further needed.

The possibility of looking for another approach to article instruction, one that would be used independently or in conjunction with the cognitive-linguistic one, was considered and analyzed in more detail by the authors (Veličković and Danilović Jeremić 2023). There is indication that naturally occurring language, as exemplified and compiled in current relevant corpora (the BNC, COCA, Longman Corpus Network, inter alia) might hold the key. By

definition, corpus linguistics focuses on authentic language use across a variety of registers (everyday conversation, fiction, newspapers, academic writing), providing insight into how native speakers use English in a variety of situations. There are a number of studies which focused on the impact of corpus linguistics on the EFL teaching and learning process. For instance, Tejada et al. (2015) worked on the CLEC corpus (the CEFR-Labeled English Corpus) which comprises some 200,000 words of the English language. The material extracted from the corpus was used for L2 teaching activities at the English Department where they worked and introduced into the curriculum as a teaching innovation. Furthermore, Lee and Webster (2012) compiled their own corpus which they further analyzed, one composed of samples of second language writing. More recently, Rizvić-Eminović and Hadžić (2021) relied on the COCA and BNC as sources from which to extract material for teaching English phrasal verbs and idioms, while Gözen and Köroğlu (2022) studied (in)definite article use in a corpus consisting of doctoral dissertations, implementing the Key Word in Context (KWIC) concordance program to analyze it.

With regard to the definite article, the corpus linguistics approach stresses the importance of only four of its uses, which are presented as deserving of special attention in the L2 classroom. For example, the prior/second mention (also known as direct familiarity) accounts for only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the definite article use in spoken and written English (Conrad and Biber 2009). Furthermore, shared context (the immediate environment) as a source of determining article use was found to be most common in conversations. The presence of modification was most frequently noted in informational writing, while inference (the use of synonyms) is most common in writing in general. When it comes to fiction in general, assumed familiarity (or the aforementioned discourse prominence) occurs most frequently. Finally, other reasons include idioms and generic reference. An overview can be found in the following table (Table 2).

**Table 2** The list of the most common reasons for the use of the definite article in conversation and different types of writing (Conrad and Biber 2009, 65)

	Conversation	Fiction	Informational writing
Introduced previously in text	25%	30%	25-30%
Shared situational context	55%	10%	10%
Modifiers of the noun	5%	15%	30-40%
Inference	5%	10%	15%
Other	10%	35%	10%

Further work on a similar topic was conducted by Yoo (2009). He provided a comparative analysis of 21 ESL/EFL grammar books on the one hand, and the corpus findings published in the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al. 1999) on the other. Some of the findings have indicated that teaching accurate article usage was not foregrounded in most of the grammar books, especially those targeted at ELLs with lower levels of proficiency, and was in a way ‘sacrificed’ for greater competence in spoken communication. The aforementioned grammar books present seven situations which are considered definite (Yoo 2009, 270) and which align with the types of usage of the definite article outlined in the existing literature: second mention (anaphoric use), shared knowledge (which subsumes associative use), situational use, postmodification (cataphoric use), unique items, unique adjectives, and ranking adjectives or superlatives (unique reference). Similar to Conrad and Biber (2009), Biber et al. (1999) take into account four registers: conversation,

fiction, newspaper language, and academic prose, but also the following uses of the definite article, which are more or less congruent with those found in the grammar books: anaphoric, indirect anaphoric (associative use and shared knowledge), situational, cataphoric, and generic use. What was concluded is that situational use is “by far the most common definite article usage in conversations” (Yoo 2009, 273), which was found in only four of the nine grammar books aimed at lower proficiency ELLs, wherein second mention is discussed in detail. The impression that is created is that second mention is the most frequently occurring use of the definite article, which is actually only the case in fiction. Additionally, the grammar books made no reference to cataphora, while the corpus findings indicated that postmodification requires further analyses, as it is the most frequent use in academic prose and newspaper language.

Despite these findings that are readily available from a corpus-linguistic, data-driven approach, in the case of L1 Serbian students of English, who have been found to be susceptible to article omission and article substitution (Veličković 2017), the coursebooks that they are provided with offer very little information which is congruent with these findings. A case in favor of ensuring that article instruction be informed by corpus linguistics can be found in the analysis of elementary school textbooks used in Serbian elementary schools (Veličković 2021). Even though most elementary school students are ranked low in terms of English language proficiency, building a proper foundation is still key. This low level of proficiency is also the reason why textbooks aimed at this population tend to explain ‘how’ articles are used, while glossing over the ‘why’. This unfortunately does not change, irrespective of whether these textbooks were meant for first or for eighth graders: the lack of explicit instruction persists throughout all the series of analyzed textbooks, as does infrequent article use. This generally breeds teacher-dependency among the target population, or alternatively, if the learners are left on their own to draw conclusions, to oversimplification and thus misconceptions.

One of the ways that the corpus linguistics approach could prove useful is that it could be relied on to counteract the impact of countability which is the concept most frequently mentioned in the aforementioned textbooks. For those still wondering why countability does not provide a good foundation for article use, Miller (2005) provides numerous reasons, including L1 and L2 discrepancies regarding countability, as well as the fact that context, or more precisely, intended use, impacts the countability of a noun. However, not only does corpus linguistics build on the existing finding of the definite article being the most frequently used word in the English language, it has also very helpfully provided us with the four most frequent uses of this article, none of which have to do with the (un)countability of the nouns in question. In other words, second mention, shared situational context, modification, and inference are superordinate or overarching terms in relation to countability or most other morpho-syntactic features of nouns.

### 3. A CORPUS LINGUISTICS APPROACH TO ARTICLE INSTRUCTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

What would the implications of this situation be for us as EFL teachers? The response is twofold: as teachers we are required to become tech savvy and to raise awareness of these findings among our population of EFL students. What is expected of us is to become facilitators in the learning process, assisting our learners when interpreting and

analyzing the data they are exposed to (Rizvić-Eminović and Hadžić 2021). Bennett et al. (2010) concluded that one way of doing so would be to conduct mini research projects with our students and encourage them to work independently, observing data, picking up patterns, and reaching a conclusion. We ourselves would be conducting similar processes. To quote Hughes: “Often the individual teacher who becomes interested in moving beyond intuitions and traditional approaches... is often an IT-literate teacher comfortable with using new technology in front of a class, is often a keen champion of ITC in the language teaching classroom, and enjoys the challenging exploratory nature of students and teachers finding answers together” (2010, 405).

One of the reasons behind the requirement for us to become more tech savvy is that compiling corpora, as quantitative data, requires the use of concordance software to determine any potential patterns (Conrad 2002). The findings from the concordance software can be paired with any theoretical approach (Partington et al. 2013), including the usage-based and frequency-based cognitive-linguistic approach. Identified concordances indicate “real-world instances of language” (Baker 2010, 94), i.e. how native language speakers of English actually use language, and as such we should ensure that our corpus of choice is as representative as possible (McEnery and Wilson 1996). Some corpora provide their own tools that can be used to search for word frequencies, e.g.

- News on the Web
- Global Web-based English (GloWbE)
- Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)
- Corpus of Historical American English (COHA)
- The TV Corpus
- The Movie Corpus
- Corpus of American Soap Operas

As far as individual concordance tools are concerned, some are readily available online and have versions that can be downloaded free of charge. A case in point is the WordSmith tool. Other query tools have been outlined by Kaya et al. (2022), including:

- The Sketch Engine for Language Learning (SKELL)
- Collocaid
- Just the Word
- Voyant Tools
- AntConc

There is also the CLARIN infrastructure, which consists of an impressive 75 corpora that can be used in the L2 learning context.

Once we have been familiarized with the tools at our disposal, and have decided on our corpus of choice, the question immediately arises: how can we use the data we obtained from the concordance analyses of key words to solve the problems of article instruction? When it comes to article omission and substitution, we can rely on the aforementioned concordances to determine whether an article (the definite article in particular) should be used, as a search of the key word would indicate the frequency of occurrence of a particular determiner - adjective - noun combination. Considering that there is a particular focus on the use of the definite article with superlatives in the studied textbooks, the concordance analyses would also help determine any sequential links between determiners and adjectives. These analyses allow us to make our way through various types of corpora and thus a variety of genres. The findings indicate that of the four uses of the definite article that



have been singled out for frequency by corpus linguistic findings, only previous mention seems to have a consistent presence across genres.

Furthermore, a corpus analysis approach allows us to manipulate the language material we choose to include in our classrooms. In other words, it encourages us to compile our own corpora that will suit the particular needs of our specific group of students. For this purpose we may consider a number of sources, such as books (including the obligatory reading material already assigned to our particular group of learners and suited to their age; it would even be possible to consider finding existing translations of books that our students are already reading as part of their curriculum), newspaper articles, and even transcripts of recordings of L2 production compiled during role-play exercises. This material would lend itself to error analysis and pattern recognition, especially in the case of the aforementioned article omission and substitution problem. It would also be useful to consider using as many different types of corpora to ensure that the most frequently occurring uses of the definite article can be found in a variety of contexts. Moreover, students can be encouraged to rely on concordances independently when practicing writing (cf. Gaskell and Cobb 2004), once they have been trained how to do so.

One way of incorporating EFL textbooks within the corpus linguistics approach might be the following. Once we have picked out a segment of text that we would like our students to review, for example for a vocabulary exercise, it is possible to then proceed and outline any of the articles found in the text itself. For example, the Headway upper-intermediate textbook contains the following text (Soars, Soars and Hancock 2019, 115):

### **What is the origin of the @ symbol?**

History suggests that the @ in email addresses, commonly referred to as the ‘at sign’, stemmed from **the** tired hands of medieval monks. During **the** Middle Ages, before the invention of the printing press, every letter of a word had to be painstakingly transcribed by hand for each copy of the book. **The** monks who performed these tedious copying duties, usually in Latin, looked for ways to reduce **the** number of individual strokes for common words. Although the word for ‘at’ in Latin, ‘ad’, is short, it was so common that the monks wished it were even shorter.

In this extract, the target vocabulary items have already been highlighted. We could proceed to do the same for the definite article used in the text (emphasis added). The examples could be used to illustrate prior/second mention (i.e. direct familiarity) as in *the monks*, shared context (i.e. the immediate environment) as in *the Middle Ages*, inference as in *the invention of the printing presses*, and the presence of modification as in *the number of individual strokes for common words*. Alternatively, students could be asked to identify the different uses of the definite article on their own, if provided with a classification beforehand, and then elaborate on this issue in pairs or small groups. If repeated regularly, such explicit practice would certainly increase the students’ metalinguistic awareness.

A similar analysis can be performed on the listening material which nowadays accompanies (almost) every unit in EFL textbooks. For instance, the Headway upper-intermediate textbook includes the following listening task in the section titled *Everyday English: Talking about places* (available as a transcript in Soars, Soars & Hancock 2019, 144), which exemplifies various uses of the definite article (emphasis added):

1. I'll never forget my trip to Giza and getting my first sight of **the** pyramids. They stand on **the** edge of **the** desert, taking you back to the **time** of **the** pharaohs. But they're surprisingly near to modern buildings, too. I kind of expected to be right in **the** middle of nowhere.
2. It's a brilliant city. We did a city tour on **the** first day to get a feel for the place, starting at **the** Reichstag. There's a viewing terrace right at **the** very top of **the** building where you can get incredible views of the surrounding area. Er, we stayed in what was **the** east side of the city. And, even though it's been unified since 1989, there's still a different feel to east and west.
3. We were staying on **the** outskirts of **the** city, so we only had a day for sightseeing. We began at **the** Capitol Building and walked the two miles to **the** Lincoln Memorial at **the** other end of **the** Mall. It's kind of a national park with gardens and lots of important museums, like **the** National Museum of American History.
4. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. It really is one of India's must-see destinations. It's a magnificent white building, right on **the** banks of the river, so you get wonderful reflections in the clear water. We also spent some time in Jaipur - I loved **the** colourful streets in the very heart of **the** Old City.

The four paragraphs specifically outlined here illustrate how important it is to use the associative context when it comes to the use of the definite article. Since this is a listening exercise, the speaker is, in a way, using words to create images of various cities or locations the world over, beginning with Egypt and ending with India. So how do we account for the use of the definite article in these situations? When it comes to oral communication, i.e. conversation, the shared situational context could be invoked at once to account for the definite article use: once the name of the location has been directly (or in some instances indirectly mentioned, as we only have access to segments of the conversation), a shared context is created. Under such circumstances, the use of the definite article actually creates a sense of immediacy while a story is being recounted, or sites described. The listener is given the impression that they are actually present at the location being described. This could provide a very good opportunity to point out to the ELLs the frequency of occurrence of the situational use of the definite article (cf. Yoo 2009), as they are doing the listening exercise.

Listening exercises provide another opportunity for us to approach a corpus in a different way and further enhance not only familiarity with the uses of the definite article, but also to enhance the students' auditory comprehension. Thus, instead of having the students follow along with the transcript, the listening comprehension exercise could be played for the whole class, either in its entirety, or in individual segments, depending on the students' level of proficiency. Once the audio material stops, the students could be asked to retell what it was that they have just heard. While one or some of them are involved in an active recall exercise, the other students would actively be involved in a peer correction exercise. On the one hand, it would be possible to monitor retention of article use, make notes of which definite phrases were reported in the same way, which became indefinite or now contained the zero article, but also make note of which of these inconsistencies the remaining class members caught on to. This kind of exercise would not solely be based on enhancing vocabulary retention, as is usually the case, but also on understanding contextualized uses of the definite article.

Another option that a corpus linguistics approach provides us with is the opportunity to include error analysis more overtly in the classroom, especially with higher levels of proficiency. In that case, EFL instructors can use preexisting contextualized examples of definite article use and make any necessary changes. A case in point would be the following example (Conrad and Biber 2009, 66):

1. In a restaurant.

MELI: Did we pay the bill already?

THANH: Not yet. **Our bill is here on a table.**

2. Sometimes it is not possible to decide when we have a satisfactory answer to a problem, **or even when we have a best answer.**
3. I will talk about **some of problems I would be faced with** if I suddenly had to live in a foreign country.
4. First Interstate reported a \$59.9 million loss for the two previous quarters, **as bank continued to be hurt by bad real estate loans.**

Error correction allows for a comparison between different types of article use at the same time, as well as a comparison between the uses of more than one article (in this case the indefinite and the zero article on the one hand, and the definite article on the other). The four examples included in the error correction exercise include a reference to the shared context/the immediate environment (*a table* instead of *the table*), the presence of modification (*a best answer* instead of *the best answer*), and perhaps inference (*some problems* instead of *the problems*).

Along similar lines, a teacher can create their own corpus of students' writing by collecting written assignments (e.g. compositions, dialogs, etc.) or use existing corpora of learner language, as mentioned previously, to prepare error analysis activities. This can be illustrated by the following examples, extracted from submitted coursework either from Serbian to English translation activities, or the essay writing activities of our tertiary-level Serbian EFL students.<sup>1</sup> The examples are grouped based on the type of error: using the indefinite article instead of the definite one

1. On the other hand, there is **an** opinion that this is not mania but rather insanity.
2. It was a hard decision going to his parents' house [...] with **a** request [for them] to immediately get in contact with him.

using the definite article instead of the indefinite one

3. **The** hot wind was blowing.  
and examples of article omission
4. Nowadays, **Ø** majority of writers tend to invent the truth or tell lies in order for their story to be widely read.
5. These days people usually promise something to someone without asking themselves if they can make that promise come true, for they are unfamiliar with **Ø** main reasons why they should never break their promise.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: the first author's private corpus of student writing.

In the case of examples 1 and 2, the definite article is required due to the presence of postmodification (the relative clause *that this is not mania but rather insanity* and the non-finite *to immediately get in contact with him*). In example 3, the inference to be drawn is that the author in question meant to convey to us a shared situational context as a part of storytelling. Or potentially, it may be an indication of second mention. However, since this was the introductory sentence to a longer segment of writing, it was in fact no more than a descriptive element, one of many, and the use of the definite article in this instance would not bring about a sense of immediacy but would provide an unnecessary prominence to the referent in question. And finally, in examples 4 and 5 the instances of article omission in both cases are illustrations of the omission on the part of the students to use the definite article, primarily due to modification (in the first instance postmodification in the form of a prepositional phrase, *of writers*, and in the second, premodification in the form of an adjective, *main*).

Last but not least, verbal humor can be beneficial in the EFL learning context because it initiates and maintains learner interest, stimulates social bonding, encourages higher-order thinking, and highlights the saliency of information, thus enhancing its retention and recall (cf. Deneire 1995; Lems 2013). Therefore, we suggest that EFL teachers incorporate puns into their teaching practices as an awareness-raising tool.<sup>2</sup> Given that it is the most frequently occurring word in English, the definite article features prominently in short jokes, such as these (cf. Elliott 2010):

Teacher: Johnny, do you know where **the** pyramids are?

Johnny: No, miss, they must be lost. There was a teacher here yesterday asking **the** same question.

Where do sheep go to get a haircut? **The** baa-baa shop.

What letter is never in **the** alphabet? **The** one that you mail.

**The** wedding was so emotional that even **the** cake was in tiers.

Did you hear about **the** actor who fell through **the** floor? It was just a stage he was going through.

In the aforementioned examples we can identify the four most common uses of the definite article proposed by Conrad and Biber (2009) as well as the situational use and postmodification emphasized by Yoo (2009). For example, in the initial exchange there is a good example of inference (*the pyramids*), as well as shared situational context (*the same question*). The joke referring to the letters is a good illustration of the second mention, even though the same noun has not been used again (*letter - the one*). A shared (situational) context could be relied on to account for definite article use in the final two sentences. In the instance of the wedding and the cake, we find that the speaker is actually creating a shared context for themselves and their audience. The inference is that this is a snippet from an ongoing conversation, since the definite article was used to introduce the noun *wedding*, implying at least one other mention of this noun. Under such circumstances it would be easy to continue with *the cake*, as we can expect, from the shared context, which cake is being referred to. The

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<sup>2</sup> These can be collected by the teacher or borrowed from sources such as books, newspaper sections, and the like and then compiled into a pun corpus.

situation is similar in the case of the final joke, as the context is constructed by the very opening: *Did you hear about...* a standard introduction to jokes that immediately creates a context and invites the listener to join in and participate. The use of the definite article in *the actor* could be ascribed to modification (*the actor who fell through the floor*), or through shared context. Alternatively, the case could be made that both *the actor* and *the floor* are definite noun phrases precisely due to the aforementioned shared situational context. Finally, *the baa-baa shop* example could be explained through inference, in the sense that by definition, a *baa-baa* (barber) shop is actually defined (explained, identified) by means of modification in the preceding sentence.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to shed light on the relatively under-represented topic of corpus-based article instruction in the EFL setting. As a contemporary approach to teaching English, firmly rooted in large amounts of data, corpus-based instruction enables learners to examine patterns of language use in authentic context as opposed to the traditional, textbook-oriented experience of studying sets of rules and their exceptions, if any (Veličković 2021). One way of doing this is by offering students the opportunity to investigate the possible uses of the definite article in concordance lines in one of the publicly available corpora. Another way of doing this is by adapting the existing texts and exercises in coursebooks to suit the purpose of sensitizing learners to the commonest uses of the definite article, that is those identified by Yoo (2009) and Conrad and Biber (2009). Bearing in mind that article omission and substitution remain a persistent challenge for EFL learners, even at more advanced levels of proficiency, we strongly believe that this issue should be addressed systematically, both implicitly and explicitly. Admittedly, EFL coursebooks of the 21st century provide a variety of texts and exercises, but these do not (explicitly) prioritize the comprehension of article use (cf. Veličković 2021; Danilović Jeremić and Veličković 2024). Hence, it is up to language instructors to modify what they have at their disposal so special attention could be paid to articles. Additionally, we propose that humorous content relating to specific article use be part of the EFL instruction since verbal play can significantly improve the learning experience.

**Acknowledgements:** The first author acknowledges that the paper was prepared as a part of the project *Scientific Findings in English Linguistics and Anglo-American Literature and Culture and Teaching Applications*, conducted at the University of Niš – Faculty of Philosophy (No. 336/1-6-01). The second author gratefully acknowledges the financial support from the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovations of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-65/2024-03/200198).

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## **PODIZANJE SVESTI O UPOTREBI ODREĐENOG ČLANA U NASTAVI ENGLESKOG JEZIKA KAO STRANOG: KORPUSNI PRISTUP**

*Korpusna lingvistika se do sada bavila proučavanjem različitih gramatičkih struktura, uključujući i gramatičku kategoriju određenog člana (npr. Conrad i Biber 2009; Yoo 2009; Crosthwaite 2019; Gözen i Köroğlu 2022). Međutim, čini se da je primena korpusnog pristupa nedovoljno istražena u kontekstu učenja engleskog jezika kao stranog. Skladno tome, cilj ovog rada bio je da ispita tu mogućnost. Korpusni pristup biće ponuđen kao alternativa tzv. „tradicionalnom“ pristupu podučavanju određenog člana u engleskom jeziku koji se u velikoj meri zasniva na sastavljanju lista pravila (i izuzetaka) za upotrebu člana i učenje istih napamet. Oslanjajući se na nalaze Conrad i Biber (2009), ispitaćemo kako se sadržaj udžbenika koji se koriste u nastavi engleskog jezika kao stranog u srednjim školama može iskoristiti za razvoj praktičnih aktivnosti usmerenih ka podizanju svesti učenika o najučestalijim upotrebama određenog člana u engleskom jeziku.*

*Ključne reči: korpusna lingvistika, određeni član, nastavni materijali, učenje engleskog jezika kao stranog*





## ESP STUDENTS' METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS DEPLOYED IN MAKING A LANGUAGE LEARNING PLAN

UDC 371.322:811.111'276.6

**Maja Stanojević Gocić**

Academy of Technical and Preschool Vocational Studies Niš, Serbia

ORCID iD: Maja Stanojević Gocić

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6804-222X>

**Abstract.** *Metacognition is a higher order thinking process that presupposes active control over cognitive learning processes. While the teachers should address learning issues in the classroom, the learners ought to be geared toward making conscious decisions about what they can do to improve their learning, especially in terms of planning the learning process. According to research, drawing upon established theories of language acquisition and pedagogical practice, metacognition enables students to employ, retrieve and deploy a particular strategy that has been taught in a particular context and subsequently employ it automatically in other contexts. Thus, students become both aware of their preferred learning strategies, which are efficient for the given task, and more responsible for meeting their learning outcomes. The aim of this study is to explore ESP students' metacognitive awareness employed in making their language learning plan. A questionnaire was administered to 85 students of Law Faculty in Kosovska Mitrovica studying English for Specific Purposes. Therefore, the role of metacognition in planning learning activities and fulfilling learning objectives is investigated. Possible pedagogical implications include affecting ESP instruction, as well as providing ESP students not only with insight, but also with practical knowledge about planning the language learning process.*

**Key words:** *ESP, language learning strategies, metacognition, language learning plan*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition requires strategic planning and diligent effort in a complex endeavor that involves a myriad of cognitive, socio-cultural, and affective factors. In order to navigate this intricate and multifaceted process successfully, learners must develop a structured plan that encompasses various linguistic skills and competencies. A language learning plan delineates the objectives, strategies, and resources necessary for achieving proficiency in a target language.

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Submitted April 8, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Maja Stanojević Gocić

Academy of Technical and Preschool Vocational Studies Niš

E-mail: [maja.stanojevic.gocic@akademijanis.edu.rs](mailto:maja.stanojevic.gocic@akademijanis.edu.rs)

Metacognitive awareness in language learning is concerned with being aware of one's learning processes, including strengths and weaknesses, and being able to plan, monitor and evaluate one's learning. It is exploited within the scope of metacognitive strategies, which are encompassed by a broad concept of metacognition. Moreover, metacognitive strategies are a part of language learning strategies, which are, in turn, a sub-branch of learning strategies as a wider concept referring to both mental and communicative processes learners deploy in the course of learning a second or foreign language (Nunan, 1999: 310, Nunan 2003).

The aim of this study is to inspect metacognitive awareness deployed in making a language learning plan by means of a questionnaire. The instrument has been administered to 75 students studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Law Faculty in Kosovska Mitrovica, in an endeavor to come up with results that would affect ESP course design as a possible practical implication of the study. Thus, this paper also aims to elucidate the essential components of an effective language learning plan in order to guide ESP students through the process of creating personalized language learning plans tailored to their individual needs and learning goals.

## 2. METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

In the most general sense, language learning strategies can be defined as specific steps, operations, actions, techniques, or behaviors employed by second language learners to help them improve and enhance their language learning. They are problem-oriented tools that facilitate the transfer of information into long-term memory, as well as the development of communicative competence and the activation of four language skills. Accordingly, this concept is related to learner-centered approach, learner's autonomy, and self-directed language learning, whereas metacognitive awareness is linked to increased self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement in language learning (Cohen, 2011). As a result, language learners who consciously deploy and orchestrate effective strategies, adapting them to the learning task, are metacognitively aware of their strategy use. They are regarded as strategic learners that possess metacognitive knowledge about themselves as learners, i.e., their own learning approaches, and self-reflection, i.e. thinking about the learning process and one's attainments during the process.

The study of language learning strategies was initiated by the studies of good and bad learners, which originated in the 1970s (Rubin 1975, Rubin, Thompson, 1982). While Rubin describes them as techniques or tools students use to acquire knowledge (Rubin 1975: 43), Cohen (1998) defines learning strategies as processes consciously selected by learners, emphasizing that the element of choice plays an essential role in defining this concept. Furthermore, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 1) emphasize the mental nature of strategic behavior and define strategies as "the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information". In that sense, Oxford asserts that learning strategies are both "operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information" and "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford 1990: 8).

O'Malley and Chamot claim that all language learning strategies can be categorized into cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective (O'Malley, Chamot 1990), while Rebecca Oxford divides them into direct strategies (memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies) and indirect ones (metacognitive, social, and affective strategies), which are depicted in the

most widely utilized questionnaire for investigating language learning strategies called Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) that she created (Oxford 1990, 1992).

Whereas learning strategies are related to both cognitive and metacognitive processes, the concept of metacognition is used an umbrella term for metacognitive strategies, metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive awareness, and several other terms commonly associated with metacognition (Veenman et al. 2006: 3-4). Cognitive strategies include cognitive (mental) operations of language processing, such as mechanical strategies of repeating, whereas metacognitive strategies presuppose active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning. In addition, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 99) underscore that metacognitive strategies may include consciously directing attention to the learning task, self-evaluation appraising the success, and shortcomings in the learning effort. Hence, metacognitive awareness is conscious awareness of one's knowledge and the ability to reflect on what one knows, allowing a learner to plan, regulate and monitor learning (Grabe, Stoller 2011: 289). Since metacognition is viewed as knowledge about cognition and the regulation of cognitive activities, which consists of metacognitive knowledge, inclusive of knowledge about task performance and strategy use, and metacognitive regulation, O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 99) elaborate that knowledge about cognition generally refers to implementation of thoughts about learners' cognitive operations involved in language performance, whereas regulation of cognition comprises "planning, monitoring, and evaluation of a learning or problem-solving activity". Accordingly, metacognitive strategies are problem-oriented operations that help students understand the way they learn. These are "learning strategies that encourage learners to focus on the mental process underlying their language learning." (Nunan 1999: 310).

Effective strategy training requires both cognitive and metacognitive strategies, as students with metacognitive approach to learning would be able to review their progress, accomplishment, and learning directions (O'Malley et al. 1985). In that respect, metacognitive strategies are used to monitor language learning processes as cognitive mechanics, and to enable students to effectively plan and regulate these processes within specific problem-solving tasks. Consequently, they have been oriented towards selective attention, including focusing on special aspects of learning tasks, planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning, such as checking comprehension in receptive or productive language activity (O'Malley, Chamot 1990: 46). Metacognitive strategies, therefore, enable learners to plan and prepare their own learning during receptive or productive language activity, control and monitor the strategies they have chosen, knowing when and how to use and combine them, assess their own repertoire of strategies or their orchestration.

Apart from being a part of individual approach to language learning, metacognitive strategy use can be integrated into instruction and taught within strategy training (Oxford 1990), or strategies-based approach (Cohen 1998). Such strategic intervention would provide a model of efficient strategy implementation. In that sense, studies, such as O'Malley et al. (1985), Anderson (2002), and Rasekh and Ranjbari (2003), assert that metacognition enables students to employ, retrieve and deploy a particular strategy that has been taught in a particular context. The main objective of such attempts is to allow students to become aware of efficient learning strategies, and more responsible for meeting their learning objectives, which produces numerous benefits in language learning. As a result of strategy training, the given strategy or combination of strategies, can subsequently be employed automatically, or subconsciously, becoming applicable to other contexts.

## 2.1. Language learning plan

A language learning plan is a systematic framework designed to facilitate language acquisition. It outlines goals and strategies learners employ to enhance their linguistic proficiency over a specified period of time. A well-crafted language learning plan encompasses various dimensions of language acquisition, including vocabulary acquisition, grammar comprehension, fluency, listening comprehension, reading proficiency, or writing skills. Additionally, it takes into account learners' individual learning styles, preferences, and motivations, thereby fostering a personalized and adaptive approach to language learning.

### 2.1.1. *Components of a language learning plan*

Creating a language learning plan, as a structured approach to achieving language proficiency goals, includes several steps, such as setting clear long-term and short-term goals, inclusive of breaking down language learning objectives into manageable tasks, regarding an anticipated language task or situation selecting linguistic resources, choosing learning tools or determining targeted language elements and functions, designing and establishing a study schedule (Oxford 1990: 139), as well as integrating assessment mechanisms that encompass restructuring, reorganizing, or reassessment of the original plan.

Therefore, metacognitive awareness, broadly involving metacognitive knowledge (understanding of one's cognitive processes) and metacognitive regulation (control and adaptation of these processes) in its broadest sense, profoundly influences each step of this process. Thus, regulation of learning, as distinguished from knowledge about learning, entails planning (predicting outcomes, scheduling, and trial and error), along with monitoring and checking outcomes (O'Malley, Chamot, 1990: 106).

According to Oxford (1990: 138-139, 156-160) metacognitive strategies are divided into creating one's learning, arranging and planning it, and evaluating it, while arranging and planning one's learning touches the following areas: finding out about language learning, organizing the schedule and environment, setting goals and objectives, considering task purposes, planning for tasks, and seeking chances to practice the language.

The first step in crafting a language learning plan is to establish clear and achievable goals. These goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) (Doran, 1891). Whether the aim is to achieve conversational fluency, pass an exam or enhance career prospects, clearly defined goals provide learners with a sense of direction and motivation.

Conducting a thorough needs analysis is essential for identifying the linguistic requirements and priorities of the learner. This involves assessing proficiency levels in different language skills, as well as determining specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. By understanding their linguistic needs, learners can tailor their language learning plan to effectively address areas requiring improvement. In addition, language skills are also taken into account when deciding the purpose of a language task, which involves purposeful listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Oxford, 1990: 139).

Effective language learning plans incorporate a diverse range of learning strategies to accommodate individual preferences and learning styles. These strategies may include vocabulary acquisition techniques (e.g., mechanical repetition, mnemonics), grammar practice exercises, conversational practice with native speakers, which Oxford (1990: 139) depicts as seeking out or creating opportunities to practice the language in naturalistic situations, or the use of technology-mediated resources, such as language learning apps, online tests and online courses.

Selecting appropriate learning resources is crucial for the success of a language learning plan. The resources may include textbooks, audiovisual materials, online interactive platforms, language exchange programs, or authentic cultural materials (e.g., films, newspaper articles). Learners should evaluate the quality, relevance, and accessibility of resources to ensure they align with their learning objectives and preferences.

Regular assessment and monitoring of progress are also integral components of a language learning plan. This involves setting milestones or checkpoints to evaluate proficiency levels and adjust learning strategies accordingly. Progress monitoring may entail self-assessment through quizzes, exams, or language proficiency tests, as well as seeking feedback from teachers, peers or language tutors.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The role of metacognition in planning learning activities is exploited by virtue of a questionnaire that has been created by the author of this paper, relying heavily on Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire, developed by Zhao (2009).

The instrument is divided in three parts: a) demographic data on respondents' age, gender and number of years they have been studying English as a Second Language; b) 6 statements marked on the five-point Likert scale intended to measure ESP students' metacognitive awareness; c) 11 statements designed to measure the frequency of certain actions involved in planning the learning process. According to five-point Likert scale, students' responses range from 1= I never use to 5= I always use. The intended purpose is to find out how students reflect on developing and implementing the language learning plan as a metacognitive strategy.

The aim of this study is to explore ESP students' metacognitive awareness employed in making their language learning plan by means of a questionnaire that has been administered to 85 students of Law Faculty in Kosovska Mitrovica in electronic form (via Google Forms). ESP students have reported on their strategic behavior for the purpose of mapping their self-perception on strategy use, as well as considering the creation and application of their language learning plan as one of metacognitive strategies.

The following data are gathered about the respondents who participated in the research. There have been 38 male and 47 female students. Their average age is 20 (AM= 20.00, SD=0.66), and students have been learning English for approximately 12 years (AM= 11.97, SD=1.54).

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of this paper, descriptive statistical analysis is carried out to determine the frequency of strategy use. Since descriptive statistics, as an established tool is implemented to analyze the compiled data, arithmetic mean (AM) and standard deviation (SD) were calculated, and the obtained results presented in Table 1 that shows reported strategy use by ESP students as participated in the research.

**Table 1** Descriptive values of metacognitive strategies

PART I Metacognitive awareness		AM	SD
I regularly reflect on my language learning progress and adjust my strategies accordingly.		3.86	0.80
I monitor my own comprehension during language learning activities (e.g., reading, listening), and regulate when I don't understand.		3.84	0.75
I use a variety of strategies (e.g., flashcards, language apps, language exchange) to enhance my language skills.		3.80	0.78
I set specific language learning goals that are measurable and achievable.		3.74	0.97
I seek feedback from teachers, peers, or language partners to improve my language skills.		3.67	0.70
I keep a language learning journal or log to record my thoughts, progress, and areas for improvement.		3.65	0.61
PART II Formulating a language learning plan		AM	SD
I practice all language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) as a part of my language learning plan.		3.89	0.76
I turn to teachers and colleagues for help in implementing the learning plan.		3.85	0.79
I select materials (e.g., textbooks, online resources, videos) that are appropriate for my language learning goals.		3.84	0.83
I'm considering how to realize my learning plan.		3.80	0.84
I regularly review and revise my language learning plan to ensure it remains effective and aligned with my goals.		3.80	0.74
My plan is detailed, including a deadline for completing all tasks.		3.75	0.79
I create a structured study schedule with dedicated time for language learning activities.		3.73	0.90
I check if there is a mismatch between the current situation and the goals set in the plan		3.72	0.78
I know when to use certain learning strategies and how to use them.		3.71	0.87
I have a short-term plan and a long-term learning plan.		3.69	0.60
I check if the learning plan is implemented on time.		3.66	0.88

Based on the questionnaire administered, as shown in Table 1, the respondents exhibit a higher degree of metacognition. The most frequently used strategies are “I regularly reflect on my language learning progress and adjust my strategies accordingly” (AM=3.86, SD=0.80), and “I monitor my own comprehension during language learning activities (e.g., reading, listening), and regulate when I don't understand” (AM=3.84, SD=0.85). These results indicate that ESP students are metacognitively aware of effective strategy use, which also suggests a satisfactory degree of metacognition displayed by respondents. On the other hand, the least frequently used strategy is “I check if the learning plan is implemented on time” (AM=3.66, SD=0.88), which also suggest the overall moderate use of metacognitive strategies, based on students' reports.

It has also been determined that students often strategically opt for the use of a wide variety of strategies (AM=3.84), in the course of administrating a language learning plan and managing the learning process.

Since the strategy with lowest standard deviation is “I have a short-term plan and a long-term learning plan” (SD=0.60), it indicates the lowest level of discrepancies in students' answers.

The results of this research are in alignment with surveys that have found varying levels of metacognitive strategy awareness, where ESP students deploy a wide variety of strategies, such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection (Stanojević Gocić et al. 2023).

Since the results show that metacognitive strategies are moderately used by ESP students, they could be deemed as satisfactory. However, several steps could be undertaken in order to improve and develop students' metacognitive awareness and formulating a language learning plan, inclusive of modeling and applying effective strategies, developing short-term and long-term language learning plans in the classroom, promoting self-directed language learning, providing appropriate strategic input in a form of strategy-based instruction, developing strategic competence, as well as explicit teaching of strategies that proved to be more efficient than the implicit one (Chamot 2004). These steps would subsequently result in skill transfer, active learning, individualization, autonomous learning, self-regulation and self-reflection, as well as the application in real-world contexts. Thus, providing a set of guidelines, explanations and suggestion is an efficient strategic option (Rubin, Thompson, 1982).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Strategic area is a part of both individual and instructional language learning approaches. However, students with metacognitive knowledge use information to overcome various problems of learning. Since the use of language learning strategies by is directly linked to students' success, strategic input or strategy-based instruction, along with developing students' strategic competence is one of the means of mastering language skills efficiently and effectively (Stanojević Gocić, Janković 2019). Its key aspects include explicit teaching of specific strategies as problem-solving techniques, metacognition used to supervise and adjust strategies as needed, skill transfer utilized to transfer skills to other learning situations, active learning and engagement in implementing the strategies that have been taught, feedback from teachers, reflection as a form of self-assessment, and implementation in various contexts. In general, if students are provided with adequate strategic input, they should subsequently learn how to develop their language learning strategies, raise their metacognitive awareness to achieve better results, and enhance overall attainments in language acquisition.

Accordingly, this paper has provided a comprehensive framework for designing language learning plans, informed by current research and pedagogical practices. Crafting an effective language learning plan requires careful consideration of various factors, including goal setting, needs analysis, learning strategies, resource selection, progress monitoring and adjusting strategies. Thus, several opportunities and tools can be exploited in that sense. Passing an exam and improving speaking skills can be seen as short-term goals, whereas career advancement and fluent communication are usually viewed as long-term aims, both of which might be achieved through self-study, different courses, practicing with native speakers, or the use of resources, such as textbooks, language apps, online dictionaries, language courses, online test with answers that provide adequate feedback, etc. Additionally, critical thinking, problem-solving and adaptability in learning are encouraged.

Therefore, the finding of this research could be utilized by ESP teacher to promote and develop metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation of language acquisition, which has been prioritized in contemporary methodology. Its possible pedagogical implications include affecting an ESP course design and providing ESP students with not only insight, but also practical knowledge with regard to planning their language learning. Practical implications also indicate the results may be used to upgrade the process of ESP teaching and learning, as students could benefit from explicit instruction and explicit knowledge about metacognitive strategies in a form of strategic input.

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## METAKOGNITIVNA SVEST STUDENATA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA STRUKE PRIMENJENA U IZRADI PLANA UČENJA JEZIKA

*Metakognicija je proces razmišljanja višeg reda koji pretpostavlja aktivnu kontrolu nad kognitivnim procesima učenja. Dok nastavnici treba da se bave pitanjima učenja u učionici, učenici treba da budu usmereni na procese razmišljanja o donošenju svesnih odluka o tome šta mogu da urade da poboljšaju svoje učenje, posebno u smislu planiranja procesa učenja. Prema postojećim istraživanjima, oslanjajući se na utvrđene teorije usvajanja jezika i pedagošku praksu, metakognicija omogućava studentima da koriste, pronađu i primene određenu strategiju čijoj su implementaciji podučavani u određenom kontekstu. Strategija se nakon toga koristi automatski i može biti primenljiva u drugim kontekstima. Glavni cilj je omogućiti studentima da postanu svesni preferiranih strategija učenja koje su efikasne za dati zadatak, i da im pomogne da postanu odgovorniji za ispunjavanje ishoda učenja. U ovom radu istražujemo metakognitivnu svest studenata engleskog jezika struke koja se koristi u izradi plana učenja jezika. Upitnik je popunilo 85 studenata Pravnog fakulteta u Kosovskoj Mitrovici koji izučavaju engleski jezik struke. Rezultati pokazuju da je značajna uloga metakognicije u planiranju aktivnosti i ispunjavanju zadatih ciljeva učenja. Pedagoške implikacije istraživanja uključuju uticaj na nastavu engleskog jezika struke, jer pružaju studentima ne samo uvid već i praktično znanje vezano za planiranje procesa učenja jezika.*

Ključne reči: engleski jezik struke, strategije učenja jezika, metakognicija, plan učenja jezika



# **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS' ANXIETY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE ABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT**

*UDC 811.111'243:159.94-057.875*

**Milevica Bojović**

University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Agronomy in Čačak, Serbia

ORCID iD: Milevica Bojović

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6615-418X>

**Abstract.** *The study explores undergraduate biotechnology students' levels of foreign language anxiety, their levels of communicative language ability in English as a foreign language, and the relationships between these phenomena. Three instruments were used in the study - the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, the Communicative Language Ability Scale, and a speaking assignment. The measures of internal consistency, inter-rater reliability, descriptive statistics, and Pearson correlation analysis were used for data processing. The study showed that the students' levels of foreign language anxiety are at a medium level. Also, the levels of communicative language ability and its competences are at an intermediate level. The obtained results indicate that the students' foreign language anxiety levels are related to their communicative language ability levels. Moderate correlations are recorded - the lower the levels of foreign language anxieties, the higher the levels of communicative language ability are, and vice versa.*

**Key words:** *biotechnology engineering, communicative language ability, English for specific purposes, foreign language anxiety*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers and educators in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language learning (FLL) have long acknowledged that anxiety as an affective factor is linked to the process of learning a foreign language (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986; Horwitz and Young 1991; MacIntyre 1995; Ohata 2005). The presence of foreign language anxiety (FLA) becomes apparent in an FLL environment where learners may encounter concerns and negative emotional responses when engaged in learning a new language (MacIntyre 1999, 27). Apprehension, particularly during language activities

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Submitted March 25, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Milevica Bojović

University of Kragujevac

E-mail: [milevica.bojovic@uni.kg.ac.rs](mailto:milevica.bojovic@uni.kg.ac.rs)

such as speaking in the classroom, appears to be a commonly identified obstacle to achieving fluency in a foreign language (Gkonou 2014).

Speaking is a remarkably intricate skill that involves the combination of language and discourse knowledge, core speaking skills (such as chunking, signalling intention, turn-taking), and speaking strategies (Goh–Burns, 2012). Foreign language learners usually face challenges in acquiring language proficiency and mastering the skill of speaking as it is the aspect where their language ego is particularly vulnerable due to the heightened self-exposure it entails (Gkonou, 2014). Engaging in public speaking or addressing an audience tends to evoke a significant level of anxiety (Young, 1999). Studies investigating the relationships between foreign language anxiety and foreign language proficiency have shown that learners with higher levels of anxiety exhibit poorer language skills (Ganshow et al. 1994; Aghajani and Amanzadeh 2017) and that those with low anxiety levels outperformed those with high anxiety levels overall (Ganshow and Sparks 1996).

In this study students' English language speaking skills/proficiency is viewed and evaluated via the concept of communicative language ability. This study seeks to explore the concepts of foreign language anxiety (FLA) and communicative language ability (CLA) and to determine how much biotechnology engineering students are relaxed or anxious when they speak English as a foreign language. It also aims to examine students' levels of communicative language ability in EFL and the potential relationships between foreign language anxiety and communicative language ability. Whether students who are less or more anxious than other students show higher levels of foreign language proficiency is worth a closer examination.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section focuses on defining and characterizing FLA and CLA in English as a foreign language. Furthermore, related research and studies on these topics are presented.

### 2.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

The adequate definition of FLA began to take shape in the mid-1980s when Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) endeavored to establish it as a distinct variable in foreign language learning. FLA is an aspect of situation-specific anxiety. It is a multifaceted concept encompassing self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors specific to the classroom language learning experience, stemming from the distinctive nature of language acquisition (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986, 128).

FLA implies performance evaluation within an academic and social context (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986, 127). They identified three closely interrelated performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These elements are believed to provide useful conceptual building blocks for a description of foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986, 128).

Communication apprehension (CA) encompasses the shyness, fear, and anxiety that people encounter when they are required to engage in communication with others; it is manifested as difficulties and discomfort when speaking (commonly known as oral communication anxiety or speaking anxiety) within a group, in public, or when listening to or learning a spoken message (referred to as receiver anxiety) (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope

1986, 127). The common behaviour of those experiencing communication apprehension involves avoidance and withdrawal from communication interactions (Aida 1994, 156).

Test anxiety (TA) is a type of performance-related anxiety that originates from a deep-seated fear of not performing well (Gordon–Sarason 1955). Test-anxious students often set unrealistically high standards for themselves, believing that anything less than perfect test performance is a failure. When it comes to speaking in a foreign language, it has the potential to trigger both test anxiety and oral communication anxiety simultaneously.

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is an individual's fear of being evaluated, distress about negative evaluation, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations of being negatively evaluated (Watson–Friend 1969, 449). This fear of negative evaluation is not limited to testing situations but can be applied to various social and evaluative contexts, such as job interviews or oral presentations in a foreign language classroom.

## 2.2 Communicative Language Ability

Communicative language ability (CLA) may be described as comprising both knowledge (competence) and the ability to execute that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use (Bachman 1990, 84).

The concept of CLA is rooted in the concept of communicative competence which emerged in the 1970s (Hymes 1972) in the fields of anthropology and sociolinguistics research. This concept emphasizes the importance of non-native speakers possessing not only knowledge of language forms but also socio-cultural knowledge to use these acquired language forms appropriately. It was further developed in the 1980s, through the work of Canale and Swain (1980) and Sauvignon (1983), synthesizing knowledge and skills needed for successful communication (encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence). This model maintained prominence until the 1990s when the model of communicative language ability emerged, based on empirical research (Bachman 1990; Bachman and Palmer 1982, 1989, 1996).

The CLA model (Bachman 1990) consists of three key competences:

- (1) linguistic competence: it involves (a) organizational elements such as grammatical competence (vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology/graphology) and textual competence (cohesion and rhetoric organization), and (b) pragmatic elements such as illocutionary competence (adequate usage and understanding of speech acts as well as of the functions of ideation, manipulation, heuristic function, rhetoric function) and sociolinguistic competence (sensitivity to differences in dialects, registers, sensitivity to naturalness, ability to interpret cultural references);
- (2) strategic competence: it revolves around the interaction of various metacognitive components such as goal setting (recognition and selection of goals, and the decision whether to achieve the goal), assessment (means of connecting language usage context and other components), and planning (decision on how to use language competence and other components of language usage in order to achieve a targeted goal); and
- (3) psycho-physiological mechanisms: it primarily concerns neurological and psychological processes involving communication channels (auditory and visual) and means of communication (receptive and productive); in receptive language use, auditory and visual skills come into play, while in productive use neuromuscular skills (articulatory and digital) are utilized.

Another model relevant to this research is a model of communication language use within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001). This model refers to three basic components:

- (1) communicative competence, consisting of:
  - (a) linguistic competence (equivalent to Bachman's grammatical competence);
  - (b) sociolinguistic competence (corresponding to Bachman's sociolinguistic competence); and
  - (c) pragmatic competence, consisting of two factors:
    - discourse competence aligns with Bachman's concept of textual competence, and
    - functional competence considers language macrofunctions (e.g., description, narration, commentary, explanation, or instruction), microfunctions (e.g., seeking information, socializing, or structuring discourse), and message sequencing in accordance with interactional and transactional schemes. Two factors affecting the learner/user's functional success include (i) fluency (the ability to articulate, to keep going when one lands at a dead end), and (ii) propositional precision (clarity in expressing thoughts and propositions);
- (2) strategic competence involves the employment of communicative strategies, regarded as the application of the metacognitive principles of pre-planning, execution, monitoring, and repair action across various communicative activities such as reception, interaction, production, and mediation; and
- (3) nonverbal communication is the process of conveying and receiving messages without words or sounds and involves a wide array of elements, such as finger pointing, eye direction, paralinguistic elements (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, body posture, eye contact, proxemics), nonlinguistic elements (use of extralinguistic speech sounds), and prosodic elements (pitch, stress, and intonation).

In this study, an eclectic CLA model is employed, consisting of the following key components: grammatical competence, textual competence, sociolinguistic competence, functional competence, strategic competence, fluency, and nonverbal communicative ability. This model served as the basis for developing the assessment instrument designed to measure learners' speaking ability in an oral production task.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Research Questions

The following research questions are explored:

- (1) What are the students' levels of perceived FLA and its performance anxieties?
- (2) What are the students' levels of CLA and its component competences?
- (3) Are the students' levels of FLA and CLA related?

#### 3.2. The Participants

A total of 70 participants, biotechnology engineering students at the University of Kragujevac, Serbia, took part in the research. The study involved 56 female (80%) and 14 male (20%) students in the third and fourth year of a 4-year bachelor program. All junior

and senior students were exposed to two compulsory academic courses - English in food industry and English in agronomy in the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years.

### **3.3. The Instruments**

The research instruments involved the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986), the Communicative Language Ability Scale (CLAS) (Bojović 2021), and a speaking task.

#### *3.3.1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)*

The FLCAS is a tool for measuring foreign language learners' anxiety from the perspective of total anxiety in learning a foreign language and its performance anxieties - communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The scale consists of 33 items and is of the Lykert-type, with choices ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "strongly disagree" (5). The theoretical range of the FLCAS is from 33 to 165. The positively worded statements express low levels of anxiety and negatively worded statements express high levels of anxiety. The positive statements underwent reverse scoring, with responses ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). Consequently, lower scores signify increased anxiety, and higher scores signify reduced anxiety levels. The scale has been adjusted to make the questions relevant to the context of learning English as a second language.

#### *3.3.2. Communicative Language Ability Scale (CLAS)*

The CLAS instrument serves as a means to assess students' communicative language ability as a cumulative factor as well as individual competences. The instrument is based on a range of measuring solutions developed to evaluate individual competences by various authors (Bachman 1990; Council of Europe 2001; Jungheim 2001; Milanovic et al. 1996). The 5-point, multi-trait scale is created for the external assessment of the learners' general speaking ability as well as CLA competences: grammatical competence, textual competence, functional competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence, fluency, and nonverbal communicative ability (Bojović 2021, 48-50). The instrument includes qualitative descriptors that signify the level of each competence measured. It is a 5-point scale, with a range from 1 to 5: the low end represents a low level and the high end indicates a high level of the measured competences.

#### *3.3.3. Speaking Assignment*

A speaking task assigned to the students during the midpoint of their spring semester involves simulated participation in a scientific conference focused on biotechnology. The participants were instructed to complete the assignment so that the levels of their communicative language ability would be evaluated. The students engaged in a simulation of a scientific conference in the biotechnology engineering field delivering oral presentations on the conference's relevant topics in the English language. The students were given half an hour to prepare what they would say prior to their individual recording. They were asked to analyze and compare the growing, production, and processing of two types of fruit (raspberry and plum) and to deliver a presentation to specialists in biotechnology. The topics aligned with the material covered in their English for Specific Purposes classes. A set of English words and

phrases (40 for each plant) was supplied to the participants to incorporate into their presentations, aiming to stimulate the students' oral production.

### 3.4. Procedure and Data Analysis

The instruments were administered to the participants by their foreign language teacher during their regular EFL classes. After completing their oral presentations, the students were expected to self-evaluate their levels of foreign language anxiety using FLCAS; the recorded oral presentations were evaluated by four external raters who used CLAS.

The measures of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), interclass correlation (inter-rater reliability coefficient), descriptive statistics (mean values and standard deviation), and correlation statistics were used for data processing. The obtained data were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 Package for Windows. To establish the levels of students' language anxiety, the 70 students were classified into three groups — high-anxious, medium-anxious, and low-anxious — based on their scores on FLCAS. The authors of the FLACS (Horwitz 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986) did not provide the scoring procedure along with the instrument. To determine a student's foreign language anxiety level, which encompasses three performance anxieties (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation), local norms were established for the FLACS. The students' mean scores are converted into z scores: the students scoring more than two-thirds standard deviations above the overall sample mean are categorized as low-anxious; the students whose scores fell within the range of  $+0.67$  to  $-0.67$  standard deviations from the sample mean are identified as medium-anxious; and, those scoring more than two-thirds standard deviations below the sample mean are identified as high-anxious. The "cut point" for high and low anxiety groups was set at two-thirds of a standard deviation to ensure that each group included enough students for comparison (Sparks and Ganschow 2007). ). For the CLAS, the following key helped to interpret the means: mean values from 4.5 to 5.0 indicate advanced level, from 3.5 to 4.49 indicate upper-intermediate level, from 2.5 to 3.49 indicate intermediate level, from 1.5 to 2.49 indicate lower-intermediate level, and values of  $M \leq 1.49$  indicate beginner level.

## 4. RESULTS

This section presents the obtained results concerning the levels of students' FLA, the levels of their CLA and competences, and the correlations between these two factors.

In this study, the FLCAS instrument proved to be reliable and internally consistent since the coefficient Cronbach's alpha is  $r=0.91$ . This result is within the coefficient values found in the literature for FLACS, ranging from 0.90-0.96 (Horwitz 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 1986; Aida 1994; Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert 1999; Rodriguez and Abreu 2003; Toth 2008; Yan and Horwitz 2008; Tallon 2011; Bojović 2020). The instrument CLAS was also found to be reliable and internally consistent as the coefficient Cronbach's alpha is  $r=0.97$ . The result is within the values found in the literature for CLAS ( $r=0.98$ , in Bojović, Palurović, and Tica 2015). External evaluation was also reported to be reliable since the inter-rater reliability coefficient is  $r=0.81$ .

#### 4.1. The Students' Levels of Foreign Language Anxiety

The descriptive statistics (mean value and standard deviation) show that the overall FLA is at a medium level ( $M=102.03$ , the score is between  $+0.67$  and  $-0.67$  standard deviations from the sample mean) and that all the performance anxieties are also at medium levels (Table 1).

The study reports the highest level of anxiety for communication apprehension ( $M=31.47$ ) and the lowest level of anxiety (the highest level of relaxation) for the test anxiety factor ( $M=49.84$ ). All the anxiety levels are reported for communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and overall anxiety among the participants ( $15 \leq M \leq 54$ ,  $27 \leq M \leq 67$ ,  $7 \leq M \leq 33$ ,  $51 \leq M \leq 150$ , respectively).

**Table 1** Levels of students' FLA

FLCA factors	Possible scores	M	SD
Communication apprehension	11-55	31.47	8.509
Test anxiety	15-75	49.84	9.952
Fear of negative evaluation	7-35	20.71	6.336
Overall anxiety	33-165	102.03	22.306
N = 70			

FLCA -foreign language classroom anxiety, M–mean value, SD–standard deviation, N - number of participants

#### 4.2. The Students' Levels of Communicative Language Ability in EFL

The results of the descriptive analysis show that biotechnology engineering students' general communicative language ability (CLA) in EFL is at an intermediate level since the mean value is  $M = 3.26$  (Table 2). The levels of respective competences also fall within the intermediate range, with the highest score being recorded for grammatical competence ( $M = 3.32$ ), followed by textual competence ( $M = 3.30$ ). Strategic competence ranks slightly lower ( $M = 3.14$ ), while fluency ( $M = 3.12$ ), functional competence ( $M = 3.09$ ), and sociolinguistic competence maintain intermediate levels ( $M = 2.93$ ). The lowest was recorded for nonverbal communicative ability ( $M = 2.53$ ) (Table 2).

**Table 2** Levels of CLA in the formal EFL context

CLA competences	Possible scores	M	SD
Grammatical competence	1-5	3.32	.721
Textual competence	1-5	3.30	.746
Functional competence	1-5	3.09	.690
Sociolinguistic competence	1-5	2.93	.667
Strategic competence	1-5	3.14	.692
Fluency	1-5	3.12	.687
Nonverbal communicative ability	1-5	2.53	.814
General communicative ability	1-5	3.26	.663
N = 70			

CLA - communicative language ability, M - mean value, SD - standard deviation, N - number of participants

The results suggest that the students-prospective engineers in biotechnical sciences generally possess the ability to communicate appropriately and efficiently while carrying

out the assigned task, with the content of their communication being adequate. However, it is worth noting that there are significant and sometimes inappropriate language corrections made to compensate for their language deficiencies, which may demand a certain degree of effort to understand the speaker/collocutor.

### 4.3. The Relationships between Students' Levels of FLCA and CLA

A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the students' levels of foreign language anxiety and their levels of communicative language ability. Positive correlations mean that the higher scores on the FLCAS indicate the higher scores of students' communicative language ability scale. The results are presented in Table 3 (p-value significance levels are shown in brackets).

The overall students' levels of FLA show a positive and significant correlation with students' general communicative ability ( $r=0.32$ ). All three performance anxieties (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation) are positively correlated with the students' levels of general communicative language ability ( $r=0.27$ ,  $r=0.31$ ,  $r=0.29$ , respectively). Additionally, the overall levels of FLA are positively and significantly correlated with all communicative language ability competences: grammatical competence ( $r=0.27$ ), textual competence ( $r=0.31$ ), functional competence ( $r=0.31$ ), sociolinguistic competence ( $r=0.42$ ), strategic competence ( $r=0.34$ ), fluency ( $r=0.36$ ), and nonverbal communicative ability ( $r=0.30$ ).

**Table 3** Relationships - levels of FLA and CLA

CLA variables	(E)FL anxiety			
	CA r(p)	TA r(p)	FNE r(p)	Overall Anxiety r(p)
GC	.22	.26* (.027)	.25* (.035)	.27* (.024)
TC	.23	.33** (.005)	.28* (.019)	.31** (.009)
FC	.21	.35** (.003)	.29* (.014)	.31** (.008)
SLC	.34** (.004)	.42** (.000)	.38** (.001)	.42** (.000)
SC	.28* (.02)	.37** (.004)	.33** (.006)	.34** (.004)
FL	.30* (.012)	.35** (.003)	.32** (.006)	.36** (.002)
NVCA	.25* (.037)	.27* (.023)	.29* (.013)	.30* (.013)
General CA	.27* (.025)	.31* (.01)	.29* (.016)	.32** (.008)
N=70 p < .05* p < .01**				

CLA - communicative language ability, EFL - English as a foreign language,  
 CA - communication apprehension, TA - test anxiety, FNE - fear of negative evaluation,  
 GC - grammatical competence, TC - textual competence, FC - functional competence,  
 SLC - sociolinguistic competence, SC - strategic competence, FL - fluency,  
 NVCA - nonverbal communicative ability, CA - communicative ability  
 N - number of participants, r - correlation coefficient, p - statistical significance

Moreover, the correlation analysis shows that two performance anxieties, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation show positive and significant correlations with all communicative language ability competences. Test anxiety positively correlates with grammatical ( $r=0.26$ ), textual ( $r=0.33$ ), functional ( $r=0.35$ ), sociolinguistic ( $r=0.42$ ), strategic competence ( $r=0.37$ ), fluency ( $r=0.35$ ), and nonverbal communicative ability ( $r=0.27$ ). Fear of negative evaluation also correlates positively and significantly with



communicative language ability competences: grammatical ( $r=0.25$ ), textual ( $r=0.28$ ), functional ( $r=0.29$ ), sociolinguistic ( $r=0.38$ ), strategic competence ( $r=0.33$ ), fluency ( $r=0.32$ ), and nonverbal communicative ability ( $r=0.29$ ).

However, communication apprehension is significantly and positively correlated with four competences: sociolinguistic ( $r=0.34$ ), strategic ( $r=0.28$ ), fluency ( $r=0.30$ ), and nonverbal communicative language ability ( $r=0.25$ ). The other three competences, grammatical, textual, and functional do not show statistically significant correlations with communication apprehension ( $r=0.22$ ,  $r=0.23$ , and  $r=0.21$ , respectively).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The instruments in the study proved to be reliable and internally consistent. The students' foreign language anxiety as well as performance anxieties are at a medium level. Such results are in line with the results obtained in the research investigating the foreign language anxiety levels of students learning English (Rodríguez and Abreu 2003; Chiang 2006; Lucas, Miraflores, and Go 2011; Arnaiz and Guillen 2012; Bojović 2020). On the other hand, high levels of language anxiety have also been recorded (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002; Maros-Llinas and Garan 2009; Pawlak 2011). One should bear in mind that the benefits of such comparisons may be restricted due to individual variations, as the data suggest that proficiency growth is accompanied by increased diversity in anxiety levels (Pawlak 2011). Furthermore, besides instructional factors such as engagement in small group speaking activities (Young 1990), the ambiance within the classroom, characterized by factors like reduced competition and clear task orientation, is linked to decreased levels of anxiety (Palacios 1998). However, higher levels of relaxation have also been observed in a language classroom (Pichette 2009).

The students' oral communication skills as assessed in this study, exhibit a wide range of competences, although there are some noticeable gaps. Their understanding of morphology and syntax structures is fairly extensive but not entirely comprehensive. Vocabulary is at an intermediate level of development. Simple cohesive tools are present and generally marked, while speech tends to include details though ideas are sometimes developed and presented in a confused way. According to the data obtained from students' recordings, the use of cohesive devices such as "and", "but", "then" is recorded as prominent, while the ones used for sequencing ideas (e.g., first, second, lastly, as a result), contrasting ideas (e.g., in contrast, instead, on the contrary, in comparison), comparison (e.g., similarly, likewise, compared with) or adding new ideas (e.g., in addition, furthermore) are used more seldom or missing; moreover, introduction to the topic and overview of what will be discussed are not predominant, sometimes similar ideas (e.g., the fruits' common pests and diseases) are not grouped, and jumping from one idea to another without proper transitions are also recorded. Language functions are sometimes clear, efficient, and appropriate; the students/speakers are typically aware of the collocutors and context, but they occasionally use grammatical but unnatural structures and appropriate cultural references (such as greeting and welcoming the audience, introducing oneself, thanking the audience at the end of the talk). They apply formal and informal registers, though sometimes inadequately. In general, the students/speakers are able to convey the main ideas using communication strategies despite encountering challenges in initiating interaction and responding to conversation turns. Speech is sometimes slow and hesitant, with pronunciation errors occasionally hindering

effective communication. However, non-verbal behavior often involves excessive and inappropriate nodding and inadequate eye direction; gestures are sometimes used to solve language difficulties but often inappropriately and unsuccessfully. Beginner levels of communicative language ability were not recorded. Even though there is a paucity of available empirical quantitative/qualitative research on speaking skills as communicative language ability, the current results are consistent with what was found in Bojović, Palurović, and Tica (2015) and Bojović (2021).

Another issue that the study referred to is the relationship between the levels of foreign language anxiety and communicative language ability. Those participants who experienced higher levels of foreign language anxiety showed lower levels of communicative language ability. In other words, the more advanced the language learner is, the lower the level of language anxiety is. Higher levels of FLA may have a detrimental effect on the students' oral communication skills/speaking performance. This finding is in line with the results obtained in various studies (Philips 1992; Aida 1994; Woodrow 2006; Aghajani and Amanzadeh, 2017; Tsang 2022). It is important to note that the speaking ability evaluation was done in the referred studies by using other tool than the Communicative language ability scale. Moreover, the lower the fear of being evaluated when speaking in English as a foreign language, the higher the level of foreign language oral communication skills is, including all constituent competences. Such a result is consistent with the results of previous research (Jibeen, Baig, and Ahmad 2019). Performing an FL oral communication task in a foreign language classroom is considered a situation in which a speaker has little control over communication procedures and their performance is continuously being observed by everyone present in the class (Horwitz and Young 1991; von Worde 2003). It has been argued that individuals with intense levels of FNE are apprehensive about the possibility of making errors and are negatively influenced by public opinion (Watson and Friend 1969, 449). Furthermore, the participants who experienced lower levels of test anxiety had higher levels of speaking communicative ability. Research shows that slightly anxious students performed better on oral tests/language tasks than highly anxious students (Phillips 1992). Finally, the students who manifested higher levels of difficulty and discomfort when speaking in EFL showed lower levels of speaking competence/ability. Stress and tension in any communicative or language-performance situation often result in poor performance, because actors focus more on perceived danger than on their language production (Cicek 2014). People can be reluctant to communicate since they prefer silence over the risk of appearing foolish when they speak (Keaten, Kelly, and Philips 2009, 159). Interestingly, no statistically significant correlations, though positive, were recorded between communication apprehension, on the one side, and grammatical, textual, and functional competence, on the other side. The absence of correlations between anxiety and grammatical competence is corroborated by the study of Balemir (2009) due to the weaker link between grammar competence and public speaking. This could be the avenue for further research in the future.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the undergraduate biotechnology engineering students' levels of FLA were at a medium level and their performance anxieties, i.e. communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, remained at the same level. Moreover, the students' communicative language ability (general communicative ability

and its competences) was at an intermediate level. Also, the students at the higher levels of CLA and its competences had lower levels of the overall FLA (the higher levels of relaxation) than their peers at the lower levels of communicative language ability.

The findings in the study have several possible implications in the classroom. Speaking to an audience is an anxiety-arousing activity (Woodrow 2006; Yan and Horwitz 2008; Liang and Kelsen 2018; Kelsen 2019) and has a debilitating effect on speaking English for some students (Woodrow 2006). It is important that teachers are sensitive to this in classroom interactions and provide help to minimize foreign language anxiety. Cooperative activities have been shown to encourage and support most of the affective factors (Crandall 1999), which correlate positively with language learning, such as reducing debilitating anxiety, increasing motivation, and promoting self-esteem. They would allow the anxious student to practice the target language in a small group. In large groups, students may use pair work, group work, and cooperative activities, to decrease students language anxiety. EFL teachers can organize the activities in groups of three or four students to encourage all members to participate in speaking activities and to benefit from multiple ideas, thus allowing for more face-to-face group interaction. Such activities can provide students with the necessary social skills that facilitate teamwork and enhance communication (Crandall 1999). In teaching EFL speaking, it is advisable to expose students to natural dialogues through role-plays, discussions on video and audio recordings, and films used in the classroom. The selection of triggering materials should be based on the context and topics the students are most likely to encounter in the real world. Prior to the speaking assignment explored in the study, the EFL/ESP classes involved activities based on content-based learning and communicative approach. The learning/teaching process reflected the contents, methods, and procedures characteristic of the biotechnology engineering profession, involving the exposure of students to group, cooperative, and collaborative activities through discussion, quizzes, negotiations, problem-solving, and role-plays. Based on the results of the study, some changes are to be implemented regarding improving students' non-verbal communication skills through group discussions on interpreting body language in various contexts (e.g., job interviews, social interactions, public speaking), providing educational videos on the importance of nonverbal cues, and role-playing exercises to practice nonverbal behaviour (e.g., acting out the appropriate nonverbal cues in different scenarios).

The study has certain limitations that future research could address. The findings in this study were based on a limited number of undergraduate students within a highly specific field of engineering. Consequently, these results cannot be generalized to the entire student population or specifically to those students in biotechnology engineering, and certainly not to the engineering profession in general. Additionally, the FLCAS instrument used in this study relies on self-reported data. This implies that the participants' responses depend on their sincerity, willingness to cooperate in the research, and on their awareness of language anxieties they encounter when speaking in English.

This study furthered the understanding of foreign language anxiety in EFL public speaking. The strength of the present study is that it explores the levels of foreign language anxiety and speaking abilities, conceptualized as communicative language ability, with regard to the performance of a specific speaking task, and this is done in English for specific purposes. As many studies suggest foreign language anxiety goes hand in hand with speaking a foreign language and can affect learners of different proficiency levels. Further research could investigate the effects of foreign language anxiety and performance anxieties on specific language competences in various communicative tasks, disciplinary contents, and age groups.

Additionally, the areas of speaking communicative language ability identified as having a correlational relationship with anxiety can form the basis of an experimental study so that direction of casualty may be determined.

**Acknowledgement:** *The paper is a part of the research done within the project No. 451-03-66/2024-03/200088, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, and realized at the University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Agronomy in Čačak.*

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## ODNOS ANKSIOZNOSTI U UČENJU ENGLSKOG KAO STRANOG JEZIKA I KOMUNIKATIVNE JEZIČKE SPOSOBNOSTI U VISOKOŠKOLSKOJ NASTAVI

*U ovom radu su predstavljene rezultati istraživanja koje je imalo za cilj da ispita nivo anksioznosti u učenju engleskog jezika, stepen razvijenosti komunikativne jezičke sposobnosti na engleskom jeziku i postojanje odnosa ove dve varijable. U tu svrhu, u kvantitativno/kvalitativnom istraživanju učestvovalo je 70 studenata osnovnih studija, budućih inženjera biotehnologije, koji*

*uče engleski jezika kao strani jezik struke na Univerzitetu u Kragujevcu, Srbija. Instrumenti korišćeni u istraživanju su Skala samoprocene anksioznosti u učenju stranih jezika, Skala komunikativne jezičke sposobnosti i zadatak koji podrazumeva simulaciju učešća i prezentiranja na engleskom jeziku na naučnoj konferenciji u oblasti biotehnologije. Za obradu podataka korišćene su mere unutrašnje konzistentnosti, pouzdanosti evaluatora, deskriptivne analize i Pirsonove korelacione analize. Dobijeni podaci su analizirani pomoću statističkog softvera SPSS22.0. Rezultati ukazuju na to da su ispitanici pokazali umeren nivo jezičke anksioznosti u usmenom izražavanju u nastavnoj situaciji i srednji nivo komunikativne jezičke sposobnosti. Rezultati takođe pokazuju da postoji pozitivna korelacija između nivoa jezičke anksioznosti i komunikativne jezičke sposobnosti. Ispitanici koji su bili na višem nivou anksioznosti imali su niži nivo komunikativne jezičke sposobnosti.*

*Ključne reči: anksioznost u učenju jezika, biotehnologija, engleski kao strani jezik struke, komunikativna jezička sposobnost*





# THE USE OF METADISCOURSE MARKERS IN ACHIEVING PERSUASION IN SHORT ADVERTISEMENTS WRITTEN BY ESP STUDENTS



UDC 811.111'42:659

Tijana Vesić Pavlović<sup>1</sup>, Danijela Đorđević<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

ORCID iDs: Tijana Vesić Pavlović  
Danijela Đorđević

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5786-975X>  
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8804-4037>

**Abstract.** *The paper focuses on the metadiscourse markers used with the aim of persuasion in ESP student writing. The corpus consisted of 66 short advertisements (8,611 tokens) written by the first-year students of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Belgrade as part of their ESP course. Based on Hyland's model of metadiscourse, we analyse the frequency of use and different types of metadiscourse markers in students' advertisements. The aim is to explore whether ESP students use MD markers to persuade the audience to try out a new welding technique. The most frequently used markers overall were engagement markers, followed by attitude markers, whereas the least frequent were frame markers and code glosses. Interactional metadiscourse categories are used much more than the interactive ones, both in the body of the advertisement and the slogans. Based on the obtained findings on the use of MD markers in student-written advertisements, it can be concluded that some students successfully kept up with the trends found in similar research of advertisements written by experienced copywriters.*

**Key words:** *metadiscourse, persuasion, advertisements, ESP students, student writing*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising is omnipresent in the modern world, and all of us are familiar with its different forms. The aim of all forms of commercial advertising is still the same – to sell the product in question. Experienced copywriters develop the skill of writing advertisements that will persuade the buyers to purchase a certain product – the main purpose of commercial advertising thus being persuasion (Tanaka 2005). Copywriters usually aim at getting the audience to “register their communication either for purposes of immediate action or to make

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Submitted April 5, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Tijana Vesić Pavlović

University of Belgrade

E-mail: [tvesic@mas.bg.ac.rs](mailto:tvesic@mas.bg.ac.rs)

us more favourably disposed in general terms to the advertised product or service” (Goddard 2002, 11).

Language plays a very important role in the process of persuasion. Previous studies argue that persuasive language has certain specific features; as pointed out by Labrador et al. (2014, 40), it “tends to be creative and attention-drawing, exploiting language resources to the maximum with catchphrases, emotive words, informal expressions and striking metaphors and comparisons to appeal to the readers”. Copywriters use different linguistic devices to get their message across in text advertisements, and metadiscourse devices may be very helpful in shaping the way consumers perceive and engage with the content, as well as in establishing credibility.

Generally speaking, metadiscourse has the role of “establishing and maintaining contact between the writer and the reader and between the writer and the message” (Hyland 1998, 437). Thus, adequate use of metadiscourse markers, especially in academic writing, has been proposed as a feature of an author who successfully communicates with their audience (Hyland and Tse 2004). According to Hyland (2005, 72), “one of the clearest examples of the rhetorical role of metadiscourse is found in advertisements”. In advertising, metadiscourse plays an important role in “organising the discourse” (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1291), as well as in “engaging the potential consumers, leading them to the desired behaviour, thus creating a successful persuasive communication between advertisers and consumers” (Al-Subhi 2022, 25). The features of interpersonal metadiscourse serve to enable copywriters “to adopt a kind of balance between informing and persuading” (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1295), thus reinforcing the persuasive role of an advertisement.

This paper focuses on the metadiscourse (MD) markers used with the aim of persuasion in ESP student writing. The corpus for the analysis consisted of 66 short advertisements written by the first-year students of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Belgrade as part of their ESP course. Students’ task was to write an advertisement for the new welding technique based on the pieces of information presented in the text they had read during the class prior to writing. In our analysis, based on Hyland’s model of metadiscourse, we aim at identifying the type of MD markers used in students’ advertisements and finding out whether they were employed with the function of persuading the audience to try the new welding technique.

The paper has the following sections. In the second part, we provide an elaboration of the theoretical framework used in the analysis and present the findings of relevant previous studies on the use of MD markers as persuasive devices in student essays and in different types of advertisements. Section 3 outlines the materials and methodology used in the paper, while section 4 presents research results. In the final section, we summarise the study findings and provide a discussion.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

### 2.1. Hyland’s interpersonal model of metadiscourse and MD persuasive role

Hyland’s model of metadiscourse (2005) is a prominent framework in the field of discourse analysis, particularly within the context of academic writing. It focuses on the ways in which writers use metadiscourse to establish their presence in the text and engage with their readers. Metadiscourse refers to the linguistic devices and strategies the authors employ to guide readers through a text, express their stance, and manage the flow of

information. Hyland's model identifies two primary classes of metadiscourse: interactive and interactional. Interactive metadiscourse includes the elements that provide a better organization and coherence of the discourse, and comprises transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, code glosses and evidentials. Interactional metadiscourse, on the other hand, encompasses elements that indicate the writer's relationship with the reader and engagement in the discourse, like hedges, boosters, self-mentions, attitude markers and engagement markers (Hyland 2005).

Hyland's model may help understand how writers establish rapport with their audience and convey their persuasive intent through the strategic use of language in various discourse contexts, including advertising. This author also provides an account of the three central persuasive elements when writing with the aim of persuasion, these being ethos, as "the personal appeal of one's character", pathos, as "the appeal to emotions", and logos, as "the appeal to reason" (Hyland 2005, 64). Metadiscourse projects "the rational appeals of Logos when it explicitly links elements of the argument; it conveys an Ethos where it refers to the writer's authority and competence; and it relates to Pathos when it signals respect for the readers' viewpoint or that the message has direct relevance to the audience" (Hyland 2005, 65).

Various studies that investigated MD features in different types of texts also commented on its persuasive role (e.g., Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen 1993; Dafouz-Milne 2008; Ho 2016; Hyland 2002; Longo 1994). Hyland's study (2002) provided valuable insights into how directives, as the expressions that instruct or guide the reader, contributed to the effectiveness of argumentation and engagement in academic writing. In his study on the use of persuasive MD in Hong Kong government policy documents, Ho (2016) specifically found that hedges, engagement markers and self-mentions served to establish credibility and achieve affective appeal, thus accomplishing ethos and pathos, while transition markers, endophoric markers, and code glosses were used in order to persuade with reasons, thus serving the function of logos (Ho 2016, 17). Liu and Zhang (2021) analysed the patterns of use of MD resources in the corporate press release genre, with the focus on those utilised in achieving persuasiveness. They found that interactional MD markers were used twice as much as interactive metadiscourse, with the most frequent type of markers used being attitude markers which served the function to promote a good image of the company. Another frequently used MD category comprised engagement markers, while other categories, such as evidentials or endophoric markers, were used much less.

## **2.2. Previous research on the use of MD as a persuasive device in ESL student writing**

The importance of the correct use of metadiscourse markers in student writing in foreign languages has been greatly emphasised in the pertinent literature. A number of studies explored the use of MD features in ESL writing. For instance, a previous study on the use of MD markers in the essays of Serbian mechanical engineering students has shown that students dominantly employed interactional metadiscourse markers, compared to the categories of interactive metadiscourse; further, transitions were the most frequently used markers, followed by engagement markers and hedges (Vesić Pavlović and Đorđević 2020).

Several studies also focused on the use of MD with the aim of persuading the reader in author's opinions. In their study, Lee and Deakin (2016, 29–31) concluded that Chinese ESL students who used more interactional metadiscourse in their argumentative essays managed to balance caution and certainty appropriately and achieved a greater degree of

persuasion, which resulted in higher marks. This points to a strong relationship between effective persuasion and adequate use of interactional MD markers. Ho and Li (2018) reached a similar conclusion in their analysis of the essays written by first-year university students, L2 English learners. In this study, high-rated essays also contained a variety of MD markers, especially a greater number of hedges and attitude markers than the low-rated essays, which were used to balance arguments and to construct persuasive arguments (Ho and Li 2018, 58). Another thing observed by these authors was the fact that the MD features needed to be used appropriately in order to achieve the desired aim of persuasion, i.e., there had to be a “frequency-appropriacy combination” (Ho and Li 2018, 65).

### 2.3 Previous research on the use of MD in constructing persuasion in advertising

Different studies emphasise the importance of the use of MD features in the advertising genre since it constitutes a specific type of persuasive writing (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001; Gustafsson 2017; Al-Subhi 2022). Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001) investigated the use of metadiscourse markers in slogans and/or headlines in print advertisements. The MD markers found in their study included hedges, emphatics, person markers, endophoric markers and evidentials. They also provided elaborate explanations as to why certain identified MD markers may be specifically important for achieving persuasion. Thus, they argue that the use of pronouns is aimed at giving the impression that the ads personally address a consumer. Person markers are used in advertising to signal a one-to-one relationship and create “a sense of solidarity with the potential customer” (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1298). Various pronouns were used for these purposes in the analysed advertising slogans and headlines (such as inclusive/exclusive *I* and *we*, *he*, *she*, *it*). Since the role of hedges is to show a certain degree of tentativeness, Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001, 1299) argue that copywriters use them to make “indirect reference to the qualities of the goods being advertised”, since “social conventions deny copywriters the possibility of being frank and straightforward”. Also, hedges help copywriters adhere to social conventions since “facts should be somehow disguised” (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1300), for example: *Never has it been so important to read the label*. The use of modal verbs in slogans and headlines implies that the message conveyed by the advertisement is true and based on the expert knowledge of the one compiling the advertisement, for example, *You just can't help yourself* (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1301). The function of emphatics in slogans/headlines is to emphasise that the key features of the advertised products are necessary and thus persuade consumers to buy them (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1302). The function of endophoric markers is to “persuade consumers by associating their messages to other cultural artefacts” (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001, 1303).

Using Hyland’s model of metadiscourse, Gustafsson (2017) analysed metadiscourse features in advertisements found on web pages of make-up brands in order to ascertain whether companies resorted to MD to attract their customers and motivate them to buy their products. The most frequently used categories of MD in this study included engagement markers, followed by boosters and self-mentions. This author comments on the noticeable absence of hedges and attitude markers in the analysed advertisements, citing the fact that companies do not want to “withhold full commitment to the product that they want to sell”, but wish exactly the opposite (Gustafsson 2017, 16) as a possible reason for this.

Al-Subhi’s study (2022) explored the frequency and use of both the linguistic and the visual MD markers and their role in constructing persuasion, using the corpus of social media

advertisements obtained from Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, relying on Hyland's stance and engagement metadiscourse model. It was shown that the categories of interactive MD were absent from the analysed ads, with the exception of transitions whose use was minimal. Overall, engagement markers had the highest frequencies of occurrence in the analysed corpus, which indicates that copywriters strived to establish interactionality and "an explicit relationship with the readers" (Al-Subhi 2022, 29). In the category of stance, attitude markers were used most commonly, most specifically, attitudinal adjectives, while self-mentions, boosters and hedges were not used often, with hedges being the least used. The author emphasises the significance of attitudinal adjectives that serve to strengthen "the persuasiveness of the ads as advertisers cast a positive light on the products through the inclusion of appropriate adjectives (Al-Subhi 2022, 37). In the category of engagement markers, directives (such as *do, start, get, shop, save*) were used most frequently in order to "instruct the targeted audience to perform certain actions arranged by the advertisers" (Al-Subhi 2022, 29). Copywriters used reader-inclusive pronouns such as *you, your* or *yourself* to address readers directly, as well as the inclusive *we*. Questions were also used in the ads as a means of building a direct relationship between the writer and readers, but to a lesser extent (Al-Subhi 2022, 29). This study also showed that the use of linguistic metadiscourse in constructing persuasion can be complemented by the use of different features of visual metadiscourse.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

*Course of research.* The first-year students of two generations of the students of the study programme of Information Technologies in Mechanical Engineering, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, University of Belgrade, wrote an advertisement for a new technique in the field of welding, the so-called vaporised foil actuator welding (VFAW). These short advertisements were collected in the fall semester of two consecutive academic years, 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Generally, during their university ESP course, students are taught how to effectively communicate within their future professional context. This includes reflecting on the use and importance of discourse markers in a written text, since they play a crucial role in enhancing coherence and cohesion of the text, with a special focus on understanding the functions of discourse markers in various contexts. Prior to completing this task, the students had read a text about this technique during their English class and then, together with the teacher, had a discussion about this issue. Finally, at the end of the class, they received brief instructions on writing the advertisement for the VFAW technique<sup>1</sup>.

*Corpus.* A total of 66 essays were collected, which had 8,611 tokens. Students were given an option to formulate a slogan for their advertisement and the collected number of slogans was 38. The number of words in the body of the advertisement was 8,293, while the number of words in the subcorpus of slogans was 318.

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the instruction was as follows: "Read the text *VFAW: A New Technique for Joining High-Strength Metals* on pages 77 and 78. Based on the facts provided in the text, do the following task: write a short advertisement in which you should offer this technique to potential customers. In the advertisement, you need to point out the advantages of this method of welding compared to other methods and try to rouse interest in the potential user. You can use bullets or boldfaced or italics to emphasise certain facts. The advertisement should contain text only! The title should read: Advert for the VFAW technique – UNDER this general title, you can write down a short slogan to attract the attention of the company you are advertising this technique to. The advertisement should be approximately 150 words long."

*Data analysis.* In the process of analysis, the advertisements were carefully read by both researchers and the MD expressions were recorded. In the next step, they were grouped into the categories contained in Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse, namely, interactive and interactional MD markers. In the upcoming results section, we provide an analysis of the frequencies and types of the employed MD markers in the entire corpus, as well as a separate analysis of their presence in the body of the advertisement and the slogans.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Upon reading the collected advertisements, it was noted that students frequently engaged in direct audience interaction. In the opening parts, they would query whether the reader(s) had grown fatigued with the conventional welding practices, and then they would go on to present the product they were advertising, the VF AW. Generally speaking, the use of MD markers for the purposes of persuasion was fairly prominent in the analysed advertisements, while students also typically employed conspicuous typographic features such as bold text or uppercase letters to accentuate the significance of their innovative offering.

In the text of the advertisement as a whole (Table 1<sup>2</sup>), interactional metadiscourse (with the normalised frequency at 75.95 per 1,000 words) was used much more than interactive metadiscourse (with the normalised frequency at 20.67 per 1,000 words). Some interactive MD marker categories, such as endophoric markers and evidentials, were not used at all. The most frequently used types of MD markers, engagement markers (30.54 per 1,000 words) and attitude markers (19.97 per 1,000 words), both belong to interactional metadiscourse.

**Table 1** Metadiscourse markers by category and type in the whole text of the advertisement

Interactional metadiscourse			Interactive metadiscourse		
Type of marker	Num. of tokens	Norm. frequency	Type of marker	Num. of tokens	Norm. frequency
Engagement markers	263	30.54	Transition markers	142	16.49
Attitude markers	172	19.97	Code glosses	18	2.09
Self-mentions	81	9.41	Frame markers	18	2.09
Hedges	81	9.41	Endophoric markers	0	0
Boosters	57	6.62	Evidentials	0	0
Total	654	75.95	Total	178	20.67

Since previous studies have shown that there may be some peculiarities in the use of MD markers in the slogans and in the body of the advertisement, we will present the types and frequencies of the MD markers in the body of the advertisements and the slogans separately and elaborate on the findings in more detail.

<sup>2</sup> To illustrate the frequency of occurrence of different types of markers in the analysed texts, we provide both the absolute frequencies, i.e., the total number of metadiscourse markers in the analysed texts, and the normalised frequencies, i.e., the number of markers per 1,000 words.

The same as in the case of the advertisement as a whole, interactional metadiscourse categories (71.63 per 1,000 words) were used much more than the interactive ones (21.34 per 1,000 words) in the body of the advertisement (Table 2). The most frequent markers found in the body of the advertisement were engagement markers (28.94 per 1,000 words), followed by attitude markers (17.36 per 1,000 words). Transitions, belonging to the category of interactive markers, were the third most used category (17.00 per 1,000 words), while other categories of interactional discourse, namely, hedges, self-mentions and boosters, were present moderately.

**Table 2** Metadiscourse markers by category and type in the body of advertisements

Interactional metadiscourse			Interactive metadiscourse		
Type of marker	Num. of tokens	Norm. frequency	Type of marker	Num. of tokens	Norm. frequency
Engagement markers	240	28.94	Transition markers	141	17.00
Attitude markers	144	17.36	Frame markers	18	2.17
Hedges	80	9.65	Code glosses	18	2.17
Self-mentions	76	9.16	Endophoric markers	0	0
Boosters	54	6.51	Evidentials	0	0
Total	594	71.63	Total	177	21.34

Engagement markers serve to capture the attention and interest of consumers, and may be deemed as essential tools for persuasion in advertising (Fuertes-Olivera et al. 2001). In the analysed advertisements, they were mostly realised by the following means: reader pronouns, directives and questions. In examples (1) and (2), we have the use of the reader pronoun *you*, which serves to engage the audience directly, fostering a sense of personal connection. Apart from including the pronoun *you*, example (1) is also an illustration of the question as a metadiscourse marker, which serves to invite the audience to consider the product or service being promoted. In example (3), we note the use of directives that serve as persuasive tools, urging consumers to take specific actions such as *Keep up with it* or *Try it out*.

- 1) *Do you know how to weld metals without actually melting it?*<sup>3</sup>
- 2) *If you want to have the best welders in town then you are at the right place.*
- 3) *Keep up with the greatest companies and try it out!*

Attitude markers are also very important when compiling advertisements since they show writer's emotional stance towards propositions, focusing on affect rather than knowledge, and expressing emotions such as "surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so on" (Hyland 2005, 53). Thus, they may influence the consumers' perceptions and convince them of the product's effectiveness and uniqueness (Gustafsson 2017). The most frequently used attitude markers in the body of the advertisement included adjectives and exclamation marks, followed by adverbs and verbs, but to a lesser extent. As underlined in a previous study by Al-Subhi (2022, 28), adjectives such as *great*, *new*, *ultimate* or *perfect*, which are often used in the descriptions of different products in advertisements, are actually instances of attitude markers since the advertisers "use these items to stress the

<sup>3</sup> The examples taken from students' advertisements are provided verbatim, without the (sometimes necessary) corrections of grammar or spelling errors.

qualities of the advertised products and the message of the text". In example (4), we can see that the use of *perfect* positively evaluates the product, suggesting that it will certainly meet the needs of the audience. In example (5), the adjective *new* highlighted in uppercase letters draws attention to the novelty of the product, while the exclamation mark further intensifies the claim. The adjective *great* in ex. (6) conveys a highly positive evaluation, suggesting that the audience is about to experience something highly beneficial. Again, the exclamation mark adds emphasis on the VFAW technology.

- 4) *Well, this so called "VFAW" technique is perfect for you.*
- 5) *But that changes now with the introduction of our NEW product!*
- 6) *Well, today is going to be a GREAT day for you then, because you're about to find out what VFAW technology is!*

Transition markers serve as signposts that aid in structuring the discourse and navigating the reader's experience; hence, they may be important in realising "cohesion and coherence of a text, without which the purpose of any persuasion can be crippled" (Liu and Zhang 2021, 9). In our corpus, these markers were typically realised by conjunctions and adverbs/adverbial phrases implying addition, comparison and consequence. In example (7), the transition marker *so that* serves to indicate the result of the action described in the previous clause. Then, in example (8), the transition marker *moreover* implies an additional idea. These transition markers help to increase the coherence of the advertisement by clarifying the relationships between ideas and guiding the reader through the key points.

- 7) *We join the metal without melting, so that the metal does not weaken.*
- 8) *Moreover, it produces new material structures.*

Hedges serve to signal the writer's acknowledgment of alternative perspectives and reluctance to fully commit to a proposition; they also suggest that statements are based on plausible reasoning rather than absolute certainty (Hyland 2005). If we look at the following examples (9, 10, 11), we can see that the hedges *can be fitted* and *can be installed* suggest possibility rather than certainty. They soften the statement, indicating that fitting/installing the product to robots is a potential application rather than an absolute guarantee. Also, by using *potential* in example (9), the advertisement suggests that the product can be used for work on the manufacturing line, but it does not make a guarantee. In example (11), the use of *that is possible* suggests a cautious assertion rather than a certain claim.

- 9) *It also can be fitted to robots for potential work on the manufacturing line too.*
- 10) *VFAW can be installed on robots as needed.*
- 11) *With our VFAW technique, that is possible.*

Self-mentions in writing refer to the author's explicit inclusion in the text, assessed through the occurrence of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives (Hyland 2005). In example (12), the use of *me* emphasises the role of the speaker in providing information, thus enhancing trust. Similarly, in example (13), the self-mention *our* connects ownership with the brand promoting the welding technology and increasing credibility.

- 12) *Let me introduce you to VFAW also known as vaporized foil actuator welding.*
- 13) *Our brand-new welding technology relies on vaporizing foils.*



Boosters include words like *clearly*, *obviously*, or *demonstrate* that writers use to eliminate alternatives, anticipate conflicting viewpoints, and assert their certainty in their statements (Hyland 2005). In example (14), *completely* highlights the novelty and innovation of the method being described. It suggests that the technique being advertised is not just an improvement, but a significant advancement in the field. The booster *certainly* in example (15) adds assurance to the claim being made. In both advertisements, the use of boosters contributes to the persuasive power of the messages by emphasising the novelty, efficiency and potential benefits of the described welding techniques.

14) *This is a completely new and modern way to join the new materials without melting.*

15) *This way of joining high-strength metals certainly to bring with it many changes and holds a lot of promises.*

Frame markers are signals within a text that indicate its boundaries or the structure of the content, serving various functions such as sequencing, labelling, predicting, and shifting arguments, thereby enhancing the clarity of the discourse for readers or listeners (Hyland 2005). Still, while they enhance clarity and organisation, they may not directly contribute to capturing attention, which is one of the key goals in advertising. As a result, frame markers may be used to a lesser degree in advertising compared to other types of markers that focus more directly on engaging consumers, such as engagement markers. In example (16), the frame marker *so far* implies that the statement is situated within a temporal frame, indicating that up to the present moment, no solution has been found. The frame marker *firstly* in example (17) indicates the beginning of a sequence of points. In both examples, the frame markers contribute to the organisation of the text.

16) *So far no one was able to find the perfect solution for this problem.*

17) *Firstly, the hot gas pushes the pieces of metal together at high speed instead of joining them by melting.*

Code glosses provide supplementary details to aid the reader in understanding the intended meaning conveyed by the writer (Hyland 2005). In both examples (18, 19), the use of code glosses (e.g., *for example* and *such as*) clarifies the points made in the advertisement, making it more effective in communicating the advantages of the promoted welding technique.

18) *Metals, for example aluminum, welded by VFAW are two to three times stronger or better welded than by using other old methods.*

19) *Many flaws of traditional welding, such as overheating sensitive materials, have been completely removed!*

Table 3 shows the types of MD markers and the frequency of their use in the formulated slogans. When interpreting the results in Table 3, it should be borne in mind that the total number of tokens in the corpus of slogans was very small, since slogans are meant to be short and striking; thus, very high frequencies of certain types of MD markers indicate that student writers extensively relied on the persuasive power of these devices in slogans to get their message across to potential consumers.

**Table 3** Metadiscourse markers by category and type in advertisement slogans

Interactional metadiscourse			Interactive metadiscourse		
Type of marker	Num. of tokens	Norm. frequency	Type of marker	Num. of tokens	Norm. frequency
Attitude markers	28	88.05	Transition markers	1	1
Engagement markers	23	72.33	Code glosses	0	0
Self-mentions	5	15.72	Frame markers	0	0
Boosters	3	9.43	Endophoric markers	0	0
Hedges	1	3.14	Evidentials	0	0
Total	60	188.67	Total	1	3.14

It can be seen that students almost solely used the category of interactional metadiscourse (with the normalised frequency at 188.67 per 1,000 words) rather than interactive metadiscourse (3.14 per 1,000 words). Attitude markers (88.05 per 1,000 words) and engagement markers (72.33 per 1,000 words) were used with a very high frequency in these slogans. Other MD categories were utilised sparsely (e.g., self-mentions, boosters and hedges). Examples of the use of MD markers in the analysed slogans are given below (ex. 20–26).

- 20) *Vaporize all your problems away!*  
 21) *VFAW the new age of better welding!*  
 22) *Weld more efficiently!*  
 23) *Are you looking for faster, cheaper, more efficient way of welding your materials?*  
 24) *March into the future!*  
 25) *TO REDUCE WELDING FLAWS, USE VFAW!*  
 26) *We offer a solution for your problem!*

In example (20), we have the engagement markers *vaporize* (a directive) and *your* (a reader-inclusive pronoun), directly involving the audience, as well as the exclamation mark as an example of attitude markers. In ex. (21), the attitude marker *new*, as well as the exclamation mark, indicate advancement, showing a positive attitude towards the product/service. Further, ex. (22) contains direct addressing of the audience (the use of the engagement marker, the directive *weld*) involved in welding. In example (23), the question directly engages the audience by addressing their needs related to welding. The use of directives (*march into the future*, *use*) in ex. (24) and (25) again serves to directly address and draw attention of those interested in advancements in the field. The use of the self-mention *we* and the engagement marker *your* in ex. (26) demonstrates confidence in the product or service's capacity to address customer requirements. Based on the analysis, it may be argued that the advertisement slogans mostly employ attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions in order to convey assurance, engage the audience, and promote the advertised product/service.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The focus of the current study was to investigate the use of MD markers for the purposes of persuasion in a sample of short advertisements written by ESP learners, first-year students of the University of Belgrade. The analysis was conducted within the frame

of Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse, on the set of advertisements written as a part of students' tasks during their ESP course.

Study results show that students relied on MD markers as linguistic cues to emphasise the key selling points and encourage a favourable response from their readers. Interactional metadiscourse prevailed both in the body of the advertisement and the advertisement slogans, while interactive metadiscourse was present to a certain (lower) extent, mostly in the body of the advertisement. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies, which pointed that, due to the relatively short nature of advertisements, the use of interactive metadiscourse was not dominant (Al-Subhi 2022, 37).

The most frequently used MD markers, in both the advertisement body and slogans, belong to the categories of engagement markers and attitude markers, since these markers play a crucial role in capturing the audience's attention, maintaining their interest, and ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions. There is a difference in the use of different types of MD markers between the body of the advertisement and slogans since other MD types apart from engagement markers and attitude markers were rarely used in slogans, which was to be expected, given that slogans are very short. Generally speaking, students used attitude markers to encourage consumer trust and used engagement markers to draw their readers' attention and create a sense of participation. Hedges were employed to provide a sense of caution on the part of the writer, while the function of boosters was to increase the value of the advertised product. Self-mentions were used to reinforce brand identity, and transition markers to facilitate smooth shifts. Frame markers were employed to maintain focus on product benefits, while code glosses were utilised successfully to clarify technical terms.

It should also be noted that students relied on the devices such as caps lock, questions and parts of the text boldfaced as the ways to draw potential customer attention. The role of a specific layout, e.g., using particular typographical features, for achieving persuasion in advertisement has been pointed out already by Goddard (2002). Thus, it can be concluded that some students successfully kept up with the "trends" found in similar research of ads written by experienced copywriters.

This study may bear practical relevance for ESP teachers in terms of the possibilities of enhancing students' pragmatic competence. The task of writing advertisements for the specific products relevant to students' future professions may serve as a good exercise for practicing pragmatic skills in a foreign language, as well as demonstrating creativity in practical tasks. The quality and outcome of the task could be enhanced by an introduction given by the teacher, elaborating on the specific linguistic features and structures typical of the context of an advertisement and providing the text of authentic advertisements written in the English language, which could serve as good examples of the features of this genre. The major limitation of the study lies in its scope. Namely, it was conducted on a relatively small number of essays written by students of one faculty only. Thus, future similar research might focus on ESP students of different profiles, primarily for the purposes of complementing the findings of this study and comparing the strategies students of different vocations use when writing advertisements in a foreign language.

**Acknowledgement:** *The study reported in this manuscript was supported by a grant from the Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, according to the contract on the financial support of the scientific research of teaching staff at the accredited higher education institutions in 2024, contract number: 451-03-65/2024-03/200105, dated 5/02/2024 (for the first author), and contract number: 451-03-65/2024-03/200116 (for the second author).*

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## **UPOTREBA METADISKURSNIH MARKERA SA CILJEM UBEĐIVANJA U KRATKIM REKLAMNIM OGLASIMA STUDENATA KOJI UČE ENGLESKI JEZIK STRUKE**

*U radu se bavimo metadiskursnim markerima koji se koriste sa ciljem ubeđivanja u esejima studenata koji uče engleski jezik struke. Korpus na kome je izvršena analiza obuhvatio je 66 kratkih reklamnih oglasa (8611 reči) koje su pisali studenti prve godine Mašinskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu u okviru kursa engleskog jezika. Koristeći Hajlandov model metadiskursa, analizirali smo učestalost upotrebe i različite tipove metadiskursnih markera u ovim reklamnim oglasima. Cilj je bio da se istraži da li studenti koriste metadiskursne markere da ubede publiku da isproba novu tehniku zavarivanja. Generalno gledano, najčešće korišćeni markeri bili su markeri angažovanja, a za njima markeri stava, dok su najređi bili okvirni markeri i objašnjivači. Interakcioni metadiskurs se koristi mnogo više od interaktivnog, kako u glavnom delu oglasa, tako i u sloganima. Na osnovu dobijenih nalaza o upotrebi metadiskursnih markera u reklamnim oglasima koje su pisali studenti koji uče engleski jezik struke, može se zaključiti da su neki studenti uspešno ispratili „trendove“ uočene u sličnim istraživanjima reklamnih oglasa koje su pisali iskusni pisci reklamnih tekstova.*

*Ključne reči: metadiskurs, ubeđivanje, reklamni oglas, studenti koji uče engleski jezik struke, studentski eseji*



## IMPACT OF WRITING STRATEGIES ON TEXT QUALITY: A CASE STUDY

UDC 371.3:81'243  
808.1

**Danijela Vranješ**

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade, Serbia

ORCID iD: Danijela Vranješ

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3301-6514>

**Abstract.** *When it comes to teaching foreign languages, writing is often a neglected skill. Students are not equipped with the necessary writing strategies to facilitate the writing process and improve the overall quality of the produced text. Therefore, the aim of this research is to make the writing process more comprehensible by shining some light on various writing strategies and their impact on text quality. The study focuses on writing in German as a foreign language, specifically on four texts (whose complexity gradually increased) the participant wrote during the four-month writing course accompanied by a think-aloud protocol and keystroke-logs. Firstly, the research focuses on the analysis of the data drawn from the think-aloud protocol and keystroke logs, which help determine the writing strategies. Secondly, the quality of each text is determined. The focus of the final phase is to determine how task complexity impacts the choice of writing strategy, as well as how task complexity and writing strategy influence the quality of the final text. The overall aim of the research is to dissect the process of writing, making it more comprehensible both for students and teachers, as well as to develop guidelines for teaching writing in a foreign language.*

**Key words:** *writing process, writing strategies, writer profile, text quality*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

When teaching writing in a foreign language, especially in higher education – though secondary education is no exception – it is often presumed that students are familiar with the notion of a text as well as that they will be able to write a high-quality text without detailed instructions. Therefore, the writing skill is often reduced to homework assignments, a method that is becoming increasingly problematic due to quick development of generative AI.

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Submitted April 10, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Danijela Vranješ

University of Belgrade

E-mail: danijella95@gmail.com

However, as generative AI is still not quite so good that it could substitute humans in writing various types of texts, the writing skill remains one of the essential communicative skills when learning a foreign language. In order to write a good text and convey the intended message, the writers have to employ certain writing strategies, both when writing in their mother tongue and in a foreign language. Some of these strategies may be more or less beneficial for the quality of the final text. Thus, as many studies have shown, it is important to give clear instructions about the writing process in class and educate the students about the cognitive processes that occur during writing (Cumming 1989; Breuer 2019; Silva 1993; Raimes 1987; van den Bergh & Rijlaarsdam 2001).

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the improvement of teaching writing in L2 through highlighting the importance of teaching writing strategies. From the perspective of psychology of writing, we aim to investigate how task complexity impacts the choice of the writing strategy, as well as how these two factors influence the quality of the final text. Based on the results, we aim to develop implications for teaching writing in the second/foreign language.

## 2. WRITING AS A COGNITIVE PROCESS

“I write because I don’t know what I think until I read what I say.” This quote from the American writer Flannery O’Connor perfectly describes the relationship between thinking and writing – writing is namely a thought process, that is, it consists of various cognitive processes. Hayes and Flower (1980) were among the first researchers to investigate the writing process from the psychological perspective. Equating the writing process with a problem-solving activity, they adopted the think-aloud method from psychology for researching the cognitive processes during writing. Their research resulted in distinguishing between three main cognitive processes that occur during writing: planning, which consists of generating and organizing ideas, and setting goals; translating [ideas into text, author’s note]; and reviewing, which consists of evaluating and revising (Flower & Hayes 1981). The model was later reevaluated by Hayes (1996) and complemented by the working memory component.

Building on the theory of Flower and Hayes that writing is in its nature a problem-solving activity, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) came up with a developmental model of writing which distinguishes between two types of writing: writing as knowledge-telling and writing as a knowledge-transforming process. Based on these two strategies, they distinguish between novice and expert writers. The knowledge-telling strategy is typically employed by novice writers and consists in finding information about the topic in the long-term memory and formulating this information into ideas, whereas the knowledge-transforming strategy is reserved for expert writers, who are able to set clearer goals and adjust and organize the information from their long-term memory in order to fulfill their rhetorical and pragmatic goals. However, it is important to note that the two strategies should not be understood as mutually exclusive, but rather perceived as two extremes on a continuum (Alamargot & Chanquoy 2001, p. 6).

On the other hand, Galbraith (1999) challenges the assumption that writing can be reduced to merely problem-solving, arguing that such hypothesis disregards the creative nature of language and reduces it to a process of expressing the knowledge stored in the long-term memory. He highlights that knowledge is not composed of a number of ideas



that exist independently of each other, but rather that the knowledge used for problem-solving and for writing are two types of knowledge which are stored in different areas of our long-term memory. Therefore, he labels writing a knowledge-constituting process and develops a two-process model of writing. This means that the ideas that the writer conveys during writing are not merely the ideas that are stored in the long-term memory, but rather that those ideas can be developed further during the process of writing. As van den Bergh and Rijlaarsdam (2001) put it, the ideas appear in our brain as cognitive nodes and each change that we make in the text can trigger the activation of new nodes that we had not been aware of before. During this process, Galbraith (1999) notes, the writer cannot only use the knowledge that he or she has stored in the long-term memory, but they can also come to new insights.

Despite the differences in their understanding of the writing process, two things remain the basis of every theory of writing: the fact that it engages working memory (Kellogg 1994; Kellogg 1996) and that it consists of the three main cognitive processes: planning, translating, and revision (all of which can further be divided into subprocesses). During writing, the writer will, consciously or not, combine these processes in a certain way, that is, they will employ a certain writing strategy. Until now, many researchers have tried to understand how these strategies can impact the quality of the final text, in other words, which strategies might yield better results. For example, Kellogg (1988) investigated the impact of two planning strategies, rough drafting and outlining, on the quality of the final text. The results show that outlining has a positive effect on the quality of the text, since planning the content in advance in more detail offloads the working memory during writing and allows the writer to focus more on the translating and the revision process. A similar conclusion was reached by Kaufer, Hayes and Flower (1986), who investigated the impact of planning to sentence formulation. These two studies refer to writing in L1, but the results have also been corroborated in a study that focusses on L2 writing (Ellis & Yuan 2004). The authors of this study conclude that planning prior to writing has a positive effect on text quality because it gives the writer more confidence in their ability to express themselves accurately, which also leads to producing a more complex text.

In addition to planning, revision strategies also have a great impact on text quality. In the context of writing, revision “means making any changes at any point in the writing process” (Fitzgerald 1987: 484, cf. Alamargot and Chanquoy 2001). Many authors have tried to identify which revision strategies yield the best results (Eklundh 1994; Olive and Kellogg 2002; Piolat and Roussey 1991; Scardamalia, Bereiter and Steinbach 1984; Sommers 1980; Van Gelderen and Oostdam 2004). The results show that expert writers tend to perceive the text in a holistic way and revise more globally, with the focus on meaning, while novice writers are more focused on microstructural revisions (such as orthography or grammar mistakes). Moreover, expert writers have a wider array of revision operations at their disposal and their writing is often non-linear, while novice writers tend to present the information in the order in which it comes to their mind. When it comes to writing in L2, a greater number of microstructural revisions is to be expected; however, novice writers (or L2 learners whose L2 knowledge is at a lower level) are often unable to detect the mistakes and are more likely to resort to paraphrasing when faced with a language obstacle, rather than to diagnose the mistake and revise it (Flower et al. 1986).

Based on prior research it can be concluded that some writing strategies may be more beneficial and lead to higher quality texts. In the next chapter, we will present the most common writing strategies based on relevant literature.

### 3. WRITER PROFILES AND WRITING STRATEGIES

Based on the way that writers combine the three main processes during writing, they develop, consciously or not, a writing strategy, which leads to a higher or a lower quality text. One of the first intents to identify writing strategies was made by Williamson and Pence (1989), who divided the writers into three groups based on the way they employed the process of revision: linear revisers, who revised their texts after finishing the first draft; intermittent revisers, who occasionally stopped to make revisions while writing; and recursive revisers, who often stopped to revise the written text and made a number of drafts while writing.

In their analysis of the writing process, Flower and Hayes (1980) identify four writing patterns: *depth first*, when the writers planned each sentence in advance and revised before moving onto the next sentence; *get it down as you think of it, then review*; *perfect first draft*, when the writers were focused on the text as a whole and aimed to write the best text possible, hence they planned holistically; *breadth first*, when the writer plans the content beforehand, makes the first draft and revises afterwards.

One of the most detailed studies on this topic was conducted by Torrance, Thomas and Robinson (2000). They analyzed 715 essays of undergraduate students and identified four patterns of writing behavior: *minimal-drafting strategy*, when the writers developed only one or two drafts; *outline and develop*, when the writers planned the content both before and during writing; *detailed-planning*, when the writers used content-planning methods such as brainstorming, mind-mapping or rough drafting; and *think-then-do*, when the writers did not develop any kind of an outline prior to writing.

A very similar typology of writers was created by van Waes and Schellens (2003). They compared writing strategies in two contexts: when the writing was done by hand and when it was done on the computer. Their study yielded five writer profiles i. e. writing strategies: *initial planners*, who planned the content in advance and consequentially revised less during writing; *average writers*, whose values for every variable were around average; *fragmentary stage I writers*, who did not plan much before writing and revised mainly while creating the first draft; *stage II writers*, who postponed their revision process until the end of the first draft; *non-stop writers*, whose values for each variable were below average.

When it comes to writing on the computer, Kim (2020) introduced the *internet search* variable into her study. Similar to previous studies, she identified four types of writers: *plan-based*, *revision-based*, *search-based* and *correction-based writers*, the difference between revision-based and correction-based writers being that revision-based writers are more focused on macrostructural revisions, and correction-based writers' main focus are micro-revisions, i. e. revisions of orthography or grammar structures.

The review of relevant literature leads to the conclusion that the strategies mainly revolve around the two processes: planning and revision. Thus, the writers are either more focused on planning the content beforehand and therefore revise less during writing, or they plan less beforehand, which leads to more revisions during writing. Considering the previously described typologies, we developed four writer profiles:

1. Planners (*perfect first draft* (Hayes & Flower 1980), *linear revisers* (Williamson and Pence 1989); *initial planners* (Torrance, Thomas, and Robinson 2000); *plan-based writers* (Kim 2020));
2. Mixed-method writers (*intermittent revisers* (Williamson and Pence 1989); *outline and develop* (Torrance, Thomas, and Robinson 2000); *fragmentary stage I writers* (van Waes and Schellens 2003));

3. Revisers (*breadth first* (Hayes and Flower 1980); *minimal-drafting* (Torrance, Thomas, and Robinson 2000); *stage II writers* (van Waes and Schellens 2003); *revision-based writers* (Kim 2020));
4. Intuitive writers (*think-then-do* (Torrance, Thomas & Robinson 2000); *non-stop writers* (van Waes and Schellens 2003); *correction-based writers* (Kim 2020)). These writers are usually familiar with the task and the type of text they are supposed to write and are therefore able to produce a high-quality text with neither much detailed planning in advance nor many revisions during writing.

Based on data from concurrent think-aloud protocols as well as from keystroke logging data, the writer in this case study will be allocated to one of the four writer profiles for each of the four texts.

#### 4. TASK COMPLEXITY AND TEXT QUALITY

While the writing strategy is an important factor in producing a high-quality text, other factors such as task complexity can also impact the quality of the final text. The more complex the writing task is, the more load it will place on the working memory. Hence, it is often hypothesized that a more complex task will negatively impact the ability of the writer to produce a high-quality text. This hypothesis was named a *trade-off hypothesis* (Skehan 2009).

The opposite of this hypothesis is the so-called *cognition hypothesis*, a term coined by Robinson (2001) to describe the fact that writers sometimes produce a higher quality text in the condition where the task complexity is increased, since the writer will make a greater effort to fulfill the task properly and therefore lead to a better quality of the final text.

In this paper, we seek to investigate the impact of task complexity on the choice of writing strategy as well as the impact of these two factors on text quality. We hypothesize that the increase in task complexity will force the writer to switch to a strategy that allows them to scaffold the task and approach the writing from a different perspective.

#### 5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study we aim to investigate whether and how task complexity impacts the choice of writing strategy. Therefore, the first research question is as follows:

RQ1: Does task complexity influence the choice of writing strategy, and if so, how?

Moreover, given that research on the influence of task complexity on text quality is inconclusive – in other words, both aforesaid theories have been corroborated by further studies – we aim to determine whether there is a relation between task complexity and certain aspects of text quality, which poses the following question:

RQ2: Which aspects of text quality are influenced by task complexity and how?

It is assumed that both task complexity and writing strategies will have a certain impact on the quality of the final text. That brings us to the third research question:

RQ3: How do task complexity and writing strategy impact certain aspects of text quality?

We hypothesize that the writer will try to structure the text better as task complexity increases, which means that they will try to employ a greater amount of planning, preferably before the writing process begins (H1). We also hypothesize that the quality of text structure and cohesion will be directly proportional to the amount of planning (H2). However, due to writing in L2, we presume that increased task complexity will negatively

impact the linguistic features of the text, such as grammar, orthography or sentence structure (H3).

The present study is a case study conducted in the context of customer service. The study follows the development of the writing skill of one participant over the course of four months. The participant is a customer support agent who replies to clients' requests via e-mail. They speak German as a foreign language at the B2 level according to the CEFR. In the scope of the study, the participant completed four writing tasks in which they wrote replies to customer requests over the course of four months (one at the end of each month). During these four months, the participant took part in a writing course, where they received instructions about the writing strategies and their advantages and disadvantages, but they were free to construct their writing process as they wished during the sessions. The choice of writing strategy was therefore not influenced by the researcher.

The time for the task was limited to 30 minutes. The tasks progressively get more complex, in that the amount of information to be conveyed to the client is increased, which should force the participant to pay more attention to text structure and content. Moreover, the last task differs from the previous three tasks in that the participant does not have any ready-made solutions regarding the client's request, i. e. they have to employ a knowledge-transforming strategy rather than the knowledge-telling one (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987).

Each writing session was video-recorded and accompanied by a concurrent think-aloud protocol. The data therefore consists of transcribed think-aloud protocols, keystroke-logs (based on the video-recording of the writing process) and measurements of text quality. Transcripts from think-aloud protocols were coded (Appendix A), as well as keystroke logs. The writing session is divided into two stages: Stage I, until the end of the first draft, and Stage II, from the end of the first draft until the final text (Van Waes and Schellens 2003) For the coding of keystroke logs a tagset from Conjin et al. (2022) was used, with some adaptations made for the purpose of determining the writing strategy (Appendix B). The tagset was created mainly for assessing revision in L1, but all its categories apply to L2. However, as opposed to a surface change in wording/phrasing in L1, which mainly has to do with the writer wanting to convey a different meaning, in L2 there is a possibility that a word with wrong meaning was used and the revision consists in substituting it with the right word. Therefore, we added "wrong wording" to the category of Surface revisions. Moreover, some categories have been omitted, such as *number of backspaces*, *number of characters deleted/inserted*, *list of part-of-speech tags words inserted/deleted*, since they would not contribute to determining the writing strategy. Furthermore, the categories *temporal location (time from start process)* and *duration (duration and pause before revision)* have been omitted, it would be very hard to determine the correct timing of revisions without a keystroke-logging program such as Inputlog, and these data are not crucial for determining a writing strategy. Additionally, pauses were analyzed according to the type of pause (planning (global/local), formulation, revision, reading the task, reading the written text), and the length of the pause.

Data from think-aloud protocols and keystroke logs will be used for determining the writing strategy. Finally, for the assessment of text quality, a rubric from Beauvais, Olive, and Passerault (2011) was used and the texts were assessed by three independent external raters.

## 6. RESULTS

### 6.1. Writing strategy – Think-aloud protocols

In the first protocol, the coded data constitutes the following sequence:

Pl\_k T Pl\_ig Pl\_k Pl\_o Rl\_g Pl\_ig Rr Pl\_sp Rl\_st Rr Pl\_k Pl\_o Rl\_st Pl\_o Rl\_pp Rl\_st  
Rl\_st Rl\_sp Rg Pl\_o Rl\_sp T Pl\_ig Pl\_o Rl\_sp Rl\_g Rl\_st Rg Rr Rl\_st Rg Rl\_st Rl\_st Rl\_st  
Pl\_o Rg Rg

As the data shows, there is no general planning of the text before the writing process. During the first three fourths of the writing process, the writer only plans and revises locally. Local planning also occurs more frequently in the first part of the writing process, after which local revision outweighs the planning. During the writing process, the writer also scrolls back to read the task twice. Then, toward the end of the writing process, there is an increase in global revision. The writer reads the written text from beginning to the end (which can also be interpreted as global revision, i. e. *evaluation* (Flower, et al. 1986)), after which they start revising the whole text, starting from the second paragraph to the end of the text.

Since no global planning occurred at any point in the writing process, and the local planning only occurred at the sentence level, but not at the paragraph level, which triggered more frequent revisions and global revisions toward the end of the writing process, the writer can be described as a **reviser**.

In the second protocol, the coded data constitutes the following sequence:

Pl\_k Rl\_st Pl\_k Rl\_st Rl\_pp Pl\_ig T Pl\_ig Rl\_st Rl\_pp Rl\_sp Pl\_k Pl\_ig Rr Rl\_st Rg  
Rl\_st Pl\_ig Rl\_st Pl\_k Rg Rg Rg Rl\_st Rl\_g Rl\_st Rl\_sp Rr Rl\_st Rl\_pp Rl\_st

In comparison with the first protocol, it is obvious that the writer plans less frequently in the second protocol and the planning process is scattered throughout the writing session rather than densely stacked toward the beginning. This can be explained by a qualitative difference in the planning process: while no planning occurs at the text level in either protocol (i. e. outlining of the whole text), the planning in the first protocol occurs at the sentence level, while in the second protocol the writer plans paragraph by paragraph. Similar to the first protocol, global revision is moved toward the end of the writing process.

Although no global planning is registered in the second protocol either, there is a qualitative difference in the planning process, in that the writer now plans bigger chunks of text (at paragraph level), therefore planning is scattered out throughout the whole writing process. Due to this qualitative difference in the planning process, we are prone to categorize the writer as a mixed-method writer in the second protocol.

In the third protocol, the coded data constitutes the following sequence:

T Pg\_o Pl\_k Pl\_k Rl\_sp Rl\_sp Pl\_ig Rl\_sp Rl\_sp Rr Rg Pl\_o Rl\_sp Rl\_st Rl\_st Rl\_st  
Rr Rg Pl\_st Pl\_ig Rl\_sp Rl\_st Rl\_st

Compared to the first two protocols, it is noticeable that this is the first protocol in which global planning occurs at the beginning, immediately upon reading the task, in the form of outlining of the whole text. After that, local planning is almost evenly distributed throughout the whole writing process, occurring even toward the end of the writing process. This can be explained by the fact that the Stage II of the writing process takes up one third of the total writing time (see Table 1). At this point, the writer comes back to the first

paragraph and starts the revision process from there (marked by the second global revision in the codes).

Considering that the writer made a global outline of the text at the beginning, followed by periods of evenly distributed local planning mostly on paragraph level, as well as that Stage II of the writing process was marked mostly by global revision, we can conclude that in the third protocol the writer is using the **mixed-method** strategy.

In the fourth protocol, the coded data constitutes the following sequence:

Pl\_k RI\_st RI\_st RI\_st Rr RI\_st RI\_st RI\_st RI\_sp Pl\_o Pl\_ig RI\_st RI\_g RI\_pp RI\_st  
Pl\_o Pl\_k RI\_st Rg RI\_p Pl\_ig Pl\_ig RI\_st Pl\_o RI\_st RI\_st RI\_st Rg Rg

As can be inferred from the codes, in the fourth protocol there is no global planning before writing. However, in contrast to Protocol 2 and 3, local planning is not frequent at the beginning, but it is rather distributed in the second half of the writing process. Rather, the writer seems to be focused more on revision, and revises the text thoroughly in Stage II. Data from keystroke logs corroborates this: Stage II takes up exactly 40% of the writing process, and the writing process is the longest so far (see Table 1).

From this data we can conclude that the planning process is usually triggered by the revision process, and not vice versa. Therefore, due to lack of planning at the beginning, more revisions in the text were to be expected and the writer can be described as a reviser. However, a qualitative difference between the reviser in Protocol 1 and the one in Protocol 4 must be highlighted: while the writer transfers the revision process toward the end in both protocols, semantic revisions and revisions above word level are more frequent in Protocol 4, whereas in Protocol 1 there is a domination of surface changes.

## 6.2. Writing strategy – Keystroke logs

The keystroke-logging data for all four protocols is presented in the following table:

**Table 1** Keystroke-logging data for all four protocols

Revision	Type	Protocol 1	Protocol 2	Protocol 3	Protocol 4
Orientation	Surface changes	75.9%	69.2%	78.6%	20%
	Deep (semantic) change	24.1%	31.8%	21.4%	80%
	<i>Microstructure</i>	100.0%	87.5%	66.7%	75%
	<i>Macrostructure</i>	-	13.5%	33.3%	25%
Domain	Subword	37.9%	34.6%	28.6%	10%
	Word	41.4%	38.5%	28.6%	30%
	Phrase	6.9%	11.5%	35.8%	10%
	Clause	-	11.5%	-	30%
	Sentence	6.9%	-	-	20%
	Paragraph	-	-	7.1%	-
Pauses	Planning	43.9%	45.5%	70.6%	51.7%
	Revision	57.1%	54.5%	29.4%	48.3%
Duration	Process	22:27	16:41	13:38	22:52
	Stage 1	56.1%	64.9%	63.9%	60%
	Stage 2	43.9%	35.1%	36.1%	40%

Table 1 shows that most revisions in the first three protocols were surface changes, whereas the deep (semantic) changes take the overhand in the fourth protocol. In the first protocol, most revisions occurred below the clause level, while sentence revisions occurred only toward the end of the writing process. No whole-paragraph revisions were registered. Moreover, when it comes to semantic changes, no macrostructure revisions were noted (changes in overall aim or subtopic). In addition to that, the Stage II of the writing process (the stage in which the writer revises the written text) is the longest of all four protocols, with most revisions taking place in this writing stage. Although the revisions occur only at the microstructural level, global revision in form of whole-text evaluation is present in Stage II. This confirms the data from think-aloud protocols and corroborates the conclusion that the writer is to be described as a **reviser** in the first protocol.

Compared to the first protocol, surface changes are slightly less present in the second protocol, but there are also more revisions above the clause level, as well as more revisions at the phrase level. Additionally, while in the first protocol the writer was mainly focused on surface changes, within which only microstructural changes were noted, there is a slight shift toward more deep (semantic) revisions in the second protocol, as well as toward more macrostructural changes. The situation is similar in the third protocol, where a third of all semantic changes are macrostructural changes. Moreover, in Protocols 2 and 3, Stage II is shorter than in Protocols 1 and 4 and takes up about a third of the whole writing process. This might be a consequence of more planning at the beginning of the writing process, as noted in the think-aloud protocol data. This is especially the case in the third protocol, where most pauses were used for planning, which means that planning episodes were rather frequent during the writing process as well, not only at the beginning of the process.

Even though there are less planning episodes in Protocol 2 compared to Protocol 3, data from think-aloud protocol shows a qualitative difference in the planning process in Protocol 2, so the writer can be described as a mixed-method writer in both Protocol 2 and Protocol 3.

Protocol 4 differs greatly from the first three protocols, first and foremost in the distribution of the two revision types – surface and deep changes. Compared to the previous protocols, there are significantly more revisions above the phrase level, which suggests a greater focus on global revision. This comes as a consequence of the lack of planning both at the beginning of the writing process and during the writing process. In protocol 4, the writer is almost exclusively focused on revision. Moreover, most semantic revisions take place in Stage II of the writing process, so revision is moved toward the end of the writing process. A notable fact is also that, while most revisions are contextual (90%; “revisions made when the writer moves away from the leading edge and makes a revision in a previously written and completed sentence”, cf. Conjin et al. 2022), a third of the contextual revisions are immediate revisions, that is, revisions made at the point of cursor location (cf. Conjin et al. 2022), which means that the writer went back to a certain point in text, started revising, and the revision triggered the translating process at that location. This means that the writer does not resort to the “think then do” strategy, but rather revises the text globally multiple times during the writing process. Based on the keystroke-logging data, the writer belongs to **revisers** in the fourth protocol, which is in line with the conclusion drawn from think-aloud protocol data.

### 6.3 Text quality

Text quality was assessed by three independent external raters who are professional lecturers and teachers of German as a foreign language. Four factors of text quality were assessed: language (grammar, spelling), sentence structure and cohesion, text structure, and task fulfillment. A mean and standard deviation were calculated 1) for each of the factors separately, to account for possible impact of task complexity and writer strategy on individual factors, and 2) for all factors collectively. The values of the factors are as follows:

**Table 2** Text quality values

Protocol	Overall		Grammar and spelling		Sentence structure and cohesion		Text structure		Task fulfillment	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	4.08	0.52	2.67	1.15	4.33	0.58	4.67	0.58	4.67	0.58
2	4.92	0.14	5.00	0.00	4.67	0.58	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
3	4.58	0.29	3.33	1.15	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
4	<b>3.83</b>	0.95	<b>2.67</b>	1.15	<b>3.67</b>	1.53	<b>4.33</b>	1.15	<b>4.67</b>	0.58

As can be seen from Table 1, Protocol 2 has the highest overall value, followed by Protocol 3. Even though the tasks complexity increases, text quality values from Protocol 1 to Protocol 3 also increase, with an exception of *Grammar and spelling* in Protocol 3, which drastically decreases in comparison to Protocol 2. Moreover, Protocol 4 has the lowest values for all criteria, but the most drastic decrease can be seen in *Grammar and spelling*.

The major difference between protocols 1-3 and Protocol 4, as mentioned before, lies in the fact that for Protocol 4, the writers had to employ the knowledge-transforming strategy, because they could not lean on prior process knowledge to solve the customer's problem. Evidently, this transition from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming took a toll on all aspects of text quality, especially on the linguistic abilities as well as the ability to connect sentences and structure the text in a plausible way.

As for the impact of task complexity on text quality, it can be concluded that 1) increased task complexity negatively impacts linguistic abilities, but not necessarily other factors such as text structure or task fulfillment, and 2) if the challenge consists in changing the approach to writing from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming, it has a negative impact on all aspects of text quality, irrespective of the writing strategy.

### 6.4 Correlation between task complexity, writing strategy and text quality

As can be seen from Table 2, the lowest quality texts are the ones in Protocol 1 and Protocol 2. This can be due to two factors:

- 1) In both protocols, the Reviser strategy was used. This means that there was no global planning prior to writing the text and the planning was mainly done at the local level, sentence by sentence. This could have led to a cognitive overload during writing, preventing the writer from being able to focus their attention on the linguistic form, sentence and text structure, and covering all points from the task.



- 2) Both tasks can be described as highly complex: the complexity of the first task lies in the fact that the writer had not had the opportunity to write such a text prior to the study, so they are yet to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such a task. The complexity of the fourth task consists in the necessary change of strategy, from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming.

**Table 2** Correlation between task complexity, writing strategy and text quality

Task complexity	Writing strategy	Grammar and spelling	Sentence structure and cohesion	Text structure	Task fulfillment
		<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>
1	Reviser	2.67	4.33	4.67	4.67
2	Mixed-method	5.00	4.67	5.00	5.00
3	Mixed-method	3.33	5.00	5.00	5.00
4	Reviser	2.67	3.67	4.33	4.67

That being said, it is clear from the results that the two tasks (Protocol 1 and 4) were the most complex for the writer, and that with increased task complexity the writer resorts to the Reviser strategy.

When it comes to Protocols 2 and 3, it can be concluded the writer has familiarized themselves with the form of the text, not least because they had had more writing practice during the writing course. Although the task complexity gradually increased, it seems that the complexity did not impact the ability of the writer to organize a greater amount of information into a coherent text, which is corroborated by the fact that the values for the criteria *Sentence structure and cohesion*, *Text structure*, as well as *Task fulfillment* gradually increased from Protocol 1 to Protocol 3, which may be attributed to the choice of writing strategy.

As for linguistic knowledge, reflected in the criterion *Grammar and spelling*, Table 2 shows that the lowest values are in Protocol 1 and 4. The highest value for this criterion is in Protocol 2, when the writer switched to the mixed-method strategy, but the values gradually decreased from Protocol 2 to Protocol 4. It can therefore be concluded that the linguistic knowledge suffers under the pressure of task complexity, which is in line with the trade-off hypothesis (Skehan 2009). However, more research is needed to fully confirm these results.

## 7. DISCUSSION

Based on a case study we have demonstrated how task complexity can impact the choice of writing strategy, as well as how these two factors can influence text quality. The results show that with increased task complexity, the writer resorts to the Reviser strategy, which refutes Hypothesis 1. However, it seems that this strategy, with no prior global planning, negatively impacts the coherence and cohesion of the text, and that the mixed-method strategy helps improve the overall sentence and text structure. In other words, this means that more planning leads to a better organization of the text, which confirms Hypothesis 2. When it comes to Hypothesis 3, the results show a decrease in values with higher task complexity, with an exception of Protocol 2, where better values for *Grammar*

and spelling criterion could be attributed to the mixed-method strategy. However, more research is needed in this area and we deem the results for Hypothesis 3 inconclusive.

Although task complexity was varied by incorporating more information into the task, i. e. the task required the writer to convey more information to the customer, which posed the biggest challenge for text coherence and cohesion, it seems that for this writer the complexity of the task did not consist in the amount of information, but rather in the fact that the task was new. Hence, Protocol 1 has the lowest values because this is the first time that the writer is confronted with autonomous composition of the whole e-mail, and Protocol 4 was a challenge because the writer did not have prior process knowledge to rely on, so the knowledge-telling strategy could not be used. These results show that task complexity can be achieved in many ways and shed light on just how personal and individual the writing process can be. However, since a greater amount of planning in Protocol 2 and 3 yielded better results for text coherence and cohesion, it would be well-advised to incorporate more planning into tasks of higher complexity as well. In order to research whether switching to mixed-method or Planner strategy would improve the results in a task of higher complexity, more research is needed.

The results imply that there should be more explicit instruction regarding the given text type, to account for the greater complexity caused by the lack of knowledge about the text type. Moreover, the results suggest that it is the combination of global planning and global revision (i. e. the mixed-method strategy) that yields the best results. Therefore, it could be beneficial to teach students explicitly how to plan efficiently prior to starting the writing process, as well as how to revise efficiently on the text level (global revision), rather than to let them intuitively choose the writing strategy.

The aim of this study was to shed light onto the individual writing process and gain insight into if and how the person adjusts their writing process according to task complexity. Given that this study consists only of one case, i. e. one writer, it is hardly generalizable, which is its biggest limitation. However, this study is only a part of a PhD project which encompasses seven case studies altogether, and we hope to be able to draw more reliable and generalizable conclusions from a greater set of data.

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## **UTICAJ STRATEGIJA PISANJA NA KVALITET TEKSTA: STUDIJA SLUČAJA**

*Kada je reč o učenju stranih jezika, pisanje je često zanemarena veština. Učenici nisu opremljeni neophodnim strategijama pisanja koje bi olakšale proces pisanja i poboljšale ukupan kvalitet sastavljenog teksta. Stoga je cilj ovog istraživanja da učini proces pisanja razumljivijim fokusirajući se na različite strategije pisanja i njihov uticaj na kvalitet teksta. Istraživanje je fokusirano na pisanje na nemačkom kao stranom jeziku. Korpus obuhvata četiri teksta koje je učesnik istraživanja napisao tokom četiri meseca kursa pisanja na sesijama pisanja, a podaci uključuju i protokol razmišljanja naglas i zapisnik praćenja pokreta na tastaturi. Zadaci progresivno postaju kompleksniji. Prva faza istraživanja predstavlja analizu podataka dobijenih iz protokola razmišljanja naglas i podataka iz zapisnika pokreta na tastaturi, uz pomoć kojih će biti određena strategija pisanja. U drugoj fazi istraživanja određuje se kvalitet svakog teksta. Cilj finalne faze istraživanja je da se utvrdi kako kompleksnost zadatka utiče na izbor strategije pisanja, kao i kako kompleksnost zadatka i strategija pisanja utiču na kvalitet konačnog teksta. Konačni cilj istraživanja je da se proces pisanja razgradi na činioce i na taj način učini razumljivijim kako za studente tako i za nastavnike, kao i da se razviju smernice za podučavanje pisanja na stranom jeziku.*

*Ključne reči: proces pisanja, strategije pisanja, profilisanje autora, kvalitet teksta*

## APPENDIX A

Code	Explanation	Abbreviation
Task reading	reading the task determining the overall structure and organization of the essay	T Pg
Planning: global	organizing thoughts into a structured plan	Pg_o
▪ Outlining	brainstorming potential ideas for the writing task	Pg_ig
▪ Idea generation	identifying keywords, superficial planning	Pg_k
▪ Keywords	selecting a specific topic or organizing information within a paragraph or a sentence	Pl
Planning: local	organizing thoughts into a structured plan	Pl_o
▪ Outlining	brainstorming potential ideas for the writing task	Pl_ig
▪ Idea generation	identifying keywords, superficial planning	Pl_k
▪ Keywords	reorganizing the structure of the essay or adjusting the overall focus; checking if all subtasks have been addressed	Rg
Revision: global		Rr
▪ Rereading	correcting errors or making small changes within a paragraph	Rl
Revision: local		
Surface change		
▪ Spelling		Rl_sp
▪ Grammar		Rl_g
▪ Punctuation		Rl_p
▪ Style	substituting a word or a phrase to fit it better into the context	Rl_st
▪ Paraphrasing	substituting a word or a phrase to make up for the lack of knowledge	Rl_pp
▪ Typography	typo	Rl_t
▪ Cosmetics	change of font	Rl_c
▪ Wrong wording	using a wrong word due to lack of knowledge or negative transfer from L1 Semantic (deep) change	Rl_ww
Microstructure	supporting info, emphasis, understate, coherence, cohesiveness	Rl_mic

## APPENDIX B

Property		Feature	Value
A. Orientation	<b>1</b>	<b>Surface change</b>	Numeric
	1.1	Typography	Numeric
	1.2	Capitalization	Numeric
	1.3	Punctuation	Numeric
	1.4	Spelling	Numeric
	1.5	Grammar	Numeric
	1.6	Cosmetics/presentation	Numeric
	1.7	No change	Numeric
	1.8	Wording/Phrasing	Numeric
	1.9	Wrong wording	Numeric
	<b>2</b>	<b>Semantic (deep)</b>	
	2.1	Microstructure changes (supporting info, emphasis, understate, coherence, cohesiveness)	Numeric
	2.2	Macrostructure changes (overall aim, subtopic)	Numeric
B. Evaluation	1	Correct start	Numeric
	2	Correct revision	Numeric
C. Action	1.1	Insertion	Numeric
	1.2	Deletion	Numeric
	1.3	Substitution	Numeric
	1.4	Reordering	Numeric
D. Domain	<b>1</b>	<b>Linguistic domain</b>	
	1.1	Subword	Numeric
	1.2	Word	Numeric
	1.3	Phrase	Numeric
	1.4	Clause	Numeric
	1.5	Sentence	Numeric
	1.6	Paragraph	Numeric
	<b>2</b>	<b>Number of backspaces</b>	
	2.1	Number of words deleted	Binary
	2.2	Number of words inserted	Binary
2.3	Number of sentences deleted	Binary	
2.4	Number of sentences inserted	Binary	
E. Spatial location	1	Word finished	Numeric
	2	Intended word	Numeric
	3.1	Word initial	Numeric
	3.2	Clause initial	Numeric
	3.3	Sentence initial	Numeric
	4	Characters from leading edge	Binary
	5	Words from leading edge	Binary
6	Precontextual (1 – contextual)	Numeric	
	7	Immediate (1 – distant)	Numeric

## SYNONYMY IN TEXTBOOKS FOR SERBIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

UDC 371.671:811.163.41'243

811.163.41'373.421

**Jelena Marković Nikolajeva**

The Institute for Foreign Languages, Belgrade, Serbia

ORCID iD: Jelena Marković Nikolajeva  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-5947-8027>

**Abstract.** *This paper is about synonymy in Serbian as a foreign language. In Serbian vocabulary, which is represented in the textbooks for Serbian as a foreign language, there are many synonymous lexemes, and occasionally we come across lexical exercises with synonyms. We want to research whether all the synonyms that appear in textbooks for a certain level of learning are justified, and how much attention is paid to their learning. To that end, we will present a textbook lexicon of Učimo srpski 2 (2023), made for A2 and B1 levels of learning. The thematic organization of this textbook and the richness of the vocabulary and exercises provide an opportunity to explore an approach to synonymy in teaching Serbian as a foreign language. We will also look at the textbook Učimo srpski 1 (2020), to give an insight into the synonymous lexemes at the very beginning of the course of Serbian as a foreign language.*

**Key words:** *lexis, synonymy, textbooks, Serbian as a foreign language*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we will present an approach to the synonymy of one accredited institution for teaching Serbian as a foreign language by analyzing current textbooks that are used in many schools and centers for studying Serbian as a foreign language. First, we present which lexemes we consider to be synonyms to begin with. We will cross-reference the lexical structure through the thematic fields, as well as the lists of synonym pairs, or chains. We will comment on the selection and organization of synonyms, as well as on the lexical exercises that follow them, and whether their relation is proportional. Finally, we will give examples of lexical exercises that we think can contribute to learning about synonymous relations.

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Submitted April 10, 2024; Accepted May 11, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Jelena Marković Nikolajeva

The Institute for Foreign Languages, Belgrade

E-mail: [jelenazmarkov@gmail.com](mailto:jelenazmarkov@gmail.com)

## 2. SYNONYMY IN TEACHING SERBIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

It has been already pointed out in the glottodidactic literature that the mastering the lexicon also implies knowledge of paradigmatic lexical relations, one of which is synonymy (Krajišnik 2016). In teaching Serbian as a foreign language, synonyms are initially avoided in order not to overload the memory of students who have yet to master the vocabulary needed for the simplest communication. Nevertheless, in the textbooks for Serbian as a foreign language, even those intended for absolute beginners, you can find synonyms. It is natural to ask ourselves if we should introduce these lexemes as synonymous. If the answer is 'yes', that triggers many other questions, some of which we would like to try to answer in this paper: how to point out the synonymy in lexemes in the most approachable way, to deal with the different types of synonymous relations and polysemy within synonymy. So the problem of synonymy in the teaching of Serbian as a foreign language appears at the beginning, although synonyms themselves are generally avoided at this level of learning.

We believe that the complexity of this paradigmatic relationship requires a thoughtful approach, both in the choice of synonyms and in their presentation and adoption. It has been stated that students do not show much interest in synonymy (Krajišnik 2016, 25), but also that there is justification to introduce synonyms at the beginners level of learning because of their frequency (Dražić 2008, 48). Also, Dražić presented how collocations can be used to explain the synonymous relations between individual lexemes (2014). We believe that by using an appropriate methodological approach, we can spark an interest in our students for the synonymous relations, especially since the similarity of meaning can lead to using the lexeme in an inadequate context. We think that the knowledge of synonymy contributes to the overall mastery of vocabulary, and therefore to better communication. Synonymy between two lexemes can be very complex, especially when it comes to polysemic lexemes, which is why the teacher, even if he is a native speaker, often needs to consult a dictionary to give precise explanations. Therefore, it is best to be familiar in advance with synonym pairs and chains that appear in the teaching materials.

The subject of our interest is not so much the synonyms with which the speaker displays the richness of his vocabulary or the extraordinary sense of nuances of meaning, but those synonyms that can be used inadequately. By that, we mean that a speaker, by misusing a synonymous word, could make a sentence that no native speaker of the Serbian language would ever make. For example, a student needs to distinguish the adjective *velik* from the adjective *krupan*, so that he does not make a mistake like this: *Njena kuća je krupnija od moje*<sup>1</sup>. The adjective *velik* has many other synonyms, such as: *golem*, *kabast*, *zamašan*, *grandiozan*, *bezmeran*, *džinovski*, *basnoslovan*, etc. (Lalević 1974). We consider their knowledge and use to be a characteristic of the C level by CEFR<sup>2</sup> at which the student is capable of independently noticing the nuances of meaning.

## 3. THEORETICAL APPROACH TO SYNONYMY

Synonymy is a paradigmatic relation that has received a lot of attention in linguistics, although there are great differences in how it is approached. Although much has been written about synonymy, it is still a field that needs further research. Some authors believe that

<sup>1</sup>This is a sentence of one Romanian student who speaks Serbian at the B1 level.

<sup>2</sup>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.



synonymy does not exist (Bloomfield), that there is only one type of synonyms (Tafrá), that there is a binary division of synonyms, and that a scale of synonymy exists (Dragičević 2010, 244–245). Zgusta states that the identity of meaning, which two lexemes must have to be considered synonyms, can be understood in two ways: as absolute identity and great similarity (1991, 88), which in Serbo-Croatian literature corresponds to the division into lexemes of the same meaning – ‘istoznačnice’ and lexemes of similar meaning – ‘bliskoznačnice’. Cruse (2001, 157–160) introduced a scale of synonymy, thus distinguishing between absolute synonymy, propositional (cognitive) synonymy and approximate synonymy. If we want to consider synonymous lexemes when acquiring the lexicon of a foreign language, we must take into account all the possible complexity of synonymous relations. For example, the synonymy that occurs in the synonym pairs *interesantan* and *zanimljiv* and *siromašan* and *skroman* cannot be explained in the same way. That is why we prefer approaches such as those of Zgusta and Cruse, according to which there are different types of synonymous relations and not just one type in which two lexemes are interchangeable in all contexts.

In addition to considering the fact that there is a scale of synonymy, we also would like to include Zgusta’s thoughts on components of lexical meaning (1991). According to Zgusta, those components are designation, connotation, and range of application (1991, 32). The designation is the relation between a lexeme and a corresponding segment of the extra-linguistic world (eg, lexeme *sto* and a class of objects denoted by it or a lexeme *velik* and existing quality of some objects, beings, or phenomena). This segment of the non-linguistic world is called denotatum. The second segment of lexical meaning — connotation consists of all components that add some contrastive value to the basic, usually designative function (e.g. *pas* and *džukela*). The range of application is particularly noticeable in the case when two lexemes have almost identical designata and there are no noticeable differences in connotation, but it is obvious that we do not use them in the same way (e.g. the adjectives *crven* and *rujan*).

#### 4. TEXTBOXS FOR SERBIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

##### 4.1. *Učimo srpski 1* (2020)

We found 30 synonym pairs and two synonym chains in the textbook *Učimo srpski 1* (2020), which is used in the beginner’s course of Serbian as a foreign language and covers A1 and A2 levels of learning, according to the authors.

**Table 1** Synonym pairs in *Učimo srpski 1*

<i>sada</i>	<i>trenutno</i>	<i>upaliti</i>	<i>uključiti</i>	<i>uvek</i>	<i>stalno</i>
<i>studirati</i>	<i>učiti</i>	<i>zakazati</i>	<i>rezervisati</i>	<i>krasti</i>	<i>opljačkati</i>
<i>zato što</i>	<i>jer</i>	<i>topao</i>	<i>vreo</i>	<i>dobro</i>	<i>kvalitetno</i>
<i>čujen</i>	<i>poznat</i>	<i>velik</i>	<i>krupan</i>	<i>pametnan</i>	<i>mudar</i>
<i>zanimanje</i>	<i>posao</i>	<i>mali</i>	<i>sitan</i>	<i>bojati se</i>	<i>plašiti se</i>
<i>zanimljiv</i>	<i>interesantan</i>	<i>ukras</i>	<i>dekoracija</i>		
<i>naporan</i>	<i>težak</i>	<i>bogat</i>	<i>raskošnan</i>		
<i>novac</i>	<i>pare</i>	<i>bogatstvo</i>	<i>raskoš</i>		
<i>kuća</i>	<i>dom</i>	<i>pokušati</i>	<i>probati</i>		
<i>praktičan</i>	<i>koristan</i>	<i>velik</i>	<i>ogroman</i>		
<i>prodavnica</i>	<i>radnja</i>	<i>provaliti</i>	<i>obiti</i>		

**Table 2** Synonym chains in Učimo srpski 1

<i>puno veoma jako</i>
<i>čuvati paziti štiti</i>

Since it is a textbook that should introduce students to the basic vocabulary, we consider that there are lexemes, and therefore synonym pairs, which are redundant, i.e. their learning should be left for higher levels. At this level, what is most important is the selection of the necessary vocabulary, which will enable students to communicate more successfully using a foreign language in everyday situations. Each synonym pair requires a certain amount of attention for the student to master this relation. This is why, at the very beginning, there is room only for synonym pairs or chains of lexemes that are frequent and closely related to the thematical fields of the basic vocabulary, such as: *studirati – učiti, zanimanje – posao, upaliti – uključiti, zakazati – rezervirati, velik – krupan, mali – sitan, uvek – stalno, dobro – kvalitetno, zato što – jer, koristan – praktičan, puno – veoma – jako i čuvati – paziti – štiti*. There are also synonym pairs that are very easy to adopt because one member of a synonym pair or a chain comes from the English language, so it is most likely that the meaning of this lexeme will be transparent. So there is no reason to delay their adoption, e.g. *zanimljiv – interesantan*.

#### 4.2. Učimo srpski 2 (2023)

The textbook *Učimo srpski 2* contains 9 lessons: “Prijateljstvo”, “Kuvanje”, “Običaji kod Srba”, “Dome, slatki dome”, “Put putujem”, “Moj prvi posao”, “Tajni svetovi”, “Krv nije voda” and “Prirodne lepote”. Each lesson represents one thematic field, which is sometimes obvious from the title itself. It can be said that the authors of the textbook selected semantically various and productive thematic fields. We will present thematic fields and situational sequences, as well as the synonym pairs that appear in the lessons in the tables, for greater transparency. In presenting the thematic fields, 17 thematic fields of V. Krajišnik will serve as a model (2016, 42-68).

##### 4.2.1. Lesson “Prijateljstvo” (thematic field: prijateljstvo)

**Table 1.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Prijateljstvo”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>prijatelj</i>	<i>vrline, mane, ponašanje, osećanja...</i>
<i>upoznavanje prijatelja</i>	<i>društvene mreže, putovanja, posao, izlasci, interesovanja, detinjstvo...</i>
<i>druženje</i>	<i>slobodno vreme, zabava, ćaskanje...</i>

**Table 1.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Prijateljstvo”

<i>prijatelj</i>	<i>drug(ar)<sup>3</sup></i>
<i>prednost</i>	<i>vrlina</i>
<i>nesebičan</i>	<i>velikodušan</i>
<i>razgovarati</i>	<i>komunicirati</i>

<sup>3</sup> According to RSJ, there is no difference in meaning between the lexemes *drug* and *drugar*, so these lexemes would then represent morphological doublets (see Dragičević 2010, 246).

**Table 1.3** Synonym chain in the lesson “Prijateljstvo”*poznat čuven slavan popularan poštovan*

All synonym pairs are connected with the thematic dominant *prijatelj* (*prijatelj* and *drugar*), that is with situational term *vrlina* (*prednost* and *vrlina*, *nesebičan* and *velikodušan*) and *ćaskanje* (*razgovarati* and *komunicirati*).

*Prijatelj* i *drug* are approximate synonyms. There's a difference in their designata. In a different dictionary, Lalević emphasizes the component of intimacy; it is said that *prijatelj* is a close friend (1974, 2786). The RSJ does not make this distinction: The other one is said to be a “close, intimate, benevolent and loyal person” (309), and after the descriptive definition of the designatum, *drug* appears as a synonym. The native speakers feel the difference between these lexemes exactly as explained by Lalević. We'll give some thoughts from the native speakers on this subject:

- 1) *Prijatelj je neko sa kim se družiš više godina i poznajete se bolje. Drug ili drugar je neko sa kim ti je lepo da se družiš, provodiš malo više vremena sa njim i ako potraje, postaće ti prijatelj*<sup>4</sup> ([www.polyglotclub.com](http://www.polyglotclub.com), 12.8.2023).
- 2) *Elem, rekao bih da je prijatelj u gradaciji intimnosti ipak najbliži i najvažniji. PORODIČNI je samo prijatelj. Kao i PAS. Drug je prisutan, ali više opšti*<sup>5</sup> ([www.polyglotclub.com](http://www.polyglotclub.com), 12.8.2023).

In order to adopt this synonym pair, it is necessary to highlight the component of intimacy possessed by a lexeme *prijatelj* versus the lexeme *drug*. This can be done by collocations *pravi prijatelj*, *najbolji prijatelj*, *dugogodišnji prijatelj*, *porodični prijatelj* (see the example number 2). It should also be noted that this difference is present in adult speakers. For speakers of school age, it is quite common to say *pravi drug* and *najbolji drug*, and it is not expected to use the lexeme *prijatelj* for a person belonging to their circle.

*Prednost* i *vrlina* are also approximate synonyms. Their designata differ because, although both lexemes have positive properties, the lexeme *prednost* has a more prominent component of supremacy, precedence (RSJ, 992). There is also a difference in the range of application: *vrlina* is typically, but not always, used for human characteristics (Same, 163). So we can explain that it's common to talk about the advantages (*prednostima*) and disadvantages of an object or phenomenon, when we compare them with other objects and phenomena, while we talk about the virtues (*vrlinama*) and disadvantages of a person.

The synonym pair *nesebičan* and *velikodušan* would represent cognitive synonyms because their designation is the same. We're going to illustrate this with the test of replacing lexemes in pairs of sentences, which will only be different because there's one member of a synonym pair, and the other one has another member.

- I *Petar je dao sav svoj novac beskućnicama, jer je on nesebičan čovek*  
*Petar je dao sav svoj novac beskućnicama, jer je on velikodušan čovek.*
- II *Ona je tako nesebična da će ti uvek pomoći.*  
*Ona je tako velikodušna da će ti uvek pomoći.*
- III *Bio je velikodušan čovek, uvek spreman da deli sa drugim.*  
*Bio je nesebičan čovek, uvek spreman da deli sa drugim.*

<sup>4</sup> *Prijatelj* is someone you hang out with for many years and you know each other better. *Drug* is someone you enjoy hanging out with, spend a little more time with him and if it lasts, he will become your *prijatelj* (translated by the author).

<sup>5</sup> Anyway, I would say that *prijatelj* is the closest and most important in the gradation of intimacy. PORODIČNI is just *prijatelj*. As is the PAS. *Drug* is present, but more general (translated by the author).

As can be concluded from the above examples, the same truth conditions apply to the first and second sentences within each pair of examples.

*Komunicirati* and *razgovarati* are only approximate synonyms. The verb *komunicirati* has a more general meaning, while *razgovarati* refers to a type of communication, which uses speech, words (RSJ). Nevertheless, the two lexemes are interchangeable in certain contexts and that is why Čosić lists them as synonyms in his dictionary (see P. Čosić 2008). Consider the following examples:

*Radnik obezbeđenja mora ljubazno da razgovara sa strankom.*

*Radnik obezbeđenja mora ljubazno da komunicira sa strankom.*

*Ne želim više sa tobom da razgovaram.*

*Ne želim više sa tobom da komuniciram.*

But:

*Kada možemo da razgovaramo o tome?*

*\*Kada možemo da komuniciramo o tome?*

*Računari komuniciraju razmenom podataka.*

*\*Računari razgovaraju razmenom podataka.*

In the first two pairs of sentences, these synonyms are interchangeable, because the meaning of the lexeme *razgovarati* approaches the more general meaning of the lexeme *komunicirati*. In the other two pairs of sentences, the speech component implied by the lexeme *razgovarati* is more prominent, and it cannot be replaced by the lexeme *komunicirati*.

#### 4.2.2. Lesson “Kuvanje” (thematic field: hrana i piće)

**Table 2.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Kuvanje”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>hrana</i>	<i>voće, povrće, meso, mlečni proizvodi, riba, hleb i peciva, testenina, slatkiši, začini, ukusi</i>
<i>piće</i>	<i>voda, sok, alkoholna pića, kafa</i>
<i>pripremanje hrane</i>	<i>kuvati, pripremati, spremati, praviti, pržiti, seći, peći, mazati, dodavati, stavljati, mešati, ocediti, meriti, izlupati<sup>6</sup></i>
<i>bonton za stolom</i>	<i>postavljanje stola, serviranje hrane, služenje hrane, jedenje hrane</i>
<i>vrste jela i obroka</i>	<i>doručak, ručak, večera, salata, predjelo, supa, glavno jelo, prilog, desert</i>
<i>predmeti za spremanje, serviranje i čuvanje hrane</i>	<i>pribor za jelo, kuhinjsko posuđe, kuhinjski aparati, bela tehnika</i>
<i>ishrana van kuće</i>	<i>ugostiteljski objekti za ishranu i piće, naručiti, rezervisati, platiti</i>

<sup>6</sup> The mentioned verbs also have their counterparts when it comes to verbal aspect in this lesson (e.g. *kuvati* - *skuvati*). We decided not to list them, because there are no differences in lexical meaning even though they are considered to be separate lexemes.

**Table 2.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Kuvanje”

<i>jelo</i>	<i>obrok</i>
<i>jesti</i>	<i>gristi</i>
<i>služiti</i>	<i>servirati</i>
<i>parče</i>	<i>komad</i>
<i>odjednom neočekivano</i>	
<i>proslava</i>	<i>slavlje</i>

**Table 2.3** Synonym chains in the lesson “Prijeteljstvo”

<i>kuvati</i>	<i>spremati</i>	<i>pripremati</i>
<i>razni</i>	<i>različit</i>	<i>drugačiji</i>

*Jelo* and *obrok* are thematic dominants; *jesti* and *gristi* are connected with the situational term *jedenje hrane*, while the synonym pair *parče* and *komad* are about the situational term *jelo*, but there is no direct associative link between these lexemes. Synonym chain *kuvati*, *spremati* and *pripremati* are part of the situational sequence of the thematic dominant *pripremanje hrane*.

*Jelo* and *obrok* are in the dictionary of synonyms by P. Čosić (2008) and RSJ lists them as synonyms, but their designata are different. *Jelo* is anything made from food (e.g. *paprikaš*, *pomfrit* etc.), while *obrok* is all the food and drink we eat and drink at one time (e.g. *doručak*, *ručak*, *večera*). *Jelo* can mean a meal, as in the example of *spavati posle jela* (RSJ), which is a secondary meaning developed by metonymy, and only then is a synonymous relation established with the lexeme *obrok*. This information should perhaps be left for higher levels of learning, but it is desirable to delineate the meanings of these lexemes.

The verb *jesti* has many cognitive synonyms that differ in associative meaning or connotation. Their adoption is left for higher levels. In the lesson, there is only an approximate synonym *gristi*, with which there is a partial overlap of meaning. *Gristi* involves tearing food with the teeth while *jesti* has a wider range of application that includes biting, in addition to putting in the mouth, chewing and swallowing (Lalević 1974; RSJ). The explanation can be supported by (im)possible collocations: *jesti jabuku*, *puding*, *supu* and *gristi jabuku*, *\*puding*, *\*supu*. In addition to the lexemes *jesti* and *gristi*, we think that an approximate synonym *hraniti se* could be added, because it is a frequent lexeme and is needed to talk about nutrition (*Čime se hraniš?*; *Da li se hraniš zdravo?*; *Kako se hrane Srbi?*).

The verb *služiti* has a more developed polysemantic structure than the verb *servirati*. Only in one of the secondary meanings does it establish a synonymous relation with *servirati*, and that is the meaning: “to bring and give (guests) food and drink”<sup>7</sup> (RSJ). As a reflexive verb, it has the opposite meaning: “to take (at the table) food and drink” (Same). *Služiti* and *servirati* are only approximate synonyms, because their designata are slightly different: *servirati* refers to bringing food to the table and preparing it, while *služiti* also includes giving food and drinks to guests. Thus, the dish can be served (*servirano*) without the guests being served with it (*posluženi*). Differences in designata also affect differences in collocations: *servirati sto*, *ručak*, *tortu*, *\*goste*; *služiti \*sto*, *ručak*, *tortu*, *goste*. A note about the verb rection in collocations *služiti se kolačima*, *kafom* and similar is also useful for students.

<sup>7</sup> “доносити и давати (гостима) јело и пиће” (RSJ, translated by the author)

Synonyms *parče* and *komad* should be brought in connection with another synonym of a more general meaning - *deo*. All three lexemes oppose the notion of a whole, but there are differences in meaning and usage. *Deo* denotes an element of a whole (RSJ), but does not indicate whether it is separated from the whole. *Parče* is a separate part of the whole, whether it is cut off, broken off, rejected, torn off, etc. *Komad* means the same thing as *parče*, with the exception that it has a few more meanings. That's why we can say *parče* and *komad pite, zemlje, hleba* but only *dva komada jajeta, komad odeće, nameštaja, zatim pozorišni and muzički komad* (RSJ).

When it comes to the synonym chain *kuvati, pripremati* and *spremati*, all three verbs can refer to making a meal, but *kuvati doručak* and *kuvati večeru* are not as common collocations as *kuvati ručak*. We made a small research about this by using the Corpus of the Contemporary Serbian Language (SrpKor2013). Among 1782 concordances with the lexeme *kuvati* the collocation *kuvati ručak* appears 36 times, *kuvati večeru* only four times, and *kuvati doručak* just two times.

#### 4.2.3. “Običaji kod Srba” (thematic field: običaji)

**Table 3.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Običaji kod Srba”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>venčanje</i>	<i>upoznavanje, zaljubljanje, veridba, svadba, kumstvo</i>
<i>rođenje deteta</i>	<i>slavlje, babine, poklon</i>

**Table 3.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Običaji kod Srba”

<i>venčanje</i>	<i>svadba</i>
<i>bidermajer</i>	<i>buket</i>
<i>burma</i>	<i>prsten</i>
<i>kuća</i>	<i>dom</i>
<i>kititi</i>	<i>ukrašavati</i>
<i>svečano</i>	<i>praznično</i>
<i>trpeza</i>	<i>sto</i>
<i>izbor</i>	<i>odabir</i>
<i>obavljati</i>	<i>raditi</i>

The first three synonym pairs (*venčanje* and *svadba*; *bidermajer* and *buket*; *burma* and *prsten*) are directly connected to the situational term *svadba*, as well as all other synonym pairs, or at least one of their members, although these lexemes can also be found within some other thematic groups.

*Kuća* and *dom* are approximate synonyms. In the paper of Sanja Đurović (2013), we can see how for the synonymous relation of these two lexemes, the semantical component of providing help, warmth, and safety is important, which is the semantic component possessed by the lexeme *dom*, hence the expressions *Dom za nezbrinutu decu, Dečji dom, Dom penzionera*. In the contemporary Serbian language, however, this component is not exclusively linked to the lexeme *dom*, so we say *Šigurna kuća*, not *\*Šigurni dom* (332–335).

*Venčanje* and *svadba* have meanings that are clearly different: *venčanje* is a “marriage ceremony”<sup>8</sup>, while *svadba* is “a wedding celebration”<sup>9</sup>, although *venčanje* is also cited as a synonym for *svadba* (RSJ). That is because of a secondary meaning developed by metonymy. So we can say: *pozivnica za svadbu/venčanje, poklon za svadbu/venačanje* and *Bio sam na svadbi, ali nisam bio na venčanju*.

*Bidermajer* and *buket* are approximate synonyms because *bidermajer* is a special type of bouquet: “a bouquet of circularly arranged flowers worn by a bride at a wedding”<sup>10</sup> (RSJ). Because of that, if we want that *buket* refers to *bidermjaer*, we need to say *svadbeni buket*.

The relation between the lexemes *burma* and *prsten* is similar. *Burma*, according to RSJ, is an engagement or wedding ring. However, we are sure that most native speakers of the Serbian language only refer to a wedding ring by the lexeme *burma*. This is evidenced by these examples, from which it is clear that *burma* and *verenički prsten* have different designata:

1. *ŠTA RADITI SA VERENIČKIM PRSTENOM KAD NA RED DOĐE BURMA?*<sup>11</sup> (www.zlataratanasovic.com, 19.8.2023)
2. *Ako i vi nosite zajedno verenički prsten i burmu zapravo jako grešite, a evo i zašto*<sup>12</sup> (www.telegraf.rs, 19.8.2023)
3. *Još u drevnom Egiptu je postojao običaj da verenički prsten i burma treba da se nose na domalom prstu*<sup>13</sup> [...] (www.miticdiamonds.rs, 19.8.2023)

*Kititi* and *ukrašavati* have a primary meaning related to beautification. However, designata of these verbs differ in that *kititi* refers to putting decorations on someone or something, while *ukrašavati*, in addition to putting decorations, can be drawing decorations on something, painting something, etc. That’s why we say *kititi svatove, jelku, kititi se tuđim perjem* and *ukrašavati kuću, zidove, uskršanja jaja, torte*, etc. So, *ukrašavati* means creating decorations that will be inseparable from what is decorated.

*Svečano* and *praznično* are cognitive synonyms: *obući se svečano/praznično, biti praznično/svečano raspoložen*. We think that when processing these lexemes, it is necessary to introduce synonym pairs *svečan* and *prazničan*, so as *svečanost* and *praznik*. The relation of the last pair is somewhat more complicated, because *svečanosti* are not the same as *praznici*, but are organized on the occasion of them.

*Trpeza* and *sto* have identical primary meanings, so in RSJ when referring to *trpeza*, instead of defining the primary meaning, reference is made to *sto*. However, these synonyms are used differently. Most often, *trpeza* means a meal on the table, which is a secondary meaning developed by metonymy, so we can speak about, for example, *bogatoj, slavskoj, božićnoj, novodogodišnjoj*, etc. *trpezi*. If the *trpeza* means *sto*, it will be “a table in the temple, in the church, behind the altar” (RSJ). Related to customs is the meaning of a feast for the repose of the soul, which is otherwise called *daća*.

*Izbor* and *odabir* denote the same actions, but there are differences in collocations, so these lexemes are not interchangeable in sentences such as *Sutra su predsednički izbori* or *To je tvoj izbor, nemoj sada da kukaš*. *Izbor* can also mean assortment, while *odabir* does

<sup>8</sup> “обред склапања брака” (translated by the author)

<sup>9</sup> “веселе поводом венчања, прослава” (translated by the author)

<sup>10</sup> “букет кружно аранжираног цвећа који носи невеста на венчању” (translated by the author)

<sup>11</sup> What to do with the engagement ring when it comes the time for the wedding ring? (translated by the author)

<sup>12</sup> If you wear an engagement and wedding ring together, you actually make a big mistake and here it is why (translated by the author)

<sup>13</sup> Even in ancient Egypt there was a custom that the engagement and wedding ring should be worn on your fourth finger (translated by the author).

not have this meaning (*U ovoj prodavnici je veliki izbor nameštaja*). These lexemes are interchangeable in collocations like: *izbor/odabir partnera, venčаницe, burme, smeštaja, nameštaja, destinacije za letovanje*, etc.

#### 4.2.4. Lesson 4 “Dome, slatki dome” (thematic filed: *prostor za život*)

**Table 4.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Dome, slatki dome”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>vrsta stambenog objekta</i>	<i>kuća, dom, stan</i>
<i>vrste stambenih prostorija</i>	<i>dnevna soba, spavaća soba, trpezarija, hodnik, kuhinja, kupatilo, terasa, špajz...</i>
<i>kućni poslovo</i>	<i>čišćenje, brisanje, usisavanje, pranje, peglanje, krećenje, zalivanje, košenje, nameštanje, hranjenje kućnih ljubimaca, bacanje smeća...</i>
<i>popravke i renoviranje</i>	<i>elektroinstalacije, vodoinstalacije, stolarija, izolacija, rasveta...</i>
<i>kupovina</i>	<i>kupiti, sniženje, cena, garancija, polovan, nov, skup, jeftin, promeniti novac, račun...</i>
<i>tehnički uređaji</i>	<i>televizor, frižider, zamrzivač, veš-mašina, mašina za sudove...</i>

**Table 4.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Dome, slatki dome”

<i>kuća</i>	<i>dom</i>
<i>spremiti</i>	<i>srediti</i>
<i>promeniti</i>	<i>zameniti</i>
<i>besplatno</i>	<i>džabe</i>

**Table 4.3** Synonym chain in the lesson “Dome, slatki dome”

<i>čistiti</i>	<i>brisati</i>	<i>prati</i>
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*Kuća* and *dom* appeared as a synonym pair in the previous lesson, but their explanation is best left for the lesson whose thematic field is *prostor za stanovanje*. They refer to the living space itself, while the next synonym pair is within the thematic group *kućni poslovi*. *Promeniti* could be in the thematic group *popravke i renoviranje*, but in *kupovina* as well, while the verb *zameniti* appears only in the first group. In *kupovina* is a pair *besplatno* and *džabe*. The synonym chain represents the synonym members of the thematic dominant *kućni poslovi*.

The lexeme *spremiti* is already known to students from the lesson “Kuvanje”, but now it appears in meaning ‘urediti’, which is its primary meaning. It is a synonymous lexeme to the verb *srediti*, so we can say *spremiti* and *srediti sobu*. We believe that collocations are also important at this level *spremiti se za put/ispit/posao*, as one another meaning of the verb *srediti se* – ‘doterati se’.

*Promeniti* and *zameniti* mean the same thing, but there are big differences in the range of application. First, the difference in rection should be highlighted: *promeniti nešto* or *nekoga* and *zameniti nešto nečim* or *nekoga nekim*. We will provide examples of the use of these lexemes that we consider necessary at the B1 level.



*Majstor je promenio motor (ili zamenio stari motor novim) i sad sve dobro radi.  
 Treba da promeniš tri autobusa da stigneš tamo.  
 Promenili smo evre u dinare, jer neće da ih prime u prodavnici.  
 Moram da promenim košulju. Ova koju nosim je prljava.  
 Zamenio sam roman za zbirku pesama u knjižari.  
 Moram da zamenim košulju. Treba mi veći broj.  
 Kolega će me zameniti na poslu dok sam bolesna.*

All these examples illustrate everyday situations (at home, in traffic, in the store, exchange office, at work). However, these many examples, not all of which are related to the subject area being covered, can overwhelm students. That is why it is good to leave some of them for other thematic fields with which they are directly related.

*Besplatno* and *džabe* are cognitive synonyms. We can say that we are working somewhere or that we have received something *besplatno* and *džabe*, with addition to the fact that *džabe* is usually used with the preposition *za*: *Dobio sam kartu za džabe*. It should be noted that if something for sale is said to be *džabe*, it means that the price is very low, not that the item is free. Also, *raditi nešto džabe* can mean 'uzalud'.

The members of the synonym chain are only approximate synonyms. What they have in common is that they refer to the removal of dirt. *Čistiti* has a more general meaning than the other two listed synonyms. *Prati* involves washing in a liquid, while *brisati* means rubbing. We think that it is most appropriate to show the differences in meaning and use with verb complements: *čistiti cipele četkom*; *pod metlom*; *sudoperu vrućom vodom*; *fleku sunderom* etc; *prati toplom vodom odeću/sudove/kosu/lice/zube* et al; *brisati krpom prašinu*; *telo peškirom*; *suze maramicom* et al.

#### 4.2.5. Lesson 5 “Put putujem” (thematic field: putovanje)

**Table 5.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Put putujem”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>vrste saobraćaja</i>	<i>drumski/vazdušni/vodeni/teretni/putnički saobraćaj, vozač, konduker, saobraćajni prekršaj</i>
<i>javni prevoz</i>	<i>gradski/međugradski/međudržavni/transkontinentalni prevoz, vrste prevoznih sredstava</i>
<i>stajališta</i>	<i>stajališta za gradski prevoz, aerodrom, železnička stanica, luka/pristanište, parkiralište, granični prelaz</i>
<i>svrha putovanja</i>	<i>svakodnevno putovanje, poslovno putovanje, turističko putovanje, ekskurzija</i>
<i>destinacije</i>	<i>posao, more, planine, selo, poseta, inostranstvo</i>
<i>dokumenta za putovanje</i>	<i>karta, pasoš, viza, lična karta, osiguranje</i>
<i>prtljag</i>	<i>ručni prtljag, putna torba, kofer</i>
<i>uslužni objekti</i>	<i>benzinska pumpa, motel, hotel, kamp, menjačnica</i>

**Table 5.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Put putujem”

<i>put</i>	<i>drum</i>
<i>ići</i>	<i>putovati</i>
<i>krenuti</i>	<i>poći</i>
<i>doći</i>	<i>stići</i>
<i>pravac</i>	<i>smer</i>
<i>časovnik</i>	<i>sat</i>
<i>uzak</i>	<i>tesan</i>

**Table 5.3** Synonym chain in the lesson “Put putujem”

*pogotovo osobito naročito posebno*

The first synonym pair (*put* and *drum*) is connected to the situational term *drumski saobraćaj*, while the next four (*ići* and *putovati*, *poći* and *krenuti*, *doći* and *stići*, *pravac* and *smer*) can be found within most of the mentioned thematic groups. The synonym pair *časovnik* and *sat* is related to situational terms *međudržavni* and *transkontinentalni prevoz*. We note that the synonym chain that appears in the lesson is not connected to the thematic field, so the question is whether it is justified to introduce all members of the synonym chain.

The lexemes *drum* and *put* are only approximate synonyms. According to Lalević (1976), *drum* is: “wide, paved, compacted, often paved, bordered, hard road for vehicle traffic and pedestrians”<sup>14</sup>. It should be noted that *drum* is archaic lexeme and should be connected with the collocation *drumski saobraćaj*. The connection with the lexeme *podrum* (*pod* + *drum*) can also be pointed out, although it does not belong to the thematic field *putovanje*, but it is convenient to use the opportunity to explain its origin and to make both lexemes easier to remember. As far as the lexeme *put* is concerned, one can point to a metonymically developed secondary meaning ‘putovanje’: *ići na put*, *spremati se na put*, *biti na putu za neko mesto* et al.

The next synonym pair are the verbs *ići* and *putovati*. *Ići* can mean “to move with a means of transport”<sup>15</sup>, and it is also used in contexts when it means traveling to distant regions (RSJ), so it is synonymous with the verb *putovati*: *ići/putovati u Španiju*; *ići/putovati avionom*; *ići/putovati od Beograda do Niša*. The verb *ići* has a more developed polysemy and there are many contexts in which it cannot be used instead of *putovati*: *Idem na posao*; *Autobus ide za pet minuta*; *Idi kuda želiš* et al. That's why it is needed to master the verb *ići* first, and only then *putovati*.

The verbs *krenuti* and *poći* are cognitive synonyms, with the fact that the verb *krenuti* has some secondary meanings that the verb *poći* does not. There are many contexts in which it does not matter which member of the synonym pair we use. We have selected those that we consider suitable for the B level.

*Krenuli/ pošli smo kući/u prodavnicu/ u grad.*

*Krenuo/ pošao je autobus za Beograd.*

*Moja deca su pošla/krenula u školu/na fakultet/na plivanje.*

*Krenula/pošla mu je krv na nos.*

With the verbs of movement *doći* and *stići* there is an overlap of meaning in the sense of ‘getting to a certain place’ and that is why they are approximate synonyms: *Stigao/ došao*

<sup>14</sup> “širok, utaban, nabijen, često popločan, oivičen, tvrd put za kolski saobraćaj i pešake” (translated by the author)

<sup>15</sup> „кретати се превозним средством” (translated by the author)

*sam na posao/ kuću/ u školu*, etc. However, the expression is *dobro došli*, not *\*dobro stigli*. We notice that we use *stići* more often than *doći* for objects: *Stigao je paket; Stiglo je pismo*. We will indicate some other frequent uses of these verbs in which they are not interchangeable. The verb *stići* primarily means to catch up with someone: *Stigni me ako možeš*. It is also often used in the sense of 'doing something on time': *Ne mogu da stignem da uradim sve zadatke*. When it comes to the verb *doći*, we would emphasize the meaning of "acquiring or acquiring something"<sup>16</sup> (RSJ): *doći do novca/ posla/ slobode* etc.

Although it would seem to some speakers that there is a clear difference between the lexemes *pravac* and *smer*, in the sense "pravac čine dva suprotna smera"<sup>17</sup>, in the Serbian language, these lexemes are cognitive synonyms, because we can say: *Idete u pogrešnom pravcu/smeru; karta u jednom pravcu/smeru; Otišao je u nepoznatom pravcu/smeru*. However, when it comes to secondary meanings, we are only talking about *smerovima* na fakultetu and *pravcima* u umetnosti.

The lexeme *časovnik* is monosemic, and it shares its meaning with the lexeme *sat*, so we can say: *zidni/ručni/ džepni/peščani/sunčani sat* or *časovnik*. It should be noted that *sat* is used far more often. However, when it comes to repairing this device, the term *časovničar* is usually used, not *sajdžija*. The relation between the lexemes *sat* and *čas*, which do not appear in this lesson as a synonym pair, would be much more useful to students.

#### 4.2.6. Lesson 6 "Moj prvi posao" (thematic field: posao)

**Table 6.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson "Moj prvi posao"

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>vrste poslova</i>	<i>prvi posao, dodatni posao, volontirati</i>
<i>zanimanja</i>	<i>prodavac, konobar, bebisiter, bloger, dostavljač, berač voća i povrća, šetač pasa...</i>
<i>traženje poslova i davanje otkaza</i>	<i>oglas, radna biografija, radno iskustvo, radno mesto, preporuka, diploma, lični podaci, biti primljen, kandidat, zaposliti se, intervju, dati otkaz, poslovne obaveze</i>
<i>zarada</i>	<i>plata, zarađivati, bakšiš</i>
<i>ljudi na poslu</i>	<i>poslodavac, šef, tim, mušterija, klijent, kolega</i>
<i>poželjne osobine radnika</i>	<i>radne navike, odgovornost, vredan, organizovan, otvoren, iskren, imati samopouzdanja, dolaziti na vreme...</i>
<i>organizacija rada</i>	<i>raspored, godišnji odmor, smena, sastanak, slobodan dan, radni dan, radno vreme, zamena</i>
<i>radno mesto</i>	<i>firma, salon, kancelarija, radionica, restoran...</i>

**Table 6.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson "Moj prvi posao"

<i>posao</i>	<i>rad</i>
<i>umeti</i>	<i>znati</i>
<i>nuditi</i>	<i>davati</i>
<i>presudan</i>	<i>odlučujući</i>

<sup>16</sup> "прибављања или стицања нечега" (translated by the author)

<sup>17</sup> See the article "Правац или смер?" at [www.srpskijezickiatelje.com](http://www.srpskijezickiatelje.com).

The first synonym pair (*posao* and *rad*) is directly subordinated to this thematic field. *Umeti* and *znati* can be viewed in connection with situational terms *radna biografija* or *poslovne obaveze*. *Nuditi* is connected with the situational term *oglas*, while *davati* can be found within various situational members (e.g. *dati slobodan dan/ platu/ preporuku...*).

*Posao* and *rad* are only approximate synonyms. *Rad* presents any conscious activity aimed at achieving an useful effect: for example, *fizički i umni rad* (RSJ), while *posao* is “work as a permanent occupation”<sup>18</sup> (Same). That's why in collocations *dobiti posao, ostati bez posla, zakasniti na posao* et al, we cannot use the lexeme *rad*. Nevertheless, lexeme *posao* can mean ‘rad’, so it is possible to say *Hajde da počnemo sa poslom* or *radom*. Also, it denotes a task or an obligation, like in a sentence: *Moj posao je da perem čaše*. As far as the lexeme *rad* is concerned, collocations such as *radovi na putu* or, for example, *građevinski radovi*, where *rad* means the performance of a specific job, are also important; then, *pustiti mašinu u rad* (*rad* is the functioning of the device), *naučni rad* and *ručni rad*.

The verbs *znati* and *umeti* are interchangeable only in certain contexts. One proverb contrasts their meanings: *Napred ide onaj koji ume* (who is skilled at something), *a ne koji zna* (who knows the facts). Nevertheless, *znati* can mean ‘to be skilled at something’, like in the example from RSJ: *Igrao je kako je najbolje znao*. On the other hand, as one of the secondary meanings of the verb *umeti*, it is stated: “to be familiar with something, knowledgeable about something”, which is similar to the definition of the primary meaning of the verb *znati* (RSJ). In adopting these verbs, the verb *znati* should be processed first based on the meaning coverage criteria. We can say: *Ko zna odgovor na ovo pitanje?; Ivan zna engleski* and *Marija zna da vozi automobil*.<sup>19</sup> Then it should be shown that in the last example, instead of *znati*, you can use *umeti*, which also applies to examples like: *Tvoja mama zna/ume odlično da kuva; On još ne zna/ume da čita ćirilicu; Moja baka ne zna/ume da koristi kompjuter*. The verb *umeti* can be left for a high level of learning. In addition, it is irregular in conjugation in the present tense forms (*umem: umeju*).

*Davati* is listed as one of the synonyms for the verb *nuditi* in the dictionary of synonyms by P. Ćosić (2008), which is not the case with the one of M. Lalević (1974). In the RSJ, *davati* and *nuditi* appear as synonyms in the meaning: “to offer each other a drink, a meal, etc.”. We believe that *davati* and *nuditi* are approximate synonyms due to overlapping meanings. *Dati* can mean “to make available to someone” (RSJ) and it is a semantic component that it shares with *nuditi*. It should be emphasized what would be the difference between sentences: *Dao sam ti novac* and *Nudio sam ti novac*. In the first sentence, someone received money from the speaker, while the second sentence does not claim that. Because there are no contexts suitable for intermediate level in which these two verbs are interchangeable, we would not treat them as synonyms, but only emphasize their differences.

<sup>18</sup> “рад као стално занимање” (translated by the author)

<sup>19</sup> At some point in the learning process, the use of the verb as a postman should be illustrated and known: *Znaš, i meni je teško*.

## 4.2.7. Lesson 7 “Tajni svetovi” (thematic field: životinje)

**Table 7.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Tajni svetovi”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>divlje životinje</i>	<i>lav, zmija, tigar, medved, žirafa, slon, jelen...</i>
<i>domaće životinje</i>	<i>kokoška, krava, ovca, svinja, jagnje, konj, koza...</i>
<i>kućni ljubimci</i>	<i>pas, mačka, brinuti se, hrana, vlasnik, veterinar, udomiti, kupiti</i>

**Table 7.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Tajni svetovi”

<i>inteligentan</i>	<i>pametan</i>
<i>brinuti</i>	<i>čuvati</i>
<i>svidati se</i>	<i>dopasti se</i>
<i>radost</i>	<i>sreća</i>
<i>topao</i>	<i>nežan</i>
<i>stalno</i>	<i>uvek</i>
<i>komplikovan</i>	<i>složen</i>

**Table 7.3** Synonym chain in the lesson “Tajni svetovi”

<i>fraza</i>	<i>izreka</i>	<i>izraz<sup>20</sup></i>
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In this lesson, most of the synonyms are unrelated to the topic field. Those who have a closer connection with it are *inteligentan* and *pametan* (when describing animals); *brinuti* and *čuvati* concerning pets. We would propose to give space in this lesson to the following synonym pairs, which we think are more interesting to deal with: *debeo* and *krupan*, *mršav* and *tanak*, *mali* and *sitan*, *jak* and *snažan*, *udomiti* and *usvojiti*, *krdo* and *stado*<sup>21</sup>.

*Inteligentan* and *pametan* are cognitive synonyms. This synonym pair is easy to adopt because one member of the synonym pair is an Anglicism. *Pametan* has more meanings, so in addition to intelligence, it can also mean being filled with wise thoughts, knowledge, ideas, etc: *pametna knjiga* (RSJ), which is a meaning that can be processed at a high level of learning. At this level, we should highlight the currently very common collocation *pametni telefoni*. The synonym pair *brinuti se* and *čuvati* is joined by the lexemes *paziti* and *štiti*. They do not appear in the lesson, but they are present in the textbook that precedes this textbook (*Učimo srpski 1*), so we think that these four verbs should be processed as a synonym chain. The first thing to emphasize is the difference in the rection of these verbs: *čuvati* and *štiti* + accusative, *brinuti se* + *o* + locative, *paziti* + *na* + accusative. All these verbs have in common that they imply an agent who provides someone or something with what it needs to be maintained in a desirable state. However, there are semantic components that differ, which leads to differences in usage.

<sup>20</sup> Note that in RSJ *fraza* and *izraz* are listed as synonyms, but not the *izreka*. We can testify that all three lexemes are used as synonyms. Check put the example: “Ali dve su verzije nastanka ove fraze. Izreka potiče iz Prvog svetskog rata, u kom je postojao izvestan artiljerac Maksim [...]” (www.portalmiladi.com, retrived 30.8.2023).

<sup>21</sup> The first member of each given synonym pair is already present in the lesson.

*Brinuti (se)* primarily means, as stated by Lalević (1974): “to be so occupied in one's thoughts with someone or something, to be restless because of someone or something so that everything else is more or less neglected”<sup>22</sup>. In an example like: *Ne brini, biće sve u redu*, no other verb from the synonym chain can be used instead of *brinuti*. However, when *brinuti* means ‘to take care of someone or something’, this verb is interchangeable with verbs *čuvati* and *paziti*.

*Roditelji brinu o svojoj deci/paze na/čuvaju svoju decu.*

*Ne pijem alkohol i ne pušim jer brinem o svom zdravlju/pazim na svoje zdravlje/čuvam svoje zdravlje.*

The verb *štititi* cannot be used in these contexts as a cognitive synonym. It would make a difference in the meaning of the sentences, because it implies protecting from some unfavorable influence. However, the verb *čuvati* is synonymous with it, so in the following examples, it is possible to use both verbs.

*Kišobran nas štiti/čuva od kiše.*

*Alarm nas štiti/čuva od lopova.*

*Zakon štiti/čuva ljude od diskriminacije.*

The verb *čuvati* has a few more secondary meanings of its own, which we would introduce at this level of learning or a little later: *čuvati novac/energiju* (‘to save’), *čuvati lekove na suvom/novac u sefu* (‘keep in a certain place, under certain conditions’), *čuvati stara pisma/knjige* (‘keep for a long time, don't waste’), *čuvati uspomenu/tajnu/običaje/tradiciju* (‘to adhere to something, to respect’), *čuvati se lopova/opasnosti/loših ljudi* (‘to protect yourself from someone, something’), *čuvati ovce/guske/goveda* (‘to look after cattle, poultry on pasture’) and there is also the meaning (‘avoid danger’) which is often expressed at parting: *Vidimo se, čuvaj se*. We notice that in the meaning of ‘to protect oneself from someone, something’, it is also possible to use the verb *paziti se*: *pazi/čuvaj se loših ljudi*, although it is not common to say *štititi se loših ljudi*. The primary meaning of the verb *paziti* is to concentrate on something: *paziti na času, paziti na put, paziti na svaku svoju reč*. Another meaning that distinguishes it from the other listed verbs is ‘watch, guard’: *paziti da niko ne pobegne; paziti da ručak ne zagori*. We also use this verb as a “call for attention, caution”<sup>23</sup>: *Pazi(te) se!* (RSJ).

When it comes to such complex lexical units, we believe that the students should be gradually familiarized with the members of the synonym chain. It is best for students to first master the primary meanings of these lexemes. Only when they know the primary meanings of the verbs *brinuti (se)*, *paziti se*, *čuvati* and *štititi* and learn their reactions, then we can start presenting their synonym relations:

<sup>22</sup> „biti toliko u mislima nekim ili nečim zauzet, biti nespokojan zbog nekoga ili nečega da se sve drugo više ili manje zanemaruje” (translated by the author)

<sup>23</sup> “позив на пажњу, опрезност” (translated by the author)

## 4.2.8. Lesson 8 “Krv nije voda” (thematic field: zdrav način života)

**Table 8.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Krv nije voda”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>životni vek</i>	<i>starost, mladost, rođendan, živeti, dugovečan, dug, prosečan, godina</i>
<i>sport</i>	<i>teretana, sportski klub, reprezentacija, kondicija, takmičenje, vežbati, sportista, uspeh, košarka, fudbal, aerobik, plivanje ...</i>
<i>rekreacija</i>	<i>putovanje, planinarenje, trčanje, priroda, kretati se, vežbati, trenirati</i>
<i>ishrana</i>	<i>brza hrana, doručak, ručak, pekara, umerenost</i>
<i>izgled</i>	<i>dobro, genetika, ličiti, biti u formi, jak</i>
<i>zdravlje</i>	<i>fizičko zdravlje, mentalno zdravlje, pregled, lekar, zubar, jak, zdrav, bolest, lek, stres</i>

**Table 8.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Krv nije voda”

<i>umerenost</i>	<i>mera</i>
<i>napredan</i>	<i>razvijen</i>
<i>kretati se</i>	<i>ići</i>
<i>vežbati</i>	<i>trenirati</i>
<i>jak</i>	<i>snažan</i>
<i>udarati</i>	<i>šutirati</i>
<i>buditi (se)</i>	<i>ustajati</i>
<i>pažnja</i>	<i>briga</i>
<i>krenuti</i>	<i>poći</i>
<i>barem</i>	<i>makar</i>
<i>prići</i>	<i>približiti se</i>
<i>izuzetan</i>	<i>fantastičan</i>
<i>neobičan</i>	<i>neuobičajen</i>
<i>osobina</i>	<i>crtā</i>
<i>poznat</i>	<i>slavan</i>
<i>tužan</i>	<i>utučen</i>
<i>srećan</i>	<i>zadovoljan</i>
<i>ushićen</i>	<i>oduševljen</i>

The synonym pair *umerenost* and *mera* belongs to the thematic group *ishrana*. The verb *kretati se* is within the thematic dominant *rekreacija*, while the verbs *vežbati* and *trenirati*, like *krenuti* and *poći*<sup>24</sup>, also belong to the thematic group *sport*. Synonym pairs *buditi (se)* and *ustajati*, like *pažnja* and *briga*, are not directly subordinated to any of the mentioned thematic dominants. They belong to a given thematic field. It also has a synonym pair *udarati* and *šutirati*. The adjectives *jak* and *snažan*, so as adjectives *razvijen* and *napredan* are within the thematic group *izgled*. All the other synonym pairs, including the synonym chain, are not in a strong relation with the thematic dominant.

*Umrenost* and *mera* can have the same meaning. The first member of the synonym pair is monosemic, while *mera* is a lexeme with a highly developed polysemantic structure, and its primary meaning should be emphasized: “a standard size used to determine the quantity

<sup>24</sup> We have already analysed this synonymous pair in lesson 5 “putujem”.

of something (weight, length, area, volume, time, etc.), a unit for measuring something”<sup>25</sup> (RSJ). *Mera* in the sense of ‘temperance’ is used in the expressions *imati meru* and *raditi nešto s merom*, and we can talk about *umerenosti u jelu, piću*, etc. Therefore, there are differences in usage.

The adjectives *napredan* and *razvijen* have similar meanings when referring to physical appearance. For example, we can say *napredno dete*, if a child develops well physically (RSJ). If we say *razvijen čovek*, then we usually talk about a man that is tall, big and muscular. There are collocations in which it does not matter which member of the synonym pair we use, because in them these lexemes mean the same thing, such as: *razvijena/napredna zemlja/grad/firma; razvijeno/napredno domaćinstvo* et al. However, we will only say *napredne ideje* or *napredni zakoni*, for example, when *napredan* is used to mean ‘progressive’, which would be a meaning suitable for a high level of learning. There is also a very useful collocation for students: *napredan kurs*.

*Kretati se* and *ići* are synonyms in the sense of ‘being in motion in general’ (*kretati se/ići pešačkom stazom* (RSJ). There are contexts in which they are completely interchangeable in this sense, as well as those in which one member of a synonym pair is more common than the other.

*Oluja se kreće/ide ka Beogradu.*

*Ovaj automobil se kreće/ide brzinom od 150 km na čas.*

*Treba više da se krećete (\*idete). To je dobro za Vaše zdravlje.*

*Zemlja se kreće (\*ide) oko Sunca.*

In addition to the sameness in meaning, specific meanings and collocations for each verb should be highlighted. Thus, the verb *kretati se* is used in the sense of ‘to spend time, to be in connection with social circles’: *kretati se u visokom društvu*, which, of course, should be taught at a higher level of learning. The verb *ići* has several meanings necessary at the beginner and intermediate levels: *ići autobusom, ići iz Srbije u Austriju* (‘to travel’), *Idi kud hoćeš* (‘to go away’), *Idu nam gosti* (‘to come’).

Both *trenirati* and *vežbati* have the meaning: “systematically repeating some action in order to learn, improve in it”<sup>26</sup> (RSJ), but they differ in the range of application. *Trenirati* is used in connection with sports disciplines: *trenirati košarku/fudbal/plivanje* et al, while the verb *vežbati* implies a wider range of activities: *vežbati matematiku/pevanje; vežbati se u trčanju/govorništvu*, etc.

The primary meanings of the adjectives *jak* and *snažan* match and refer to physical strength and development: *Toliko je jak/snažan da može da radi najteže fizičke poslove*. Though, it is possible to say *snažna/jaka mašina* (‘has a great driving force’), *snažan/jak udarac* (‘fierce’), *snažan/jak vetar; snažno/jako osećanje* (‘high intensity’), *snažan/ jak temperament* (‘unbridled’), *snažan/jak miris* (‘striking’), *snažan/jak dokaz* (‘persuasive’), *snažna/jaka vlast* (‘powerful’), *snažan/jak most* (‘strong’), *snažna/jaka hrana* (‘caloric, nutritious’). However, in the following expression, we use only *jak*: *biti jak u nečemu* (‘to know about something, to be skilfull in it’): *On je jak u plivanju, ali trčanje mu slabo ide*. As can be seen from the presentation of different meanings, other synonymous lexemes can be used in the explanation provided that they are already known to the students.

<sup>25</sup> „стандардна величина којом се одређује квантитет нечега (тежина, дужина, површина, запремина, време итд.), јединица за мерење нечега” (translated by the author)

<sup>26</sup> „системски понављати неку радњу у циљу учења, усавршавања у њој” (translated by the author)



*Šutirati* and *udarati* are in the dictionary of synonyms of Ćosić (2008) cited as synonyms. These are approximate synonyms. *Šutirati* is used primarily when it comes to sending the ball in a certain direction, but it can also mean pushing something away with the foot (RSJ): *Fudbaler šutira loptu; Šutnuo je psa*. We would suggest the following collocatins for the verb *udarati*: *udariti nekoga rukom/kamenom, udariti autom nekoga/u nešto; udariti grom*.

The verbs *ustajati* and *buditi se* are approximate synonyms. Although the definition of the primary meaning of the verb *ustajati* in RSJ states: “getting up after sleep”<sup>27</sup>, in the adoption of this lexeme, the general meaning that implies taking an upright position should first be highlighted: *ustati sa zemlje/stolice*, and only then the synonym relation with *buditi se* should be indicated: *Budim selustajem rano*. Although *ustajati* retains its general meaning in this context as well, the focus is on the fact that a man is no longer asleep.

The nouns *briga* and *pažnja* are synonymous in meaning ‘care, affection’. However, due to the difference in rection, they are not interchangeable: *pažnja prema starijima – briga o starijima*. There are also collocations with different members when it comes to this meaning: *poklanjati/pružati pažnju nekome* and *voditi brigu o nekome*. Before this, the primary meanings should be adopted: ‘feeling of restlessness, anxiety’ (*briga*) and ‘focus, concentration’ (*pažnja*).

#### 4.2.9. Lesson 9 “Prirodne lepote” (thematic field: *priroda*)

**Table 9.1** Thematic dominants and situational sequences in the lesson “Prirodne lepote”

thematic dominant	situational sequence
<i>geografski pojmovi</i>	<i>zemlja, planina, reka, klisura, pećina, peščara, jezero, kanjon, vodopad, vetar, naselje, more...</i>
<i>aktivnosti u prirodi</i>	<i>uživati, ribolov, jahanje, pešačenje, plovidba, šetnja, očuvanje prirode, plivati, pecati, kampovati, loviti, spasilačka služba...</i>
<i>turizam</i>	<i>turista, smeštaj, posetiti, posetilac, vodič, vidikovac, razgledanje, izletište</i>
<i>kulturno-istorijski spomenici</i>	<i>palata, mozaik, bazilika, muzej, hram, skulptura, manastir, tvrđava, nalazište</i>
<i>životinje</i>	<i>orao, vuk, jelen, divlja svinja, konj, medved, zmija, papagaj, pas</i>
<i>biljke</i>	<i>orhideja, bašta, omorika, drvo, uzgajati</i>

**Table 9.2** Synonym pairs in the lesson “Prirodne lepote”

<i>znamenit</i>	<i>poznat</i>
<i>glavni</i>	<i>važan</i>
<i>naseobina</i>	<i>naselje</i>
<i>lokalitet</i>	<i>nalazište</i>
<i>obučen</i>	<i>treniran</i>
<i>senzacija</i>	<i>atrakcija</i>
<i>veličanstven</i>	<i>grandiozan</i>
<i>car</i>	<i>imperator</i>

<sup>27</sup> “дићи се после спавања” (translated by the author)

**Table 9.3** Synonym chain in the lesson “Prirodne lepote”*poseban jedinstven specijalan*

Almost all the synonyms in this lesson are related to its thematical field in some way. Adjectives *znamenit* and *poznat*, *glavni* and *važan*, *veličanstven* and *grandiozan*, as well as all adjectives from the synonym chain, can be used when describing localities, natural phenomena and tourist places, so that they can be connected to different situational members of several thematic groups. The remaining adjective synonym pair *obučen* and *treniran* are connected with the situational term *spasilačka služba*. Synonyms *naselje* and *naseobina* are within thematical group *geografski pojmovi*; *nalazište* and *lokalitet* are within *kulturno-istorijski spomenici*; *senzacija* and *atrakcija* are subordinated to the thematic dominant *turizam*.

The adjectives *poznat* and *znamenit* have the same meaning: “about which everyone knows a lot”<sup>28</sup> (RSJ): *poznat znamenit članak/govor*; *poznato/znamenito mesto*; *poznata/znamenita ličnost/teorija/izložba*, etc. The adjective *poznat* has more meanings and therefore should be adopted first. Its primary meaning is: “which is already known”<sup>29</sup> (Same), so for example we will say: *Da li Vam je poznata ova osoba?* or *Ta knjiga mi nije poznata*. In these contexts we cannot use the adjective *znamenit*.

The adjectives *glavni* and *važan* have primary meanings that are very similarly defined in RSJ: both speak of emphasis on importance. However, the adjective *glavni* has a more developed polysemantic structure. It is used in collocations such as: *glavni zadatak/uzrok/predmet/problem* in which the adjective in superlative form *važan* can stand instead (*najvažniji*); then *glavni starešina/sudija/konobar*, in which it means “first in rank, supreme”<sup>30</sup> (Same); next *glavna bitka/rasprava* where it means ‘crucial’. These collocations should also be highlighted: *glavni grad*, *glavna uloga*, *glavni lik*. The adjective *važan* we use in the example like: *važan položaj*, *važna luka/ličnost* and in the expression *praviti se važan*.

The primary meanings of the lexemes *naseobina* and *naselje* are essentially the same, although they are formulated differently in RSJ: both lexemes denote a populated place. However, when we talk about cities, villages, towns, or city districts, we more often use the lexeme *naselje*. *Naseobina* is usually used in the context of old or even ancient places where some peoples lived: *ostaci naseobina afričkog kamenog doma*, *jezgro civilizacijskih naseobina*, *stari predmeti prvih naseobina*, *naseobina Inka*, *jedna od najstarijih naseobina na Balkanu*, etc (SrpKor2013, 8. 9. 2023). This lexeme also denotes the place where some people settled from other regions or countries, as well as the group of these people (RSJ): *prva engleska naseobina na mestu gde je danas grad Madras*; *romska naseobina*; *veza između matice i srpskih naseobina po svetu*; *ta francuska naseobina u Indiji*, etc. (SrpKor2013, 8. 9. 2023). It can be said that when it comes to the primary meaning, the lexemes *naselje* and *naseobina* differ in the range of application, but only in a way that there are contexts in which one member of the synonym pair is more common than the other.

*Lokalitet* primarily means a place that stands out for something special: for its importance, position or other peculiarity (RSJ): *lokalitet Gamzigrad*, *industrijski lokalitet*, *lokalitet od značaja za prirodu* (SrpKor2013, 6.9.2023). *Nalazište* is “the place where

<sup>28</sup> “о којем сви много знају” (translated by the author)

<sup>29</sup> “о којем се од раније зна” (translated by the author)

<sup>30</sup> „означава првог по рангу, врховног” (translated by the author)

something is or was found”<sup>31</sup>, se we can speak about, for example, *arheološkim nalazištima* (RMS). Although, we also say: *arheološki lokalitet Lepenski vir* (SrpKor2013, 6.9.2023), which is a confirmation that these lexemes are synonyms. *Nalazište* also means deposits, reserves: *nalazište nafte, zlata, uglja*, etc. and in that context this lexeme is not interchangeable with the noun *lokalitet*.

The adjectives *obučeni* and *trenirani* we can find it only under the verbs *obučiti* and *trenirati* in RSJ. Like these verbs, even the nouns *obuka* and *trening*, the adjectives *obučeni* and *trenirani* differ in the range of application. When it comes to sports activities, *trenirani* is used: *dobro trenirani tim, trenirani pripadnici OVK Janez Drnovšek* (SrpKor 2013, 8. 9. 2023). In other contexts, judging by the examples we came across, it is possible to use both adjectives: *trenirani psi; glas posebno treniranih komentatora; specijalno trenirane snage; trenirani profesionalac; profesionalno je obučen; obučen da gasi požar; obučen da ga sam vozi; pas obučen da ih vodi* (SrpKor2013, 8. 9. 2023). However, when we consult the dictionary, we see that *trenirani* is used in the sense of acquiring skills and movements only about animals (RSJ). In this case, we believe that the difference in the range of application should be emphasized, and in this way: *trenirani* can refer to sports training and dressage, and *obučeni* to other skills and knowledge acquired by humans or animals.

*Senzacija* and *atrakcija* are listed as synonyms in the dictionary of Ćosić (2008). *Senzacija* means primarily news and events that attract a lot of attention, but also sensory experiences. *Atrakcija* implies an attractive power, and thanks to the metonymic extension, it also means objects and phenomena that have such power (RSJ). In this sense, it is synonymous with lexeme *senzacija: medijska/turistička/arheološka/muzička atrakcija ili senzacija* (SrpKor2013; www.google.rs, 8.9.2023).

The adjectives *veličanstven* and *grandiozan* are cognitive synonyms. They differ only in that the second member of the synonymous pair is a loanword. That’s why we can say *veličanstven* and *grandiozan prizor/ spomenik/govor* or *veličanstveno* and *grandiozno veče/delo*, etc.

The adjectives *poseban* and *jedinstven* are synonymous with the adjective *specijalan* in the meaning “which is different from others, special”<sup>32</sup> (RSJ). The primary meaning of the adjective *poseban* refers to separateness, separation from others (Same): *Svako ima svoju sobu*, while *jedinstven* primarily means ‘complete, compact’: *jedinstvena teritorija, država* (Same). Even when used in the same sense, these adjectives are not interchangeable in all contexts. For example, we will say: *Ova devojka ima posebn/jedinstvenu lepotu*, but not *Ova devojka ima \*specijalnu lepotu*. On the other hand, there are collocations *specijalni efekti, specijalne jedinice/snage, specijalne operacije* et al.

## 5. LEXICAL EXERCISES IN *UČIMO SRPSKI 2* (2022)

The textbook contains several lexical exercises in which synonym relations are practiced in different ways. We will present the lexemes that appear in them and evaluate the productivity of the tasks. Also, we will see how the term synonym is used in the textbook, and whether it is always justified.

The first task is in the lesson “Običaji kod Srba”. We should connect synonyms: *recimo* and *na primer, svečano* and *praznično, kititi* and *ukrašavati, obavljati* and *raditi, burma*

<sup>31</sup> „место где се нешто налази или је нађено” (translated by the author)

<sup>32</sup> „који је различит од других, нарочит” (translated by the author)

and *prsten*, so as *trpeza* and *sto*. Almost all synonyms are related to the thematic dominant *venčanje*. However, apart from the fact that it is up to the teacher to explain synonym relations, we believe that additional lexical exercises are needed in which these lexemes should be put into context. Students will not master synonym relations if they are only told that some two lexemes are synonyms.

The next exercise is in the lesson “Dome, slatki dome”. It is a series of lexemes related to product prices. The lexemes should be put in order from the one that indicates the highest price to the lexeme with the meaning of the lowest price. This means that there would be antonyms at the ends of the sequence, and there would also be synonyms within the sequence. The sequence consists of lexemes and collocations: *papreno skupo* – *skupo* – *pristojna cena* – *jeftino* – *džabe* – *besplatno*. This is a good opportunity to point out that *džabe* means a very low price, while *besplatno* means we won’t pay anything. This is one type of task in which, in addition to antonymy, synonymy is also processed. This is possible when it comes to gradual synonyms. They form two synonym chains, which together form an antonym chain (see Dragičević 2010). Through tasks of this type, different degrees of intensity of the characteristic or action that the synonymous lexemes denote are observed. One such antonym chain appears in the exercise that follows the lesson “Krv nije voda”. It is only stated that to the question *Kako se osećaš?* we could answer with: *utučeno*, *razočarano*, *tužno*, *uplašeno*, *zadovoljno*, *srećno*, *ushićeno* and *oduševljeno*.

In the lesson “Put putujemo”, after one text, the synonyms *pogotovo*, *osobito*, *posebno* and *naročito* are emphasized, and at the very beginning, it is indicated that the lexemes *put* and *drum* mean the same thing (a sign of equality is placed between them). In the revision test that also covers this lesson, there is an exercise in which the highlighted verbs should be replaced with a synonymous verb. The verbs are: *odlaziti (ići)*, *otići (krenuti)*, *stići (doći)*, *vratiti se (stići/doći)*, *ići (putovati/leteti)*, *ići (odlaziti/voziti se/putovati)*. As can be seen from the presented examples and proposed solutions, synonyms are only *stići* and *doći* and *putovati* and *ići*. Although we expect that the term *synonym* will not be used in a strictly linguistic sense, we still think that it should not be said that e.g. *otići* and *krenuti* are synonymous verbs. Let’s compare the sentence from the task *Svi su već otišli* and *Svi su već krenuli*, which is the answer in the textbook. They do not mean the same thing, and due to the wording of the task, the student could conclude exactly that.

In this lesson there is another lexical exercise: in it you have to choose one of the three offered lexemes for the already written sentence. This task represents an opportunity to practice synonym relations. However, these are the lexemes offered: *prolaziti* – *polaziti* – *putovati*; *poći* – *proći* – *stići*; *kretati se* – *ukrcati se* – *usporavati*; *otići* – *proći* – *presesti*; *uleteti* – *leteti* – *izleteti*. Even without synonyms, this kind of exercise is useful, because the participants concentrate on the meaning of lexemes and their usage. However, we think it would be more productive if there were a sequence *poći* – *krenuti* – *ići*<sup>33</sup> instead of the sequence *kretati se* – *ukrcati se* – *usporavati*.

In the sixth lesson, “Moj prvi posao”, there is a task in which you have to connect synonymous words: *presudan* and *odlučujući*, *na taj način* and *tako*, *nuditi* and *davati* and *u potpunosti* and *sasvim*. The verbs *nuditi* and *davati* need additional explanations because they are not cognitive synonyms. We think that in this type of tasks, only those synonyms

<sup>33</sup> In one example, the context is provided: *Ipak nije \_\_\_\_\_ na drugi voz*. Of the offered lexemes *otići*, *proći* and *presesti*, only *presesti* is given in the key, although in this context the verb *otići* can also be used, which of course would make a difference in the meaning of the sentence.

that are the closest to absolute synonyms should be found. First of all, it is necessary to have the same type of synonyms within this type of task, so that the participants do not draw wrong conclusions. For example, they shouldn't think that it doesn't matter whether we use the verb *nuditi* or *davati*, just as it doesn't matter whether we say *presudan* or *odlučujući*, because that really won't change the meaning of the statement.

The next exercise related to synonymy occurs only in the eighth lesson "Krv nije voda". After processing the first text, you should find synonymous lexemes or expressions. It is about the following lexical units: *svake godine* (*iz godine u godinu*), *oduvek* (*od pamtiveka*), *stalan* (*neiscrpan*), *skoro* (*gotovo*), *prosečno* (*u proseku*), *mera* (*umerenost*) and *makar* (*barem*). Here, a little more attention should be paid to the synonym pair of *mera* and *umerenost*, and the primary meaning of the first member should be emphasized. In the exercise that follows the lesson, there is a lexical exercise in which synonyms are also present: *buditi se* and *ustajati*, as well as *briga* and *pažnja*. One should choose one of the three offered lexemes to fit them into the text. We believe that this type of exercise is one of the most productive for vocabulary mastery. In them, participants can conclude that it is impossible to say \**Budila sam rano*, because in that context a reflexive verb is necessary, as well as not to say *voditi brige*, but it is common to say *voditi brigu*.

It can be concluded that more attention could have been paid to synonymy in this textbook, considering how many synonyms appear in it. Against 147 synonymous lexemes, there are only a few exercises in which this paradigmatic relationship is practiced, and in them, there are only 30 synonyms. Given how complex synonymous relations can be, we believe that each synonym pair or chain should be found within the lexical exercises at least once so that the students can master synonymy at a satisfactory level. As language learning involves many other lexical and grammatical units and relations, we need to think carefully about which synonyms are needed at a certain level. In our opinion, there are too many of them in this textbook, which is intended for A2 and B1 learning levels. By careful selection of synonym pairs and chains, as well as adequate lexical exercises in sufficient measure, one can improve mastery of synonymous relations, but also lexicon in general. We will present two examples of our lexical exercises. The first example deals with the synonym chain *štiti* - *paziti* - *čuvati*, and the second with different synonyms.

Exercise 1: Underline the words that can be used in the sentence. Sometimes more than one solution is possible.

1. Alarm nas štiti/ čuva od lopova.
2. Vidimo se, pazi/ čuvaj se.
3. Šta radiš? – Pazim/ brinem da mi ručak ne izgori.
4. Lekovi se čuvaju/ paze na suvom.

Exercise 2: Use a synonym instead of the underlined word.

Example: Moj brat je mnogo jak. Može da podigne mnogo teške stvari.

Moj brat je mnogo snažan. Može da podigne mnogo teške stvari.

1. Poješću samo jedno parče pite.
2. Ovo je moja kuća.
3. Dobila sam pozivnicu za svadbu.
4. Moram da sredim kuću. Dolaze mi gosti.
5. Dobio sam ovu majicu besplatno.
6. Nismo krenuli na vreme, pa smo zakasnili

## 6. CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the material, we have established that the problem of synonymy appears already at the beginning of the Serbian as a foreign language courses. We had the opportunity to see how complex the relation can be between two synonymous lexemes, and how much attention should be paid to it for the students to successfully master it. To provide an adequate approach to this paradigmatic relation in teaching, the teacher should be familiar with different types of synonymous relations, which are associated with different types of explanations and tasks.

We noticed that there are synonym pairs that are easier to adopt compared to others, more complicated ones. It is the easiest to adopt a synonym pair in which one member is a lexeme of foreign origin, known to the students. However, even when it comes to such synonym pairs, one should be careful not to transfer how the lexeme is used in a foreign language from which it originates if it is not the same as in the Serbian language.

For the adoption of cognitive synonyms, we believe that it is most appropriate to use sentences to show the sameness of meaning. Due to polysemy, it should be pointed out in which meanings the two lexemes mean the same, and in which they do not. If two lexemes overlap in several different meanings, certain ones should be given priority over others.

The approximate synonyms are perhaps the most difficult to explain. The most precise explanation should be accompanied by adequate examples, and we believe that the best type is collocations.

The knowledge about synonymous relations that we want our students to acquire should be aligned with the level of learning, but also with the lexical topic. All synonym pairs and chains should be accompanied by lexical exercises that will help the student master their usage, in addition to learning the fact that certain lexemes mean the same or that they have similar meanings.

As a result of our analysis of textbook materials, the basis for dictionaries of synonyms was created that could be an addition to textbooks. This kind of dictionary would have several advantages. By looking at the overview list of synonym pairs and chains, the teacher can prepare in advance for explaining synonym relations, and it also represents a good basis for creating additional lexical exercises. Such an addition is also useful for the students themselves to determine synonym relations.

**Acknowledgement:** *This work is part of a study conducted for the master's thesis Synonyms in Serbian as a Foreign Language defended at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade in 2023, under the mentorship of Dr. Vesna Krajišnik. I thank my mentor dr. Vesna Krajišnik for all the advice and support.*

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## SINONIMIJA U UDŽBENICIMA ZA SRPSKI KAO STRANI JEZIK

*Ovaj rad govori o sinonimiji u srpskom kao stranom jeziku. U vokabularu koji je zastupljen u udžbenicima za srpski kao strani jezik, postoji mnogo sinonimnih leksema, a povremeno nailazimo na leksičke vežbe sa sinonimima. Želimo da istražimo da li su svi sinonimi koji se pojavljuju u udžbenicima za određeni nivo učenja opravdani i koliko se pažnje posvećuje njihovom učenju. S tim ciljem ćemo predstaviti leksiku u udžbeniku Učimo srpski 2 (2023), predviđenom za A2 i B1 nivoe učenja. Tematska organizacija ovog udžbenika i bogatstvo rečnika i vežbi pružaju mogućnost da se istraži pristup sinonimiji u nastavi srpskog kao stranog jezika. Analiziraćemo i udžbenik Učimo srpski 1 (2020), kako bismo dali uvid u sinonimne lekseme na samom početku nastave srpskog kao stranog jezika.*

Ključne reči: *leksika, sinonimija, udžbenici, srpski kao strani jezik.*





## TEACHING HERITAGE LANGUAGE – WHY SO DIFFERENT? ISSUES IN TEACHING SERBIAN AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE

UDC 371.3:811.163.41'246.2

Kristina Petrović

“SAVA” – Online school for Serbian language, Culture and Tradition

ORCID iD: Kristina Petrović

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6442-9265>

**Abstract.** *Although scholarly interest in heritage language preservation dates back to the mid-1960s and early 1970s (Kagan, Dillon, 2008, 145), the last few decades offered significant results in terms of teaching and testing. This paper highlights some issues in teaching Serbian as a heritage language, contrasting it to teaching Serbian as a foreign language. Practitioners face many challenges teaching students who study their home language: from approaching these students to meeting their needs, which go beyond just speaking the language and include identity matters, psychological, social, and intercultural burden (Kagan 2012, 72) of being bilingual and bicultural. These issues, with the right approach in language schools and at home, can become a real prerogative in a multicultural world. It is, therefore, essential for teachers and scholars, to collaborate and, with adequate state support and language policy, make “community-based curriculum” (Carreira, Kagan 2017), which considers students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral needs and would help them to “cope with two cultural worlds that they simultaneously inherit” (Kagan 2012, 80). This paper presents methods used at the School of Serbian Language, culture, and Tradition “SAVA”, which has been working with more than 500 families in 70 countries teaching Serbian as a heritage language.*

**Key words:** *heritage language, bilingualism, methodology, identity, innovation*

### 1. HERITAGE LANGUAGE

“A heritage language is a minority language (either immigrant or indigenous) learned by its speakers at home as children, and difficult to be fully developed because of insufficient input from the social environment” (Valdes 2000). With the increasing trend of migration for various reasons worldwide, an ever-growing number of people now speak a language different from that of the host country in their homes. According to Lacorte and

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Submitted April 19, 2024; Accepted May 11, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Kristina Petrović

“SAVA” – Online school for Serbian language, Culture and Tradition

E-mail: tinkapetrovic@yahoo.com

Canaball “in 1999, 38% of public school students in the USA were categorized as belonging to a minority group, particularly Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001)” (2002:109). Additionally, a study conducted in America in 2007 and 2008 found that twenty percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home (Kagan, 2012:73). The situation in Europe does not differ significantly too.

It is important to note that many linguists, including Fishman, Meisel, and Kupisch, when interpreting the term “native language,” do not restrict themselves solely to the languages of minorities. Rather, they consider any language used within a particular society — be it indigenous, colonial, or otherwise — that is neither dominant nor officially recognized (Benmamoun, Montrul 2013:261). The phenomenon of native language and culture extends beyond mere linguistic definitions. Marija Polinski writes that, in a broader sense, a native language speaker (heritage speaker) can also be considered one who does not actually speak the language at all, but it is his native language more in the cultural than in the linguistic sense (Polinsky 2015: 5).

Heritage language preservation is not only a matter of personal aspiration, but also the matter of wider language and political matter. It begins with personal sentiments, motivation, family arrangements, and what is commonly referred to as the “family language policy”, but the support from the country of origin, as well as assistance from the host country is highly important. If the preservation of the native language relies solely on the family without support from the native community and the host country, there is a high probability that the language will, at best, be maintained for just one more generation. Conversely, if the native country implements a strong language policy that includes providing and training teaching staff, developing materials, and organizing cultural events, it creates a strong foundation for lasting connections and the preservation of the native language. By fostering socialization, nurturing traditional gatherings, and working to unite community members, a supportive environment which will further encourage the ongoing use and maintenance of the native language is established.

As Maria Carreira pointed out (specifically addressing Spanish as a heritage language, but the concept can be applied to heritage languages in general), heritage languages are typically subjected to the “three-generation rule” (Polinsky, 2015: 4). In the first generation, actual immigrants speak their mother tongue whenever and wherever possible. The second generation exclusively uses the heritage language at home with their parents until the age of five or six, when they begin kindergarten. As their vocabulary in the dominant language expands, they gradually transition to the dominant language, using the heritage language less and less. By the third generation, immigrants are often entirely monolingual. While they may know some words in their heritage language and be familiar with customs, they are unable to communicate in the language, unless, of course, they undertake language learning in a classroom environment.

At the very beginning it is imperative to stress the crucial role of the family in preserving the languages of immigrants and minorities. As Mila Schwartz points out “Family Language Policy” (FLP) has “the critical role of the family in the preservation of immigrant and ethnic minority languages “(Schwartz, 2014: 172). Emphasizing the use of the heritage language within the familial domain, coupled with the cultivation of cultural norms and traditions, may represent a singularly effective strategy for language preservation for another generation. Family language policy encompasses various socio-linguistic and socio-psychological factors, as elucidated by Schwartz: “Intra-family factors of FLP (family structure, parental education, acculturation of the parents, family cohesiveness and emotional relations),

family language ideology and practice, and management, internal control for FLP” (Schwartz, 2014: 172).

When parents insist on the exclusive use of a particular language at home, there is a heightened likelihood that the language will become ingrained in everyday communication, thus enabling the maintenance and enhancement of language competencies across generations, countering the typical rule of language loss within three generations. Our practical experience from “SAVA” school supports this assertion. As an illustration, I’d like to share my personal experience with several students from America, ranging in age from 10 to 17, who have one or both parents originating from Serbia.

A family in Texas rigorously adhered to a language policy that strictly forbade the use of English within the household, maintaining a bilingual environment with the father speaking Serbian and the mother speaking Russian. Consequently, their children, who conversed exclusively in Russian with their mother and in Serbian with their father, exhibit fluency in three languages and are currently enrolled as students in the upper-intermediate language group (two out of four being my students). In contrast, students from Denmark, raised in a family with Serbian parents, started language learning from a basic A level.

The importance of Family Language Policy (FLP) is further evidenced by the fact that students from the USA, who are homeschooled, have the opportunity to enhance their native language skills through increased communication with their parents (or one of the parents). However, even though they may not spend as much time with their peers and are primarily at home with their parents, this does not necessarily determine which language they will choose as dominant. Therefore, even in homeschooling scenarios where a parent insists on communication in the heritage language (even if the other parent does not speak that language), such students come to our school at the age of ten with advanced language proficiency levels and a desire to learn about culture, tradition, and literature while refining their language skills. Their vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation accuracy are comparable to that of native speakers. Speech imperfections primarily relate to grammatical exceptions or coherence in complex sentences, which is common even among native speakers of the same age. However, if there is no insistence on a strict language policy, and communication with the other parent mainly encourages conversation in the dominant language, the preservation of the mother’s heritage language may not be ensured. In such cases, students typically begin language learning at our school from the initial level. This emphasizes that FLP is the most crucial factor in preserving the native language, regardless of the communication children have with their peers outside the home.

## 2. HERITAGE LINGUISTICS

Minority languages, dialects, and indigenous languages have consistently aroused the interest of linguists due to the various aspects and specificities that distinguish them from the learning or teaching of foreign languages. Within language groups and university classes, individuals familiar with a language from a “household setting” differed from those studying it as a foreign language. It wasn’t just about what they knew, but also their attitude toward the language. Teachers, educators, linguists, and practitioners encountered many challenges when teaching these students, leading to the realization that a different approach may be necessary.

Minority languages and indigenous languages have sparked scholarly interest in the second half of the last century. Guadalupe Valdes wrote about Spanish as a heritage language in the seventies, and Joshua Fishman was writing and teaching about minority languages in the USA during the thirties. This demonstrates that, although not officially referred to as heritage language until the end of the century (the Heritage Language Conference was held in New York in 1999, followed by the Heritage Language Journal in 2002, with many magazines, articles, and conferences organized ever since, as noted by Carreira and Kagan (2017: 153), heritage linguistics indeed has a longstanding tradition.

### 3. SERBIAN AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE

Due to the growing number of Serbian immigrants<sup>1</sup> and their descendants who wish to study their heritage language, there is a strong demand for the development of programs, materials, and plans outlining effective implementation strategies for language lessons.

As noted before – preserving the heritage language is not solely a personal aspiration, but also an integral component of a broader strategy. This strategy often encompasses not only the immigrant's home country but also the educational initiatives of the destination country. While linguists stress the significance of maintaining one's native language, and individuals endeavor to uphold it within their households, many states exhibit a lack of interest and a deficiency in language strategy and planning. In certain countries, as noted by Kelleher and Haynes (2010: 4) and referencing (MacGregor, Mendoza, Spolsky), the preservation of a heritage language has been perceived as contrary to assimilation and thus anti-American<sup>2</sup>.

Beyond the borders of the Republic of Serbia, the diaspora has several avenues for acquiring the Serbian language (as noted by Jovanović and Vučina-Simović) which include: 1) incorporation into the educational systems of recipient countries, 2) supplementary teaching and tutoring falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia, and 3) unofficial teaching conducted in various Serbian cultural centers, primarily within the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as in private schools organized and financed by parents and diaspora associations. However, despite the global presence of Serbian migrants, with only 0.4 percent participating in Serbian language classes

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<sup>1</sup> “According to the official results of the 2020 census in the United States of America, 193,844 Serbs currently live in this country. However, it is believed that the most people of Serbian origin are in Germany. There are different estimates of the number of people of Serbian origin living in Germany, ranging between 400,000 and 800,000, according to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mayor of Vienna, Michael Ludwig, said recently that about 76,000 residents of Vienna have Serbian citizenship, and that there are about 100,000 more who have origins in Serbia. According to the statistical office, 121,643 Serbs live in Austria. It is estimated that more than 30,000 Serbs live in Sweden, and about 10,000 in Norway.”

<https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/gde-zivi-najvise-srba-sta-popisi-kazu-o-nasoj-dijaspori/> [21.2.2024]

<sup>2</sup> “From 1968 until 2002, the Bilingual Education Act provided federal support for the education of speakers of languages other than English. The Bilingual Education Act underwent a number of challenges and reauthorizations through the years, but while it was in effect, it provided some basis for the legal protection of education for language minorities. The situation changed in states such as California, Arizona, and Massachusetts between 1998 and 2002, with the passage of “English-only” initiatives that restrict students' access to first language support in addition to English instruction. This also changed at the federal level when the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) superseded the Bilingual Education Act. At that point, all mention of “bilingual” education was dropped. Instead, NCLB focuses solely on English language development for immigrant and U.S.-born “limited English proficient” students.” (Kelleher, Haynes 2010:2)

according to data from the Ministry of Religion and Diaspora in 2008.” (Jovanović, Vučina-Simović, 2011: 387).

For the benefit of these students and their educators, the Institute for Textbooks (Zavod za udžbenike) in Belgrade developed an e-book titled “Serbian Language and Language Culture” in 2011. This e-book, authored by Nataša Dobrin and Gordana Štasni, serves as a textbook tailored for students ranging from the 4th to the 6th grade of primary school, as a part of *Special Program for the Education Abroad*.

But still, in contrast to Serbian as a foreign language, which benefits from an abundance of materials, textbooks, teaching plans, programs, and Educational Achievement Standards, Serbian as a heritage language encounters three primary challenges: a lack of teaching materials, the absence of a standardized program, and the lack of a comprehensive language policy. Teachers often find themselves lacking written resources and are compelled to use materials intended for teaching Serbian as a foreign language or as a mother tongue.

Moreover, existing books tailored for students learning Serbian as a foreign language may not fully address heritage students’ needs due to varying proficiency levels in different language skills (listening comprehension, reading, writing, and speaking). For instance, textbooks designed for level A1 of Serbian for foreigners typically start with fundamental grammar concepts such as conjugation and cases – topics that heritage students may indeed need due to frequent errors. However, these resources also cover basic vocabulary like greetings and introductions, which heritage students are already familiar with. Consequently, a heritage student’s writing skills may align with A2 levels, while their reading and comprehension skills could extend to a B1 level. On the contrary, grammar textbooks created for Serbian as a mother tongue, offer more detailed explanations than a heritage student might require, potentially becoming redundant for those who seek grammar guidance primarily to enhance their speaking proficiency. All these issues are just a part of a larger problem which is – the absence of a standardized methodology or program.

Since teaching Serbian as a heritage language is a new field in Serbian linguistics, a formalized program or curriculum is yet to be established. However, there was some positive developments last year, marking a shift in this landscape. The Serbian Ministry of Education dispatched thirty teachers to various European countries and the USA with the mission of teaching Serbian as a heritage language. Three subjects were formulated as a result: Serbian language, My Homeland Serbia, and Basics of Serbian Culture. Additionally, a comprehensive textbook was created to aid teachers in structuring their lessons. The ministry is presently crafting three sets of instructional materials for students in different grades (1st-3rd, 4th-6th, and 7th-8th), with completion expected in the latter half of 2024<sup>3</sup>.

In order to prepare these teachers for this educational mission, a study group comprised of ten professors and educators authored a textbook titled “Training Program for Teachers Working Abroad.” „The first part of the Handbook discusses aspects related to organizational and other general issues of importance for the way of carrying out educational work. The second part is dedicated to functional and specific questions of teaching practice, offering concrete materials and exercises, adaptable different educational needs of working with students and the most diverse organizational activities.“<sup>4</sup>

In 2023, Rajna Dragičević, Valentina Ilić, and Vesna Nikolić authored the “First Handbook for Serbian as a Heritage Language” titled “On the Wings of Words.” This

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<sup>3</sup> [https://dijaspora.zuov.gov.rs/\[4.3.2024\]](https://dijaspora.zuov.gov.rs/[4.3.2024])

<sup>4</sup> [https://zuov.gov.rs/prirucnik-za-nastavnike-koji-se-upucuju-na-rad-u-inostranstvu/\[4.3.2024\]](https://zuov.gov.rs/prirucnik-za-nastavnike-koji-se-upucuju-na-rad-u-inostranstvu/[4.3.2024])

comprehensive handbook is designed for three proficiency levels and encompasses over three hundred exercises for students. Recognizing the growing trend of educated people leaving Serbia and having families abroad, Professor Dr. Vesna Lompar initiated a seminar titled “Contemporary Challenges for Teaching Serbian as a Heritage Language.” The purpose was to draw attention to the responsibility of the Serbian government and institutions dealing with the Serbian language. The focus was on children growing up abroad who need to maintain a connection with Serbia, particularly through language learning (Dragičević, Ilić 2023: 5).

While this may appear to be a modest stride, the acknowledgment that teaching Serbian as a heritage language necessitates its own methodology, curriculum, and materials is crucial for in terms of developing a new field and empowering teachers to cognize and comprehend its specifics.

Lastly, an increasing number of educators, practitioners, and linguists are delving into the complexities and unique aspects of Serbian as a heritage language. Marina Janjić authored a book titled “Serbian Language for Students in Diaspora,” accompanied by the publication of handbooks and the organization of lessons in private schools with specialized methodologies. A notable example is the online school “Sava,” where I had the pleasure of teaching Serbian language, culture, and tradition. This institution has developed a distinctive methodology, program, and materials tailored for teaching Serbian as a heritage language.

#### 4. HERITAGE STUDENTS – WHO ARE THEY AND HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM STUDENTS STUDYING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

Narrow definition by Polinsky and Kagan describes heritage learners as those who were exposed to a particular language in childhood but did not fully learn it because another language became dominant. Broad definition links heritage language with those who were raised with a strong cultural connection to a particular language, usually through family interaction (Polinsky and Kagan, 2007).

Once in the classroom, the teacher will observe notable distinctions between these students and those studying language as a foreign subject. The primary differences encompass:

1. Identity matters:
2. The Immeasurable knowledge
3. Motivation
4. Competence

##### 4.1. Identity matters

Identity matters form the basis for everything else, as there is a strong connection between identity and the language being used. “Researchers highlight the fact that identity, self, and agency are linguistically constructed and negotiated” (Val, Vinogradova 2010:2). Children growing up in families where a language other than the dominant one is spoken may face challenges in adapting to new environments.

The language learning process is intercultural, as these children simultaneously inherit two different cultures. Usually, they start learning the dominant language around the age of five, or even earlier, when they start kindergarten. It is very important for them to assimilate, to build identity and become a part of the group. Learning the dominant language and accepting and assimilating in the mainstream culture can be crucial for the years to come. It might be one of the reasons that parents also communicate with children

in the dominant language. By the time they start school, this language becomes their comfort zone—spoken with friends and peers. Without a strong family language policy about using exclusively heritage language at home, there's a good chance that children may forget their heritage language by the time they become teenagers or even earlier. As Val and Vinogradova pointed out “language capital is part of one's cultural capital, where identity is developed, described, and contested” (2010:3) and children sometimes may not see the cultural capital of their heritage language, since it doesn't have that “cultural or market level” (2010:3). That's why preserving heritage language has to be their decision which usually takes a lot of time and effort since speaking with grandmother or parents will not provide everything they would get in a classroom environment.

The consequences from an identity perspective are significant. Even if the child is completely fluent in the dominant language and speaks it without a foreign accent, which is often the case, their parents speak another language at home. First-generation immigrants, as written before, often maintain a connection to their mother tongue and culture through activities like listening to music from their homeland, watching television, and following cultural events, including sports. However, if children do not speak or understand their heritage language well enough to share their parents' interests (as observed in our school experience), they may struggle to engage in conversations with their parents or with their relatives in their parents' homeland.

Joshua Fishman emphasizes the importance of this connection to a grandmother, stating that one will not learn their heritage language without one. However, the issue extends beyond language acquisition—it can significantly impact one's development if they lose connection with their relatives.

Identity changes throughout life and it is influenced by factors such as age, societal dynamics, and political climates. Depending on one's “language capital”, particularly language proficiency, a child has the opportunity to shape his identity. This proficiency can produce numerous psychological and cognitive benefits, as emphasized by M. Polinsky<sup>5</sup>, which become evident later in life. However, it also entails challenges, as it may necessitate reconciling various aspects of identity when integrating into a society and a group. Heritage language speakers thus engage in many negotiation of their identities, navigating not only within dominant language communities but also within their heritage language communities.

Ethnic identity, in particular, can oscillate and lead to ambivalence. It is crucial to approach students with sensitivity, recognizing that they may have strong feelings about their identity from a young age. Slobodan Selenić addresses this complex theme beautifully in his novel, “Fathers and Forefathers”, illustrating the fluctuation of identity over time. This spectrum can range from a positive affirmation – “I love who I am; my national identity forms the foundation of my opinions and way of thinking” – to a negative stance – “I hate my identity; it troubles me.” The question of identity is anything but simple – encompassing national, gender, and many other identities, with language identity being just one facet among them.

“Identity is dynamic and changes depending on the goals of interaction and the situations in which individuals and groups find themselves.”(Val, Vinogradova 2010:2) Guadalupe Walds also explores this theme, highlighting how some students actively seek connections to the challenges their home country faces. Conversely, others may exhibit total indifference. It's essential to note that some individuals even dislike the term

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<sup>5</sup> Polinsky, M, 2015, *Cognitive Benefits of Bilingualism*,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-ml2dD4SIk>

“heritage” due to its association with the past. “We have to understand that ethnolinguistic complexity as teachers”, says Valds<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4.2. The immeasurable knowledge

The immeasurable knowledge is one of the problems teachers face is assessing students who possess certain knowledge in their native language. In contrast to testing foreign students, oral and grammar placement tests might not be the best choice for heritage students, as these tests can provide misleading results. Heritage students usually demonstrate ability to communicate fluently in basic conversations e.g. when talking about themselves and their family, since these skills sharpened throughout repeated practice. Relying solely on this can mislead teachers as they may not accurately reflect the student’s language proficiency.

Traditional grammar tests frequently produce inaccurate results due to the prevalence of grammatical errors commonly made by heritage learners. Relatives and grandparents, while engaging in long-awaited conversations with their grandchildren over Internet, prioritize immersing the conversation over grammatical corrections. So, it shouldn’t be assumed that a relative will automatically take on the role of an educator. While parents often fulfill this role, they can only do so effectively if they speak the standard variant of the language and are knowledgeable about grammar rules. However, students often inherit speech patterns from their parents, which they then combine with grammatical errors influenced by the dominant language. Therefore, one of my students, who is fluent in Serbian and can express himself on various topics with great speed, still makes a lot of grammatical mistakes. Correcting these mistakes can be quite challenging because they have become ingrained in his speech and are now part of his language use. On the other hand, their reading and comprehension skills, as well as their vocabulary, usually significantly surpasses their knowledge of grammatical norms.

Maria Polinsky, who researches and evaluates effective methods for assessing student language proficiency at Harvard University’s Polinsky Lab, proposes that vocabulary tests, such as reading comprehension exercises or matching images with corresponding text, offer more precise insights into language acquisition than grammar placement tests. These assessments provide more accurate information regarding language proficiency. Additionally, Olga Kagan suggests a three-part assessment approach, comprising oral examinations, short essays, and a questionnaire about personal background. However, Polinsky contends that this method may not be suitable for beginner students (Polinsky, 2015: 17).

Lacorte, Canabal point out that biographical data that are particularly important include age at immigration, family relationships and composition, family attitudes toward assimilation and language preservation, personal interests, and academic or professional aspirations (2002:111). It is difficult to really meet your students’ needs and to tailor programs and materials unless at least some of these questions haven’t been answered. For instance Kagan writes that students of Russian as a HL in the UCLA were placed in 3 groups based on biographical information – when did they leave Russian speaking country and what level of education they got in it<sup>7</sup>. In addition to that, Russian-speaking students

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<sup>6</sup> Guadalupe Valds *The Power of the Heritage Language in Identity Formation and Engagement*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1EIPITNyt4&t=790s> [7.3.2024]

<sup>7</sup> Group 1, the most proficient group, comprises students who graduated from high school in Russia or a Russian-speaking country, Group 2 consists of students who attended school in a Russian-speaking country for five to



at UCLA (41 respondents) were asked to translate a series of sentences from English into Russian. The sentences tested students' knowledge of grammar. (Kagan 2005:216)

At School “Sava,” we evaluate language proficiency using a dual approach. After assessing proficiency across four language skills through a comprehensive questionnaire, we conduct trial lessons, which may involve several groups, to create an environment best for stimulating student progress and fostering optimal language acquisition. Through this process, we strive to identify the most effective and motivating settings for our students' progress. An environment that encourages development and progress involves not only language proficiency comparable to other students in the group but also sharing similarities in age, interests, and overall compatibility with fellow students. This includes alignment in temperament, mentality, aspirations, and motivation for learning.

### 4.3. Motivation

Motivation is a significant area of inquiry concerning heritage languages. During the first few years of childhood, a heritage language often serves as the child's mother tongue, shaping the earliest expressions and perceptions of the world. However, as previously mentioned, the dominant language gradually replaces the heritage language once formal education begins, posing a challenge to regain the motivation to relearn the heritage language.

Integrating the heritage language into a child's already packed schedule demands time and effort. It's plausible that a child might prefer engaging in other activities, such as sports or learning a language perceived as more “marketable” than their heritage language. In such cases, external motivation becomes crucial. Parents who prioritized the acquisition of the dominant language during the child's formative years since it is viewed as the “basis for mainstream educational achievement and civic participation, and it is related to processes of acculturation or adaptation to a new social environment.” (Kelleher, Haynes 2010:2) may later realize the importance of heritage language when the child struggles to understand or communicate with relatives.

As Kelleher and Haynes pointed out: “The goals of individual heritage language learners range from personal (e.g., the desire to communicate with a relative), to community cohesion, to religious participation, to ideological (e.g., the desire to see one's language or culture preserved), to academic and professional.” (2010:4)

“Some data are available to indicate the nature of HLLs' motivation: in a survey of speakers of Russian conducted at UCLA in 2000, 16 of 41 students named preserving family ties as the main reason for studying Russian, 31 named their desire to preserve Russian culture and 33 said they studied Russian so that they could read Russian literature. Only seven mentioned career goals.” (Kagan 2005: 219)

In the small survey I conducted, when asked about their reasons for learning the Serbian language, my students (ranging in age from 10 to 17) primarily cited their desire to communicate with their grandparents, their interest in reading and writing in Serbian, their aspiration to enhance their grammar skills, their Serb heritage, and their desire to establish connections with Serbia. Additionally, they found the language intriguing and believed that learning it would help them in acquiring proficiency in other languages.

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seven years (an approximate equivalent of American junior high school, Group 3: (a) students who attended elementary school in a Russian-speaking country, and (b) students who emigrated as preschoolers or were born in the USA to Russian-speaking parents, and have been educated entirely in English. )

Thus, their motivation to learn Serbian appears to stem from personal reasons, aimed at maintaining cultural ties with their relatives and addressing issues of identity. Notably, none of them mentioned aspirations to live or work in Serbia or pursue a career there. This observation supports the hypothesis that learning one's native language is predominantly driven by factors related to identity and personal sentiment, rather than practical goals, which are typically the primary motivators in learning a foreign language.

Heritage students' motivation for studying their heritage language can serve as a guiding principle for materials selection and curriculum design as Kagan points out (2005: 216) since it differs significantly from traditional foreign language learning programs, which often focus on structure, grammar, and the gradual adoption of language norms followed by vocabulary acquisition.

#### **4.4. Competences and challenges**

So far, we have discussed the distinctions between native language learners and those learning a foreign language, particularly in terms of identity, motivation, and language usage. In this section, our focus shifts to assessing students' language competence across four areas: speaking, grammar, reading, and writing.

Our teaching experience has revealed that native language students typically demonstrate stronger abilities in language comprehension and speaking/pronunciation. However, they often encounter challenges with grammar and writing. This difficulty can be attributed to the fact that the heritage language is primarily spoken, not written, and is learned primarily from parents. Consequently, it may involve both standard and non-standard forms of the language.

When foreigners start learning the Serbian language, they typically cannot speak it, except in rare cases where they might know a few words from music or films they've encountered. In contrast, native Serbian speakers usually begin their language learning journey with some level of familiarity with the language. Even if they cannot speak it fluently, they are often exposed to Serbian through interactions with their parents or exposure to music and television shows watched by their parents, which helps them acquire a certain vocabulary. This exposure facilitates easier comprehension, even at lower levels of proficiency. Consequently, their speaking skills tend to be at a higher level compared to those encountering the language for the first time. Some of them exhibit better pronunciation, while learners of Serbian as a foreign language often struggle with affricates (c, đ, č, dž, ć) pronunciation and distinguishing these sounds in words. Additionally, it's quite common even for heritage students to have difficulty with the pronunciation of affricates, resulting in a pronunciation that falls somewhere in between the correct sounds. While this may not be immediately noticeable in speech or significantly impact understanding, it can lead to substantial challenges in writing. Students often struggle to identify which sound they have pronounced. For instance, they may confuse words like "kuće" and "kuče" or "đak" and "džak" and so on.

Regarding grammar, students learning Serbian as a foreign language typically receive structured instruction with a comprehensive plan and evaluation. As a result, their grasp of grammar is methodical and gradually improves over time, leading to more lasting and solid retention. In contrast, native language students often encounter difficulties in grasping grammar rules due to their pre-existing familiarity with some speech structures, often characterized by incorrect grammar usage. Additionally, the lack of teaching materials for

the native language complicates grammar acquisition beyond the A1 level, resulting in an approach primarily focused on error identification and correction.

Due to its phonetic script (one phoneme corresponds to one grapheme), reading is a relatively easier aspect of learning the Serbian language. The Latin alphabet is typically introduced first, and learners usually adapt to it quite easily, with the exception of certain sounds like affricates and specific sonants (ž, đ, š, ć, č, lj, nj). Learning the Cyrillic alphabet, however, poses a greater challenge, particularly for foreign language students who have had no prior exposure to it. In contrast, native language students often possess some familiarity with the Cyrillic alphabet even before formal schooling begins. This is because they are exposed to it at home, where their parents may read to them in Cyrillic, thus facilitating early contact with this script. They usually learn how to write their name and first words in Cyrillic script.

When it comes to writing, the situation is quite intriguing. Students of Serbian as a foreign language typically learn to write concurrently with learning to read and understand the meaning of words. Although this process may be slow, it is grounded and guided within the classroom, leading to fewer challenges in writing. However, exceptions arise due to phonetic or morphological changes, of which there are eight in Serbian, often causing confusion among students when writing.

On the other hand, the writing abilities of native language students present a different scenario. Despite often possessing an average or high level of proficiency in Serbian, particularly in comprehension, reading, and mastering grammatical norms, they frequently make numerous errors in writing. These errors primarily stem from the fact that their native language is primarily spoken, used for communication rather than written expression. Consequently, they often encounter difficulties not only in spelling words correctly, but also in issues such as combined and split writing. Additionally, phonemes that are pronounced correctly may be spelled incorrectly. Therefore, proficiency in writing in the native language holds significant importance, especially in higher education, necessitating special attention across different learning levels.

**Table 1**

Competencies	Foreign language students	vs. Heritage language students
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No speaking abilities (just a few Serbian words, or none)</li> <li>▪ Difficulties at pronouncing</li> <li>▪ Difficulties at differentiating Serbian voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Better pronunciation</li> <li>▪ Usually start with some basic vocabulary</li> <li>▪ Well hearing and differentiating similar voices (s:c, p:b, dž:đ, č:ć...)</li> </ul>
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Slower but structured acquisition of grammatical rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Often make many mistakes in speech</li> <li>▪ Have difficulties at accepting grammatical rule (since they've learned to speak incorrectly)</li> </ul>
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acquire Cyrillic slowly and with difficulties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acquire Cyrillic faster since they are introduced with it in early childhood</li> </ul>
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Learn spelling simultaneously with learning meaning, word by word</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make many mistakes in writing since they language usage is mostly oral, not written</li> </ul>

## 5. METHODOLOGY OF THE “SAVA” SCHOOL

Olga Kagan presents heritage language learning as a “triad that includes community, family, and formal education. If all three elements are not in place, the acquisition process suffers”. (2005:213)

We have previously discussed the significance of society, or the country of origin, in preserving the native language, which is evident in the provision of support such as materials, qualified teaching staff, and structured language learning programs. Additionally, we emphasized the crucial role of the family in preserving the native language as the foundation and creator of linguistic identity.

Now, shifting our focus to the third aspect—formal education, specifically language education—we must begin with the organization of classes before delving into their structure and implementation. Regarding the organization of classes and learning options for Serbian as a heritage language, we previously outlined both formal (within the school setting) and informal methods, such as occasional classes organized by entities like the Serbian embassy, church, or other organizations. However, to sustain language preservation and foster linguistic culture, sporadic efforts are insufficient. What is required is continuity, which can only be achieved through regular language instruction.

At the school where I teach Serbian, students are required to attend three language lessons per week, along with optional history and cultural history lessons. Additionally, over the weekend they get digital material with tasks and exercises, which serve as a homework, allowing them to review and practice what they have learned during the week. This structured approach ensures continuity in their Serbian language learning, with a minimum of three hours dedicated to Serbian practice each week. As a result of this consistent practice, noticeable progress in students' knowledge and proficiency levels can be observed over time.

Guadalupe Valdes highlights the challenges involved in teaching heritage languages. In contrast to teaching foreign languages, where the emphasis is often on teaching students how to speak, read and write by acquiring proper grammatical terminology to establish a structured system, a different approach is needed for heritage languages. In teaching heritage languages, students are not only interested in the language itself but also in the subject matter. Therefore, to capacitate them to get to the subject, it is essential to first teach them how to read and write proficiently. This approach acknowledges that developing literacy skills is fundamental to accessing and understanding the subject matter in heritage language instruction.<sup>8</sup>

Guadalupe Valdes emphasizes the importance of the “conceptualization of language”<sup>9</sup> in language instruction, whether it be a second, foreign, or heritage language. Regardless of the specific language being taught, having a well-defined program and plan is crucial for effective language instruction. This program should outline clear objectives, methods, and strategies tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of the learners. By carefully conceptualizing language instruction, educators can ensure a systematic and comprehensive approach to teaching that facilitates language acquisition and proficiency development.

“Sava,” an online school dedicated to Serbian language, culture, and tradition, has been operating for four years, during which time it has educated over 7,000 students from 73

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<sup>8</sup> Guadalupe Valdes, *The Power of the Heritage Language in Identity Formation and Engagement*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1EIPITNyt4&t=790s> [7.3.2024]

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

countries worldwide. Our dedicated team of teachers and scholars coming from diverse backgrounds in language, literature, history, and art has crafted a comprehensive curriculum. This curriculum not only fosters proficiency in the four essential language skills — reading, writing, speaking, and understanding — but also fosters a deep appreciation for Serbian tradition, culture, and folklore.

Recognizing the unique nature of heritage language instruction, Maria Carreira and Olga Kagan emphasized the necessity for it to be “community-based” (Polinsky, 2015: 15). Each lesson, whether focusing on vocabulary or grammar, is deeply rooted in the principle that the curriculum must be interconnected with Serbian culture and tradition. As a result, it is not uncommon for our classes to incorporate hands-on activities such as preparing Serbian traditional dishes like *proja* or Serbian-style pancakes, particularly during lessons covering Serbian national cuisine. Likewise, we may engage in traditional customs such as dyeing eggs in the traditional way during lessons centered on Easter traditions. Additionally, we explore customs related to various traditional holidays, such as tying parents and asking for gifts during pre-Christmas holidays or learning about the Christmas traditions of preparing Christmas bread and hiding coins in it. Through these immersive cultural experiences, students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Serbian heritage and traditions.

To effectively combine material from culture, history, tradition, and literature with essential grammatical categories while enhancing writing and reading skills, our teaching approach must be grounded in an integrative principle. This involves seamlessly integrating cultural content and literary works with grammatical instruction, providing students with a holistic understanding of the language and its cultural context. By intertwining language learning with cultural exploration, historical insights, and literary analysis, we create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that not only fosters linguistic proficiency but also cultivates a deeper appreciation for Serbian culture and heritage.

For instance, when studying the First Serbian Uprising, which coincides with the Day of Statehood, as well as the day of the voting of the first Serbian modern and liberal constitution, special emphasis is placed on illuminating the intricate historical events. Topics such as the life of the Serbs under Ottoman rule, the catalysts for the uprising, the pivotal figure of Karadžorđe Petrović, and the circumstances surrounding the drafting of the first Serbian constitution are presented to students through engaging and enjoyable activities to prevent overwhelming them. For example, while learning about Karadžorđe Petrović, students may create portraits of him, examine images of his childhood home, depict the Serbian coat of arms on flags, and complement these activities with music or age-appropriate video material related to the topic. Similarly, when exploring Women's Day, we take the opportunity to commemorate significant Serbian women who have left an inerasable mark on Serbian culture through their humanity or remarkable professional achievements. Students may then create greeting cards for mothers and grandmothers from Serbia, writing messages in written Cyrillic script. By intertwining historical narratives with creative and interactive activities, we not only facilitate deeper understanding but also foster appreciation for Serbian heritage and culture among our students.

At “Sava,” we firmly believe in the power of forging connections, both with culture and tradition, which provides numerous linguistic and cognitive benefits. Moreover, fostering connections among peers is integral to our teaching philosophy. Through collaborative group work, our students often form friendships rooted in shared interests and cultural backgrounds. Serbian language serves as a common bond among them, transcending geographical boundaries and preserving these meaningful connections.

Therefore, we practice numerous activities that allow students to socialize outside of the classroom. One such activity is our “Big Break” gatherings held on Saturdays, conducted via Zoom. During these sessions, students from different countries come together to engage in discussions on various topics or participate in games. All communication occurs in Serbian, fostering language practice and immersion. While teachers serve as moderators, their role is not to correct language errors but rather to guide and suggest activities.

Additionally, our students have the opportunity to socialize during the summer months, particularly those who spend time with their grandparents in Serbia. At our school in Belgrade, “Zvezdobrojci,” students can immerse themselves in live Serbian language practice with their teachers, participate in enjoyable and educational activities, and interact with local students. Furthermore, many of our students join summer camps organized by the “Sava” school in Kopaonik and Tara. Last year, for example, a whole group of students from Europe arranged to attend one of these camps together, fostering friendships and strengthening their connection to Serbia and the Serbian language.

It's worth noting the significant bond that develops between students and teachers. Scholars in heritage language education, such as Kagan, Polinsky, and Carreira, emphasize the importance of teachers in fostering students' self-confidence and ensuring the continuity of language use and learning. Teachers play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and roots, serving as special figures for families. At our school, this relationship is nurtured through close communication with parents, who are kept informed about their child's progress and are involved in advising and guiding each other. Additionally, visits, exchanges of birthday greetings, and gift-giving further strengthen the bond between students and teachers, fostering a supportive and enriching learning environment.

As previously mentioned, teaching a native language with a wealth of material from culture, history, and tradition can be very demanding and potentially overwhelming for students. Embracing the power of play, we utilize a variety of online tools—including Canva, Blooket, ThingLink, and Wordwall—to create dynamic, interactive learning experiences that are accessible and engaging for all learners. By making our classes and materials both informative and enjoyable, we strive to ensure that every student can grasp and appreciate the richness of the Serbian language and culture.

When teaching a heritage language, it is essential to have a structured plan, program, and agenda for what and how to teach, but on the other hand – also to remain attuned to your students' interests. This involves deviating from the written program when necessary to accommodate their preferences. We strive to bridge their interests with the subjects we aim to teach, fostering a meaningful connection.

## 6. FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Serbian as a heritage language is still in its early stages within the field of language science. Both the analysis of Serbian as a heritage language and teaching practices in this area are still in the process of development at the state level. The Ministry of the Republic of Serbia has made some initial efforts to create basic materials and a curriculum for learning Serbian as a heritage language, but these efforts are still in their infancy, incomplete, and in draft form. Therefore, there is a pressing need to devise a detailed and evaluated curriculum and program for learning Serbian as a heritage language across all four language skills.

Despite the lack of institutional support, an increasing number of immigrants are seeking opportunities for their children to learn the Serbian language. Many teachers, both independently and within schools such as “SAVA,” are making efforts to compensate for this gap and provide instruction in Serbian as a heritage language. At “SAVA” school, for example, we have developed a comprehensive program and curriculum for learning Serbian at different levels (A1, A2, B1.1, B1.2) and ages (under 7, 7-9, 10-12, 13+, adults).

In addition to curriculum development, it is crucial to devise effective methods for assessing students' language proficiency, which should not only evaluate their grammar knowledge but also assess their vocabulary (both active and passive), comprehension, and communication abilities. Once these assessments are designed, the next step is to tailor instruction and materials to meet the individual needs of students based on their level of proficiency.

While there is still much work to be done by linguists, teachers, and educators in the field of heritage language education, it is encouraging that the groundwork has been laid, and progress has been made, especially with the milestone achieved at the state and official level in the past year of 2023.

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## **PODUČAVANJE ZAVIČAJNOG JEZIKA – ZAŠTO JE TOLIKO DRUGAČIJE? IZAZOVI U PODUČAVANJU SRPSKOG KAO ZAVIČAJNOG JEZIKA**

*Mada interesovanje za očuvanje naslednih jezika potiče još iz šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina dvadesetog veka (Kagan, Dillon 2008:145), poslednje decenije ponudile su značajne rezultate. Ovaj rad ima za cilj da ukaže na probleme u nastavi srpskog jezika kao zavičajnog i pokaže kako se ona razlikuje od nastave srpskog kao stranog jezika. Sam pristup učenicima mora biti drugačiji, sa obzirom na to da njihove aspiracije često prevazilaze samo savladavanje jezika. Proces podučavanja i učenja često uključuje pitanja identiteta, psihološki, socijalni i „interkulturalni teret“ (Kagan 2012:72) dvojezičnosti i pripadnosti dvema kulturama. To su pitanja koja sa pravim pristupom u školama jezika i kod kuće mogu postati pravi prerogativ u multikulturalnom svetu. Stoga je neophodno da se nastavnici, naučnici i praktičari okupe i da uz državnu podršku i jezičku politiku naprave ono što se naziva „nastavni plan i program zasnovan na poznavanju zajednice“ (Kareira, Kagan 2017). Ovakav, posebno napravljen kurikulum uzima u obzir kognitivne, afektivne i bihevioralne potrebe učenika, te bi pomogao da se „suoče sa dva kulturna sveta koja su istovremeno nasledili“ (Kagan 2012: 80). Ovaj rad takođe opisuje metode koje se koriste u Školi srpskog jezika, kulture i tradicije „SAVA“, koja radi sa preko 500 porodica u 70 zemalja širom sveta.*

Ključne reči: *zavičajni jezik, dvojezičnost, metodologija, identitet, inovacija*



## LANGUAGE ECONOMY: ABBREVIATIONS AND EMOJI IN SOCIAL MEDIA

UDC 003.07/.08:004.738.5

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**Andrijana Kjose, Mira Bekar**

Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia

ORCID iDs: Andrijana Kjose  
Mira Bekar

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9996-9523>  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8649-6232>

**Abstract.** *The pervasive influence of abbreviations and emoji in social media communication is a subject of contemporary analysis, revealing insights into their multifaceted roles and implications. Abbreviations not only foster brevity and readability but also serve as linguistic markers, signaling group membership and reinforcing social identities (Thurlow and Brown 2003). Emoji enrich textual content by imbuing it with affective nuances and contextual cues, facilitating cross-cultural communication and engendering empathy in online interactions (Derks et al. 2008). Individuals navigate an interplay between linguistic and visual cues, utilizing contextual clues to infer meanings. For this qualitative study, a cohort of 15 participants, both English and Macedonian speakers, engaging in a total of 150 conversations across prominent social media platforms and 10 posts with comments on Reddit, formed a corpus for analysis. Textual data, were collected from diverse platforms including Viber, Reddit, Instagram, Telegram, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp. The findings show that 1) participants use abbreviations and emoji for the purpose of language economy and the aforementioned enrich language; 2) expressing emotional states on social media is made easier with abbreviations and emoji. We hope this research will encourage other scholars from various discipline to address this topic from different angles.*

**Key words:** *language economy, abbreviations, emoji, social media, chats*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The effort to establish and maintain social connections, fulfilling personal and professional objectives, is primarily facilitated through online platforms. This study's significance lies in shedding light on how discourse and conversation analysis of everyday social activities,

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Submitted April 11, 2024; Accepted May 7, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Andrijana Kjose  
Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje  
E-mail: [andrijana.taseva.flf@gmail.com](mailto:andrijana.taseva.flf@gmail.com)

such as online chats, contribute to a deeper understanding of our personal and professional development as individuals, highlighting language's role as a form of social action. Our motivation was to undertake a comprehensive investigation, categorizing Netspeak usage in social media across both English and Macedonian contexts, without directly comparing chatting practices between the two languages. Instead, our focus was on identifying the primary motivations behind participants' use of abbreviations and emoji in social media chats and examining how this usage influences language economy.

The concept of language economy was introduced by André Martinet in his *Économie des changements phonétiques* (1955). Martinet studied the manifestations of economy in phonology and syntax and defined it as the unstable balance between the needs of communication—which are always changing—and natural human inertia, two essential forces contributing to the optimization of the linguistic system (Vicentini 2003). Every act of communication requires clarity and precision on the one hand, and on the other hand natural inertia – that is, carefree and quick transmission of a message. The principle of least effort, which was introduced by Zipf, in 1949, significantly inspired Martinet's work (Vicentini 2003). According to this, the principle of economy means the removal or avoidance of any uneconomic change that may be an obstacle in understanding or conveying a particular message in communication. Since language communication is a dynamic process that is in a constant state of change, it is normal to take an approach of shortening and erasing which leads to a state of maximum economy that must be constantly maintained.

In this paper, we define the concepts of abbreviations, emoji, and language economy, present our research context and analyze 150 chats along with 10 long Reddit posts with extensive comments' section. Our central premise posits that online chatting constitutes a form of social action characterized by ongoing, deliberate adjustments and spontaneous adaptations of participants' communicative behaviors. This study delved into the natural evolution of our communication practices, influenced by factors such as the interlocutor's identity, as well as our desired perception by others.

## 2. DEFINITIONS AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The constant change in language stems from the expansion of the use of digital tools, which leads to the eruption of completely new words, genres and styles. It is evident that chats on social media affect the language we use to communicate in a way that it becomes so different at moments we need to stop and think about what the interlocutor wants to tell us. Oftentimes researchers found themselves in a conundrum of a kind: whether abbreviations and emoji enrich the vocabulary of the language or they destroy the language. Contrary to what John Humphreys claims, people who send messages using abbreviations are not vandals, and in no way "ruin the vocabulary" as he points out in his story "I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language" (Humphrys 2007)."

The generations that have grown up with technology and the social media type of communication are also considered "bilingual" generations, because they are used to the daily usage of this "new" type of English language and its various forms used in computer-mediated communication (Tuttle 2021). It is more than evident that face-to-face communication is different from communication on social media. This need to simplify communication in social media also leads to the emergence of cyber spelling which is an integral part of language economy (Al-sa'di and Hamdan 2005).

## 2.1. Abbreviations

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a written word or phrase. Abbreviations may be used to save space and time, to avoid repetition of long words and phrases, or simply to conform to conventional usage (Merriam-Webster n.d.). Abbreviations play a pivotal role in contemporary communication, particularly within the context of social media and digital platforms. These condensed forms of language enable users to convey messages efficiently and effectively, catering to the fast-paced nature of online interactions (Crystal 2001). Abbreviations not only aid in overcoming character limitations imposed by various communication channels but also serve as linguistic shortcuts that facilitate rapid comprehension among users (Thurlow and Brown 2003). Moreover, they contribute to the formation of online communities and subcultures, where shared knowledge of abbreviations fosters a sense of belonging and group identity. Through the strategic use of abbreviations, individuals can establish rapport and demonstrate affiliation with specific social groups or online communities, reflecting the dynamic nature of digital communication (Thurlow and Brown 2003). This phenomenon is exemplified by the widespread use of abbreviations and emoji, which serve as shorthand expressions in digital discourse (Crystal 2001).

Abbreviations condense language to facilitate rapid exchanges, while emoji add nuanced emotional cues to textual content (Miller et al, 2016). There are concerns in other fields such as medicine because medical experts have observed that excessive use of abbreviations can pose a problem, as it may lead to inaccuracies in clinical work (Hamiel et al. 2018; Soto-Arnáez et al. 2019). As digital communication platforms continue to proliferate and evolve, understanding the dynamics of language economy and the strategic use of abbreviations and emoji becomes paramount for effective communication and successful engagement online.

## 2.2. Emoji

The utilization of emoji has surged in popularity across various social networking platforms such as X (ex-Twitter), Instagram and Facebook, providing alternative avenues for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. The content generated within these digital spaces is dynamic and contingent upon the level of engagement from the audience. Notably, platforms like X, Reddit, and Facebook foster a collaborative environment wherein content is jointly constructed and refined through the active participation of numerous readers and writers, herein referred to as users. Our thesis posits that the economy of language extends into the realm of extra linguistic elements and the mutual sharing of individual psychological, cognitive, and existential contexts.

Emoji have become an indispensable component of online social interactions, exhibiting a transformation reminiscent of verbal language, as highlighted by Herring (2020). Scholarly inquiry has revealed a notable evolution of emoji into a distinct form of language, distinguished by its graphical features (Ge and Herring 2018; Monti et al. 2016). Some scholars argue that due to its pictographic nature, emoji language holds the potential for universal comprehension and employment (Ai et al. 2017). One of the features of emoji is their use in sequences, which are combinations of several emoji to represent one image that the interlocutor wants to convey. As mentioned above, emoji are graphic symbols that have predefined names and code (Unicode), which can represent not only facial expressions, abstract concepts and statements/feelings, but also animals, plants, activities, gestures/parts of pictures and objects (Rodrigues et al. 2017). Although relatively nascent compared to emoticons, emoji have rapidly

ascended to the forefront of social media communication (Grannan 2022), culminating in the designation of the "Crying Tears of Joy" emoji as the Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year in 2015 and the number one emoji used in 2023 worldwide.

### 2.3. Language economy

Language economy refers to the efficient use of linguistic resources to convey information **concisely** and effectively, often within specific communicative contexts. In essence, it involves maximizing the communicative impact while minimizing the linguistic effort expended (Aitchison 2001). This concept is particularly relevant in digital communication, where character limitations and the need for rapid exchanges necessitate succinct expression. Language economy encompasses various strategies, such as the use of abbreviations, acronyms, and emoji, to streamline communication without compromising clarity or meaning (Thurlow and Brown 2003). Additionally, it involves the judicious selection of words and phrases to convey complex ideas succinctly, often relying on shared knowledge and contextual cues to enhance comprehension (Crystal 2001).

Interactional routines play a great part in coping with day-to-day situations. Interactions may get routinized and drawn from a standard repertoire of interactions with certain people (Bekar 2015). However, the recurrent sequences which an interactant may have drawn from a pool of previously accomplished interactions, may be new for a new co-chatter. Some interactional routines become persistent due to practical reasons of efficient exchange of information (Erickson 1996), but others remain specific to the individual. Additionally, Werry (1996) showed that overlap and interruption are impossible because the chatting system is linear and presents the whole lines or utterances of the chatters line-by-line. Moreover, it was found that communities of interlocutors created their own abbreviations, and aimed at brevity, while short syntax and subject pronouns were often deleted. Even emoticons were seen as markers of brevity. By prioritizing brevity and efficiency, language economy enables effective communication in diverse settings, including social media, business correspondence, and everyday conversation.

## 3. CONTEXT AND METHODS

This study delves into a complex research problem that holds significant importance in understanding participants' communication strategies used in social media. The sample comprises 15 respondents aged between 21 and 31, majority of whom are employed by foreign companies and communicate exclusively in English across various social media platforms, while the remainder either study or work abroad. This aspect is particularly noteworthy since the participants' native language is Macedonian, yet they demonstrate fluency in English at the B2 level as per the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Each respondent contributed 10 chats, resulting in a total of 150 chats (each lasting 10-15 minutes). These conversations occur in a continuous time sequence via applications such as Viber, Instagram, Facebook/Messenger, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, as well as Reddit posts, several of which exceed the number of 400 comments. After the first phase when they sent us the chats, we conducted short interviews with the participants, which were very insightful.

The main research questions analyzed and discussed in this paper are:

1. Is the economy of language the basic reason for the use of abbreviations and emoji?
2. Are emoji and abbreviations used as tools for expressing the emotional state of the participants in online communication?
3. Are abbreviations used as a new type of cryptic language or do they destroy the standard language variation?

The online discussions analyzed for the purposes of this study are quite extensive as they are open to the public and anyone who reads them can comment regardless if people know each other or not. The number of comments varies constantly in online discussions. When the analysis was done, in three discussions, the number of comments ranged from 50 to 70 comments, and for a longer discussion there were over 400 comments on Reddit.

The discussion with the largest number of comments is in English because Reddit's English-language forums have more visibility worldwide, and also English is used by participants whose native language is not English. The discussions in Macedonian are shorter because the number of Reddit users whose L1 is Macedonian is significantly smaller. In the two discussions in Macedonian as L1, examples of using phrases in English can be easily observed, sometimes entire sentences are used in English, sometimes only certain abbreviations but again in English as a foreign language. The inclusion of discussions from Reddit significantly increases the sample, which, in turn, further gives more weight to the research and the results obtained from the same.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

As stated above, language economy, the practice of conveying information concisely and effectively, has become increasingly important in various communicative contexts, particularly within the realm of online communication (Aitchison 2001). Our research shows that the use of abbreviations and emoji has retained some of their main and primary uses such as language economy and expressing emotions through these pictographic depictions, but additionally the examples showed that participants use abbreviations and emoji for different purposes too.

If we observe Chat 1 (below), we can conclude that participants who wanted to express themselves in a rather economical way used abbreviations for certain words. As can be seen in the conversation, this usage of abbreviations proves that the respondent wants to maintain a

*P1: Bro (23:03)<sup>1</sup>*

*P1: Do you also feel like most if not all of our hardships in life and love are just bcs we perpetuate the way our parents have treated us when we were younger into our adult years (23:06)*

*P1: Bcs honestly the more i think about it the more it seems like that's the reason behind everything good and bad ab us (23:06)*

*T: Yeah (23:07)*

*T: They def a contributor to how we act and think (23:07)*

*T: Esp if they're strict (23:07)*

#### Chat 1

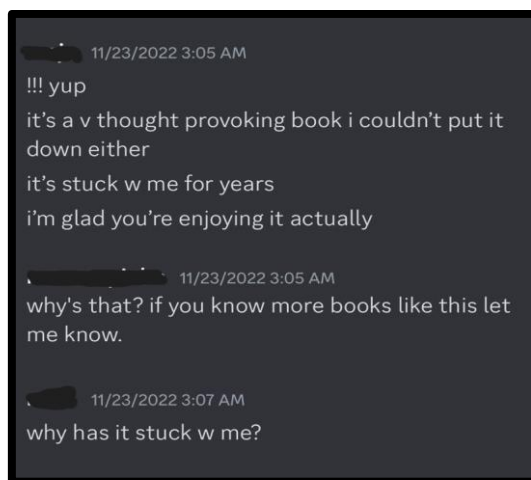
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<sup>1</sup> The part in the brackets indicates the time when the message was sent.

close relationship with the person they are talking to in this chat. In this example, the first interlocutor (or P1) addresses the second interlocutor with Bro, and even though bro is an abbreviation for brother, in this case, at the beginning of the conversation, P1 used it as a greeting similar to hey, hello. Also, we can notice that P1 uses the abbreviation bcs which stands for because twice in this excerpt, but multiple times in the full conversation. From here it can be concluded that the interlocutors are familiar with what bcs means and this helps them save time and correspond faster. P1 also uses ab as a shortened version for about. We say “version” here, because it is thought that the already accepted abbreviation for about is abt.

Regarding the second interlocutor's abbreviations (T), it can be noted that they are in bold, but since we are not analyzing the second interlocutor's discourse, we only indicate that they are used, and where exactly they are placed in the conversation. With the help of conversation analysis, we came to the conclusion that adaptation takes place in the conversation and the same is noticed in the interlocutor's responses. The interlocutor's reaction shows that they are in a close relationship with P1 and by using abbreviations they adapt to their informal conversation.

If we observe the following example, Chat 2, we can see that participant 2 (P2) uses *v* for very and *w* for *with* while explaining something about a book to the other interlocutor. The interlocutor does not use an abbreviation per se, but uses the short form *why's* for *why is*, and also, we can notice the use of all small letters, which shows that the interlocutors are in a hurry and want to communicate in a rapid way. The communication goes smoothly, both interlocutors understand the abbreviations and they expand furthermore on the topic. Something worth mentioning here is that P2 is a dynamic participant in terms of code-switching, because we can notice that he/she uses abbreviations in chats in English, but almost never in Macedonian, despite Macedonian being their L1. In a short interview, P2 explained that they communicate mostly with foreigners, and they are very proficient in English, which enables them to use abbreviations more than in Macedonian. They feel that sometimes abbreviations in Macedonian can be confusing or rather informal, while in English, P2 sees them only as means for a better and faster communication.



Chat 2

If we move on to examples concerning emoji alongside abbreviations and their use as tools for language economy, we should examine Chat 3 (below). The first interlocutor in this chat, or participant 3 (P3) uses the abbreviation *kinda* for *kind of* to explain the situation of how they feel while they are waiting for the summer to come. A valuable example on the use of emoji for language economy is seen in P1's line: *Kinda going crazy*. Here the laughing emoji is used to avoid spelling out the laughter (*hahah*). Even though the second interlocutor does not use any abbreviations or emoji, P1 continues to explain why they had been expecting the summer to come and uses the emoji to avoid spelling out the laughter. In the instance where the slightly happy emoji appears, we can say that this emoji is used instead of a period at the end of the sentence, which means that the use here is not language economy, but rather avoidance of the use of the punctuation mark period, which seems to become a regular practice in online chatting.



**Chat 3**

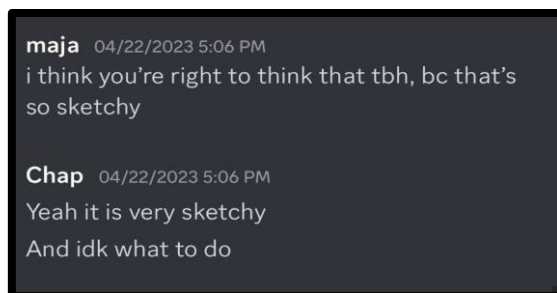
Chat 4 is an interesting example where several instances of abbreviations can be spotted. In the first line, we can see that the first interlocutor uses *lemme* - *let me*. However, our interest lies within the lines of P4. The second interlocutor (P4) uses the abbreviation *VDE* - *Vendor delivered*, which is a specialized term that they use at work. What can be concluded from this is the fact that abbreviations can be used to enrich the vocabulary of the language, since in this case it does not just save time (economy of language), but it serves a different purpose altogether such as the usage of abbreviations as a cryptic language used for business purposes. After that we can notice that the first interlocutor responds using *ok* - *all correct* and *thanx* - *thanks*. From this dialogue we can conclude that P4 is not prone to using many abbreviations in their social media chats with colleagues, but the other interlocutor seems to be comfortable with using them. Nonetheless, P4 accepted several abbreviations as normal words and decided to use them as such throughout all their chats. *VDE* was a recurring example in several chats that we examined. Also, the use of the laughing emoji at the end of P4's both lines indicate a friendly approach, and

repetitiveness since in the last line, P4 starts with *haha* - spelled out laughter, but at the end of that line, they feel the need to use the emoji to enhance the laughter. In the first instance it is used only to mark that they are not in charge of an operation at work, but they do not want to offend the interlocutor for not being aware of that information. Interlocutor 1 responds with spelled out laughter as well - *hahah* and uses the slightly happy emoji at the end to show gratitude that P4 will at least try to redirect the message to the right person. The use of the red heart replaced a whole phrase of thanking or expressing liking.



**Chat 4**

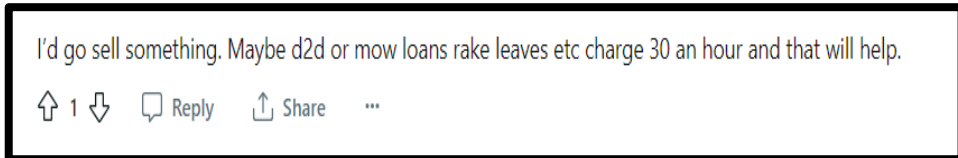
Additionally, with Chat 5, we present a typical exchange between two gamers. Fast responses are of the highest importance here, so we can notice that both interlocutors use a lot of abbreviations, and they are comfortable with the usage and with understanding them. The first interlocutor, P5 uses the short form for *tbh* - *to be honest*, *bc* - *because* and *that's* for *that is*. The other interlocutor answers using the abbreviation *idk* - *I do not know*. This heavy usage of abbreviations and shortened forms indicates that P5 knows the other interlocutor well, or at least knows the, so called, rules of the platform - since it is a platform for chatting while gaming. It is evident that using abbreviations is highly encouraged in these instances since speed is prerogative.



**Chat 5**

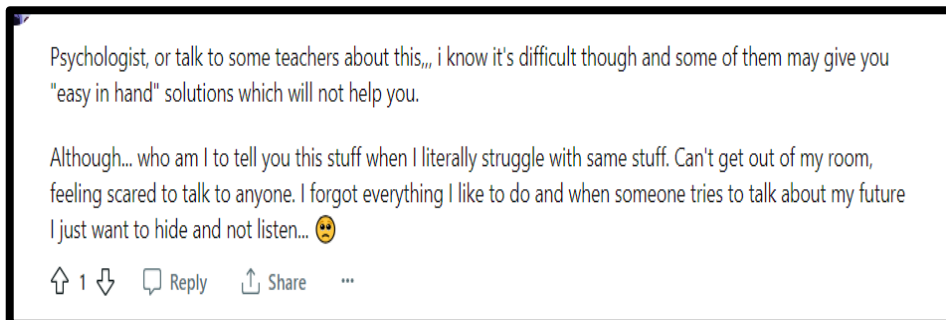


In the following Reddit example 1, we can notice the use of the short form *I'd - I would*, and the usage of abbreviations such as *d2d - door to door, etc. - et cetera* (which is a standardized abbreviation). Reddit is a compelling platform since there are several lists of the most commonly used terms and abbreviations available to all Reddit users such as OP – *Original Poster*, SO – *Significant Other*, TIL = *Today I Learned*, OC = *Original Content*, TL;DR = *Too long, didn't read*, IMO = *In My Opinion*, etc. This proves that using abbreviations is not only encouraged, but advised at this platform. Reddit users tend to check these lists to stay tuned and understand the meaning of the new abbreviations that may emerge.



### Reddit example 1

Furthermore, in Reddit example 2, there are not many instances where abbreviations are used except for the two short forms *it's - it is* and *can't - cannot*. Nonetheless, this example is of great importance because of the use of the sad emoji with a frown at the end of this comment. This was one of the rare instances of the usage of emoji in Reddit posts and comments. It seems that emoji are to be avoided on this platform, whatsoever. However, here, the sad emoji at the end is used to express the mental and emotional state of the person who wrote this, but at the same time this emoji encompasses the meaning of a whole sentence which here could be - *I feel sad, or I feel lost and sad*, deriving its meaning of course, based on what the person previously stated. This is a typical example for the use of emoji for language economy, replacement of phrases describing emotions with an emoji.



### Reddit example 2

There was a significant number of examples throughout all the 150 chats and the Reddit posts that we analyzed which prove the usage of abbreviations for language economy in chats on social media. We described the representative chats that were frequently seen among users. Furthermore, we showed many instances of the use of emoji for this same purpose, both in chats on social media and in posts and comments on Reddit. However,

this is not the only reason why participants used abbreviations and emoji. Expressing their emotional states or efficient communication, as well as cryptic language usage seem to be easier with the use of abbreviations and emoji, and that is shown in some of the examples presented above. Additionally, we observed a very intriguing instance of the usage of English abbreviations in chats where the interlocutors communicate in Macedonian. This cannot be further elaborated due to paper length limitations, but seems as a valuable insight that deserves to be mentioned.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are several points of significance in this qualitative study of online chatting practices with a special focus on abbreviations and emoji. We presented the economy of language in our research as a perception of how balance should be achieved in communication because communication requires clarity and precision on the one hand, and carefree and quick transmission of a message on the other. The rapid development of technology requires adaptation in communicative practices. We further addressed the main research questions related to the sustainability of the basic use of abbreviations and emoji, about the nature of the same seen as tools for expressing the emotional state of the participants in online communication, but also we dug deeper into the idea of seeing abbreviations as a new type of cryptic language avoiding the fear of negative effect on the standard language variations or occurrence of inaccuracies in certain fields; for example, in medicine (Soto-Arnáez et al. 2019).

The novelty of the research lies in the identification, analysis and description of ways in which English-language abbreviations and Macedonian-language abbreviations are used in informal online chats. Specifically, the use of English abbreviations in Macedonian chats will contribute to the field of computer/phone mediated communication (CMC). The first research question aimed to discover whether language economy is the main reason for the use of abbreviations and emoji in communication on social media. The results of the data analysis show that the language economy remains at the center of this use as confirmed by numerous examples of the conversations we analyzed. In regard to the other two research questions, findings demonstrate that the respondents are aware of the language economy and efficiency in online communication and emphasize the same as main reasons for using abbreviations such as being concise and clear, not losing their line of thought. In addition to the economy of language, the analysis substantiated that respondents utilize abbreviations and emoji to articulate familiarity, convey emotional states, and engage in a form of cryptic communication amongst colleagues in professional settings or within gaming communities on a designated gaming platform. Furthermore, these linguistic elements serve to mirror the situation with the interlocutor, thereby fostering a sense of rapport and social cohesion.

Building social cohesion and maintaining relationships was an essential element of previous studies in applied linguistics, sociology and psychology. To our best knowledge no studies explored the code-mixing of English and Macedonian when abbreviations were used, and we hope our study will provide a better understanding of the impact of economy of language adjustment on the social interaction. Previous research mainly investigated how emoji are only used to replace the missing gestures or emotions in online environments and ignored the issue related to the various manifestations of adjustments to new

technological advances and faster life-styles. Abbreviations and emoji should not be only seen as substitutes for the absence of physical cues, but also as tools for maintaining social relationships and for adapting to the rapid progress of science and technology because it appears that the technology development is the driving factor behind the widespread adoption of abbreviations and replacement of linguistic elements with extra-linguistic ones (emoji).

As new inventions and perceptions of communication emerge, a need for shorter, and more concise communication often arises. To effectively cater to users' needs in this context, it is vital to consider three key aspects: the experience with online chatting, the knowledge of “rules” of the platforms used, and the real-life language usage scenarios people are expected to participate in for an efficient communication avoiding misunderstandings. We would like to encourage current and future researchers to approach the same topic from different angles. We are aware that within communication, not only the expedient nature of interaction should be considered but also whether the sent messages are clear and appropriate for the recipient. Every situation in communication is specific and only an active approach to evaluation of the informational value of abbreviations and emoji proves that the selected and used abbreviations and emoji function as tools for efficiency and not as inhibitors of communication, which may cause inaccuracies.

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## **JEZIČKA EKONOMIJA: SKRAĆENICE I EMODŽIJI U DRUŠTVENIM MEDIJIMA**

*Veliki uticaj skraćenica i emodžija na komunikaciju na društvenim mrežama je predmet savremenih istraživanja, koja daju uvid u njihove višestruke uloge i implikacije. Skraćenice ne samo da doprinose sažetosti i čitljivosti, već služe i kao lingvistički markeri, signalizirajući pripadnost grupi i jačajući društvene identitete (Turlou i Braun 2003). Istovremeno, emodžiji obogaćuju tekstualni sadržaj afektivnim tonom i kontekstualnim markerima, olakšavajući međukulturalnu komunikaciju i izazivajući empatiju u onlajn interakciji (Derks i dr. 2008). Pojedinač koristi nijansiranu kombinaciju jezičkih i vizuelnih znakova, uz kontekstualne markere, kako bi iskazao nameravano značenje. Za potrebe ove kvalitativne studije analizirano je 15 učesnika, odnosno njihovih 150 razgovora i 10 dugih objava sa komentarima na Reditu. Istraživanje je obuhvatilo onlajn konverzaciju (četove) govornika i engleskog i makedonskog jezika na popularnim platformama društvenih mreža. Obimni tekstualni podaci, koji se sastoje od dugih dijaloških razmena bez prekida, prikupljeni su sa platformi Viber, Redit, Instagram, Telegram, Fejbuk, Mesindžer i Vacap. Rezultati pokazuju da: 1) učesnici koriste skraćenice i emodžije u svrhu jezičke ekonomije i obogaćivanja jezika; 2) izražavanje emocionalnih stanja na društvenim mrežama je olakšano upotrebom skraćenica i emodžija. Ovo istraživanje može podstaći i druge istraživače iz sličnih naučnoistraživačkih oblasti da se pozabave ovom temom, možda čak i iz drugačijeg ugla.*

Ključne reči: *jezička ekonomija, skraćenice, emodžiji, društvene mreže, četovi*



## PRAGMATIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL ADAPTATION IN LITERARY TRANSLATION

UDC 81'255.2:316.7  
81'27

**Zorica Trajkova Strezovska, Milan Damjanoski**

English Department, Faculty of Philology,  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, North Macedonia

ORCID iDs: Zorica Trajkova Strezovska  
Milan Damjanoski

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2346-978X>  
 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3913-5698>

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**Abstract.** *When translating a text written for a target audience with a different cultural background, the text necessarily undergoes pragmatic and sociocultural modification and adaptation. Pragmatically, the source text elements need modification to meet the needs of the new cultural and linguistic environment or the communicative situation (Zauberga 1994), and the target language audience (Neubert and Shreve 1992). Socioculturally, the peculiarities of a source text which may trigger sociocultural adaptation (Chang 2009, 95) are the different temporal and spatial perceptions of reality, the difference in the way notions are conceptualized, the syntactic and discourse organization of the two languages, as well as the choice of lexis. This article presents a pragmatic and rhetorical analysis aiming to unveil the pragmatic and sociocultural adaptations 10 students had to make when translating a short story from Macedonian into English. In addition, the students responded to a survey in which they described the challenges they faced while translating. The research highlighted the importance of thorough analysis of socio-cultural differences, pragmatic adaptations, and the context-based vs. language-based problems. Explicit instruction during translation classes is necessary to help raise students' awareness of the problems that might arise due to lack of sociocultural background knowledge and pragmatic failure.*

**Key words:** *Pragmatics, socio-cultural background, translation, short stories, explicit instruction*

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Submitted April 29, 2024; Accepted May 15, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Milan Damjanoski  
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje  
E-mail: [m.damjanoski@flf.ukim.edu.mk](mailto:m.damjanoski@flf.ukim.edu.mk)

## I. INTRODUCTION

Translation, as defined by Nord (1997, 141), refers to “any translational action where a source text is transferred into a target culture and language”. Subsequently, any text translated from one language into another endures transfer from its original context into the target context, which inevitably affects its meaning. Nida defines this process of translating as, “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” (Nida 1964, 12).

Adaptation is viewed by many authors as an integral part of the translation process (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995; Sanders 2006; Raw 2012, Volkova 2012, Volkova and Zubenina 2015), aimed at reducing the cultural and temporal gap between the source and target texts (Sanders 2006, 19). As Kosonen points out, “though pragmatic adaptation is distinct from translation, it is somehow always connected to translation” (Kosonen 2011, 66) Translation serves as a crucial tool for fostering cross-cultural understanding, with adaptation facilitating effective communication across cultural disparities and minimizing the likelihood of misunderstandings. As noted by Baker and Saldanha (2011), adaptation functions as a means of “building bridges across minds and languages.” Baker further states that “adaptation is a procedure which can be used whenever the context referred to in the original text does not exist in the culture of the target text, thereby necessitating some form of re-creation” (Baker 2011, 6). Therefore, it is both impractical and unrealistic, as Gambier and Gottlieb (2001, 34) argue, to translate a text without employing cultural, pragmatic, or other forms of adaptation.

So, as a starting point, we can conclude that a translation needs to encompass both the pragmatic and socio-cultural dimensions of the source text, while the translator has to aim towards reflecting the intended communication style of the original author, which necessitates accurate transfer of socio-cultural elements from the source to the target language.

This article aims to delineate the pragmatic and socio-cultural criteria present in the source text that prompt adaptation. It further seeks to examine the pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptations made by students when translating a Macedonian literary text, specifically a short story, into English. Additionally, the study endeavors to assess the students' awareness of the adaptations required and the extent to which they implement them. We believe that these findings will shed light on the challenges and weaknesses students face when translating texts between languages, providing valuable insights for refining translation classes to better address these areas of difficulty. Furthermore, our aim is to contribute to the advancement of research in this field by revising the existing adaptation strategies and techniques and offering illustrative examples of the inadequately made adaptations by students when translating from Macedonian into English, thereby providing insight into yet another language pair and necessary cultural adjustments.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: PRAGMATIC AND SOCIOCULTURAL ADAPTATION

The shift of focus in linguistics from form to function impacted translation studies. As Munday points out, functionalist and communicative translation theories advanced in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s moved translation from a mainly linguistic phenomenon to being considered as an act of intercultural communication (Munday 2012, 138). For example, in the context of Reiss and Vermeer's translational action theory (1974), the translator is seen "as the key player in a process of intercultural communication and production" (Munday 2012, 127). Komissarov (1991, 43) argues that translation from one language into another is always translation from culture to culture.

This also highlighted the importance and use of various adaptation strategies to enable and facilitate this communication. Kosonen points out that the main reason (but not the only reason) why pragmatic adaptation and translation are so closely related is the close relationship between culture and language (Kosonen 2011, 66). Furthermore, adaptation is an unavoidable part of the translation process which aims at strengthening the connection between source and target texts and between source and target audiences, too. According to Gambier and Gottlieb (2001, 35) even if a translator is not allowed to work with a source text at some degree of 'freedom', adaptation will occur anyway.

Having in mind that adaptation is a complex and multilayered process, Baker and Saldanha (2011, 41) distinguish between two types of adaptation: local and global. Local adaptation addresses situational challenges within specific segments of the text, aimed at managing inherent structural, pragmatic, social, or cultural translation difficulties. On the other hand, global adaptation is applied across the entirety of the text and is prompted by external factors inherent to the source text, such as shifts in purpose, function, or intended impact on the target audience.

This article, in its analysis of the translated text, shall adopt Volkova and Zubenina's (2015) concept of **adaptation as a translation technique and strategy**. Translation techniques refer to specific methods and procedures employed to transfer meaning from the source text to the target text, while translation strategies encompass broader approaches and decisions guiding the overall translation process, such as reduction, expansion, creation etc. and they may vary depending on the genre, purpose and audience. Volkova and Zubenina (2015) state that "as with any other kind of translation operation, adaptation is a system of social, cultural, pragmatic and linguistic links between source and target realities. Besides choosing the text that will be translated, the translator has to make a choice in terms of pragmatic and sociocultural adaptation, where a translator has to decide which aspect of the source text is to be adapted". Finally, in this process "pragmatic or sociocultural adaptation (or both) gets embodied in the target text with the help of particular translation techniques or strategies" (Volkova and Zubenina 2015, 92).

Pragmatic adaptation is necessary because it helps: "adapt the source text to the target audience and its needs" (Neubert 1968); modify those source elements which "would not work properly in the target language" (Vehmas-Lehto 2002), as well as "conform to the needs of the new language environment" (Kosonen 2011). Sociocultural adaptation is needed because the text should be translated to reflect a different temporal and spatial perception of reality; different way of conceptualization of a notion; because the two languages have different syntactic and discourse organization and because of the difference in the choice of lexical meaning (Chang 2009). In simple terms, pragmatic adaptation involves adjusting language use for effective communication in a specific context, while sociocultural adaptation

focuses on aligning translated content with the norms, customs and values of the target culture.

With regards to the **source text criteria** on which we based our analysis, we focused mainly on the various pragmatic and sociocultural parameters proposed by Volkova and Zubenina (2015, 96-97), which we felt provided a comprehensive and detailed set which encompasses the general, but also specific features of the translated text (short story) that need to be adapted in the process of translation. The parameters are presented in the table below:

**Table 1** Selected parameters of pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptation, Volkova and Zubenina (2015)

Pragmatic Adaptation	Sociocultural Adaptation
Textual level	
Lexical and semantic parameters of a source text (expressing author's pragmatic intentions e.g. colloquial or evaluative expressions)	Idiomatic expressions and play upon words  Specific use of pronouns
Syntactic peculiarities of a source text (inversion, impersonal & elliptical sentences, rhetorical questions, direct/indirect speech, word order shift etc.)	Cultural lacunas and realia (which may not exist in the target language)  Lexical elements reflecting social and cultural peculiarities of the source culture (words denoting gestures, measures, acronyms, toponyms...)
Grammatical parameters of a source text (modal verbs, specific use of inf. and gerund etc.)	
Stylistic parameters of a source text (stylistic devices: metaphors, personifications, similes & proverbs, sayings and phraseological units)	

Having in mind that this is a prose text, which unlike a poetic text does not always achieve its explicit and semantic and stylistic effects through the inversion or subversion of grammatical and syntactic rules, our analysis focused more on the lexical and stylistic parameters with regards to pragmatic adaptation. As to sociocultural adaptation, the students were faced with a dual challenge with regards to the language and the historical and cultural period in which the short story "Sleepwalkers" (Месечари) by Dragi Mihajlovski was written and it takes place – the 1980 and 90s . Even though Macedonian language has not experienced a drastic linguistic change since that time, its stylistic and idiomatic features have developed in subtle ways that may cause issues to generations born and educated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially with regards to its idiomatic expressions. Subsequently, the short story was written in a different social and political system, that of former Yugoslavia, thus its lexical elements, cultural lacunas and realias predominantly refer to that period, with which the current generation of students is insufficiently acquainted.

This, of course, has resulted in employment of various translation procedures and techniques in order to compensate for both the linguistic and semantic differences and requirements of Macedonian and English, as well as the different sociocultural background of readers in both cultures and literatures.



### 3. SAMPLE

Our study focused on translations conducted by ten second- and third-year student-translators majoring in English at the English department of Ss. Cyril and Methodius University. More specifically, the students included in this study are all on a C1 level (CEFR) and they are enrolled in the translation stream, indicating their aspiration to become future translators and interpreters. They participate in specialized classes focused on translation and interpreting, where they have been introduced to some of the adaptation techniques and strategies examined in this article. However, it is noteworthy that they haven't received explicit training in these adaptation methods for the purposes of this research. They all agreed to have their translations, which were part of a compulsory task within their translation course, subjected to analysis. However, they were not provided with any additional information about the specifics of the research, in order to facilitate as natural a translation as possible.

The students were tasked with translating the short story "Sleepwalkers" (Месечари) by Dragi Mihajlovski. Initially, we identified features within the source text necessitating pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptation. Subsequently, we scrutinized the students' translations based on the set of translation techniques and strategies provided in the Methodology section in order to pinpoint the pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptation challenges they encountered. The students all gave their consent to take part in the study, while this research was conducted outside their regular course assignments, thus ensuring that there would be no interference or power issues in their work would be involved.

At first, our research focused on analyzing the translation in specific points of the text where we anticipated students might encounter difficulties, based on their age, education and cultural affiliations. However, we later expanded our examination to encompass the entirety of the translations, discovering additional areas where students encountered difficulties. Additionally, the student-translators completed an open-ended questionnaire designed to assess their awareness of the necessary adaptations, drawing from their experiences during the translation process, which was then used to draw the conclusions of the study regarding the pedagogical implications gleaned from our findings. The analysis is qualitative as our intention was not to count the specific instances of various translations, but to emphasize the points where students did or did not make appropriate pragmatic and sociocultural adaptation.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

With regards to our methodological approach to the study of pragmatic and sociocultural adaptation in the student translations of the short story, we have decided to focus on their use of various translation techniques. Beside the ones proposed by Volkova and Zubenina (2015), we included some sets of adaptation and translation techniques proposed by other authors: 'creation' (Kosonen 2011) and 'destruction of linguistic patterns' (Berman 2000) as pragmatic adaptation techniques, and 'illustration' (Kostrova 2006) and 'destruction of expression of idioms' (Berman 2000) as sociocultural adaptation techniques.

**Table 2** Translation techniques

Pragmatic Adaptation	Sociocultural Adaptation
<i>Omission</i>	<i>Transcription or Transliteration</i>
<i>Expansion</i>	<i>More general word</i>
<i>Substitution</i>	<i>Less expressive equivalent</i>
<i>Updating</i>	<i>Cultural substitution</i>
<i>Creation</i> (Kosonen 2011:56)	<i>Loan words</i>
	<i>Paraphrase</i>
<i>Rationalization</i>	<i>Omission or addition</i>
<i>Clarification</i>	<i>Illustration</i> (Kostrova 2006:254)
<i>Qualitative &amp; quantitative impoverishment</i>	
<i>Destruction of linguistic patterns</i>	<i>Destruction of expression of idioms</i>
(Berman 2000:289)	(Berman 2000:289)

This combined set of translation techniques was a result of the specifics of the source text and the subsequent analysis of the provided translations by our students. In order to avoid artificially imposing a set of analytical and assessment criteria, we have taken a reverse-engineering approach and first analysed the important sociocultural, pragmatic and literary features of the source text. Based on that, we have identified a combination of techniques that the student-translators had used in their translation process.

Thus, the first set of techniques for pragmatic adaptation, such as ‘omission’ (deletion or removal of source information), ‘expansion’ (explication of source information); ‘exoticism’ (substitution by rough equivalents); ‘updating’ (substitution by modern equivalents), ‘creation’ (a target text preserves only the most essential information of a source text) are used when the translator is faced with lack of formal equivalent solutions in the target language or the need to introduce social, cultural, historical, geographical or other information which is new or relatively unknown to the target culture.

The second set of techniques is taken from Berman’s twelve ‘deforming tendencies’, which address the way translation tends to reduce variation. Though it is aimed at pointing out the reductive aspects of translation, these are techniques which are often used and ‘abused’ by translators when faced with pragmatic challenges. ‘Rationalization’ mainly entails the modification of syntactic structures including punctuation and sentence structure and order. ‘Clarification’ includes explication which ‘aims to render “clear” what does not wish to be clear in the original’. ‘Quantitative impoverishment’ highlights the loss of lexical variation in translation. The last one encompasses some of the techniques and the result from their application, because translators often adopt a range of techniques, such as *rationalization*, *clarification* and *expansion*, all of which standardize the target text to the detriment of the source text style and language (Munday 2012, 231-2).

Sociocultural adaptation may serve as both a translation technique and a translation strategy. When implemented on specific sections of a source text, it becomes evident through the utilization of various sociocultural adaptation techniques in translation. Certain techniques, such as *omission*, *paraphrasing*, *addition* and *illustration*, mirror the approach taken in pragmatic adaptation, as they are practical solutions to the impossibility to find formal equivalents. Furthermore, certain disruptive or negative techniques such as *less expressive equivalents*, *cultural substitutions* and *destruction of expressions of idioms*, may lead to the loss or impoverishment of the cultural depth of the

source text. However, the use of *loan words* and *cultural substitutions* can enrich the target language or expand the semantic versatility of the original text.

Finally, the pragmatic and sociocultural parameters which the source text imposes as well as the adaptation and translation techniques which the students applied, have a direct influence and reflect on the overall translation strategies which are chosen and applied in the translation process. As you can see in table 3 below, we adopted the strategies proposed by Volkova and Zubenina (2015, 96) combined with the ones proposed by Chesterman and Wagner (2002), as well as the well-known concept of domestication and foreignization in translation as expounded by Venuti (1995):

**Table 3** Translation strategies

Pragmatic Adaptation	Sociocultural Adaptation
<i>Explicitness change</i>	<i>Cultural filtering</i>
<i>Interpersonal change</i>	(Chesterman and Wagner 2002):
<i>Illocutionary change</i>	
<i>Coherence change</i>	<i>Domestication</i>
<i>Partial translation</i>	<i>Foreignization</i>
<i>Visibility change – author’s presence</i>	(Venuti 1995)
<i>Transcending – radical rewriting</i>	
(Chesterman and Wagner 2002)	

The following strategies we felt were used knowingly and unknowingly by our student-translators, thus altering to various degree the tone, intent or register of the original text. For example, *explicitness change* as a strategy “helps to transform the information of a source text to make it more explicit or implicit”, while *interpersonal change* helps change “the level of formality, the degree of involvement and emotivity of a source text author” (Chesterman and Wagner 2002, 60–63, Volkova and Zubenina 2015, 93) The style and register of the author is often impacted by illocutionary change which involves “a change of moods (e.g., indicative to imperative), changes of the structure of rhetorical questions and exclamations, variation between direct and indirect speech”, which can also happen with translations which lead to coherence change through “various alterations of the source text structure” (Chesterman and Wagner 2002, 60–63, Volkova and Zubenina 2015, 93). Partial translation in this case was mostly used when the translator failed to fully understand an expression or passage in the source text, thus reducing certain parts or sentences to a summary. Visibility change is a strategy where translators can “undertake changes in the level of the author’s presence in the text, but also make themselves visible by adding footnotes, bracketed comments, etc.; while transcending, refers to radical rewriting of the text (Volkova and Zubenina, 2015, 93).

Chesterman, as cited by Chesterman and Wagner (2002), regards sociocultural adaptation as a translation strategy, defining it as a form of ‘cultural filtering’ that can be manifested through domestication and foreignization (Volkova and Zubenina 2015, 95). ‘Domestication’ helps to translate specific cultural concepts of a source language so that ‘they conform to the target language norms’, while ‘foreignization’ is the directly opposite process, when those specific concepts are not adapted at all, but simply ‘borrowed or transferred directly’ (ibid).

We have also conducted a review of previous similar studies of translation techniques and strategies used by students when translating a literary text. Most of the studies have been conducted from English to the target language, but we also found studies where English is the target language as is the case in our study. In Habbeeb and Jameel (2023) when translating a text from Arabic to English, students used the strategies of adaptation, functional equivalence and domestication, with adaptation employed more than any other translation strategy, as way of overcoming to communicate effectively in the target language.. and navigate the cultural norms and expectations of the target language community, because adaptation strategy is the simplest way to achieve this objective” (Habbeeb, L. S., & Jameel, A. S. (2023).

Garipova and Latypov (2019) carried out an experiment with fourth-year students from Kazan Federal University, who were translating from Russian into English. The main difficulties found in the study were clichés, idioms, and terms, followed by translating metaphors and collocations. Al Nakhal (2017), found that difficulties that students encountered when trying to translate cultures from English to Arabic “typically linked to: 1) translating particular cultural conceptions, 2) futile attempts to achieve language similarity in English, and 3) a lack of understanding of translation methodologies and approaches”. In Asi et al. (2024), students translated texts from Indonesian to English with a dominant use of the strategy of foreignization including techniques such as calque, transference, modulation, transposition, omission, explication, and addition, while they concluded that cultural equivalence and accepted translation belong with the domestication strategy.

We shall see, as part of our analysis, which techniques and strategies shall be most employed by our students and whether they align with the findings of the aforementioned research.

## 5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section features the analysis of the pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptations made by students in their translations. As mentioned previously, we initially identified some points in the text which we expected to be problematic for students because of their sensitivity to context and culture specificities. However, we analysed the entire translations to pinpoint all the instances of adequate and inadequate translations, which also provided further insight for the conclusions drawn from this exercise.

### 5.1. Pragmatic adaptation

In the first stage of our research regarding pragmatic adaptations, we conducted an **analysis of the lexical and semantic parameters of the source text**. Our examination revealed that students encountered difficulties when translating Macedonian colloquialisms, particularly words in their diminutive form and those with archaic or period-specific usage. As a coping strategy, they often resorted to *partial translation*, resulting in a *qualitative impoverishment* and *disruption of linguistic patterns*. For instance, they employed *literal, direct translation* when faced with unfamiliar words, leading to instances such as (1a) and (2a). In other cases, they *omitted* diminutives, as seen in (3a), or opted for expansion, as in (4a), or expansion and substitution, as in (5a) when uncertain about conveying the intended meaning. Additionally, *rationalization* was employed when dealing with archaic words, resulting in a *generalized translation*, as observed in (6a). Furthermore, students encountered

challenges when translating words specific to certain Macedonian dialects, as exemplified in (7a). In these instances, they struggled to capture the nuanced colloquial register, often resorting to *literal translation*, employing *rationalization* as a technique, and inadvertently *disrupting linguistic patterns*.

- (1a) **автоматчето** (*orig.*)<sup>1</sup> - [the switch, the light switch for electricity]<sup>2</sup>  
Students' translation: *vending machine, automat sensor, automatic machine*
- (2a) **самопослуга** (*orig.*) – [grocery store]  
Students' translation: *self-service store/ shop*
- (3a) **Паркчето** (*orig.*) – [diminutive form of park]  
Students' translation: *the park*
- (4a) **збивта** (*orig.*) – [panting, breaths heavily]  
Students' translation: *panting and puffing*
- (5a) **ако ги намести антените ...можеби ќе добиеш слика** (*orig.*) - [you may get a good reception/ better signal]  
Students' translation: *you may get a picture; maybe your TV will receive a picture signal and you'll be able to watch TV clearly => expansion and substitution*
- (6a) **пнциере** (*orig.*) – [casement]  
Students' translation: *window*
- (7a) **Рецензииче да ми иккрабнат** (*orig.*) – colloquial expression (*Bitola dialect*)  
Students' translation: *to write a review (neutral); or some review to scribble for me, they can write me a little review (literal translation)*

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that certain dialect-specific terms or archaic words, still prevalent in contemporary usage, were effectively recognized and accurately translated by students, as evidenced in examples (8a) and (9a).

- (8a) **р'мбај** (*orig.*) – [break your back working; work as a slave; work till you drop]  
Students' translation: *work your fingers to the bone; labour; slave away*
- (9a) **Овие митолошки имиња баи убаво си ми ги трефнаи** (*orig.*) - [you aced/ hit on the  
mythological names]  
Students' translation: *you hit the spot with those mythological names/ you sprinkled in those mythological names*

The analysis of the **syntactic peculiarities** also revealed some problematic areas for students as they opted for *partial translation* as a strategy, which led to *destruction of linguistic pattern* as a technique, as in example (10a). They again did not manage to translate the subtle difference in meaning between "I do not know", which is a simple declarative statement and "Not that I know", which is often used to express uncertainty or limited knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> The original text was in Macedonian and is presented with the abbreviation (*orig.*).

<sup>2</sup> Translation was provided by the authors and is presented in square brackets.

- (10a) A: „Жупски е?“ (orig.) [“Is it from Zhupa?”]  
 B: „**Не** оти знам,“ вели Јово. [“Not that I know”, says Jovo.]  
 A: „**Немој да мислиш дека јас пак знам**“, велам... [“Don’t think that I know”, I say...]  
 Students’ translation:  
 A: *Zhupski, is it...*  
 B: **No idea/ I don’t know/ As if I’d know**  
 A: *Well, don’t go thinking that I know/ Well, I wouldn’t know either/ Of course, I also have no idea*

Additionally, the examination of **grammatical parameters** revealed that students generally encountered no significant difficulties, as they were largely able to make satisfactory adaptations.

- (11a) *Еднаш мора да си одам од аптеката.* (orig.) [I need to/I have to leave the pharmacy eventually.]  
 Students’ translation: *I **have to** leave the pharmacy already/ I **should** quit my job at the pharmacy.*

Moreover, as students endeavored to translate the text **stylistically**, particularly when dealing with metaphorical language, they resorted to various techniques, including *omission* or *substitution with rough equivalents*. Unfortunately, these approaches often resulted in a *qualitative impoverishment of the text*, as in examples (12a) and (13a). This was manifested through *partial translation*, *radical rewriting (transcendence)*, and *changes in explicitness* as strategies.

- (12a) ...*смалената женска сенка залепена ко* **пачавра** *за месечината*  
 Suggested translation<sup>3</sup>: [shrunken female shadow stuck to the moon **as a wet rag**]  
 Students’ translations: ....*shrunken female shadow...*  
 ...*glued to the moon* (omission, qualitative impoverishment)  
 ...*who clings to the moon like a sticker/an old rag/a tramp*  
 (substitution by rough equivalents)
- (13a) ...*очекува да го фалам,* **a moj da расме, расме.**  
 Suggested translation: [he expects me to praise him, so that **he could just show off.**]  
 Students’ translations: *he is expecting my praise/ expects me to praise him/ compliment him so that he may grow and grow/ and for him to grow, grow/ so he can expand, and grow, and grow...*

Furthermore, when translating speech acts students encountered challenges in accurately conveying the illocutionary force. Instead, they often resorted to *substitution by rough equivalents* as a technique and employed strategies such as *changing the mood* and *altering the illocutionary force*. For instance, the use of directives in (14a) sounds

<sup>3</sup> Suggested by the authors

completely normal in Macedonian, but a bit rude in English, and in (15a), students made a direct transfer of the question and did not use polite forms.

(14a) „Оди Јово,“ велам, „оди напред!“

Suggested translation: [Move Jovo, I say, you move straight on!]

Students' translations: “Go, Jovo,” I said, “go forward!”/ “Go, Jovo,” I say, “go ahead.”/ “Go ahead Jovo,” I said, “go first.” / “Go ahead, Jovo,” I say, “lead the way!”

(15a) *Да не сакаме кафе?*

Suggested translation: [Would you like some coffee?]

Students' translation: *Do you want coffee?*

Overall, the analysis revealed that the prevalent **translation techniques** employed for pragmatic adaptations included substitution, omission, rationalization (generalization), and expansion which is similar to the result in Asi et al (2024). However, some translations resulted in a qualitative impoverishment of the language and style of the source text, occasionally resorting to literal translation and disrupting linguistic patterns. As for the use of **translation strategies**, students generally opted for partial translation, or transcending (radical rewriting) in cases when they did not properly understand the context, which also led to changes in the explicitness and illocutionary stylistic features of the source text.

## 5.2. Sociocultural adaptation

Further analysis revealed that students faced difficulties in adapting the text socioculturally, particularly when translating **idiomatic expressions**, as featured in examples (1b) – (4b). They predominantly utilized techniques such as *cultural substitution* or *destruction of expressions and idioms*. Additionally, they often resorted to the strategy of *foreignization*, which involves borrowing or directly transferring terms from the source language.

(1b) „На здравје!“ велам.

„Да сме здрави и живи!“ вели Јово. (orig.)

Suggested translation: [“Cheers!”, I say. “To our health! /Gesundheit!”, says Jovo.]

Students' translations: *May we be alive and healthy; May we be in good health.*

(2b) *Јово е мртво ладен.* (orig.)

Suggested translation: [Jovo remains stone-cold.]

Students' translations: *Jovo is aloof/ reactionless/ emotionless/ nonchalant.*

(3b) „Да не сакаме кафе?“ прашува жената.

„Само стави вода“, вели Јово. (orig.)

Suggested translation: [“Would you care for/like some coffee?”, asks the woman. “Just put a pot of water on the stove”, says Jovo.]

Students' translations: “Do you want coffee?” she asks. / “Would you care for coffee?” “Would you like some coffee?” the woman asks.

“Just bring some water,” he says. / “Just put the water on” / “Just put water” / “Just give us water,” says Jovo

(4b) *Важно е да останеме луѓе. (orig.)*

Suggested translation: [It is important that we stay normal/ humane.]

Students' translations: (*false friends*)

*It's important to stay /to remain human/ people/ human beings.*

*We must remain human. / We should stay human.*

In a similar manner, when translating **cultural lacunas and realia**, student-translators did not manage to make an appropriate sociocultural adaptation, opting either for a *loan word without an explanation* or *transliteration* as techniques, and *foreignization* again as a strategy. See for instance examples (5b) to (13b). In (5b) and (6b) students just transliterated the proper names with no adaptation whatsoever. The ethnographic terms, in (7b) - (9b) were also transliterated and no footnotes were given to explain to the reader what these names referred to exactly.

Similarly, when translating brands they faced a different set of challenges. There are brands which are so popular and in everyday use that they are referred to without any need for additional explanation or even referred to in a diminutive form. However, some of them are no longer existent or present in the popular mind, thus need either explaining in the form of a footnote or being replaced with similar current brand names. The student-translators most often applied the strategy of referring to the original city in which they were produced (10b) or just transliterating it as in examples (11b) and (12b), thus not fully accomplishing the goal of mediating between two different cultures.

**Proper names:**

(5b) *Јово*

Students' translation: *Jovo*

(6b) *Јејмс (Yeats)*

Students' translation: *Yetes (inappropriate spelling)*

**Ethnographical terminology: no footnotes to explain**

(7b) *Банчор (village in Macedonia)*

Students' translation: *Bapchor*

(8b) *Вучо (mountain)*

Students' translation: *Vicho*

(9b) *Љуботен (mountain)*

Students' translation: *Ljuboten*

**Brands:**

(10b) *Нишки е? (adj.) [Is it an EI Nish TV, a Nish TV<sup>4</sup>?]*

Students' translation: *Is it from Nish? Nishiki? Niški?*

(11b) *Жупски*

Students' translation: *Župski*

(12b) *Горење*

Students' translation: *Gorenje*

(13b) *Vinjak*

Students' translation: *brandy*

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<sup>4</sup> Nish is a place in Serbia, so the question is whether the TV is a Nish TV, or EI Nish TV



Finally, the examination of students' translation of **lexical elements reflecting social and cultural peculiarities of the source culture** unveiled that they predominantly employed techniques, such as *using more general words*, *paraphrasing* or making *cultural substitutions*, as in both (14b) and (15b). Consequently, this led to the adoption of either foreignization or domestication as overarching strategies in their translation approach.

(14b) „E, ee, majkama“ (orig.)

Suggested translation: [Oh, c'mon!] (expressing disagreement)

Students' translations: *Well, well. /Well, the mother. / Ha! A thing like that/ Oh, yes.../Aye*

(15b) *И наоѓа мана во мезето* (orig.)

Suggested translation: [He nitpicks the appetizer]

Students' translations: *finds fault in her cold cuts/ nags about the salad/ he finds something wrong with her meals.*

Overall, regarding sociocultural adaptation, the prevalent **translation techniques** included cultural substitution, alteration or removal of expressions and idioms, paraphrasing, generalization, as well as transliteration and incorporation of loanwords without clarification, while the prevalent **strategy** employed was foreignization. This is very similar to the conclusions of Asi et al. (2024), where foreignization was dominant, while the difficulty with idioms is confirmed in Garipova and Latypov (2019).

### 5.3. Questionnaire results

In the subsequent phase of the analysis, we requested student-translators to reflect on their experiences through an open-ended questionnaire. Here, we will provide a summary presentation of their responses. The first question asked them to state how satisfied they were with the submitted translation and assess the level of difficulty of the text. Most of the students found the text interesting but rather challenging and difficult, and were somewhat satisfied with their submitted translation.

The next question prompted them to reflect on the aspects of the text they found challenging and explain the reasons behind their struggles. Unsurprisingly, they predominantly cited difficulties in translating cultural lacunas and realia, notably mentioning terms like *Nishki* and *Zhupski*, along with period- and culture-specific vocabulary. Additionally, they encountered challenges in capturing the colloquial style, as well as nuances of tone and register, which were evident in their translations.

Furthermore, when asked about challenges pertaining to diachronic differences in language and style, students generally responded that they did not really experience such problems. However, they did acknowledge difficulties in finding equivalent terms for certain diminutive expressions and archaic vocabulary. This suggests that many of them were not fully aware of their lack of adaptation skills. This is a matter that has to be taken into consideration when developing and adapting the translation study curricula, which needs to be regularly updated to meet the needs and scope of general knowledge of the new generations of students.

When asked whether the type of text influenced their choice of style and register, students responded affirmatively. They indicated that they considered various factors

such as the genre, cultural context, and formal or literary aspects of the text when determining the appropriate style and register to use.

Furthermore, when asked if there were any terms or socio-cultural notions they found challenging to comprehend upon their initial reading of the text, students responded affirmatively, listing examples of such difficulties including archaic vocabulary and colloquial expressions like "*филадендрон*", "*автоматче*", "*трефнал*", and "*икрабнат*".

In addition, when asked about the pragmatic adaptations they remembered they had to make to adjust the text to the English cultural and language norms, they listed examples such as: names (e.g. *Јово*), interjections, idiomatic expression (e.g. "*Оган се*" [*It's expensive*], *Јазикот се разврзува* [*I get chatty*]), diminutive forms ("*автоматче*"), lexical elements reflecting social and cultural peculiarities of the source culture ("*мезе*" [*meal*], "*Ее, мајката*" [*Well, well*]); syntactic adaptations (adding a subject, as in: "*стани, рмбaj, легни*" [*you get up, work your fingers to the bone, and go to bed*], [*rinse and repeat*]). This confirms the importance of the concept of cultural filtering by Chesterman which goes hand in hand with the need for pragmatic adaptation in order to: "adapt the source text to the target audience and its needs" (Neubert 1968)

Finally, we sought to understand if there were any social and cultural taboos present in the text that influenced their approach to translation. The students acknowledged this, citing an example with the word "*мајмуни*" compared to "*monkeys*" in English. They recognized that while "*мајмуни*" might not carry derogatory connotations in their language, its translation to "*monkeys*" could be perceived as a racial slur in English. Consequently, they opted for adaptations such as "*morons*" or "*nitwits*" to avoid offense and maintain cultural sensitivity in their translations. This is an instance, when social and cultural norms, such as taboos, lead to radical re-writing as a form of domestication strategy.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Though our analysis of the translations of the short story *Moonwalkers* by Dragi Mihajlovski is based on a small sample of just 10 student-translators, we feel it has provided us with sufficient and thought-provoking results and insights which allow us to draw certain conclusions. As Jiri Levy states, "literary translation is both a reproductive and a creative labour with the goal of equivalent aesthetic effect" (Munday 2012, 98), but also sees real world translation work as being pragmatic: "The translator resolves for one of the possible solutions which promises a maximum of effect with a minimum of effort" (Munday 2012, 62).

This precise outlining of both the goals and the effort of a literary translations also helps us point out the main issues facing young translators, as well as the reasons for choosing certain adaptation and translation strategies.

First, we tried to identify the main issues that our student-translators had with regards to pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptations. We took into account that the diachronical and cultural period when the source text was written (1980's in former Yugoslavia) would pose a set of challenges for the students who were born and educated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, from the point of view of **pragmatic adaptation**, what emerged was that students face issues when having to adapt lexical, semantic and stylistic parameters of a source text that was written before their time. Though the language has

not changed dramatically, still certain stylistic and expressive features have become either obsolete or are not as used by the younger generation.

With regards to **socio-cultural adaptation**, what emerged was that the student translators were somewhat perplexed when they had to adapt idiomatic expressions, cultural lacunas and realia and lexical elements reflecting social and cultural peculiarities of the source culture into the target culture, in this case English. They are faced with a double-pronged challenge, researching and learning the social and cultural features of a past period (Macedonia in former Yugoslavia) that is slowly dissipating from the collective memory, while at the same time trying to find equivalent translation solutions for the English and international reader and their cultural and literary expectations and knowledge.

As our analysis showed, in order to resolve these adaptation and translation challenges, they applied a set of various translation techniques. With regards to pragmatic adaptation, the most typical **translation techniques** used were: substitution, omission, rationalization (generalization), expansion with mostly satisfactory results, but some of their solutions resulted in qualitative impoverishment with regards to the language and style of the source text, as well as on certain occasions to literal translation and destruction of linguistic patterns. Concerning **socio-cultural adaptation**, the most typical **translation techniques** used were cultural substitution, destruction of expressions and idioms, paraphrase, generalization, as well as transliteration and using loan words without an explanation. The results of these techniques were varied, which depended on the level of general or cultural knowledge of the translator, and the amount of research they conducted. However, we also have to take into account that for some of the younger students, these were their first attempts at serious literary translation.

In addition, these factors had an impact on the translation strategies that were applied when attempting pragmatic and socio-cultural adaptation as part of the translation process. In order to solve the problems and challenges that the source text posed, the most typical **translation strategies** used were partial translation, transcending (radical rewriting) when not properly understanding the context, which also led to changes in the explicitness and illocutionary stylistic features of the source text. Furthermore, we have to highlight one of the strategies which is most prevalent among young translators, which is foreignization and domestication of the target text, as we have seen in the research done by Habbeeb and Jameel (2023) and Asi et al. (2024). These opposite, but sometimes parallel approaches to translation occur when there is a greater dominance of one language and culture (English), thus putting pressure on the minority languages to use its linguistic and cultural features. Domestication occurs mostly when the linguistic and cultural features of both languages differ widely, such as the case is with Macedonian and English, leading to the issues also encountered in Al Nakhil (2017). Thus, translators often reach for the traditional and well-established modes of linguistic and cultural expression and communication.

However, this exercise also helped us identify specific areas of knowledge and skills which can be improved in our student translators. Beside the analysis, another good indicator were their responses to the follow-up questionnaire, which highlighted some of the areas where they need improving. They cited difficulties in translating cultural lacunas and realia, also acknowledge difficulties in finding equivalent terms for certain diminutive expressions and archaic vocabulary, which suggests that many of them were not fully aware of their lack of adaptation skills. However, their ability and effort to solve issues of adaptation by considering various factors such as the genre, cultural context, and formal or

literary aspects of the text in order to choose the appropriate translation strategies or techniques, was encouraging.

In conclusion, we can assert that although in general the translations of our student-translators were satisfactory and met the criteria for literary translation as we analyzed the whole translated text and all the submitted translations were acceptable as translation products. However, there were still evident examples of inadequate application of adaptation techniques and strategies, both pragmatic and socio-cultural as can be seen from the examples provided in the analysis. These were the result of the various factors that were underlined in our paper (lack of general knowledge, differences in the socio-cultural aspects of the different periods, inadequate knowledge of both source and target language and culture, as well as lack of research). Nevertheless, this small-scale research underscores the imperative for addressing specific needs and implementing necessary measures within language, literature, and translation courses at the undergraduate level.

Primarily, students need more explicit instruction in pragmatics and emphasis of the importance of socio-cultural aspects of literary texts. Further emphasis should be put on honing student's skills for recognizing the aspects in the texts where pragmatic adaptation is needed. Subsequently, the course of literature and translation studies, instruction should extend to reading, analyzing and translating texts of different genres, taking into account the historical and cultural background of each.

Finally, in order to better understand the issues and challenges faced by our students in translating different texts, we shall conduct a follow-up to this task and repeat the experiment with the same sample group after the students complete the course of Pragmatics in Year 4.

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## PRAGMATIČKA I SOCIOKULTURNA ADAPTACIJA U KNJIŽEVNOM PREVODU

*Pri prevođenju teksta napisanog za publiku sa različitim kulturnim poreklom, tekst se neophodno podvrgava pragmatičkim i sociokulturnim modifikacijama i adaptacijama. Programatički, elementi izvornog teksta moraju se modifikovati da bi zadovoljili potrebe novog kulturno-lingvističkog okruženja ili komunikativne situacije (Zauberga 1994), kao i ciljne audiencije na ciljnom jeziku (Neubert & Shreve 1992). Sociokulturno, elementi izvornog teksta koji mogu pokrenuti sociokulturnu adaptaciju (Chang 2009, 95) jesu različite vremenske i prostorne percepcije stvarnosti, razlika u načinu konceptualizacije pojmova, sintaksičko i diskurzivno organizovanje dva jezika, kao i izbor leksike. Ovaj rad predstavlja pragmatičku i retoričku analizu pragmatičkih i sociokulturnih adaptacija koje je 10 studenata moralo da napravi pri prevođenju kratke priče sa makedonskog na engleski jezik. Pored toga, studenti su odgovorili na anketu u kojoj su opisali izazove sa kojima su se suočavali pri prevođenju. Istraživanje je istaklo značaj temeljne analize sociokulturnih razlika, pragmatičnih adaptacija i problema baziranih na kontekstu ili na jeziku. Eksplicitna nastava za vreme časova prevođenja neophodna je da bi se pomoglo razvijanje svesti studenata o problemima koji mogu nastati zbog nedostatka znanja o sociokulturnom kontekstu i pragmatičkim greškama.*

Ključne reči: *Programatika, sociokulturni kontekst, prevođenje, kratke priče, eksplicitna nastava*



# **THE USE OF METAPHORS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES: METAPHORS IN THE SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA AND DONALD J. TRUMP**

*UDC 81'42:32.019.5*

**Anja Petrović**

Faculty of Sport and Physical Education, University of Niš, Serbia

ORCID iD: Anja Petrović

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3575-5879>

**Abstract.** *Politics is a struggle for power with the aim of putting political ideas into practice. When giving a speech, politicians want to attract the attention of the public by all available means. The language which they use aims to mobilize the constituents, to persuade the undecided and to attack political opponents. It is for this reason that figurative language and figures of speech appear rather frequently in political speeches. A metaphor as a linguistic tool can be manipulated both for pragmatic and strategic reasons. Metaphors encountered in political speeches facilitate human understanding of complex concepts by explaining them via bodily experiences and the physical senses. It is for that reason that they rhetorically contribute to mental representations of political issues. This study aims to explore how politicians tend to convey their messages and ideas through the use of different types of metaphors: ontological, structural, and orientational. In order to achieve this goal, I will analyze three speeches given by Barack Obama between 2008 and 2009, and three speeches given by Donald J. Trump between 2016 and 2018 while using the model of study proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).*

**Key words:** *discourse, cognitive linguistics, metaphor, American politics*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is frequently regarded as one of the oldest tools of persuasion. Individuals employ persuasive language to sway others into aligning with their facts, embracing their values, and endorsing their arguments and conclusions. Essentially, it serves as a means to prompt others to adopt a particular mindset. It's important to recognize that carefully selected language has the power to shape the preconceptions, perspectives, aspirations, and anxieties of the public, leading individuals to accept falsehoods as truths or endorse policies that run

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Submitted April 9, 2024; Accepted May 8, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Anja Petrović

University of Niš

E-mail: [anja.97@live.com](mailto:anja.97@live.com)

counter to their interests. Political language and speeches, in particular, are typically characterized by meticulously crafted, managed, and directed language (Shäffner 1996, 202).

In times of presidential (or parliamentary) elections, political candidates employ figurative language in order to present themselves, introduce new policies, and question the arguments of their opponents (Charteris-Black 2018, 234). Due to the fact that politicians invest time and effort in preparing eloquent speeches that they can present to voters, the arguments that they make often deploy common rhetorical elements such as ironies, allusions, parallelism, metaphors, and smiles (Bos Van der Brug and de Vreese 2013; Boudreau and MacKenzie 2014). Studies on political discourse have showed that metaphors in particular play a central role in political speeches (Lakoff 1995; Karimova 2016; Delgado 2021). In his book, *The Language of Politics* (2002),

Gerard Steen argues that skillful utilization of metaphorical language serves as a powerful instrument for politicians, empowering them to secure or uphold their authority (2002, 45). He also adds that the use of metaphor in politics is considered a "fundamentally persuasive discourse act" (Steen 2002, 52). Steen's definition implies that metaphors are used in order to highlight some important aspects in a speech act and to ignore others. This argument is supported by Frederick George Baily, the author of the study *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (2018), who claims that it is through the use of metaphors that politicians present themselves in a positive light, degrade their rivals, and simultaneously justify their own actions. Similarly, Jonathan Charteris-Black warns that metaphors in political context are frequently used for ideological purposes since they activate unconscious emotional associations and thereby contribute to myth creation (2011, 28). As he elaborates further, the primary purpose of employing metaphors in political rhetoric is to shape our perspective on political matters by excluding alternative viewpoints (Charteris-Black 2011, 32). Once a metaphorical perspective is embraced, it becomes the guiding framework through which the public organizes relevant information and interprets news events that align with this perspective.

Alternatively, Jason Mio (1997) presents a contrasting perspective regarding the use of metaphors in political discourse. He suggests that political concepts are often intricate and abstract, making them challenging for voters to grasp. Therefore, Mio argues that metaphors can play a crucial role in simplifying complex ideas by associating them with more tangible concepts, aiding voter comprehension. Hence, politicians utilize metaphors to effectively convey abstract ideas by grounding them in tangible experiences and concrete language. This demonstrates the politicians' capacity for rational thought and enhances the persuasiveness of their arguments (Sudrama 2017; Littlemore 2003). Nevertheless, it's important to recognize that metaphors can be interpreted in various ways, leading voters to ascribe their own meanings to them, whether positive or negative. Therefore, politicians must consider the context and audience when selecting metaphors to ensure their message resonates effectively and avoids unintended misinterpretations. This adaptability in metaphor usage allows politicians to tailor their rhetoric to specific situations and audiences, maximizing its persuasive impact.

## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Barbara Lesz highlights the influential role of metaphors in shaping cognitive perception, emphasizing how they can subtly influence our understanding of complex concepts (2011, 21). Despite this profound impact, she notes that even native speakers may



not always recognize the presence of metaphors in speech or text. As a result, individuals may unknowingly internalize metaphorical constructs without fully grasping their implications. This lack of awareness underscores the subconscious nature of metaphorical language and its ability to operate beneath the surface of conscious thought. This dual characteristic of metaphors underscores their potency in shaping individuals' opinions and perspectives, subtly molding their worldview (Pikalo 2008; Karimova 2016).

Metaphors have the capacity to inject vigor into a message, rendering speeches more memorable and evoking emotional responses. For instance, likening a political figure to "a Hitler" can evoke strong emotions, shaping perceptions of the leader in question. Politicians harness metaphors to sway emotions, a strategy exemplified in renowned speeches like Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" address, George W. Bush's "Thousand Points of Light" speech, and Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" address, all designed to inspire and galvanize audiences (Mio et al. 2005, 288). Increased utilization of metaphors in political speeches appears to correlate with heightened inspiration among followers. This is primarily due to the emotional resonance elicited by these speeches, which effectively convey the necessary courses of action. (Mio et al. 2005, 289-293). According to a study conducted by Mio et al., (2005) concerning the charisma of American presidents, it was found that those who employed a greater number of metaphors in their inaugural addresses were perceived as more charismatic. Sections rich in metaphors were deemed particularly inspirational, indicating that metaphors serve as powerful rhetorical devices for inspiration.

Jennifer M. Wei (2001) took a firm stance on the significance and prevalence of metaphors utilized in election discourse to convey thoughts and shape ideas in Taiwan. Drawing data from newspaper and website coverage of the 1997 Taiwanese elections, she analyzed the interactions among voters, readers, and campaigners. Employing a cognitively and culturally grounded analytical framework proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), Wei delved into the specific socio-cultural conditions that fostered the emergence of novel and effective metaphors. Her study argued that recent social events and distinct cultural contexts gave rise to benign metaphors that depicted the unique socio-cultural landscape of Taiwanese politics. Additionally, her research provided a socio-cultural examination of particular political metaphors, demonstrating that these metaphors served strategic purposes beyond mere heuristic or cognitive functions. By utilizing the cognitive approach advocated by Lakoff et al. (1980), Wei's study also enabled linguists to explore both the universal and culturally specific aspects of conceptual metaphors. It confirmed that while conceptual metaphors stem from fundamental human experiences, our diverse cultural backgrounds shape our perceptions of the world and influence our utilization of metaphors. Therefore, Wei's (2001) research underscored the pivotal role of socio-cultural contexts in the development and utilization of metaphors. In contrast to Wei (2001), who examined metaphorical expressions in Taiwanese political news coverage, Ida Vestermark (2007) conducted a study on the metaphorical personification of America in political discourse. Utilizing the Cognitive-Semantic Approach developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Vestermark focused on the personification of America in the inaugural addresses of Ronald Reagan (1981), George H.W. Bush (1989), Bill Clinton (1993), and George W. Bush (2001). Her analysis centered on the utilization and interpretation of metaphors by these presidents, aiming to decipher the underlying messages conveyed to the audience. Employing this approach, Vestermark identified conceptual metaphors and examined how they attributed human characteristics to the non-human entity of America, while also elucidating the potential intentions of the speakers. In his research, Rotimi

Taiwo (2010) investigated metaphors in Nigerian political discourse, employing a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Cognitive Linguistics, as pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Taiwo primarily focused on identifying metaphors and analyzing how discourses mapped the source and target domains in their metaphoric expressions. Drawing from Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, he identified three target domains that served as sources of conceptual metaphors in his data: the nation, politicians, and politics. Specifically, Taiwo outlined the conceptualizations of the NATION as a FAMILY and as a PERSON, along with the conceptual mappings of POLITICS AS BATTLE and POLITICS AS A JOURNEY.

### 3. THE CONCEPT OF METAPHOR

A metaphor is a linguistic device where a word or phrase, typically representing one concept, is employed in lieu of another to imply a resemblance or comparison between the two, often conveying deeper meanings or associations. Metaphors are so ingrained within language and culture that their presence may go unnoticed or unacknowledged (Gibbs 1994, 210). Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) revolutionized the study of metaphors. It introduced three key propositions: metaphors are pervasive and extend beyond literary realms; they exhibit significant levels of organization and consistency; and they represent not only linguistic devices but also fundamental cognitive processes. These two authors assert that metaphor is ubiquitous in daily existence, permeating not only language but also behavior and cognition. Additionally, they argue that the conventional framework through which we perceive and engage with the world is essentially metaphorical in essence (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 3). Lakoff and Johnson propose that metaphor involves comprehending one concept through the lens of another, where a conceptual domain (*the target*) is interpreted in relation to another conceptual domain (*the source*). These domains are described as collections of information that structure interconnected ideas (Evans and Green 2006; Holyoak and Stamenković 2018). As a result, complex concepts are often grasped by likening them to more tangible ones (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Take, for instance, the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, where LOVE represents the target domain and JOURNEY serves as the source domain. In this case, JOURNEY is more concrete than LOVE, allowing us to draw parallels from our everyday experiences. This example follows the format where mnemonic labels like TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN are used to identify the mapping between concepts. Furthermore, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) asserts that there are "systematic correspondences" between the source and target domains, where the constituent elements of one domain correspond to those of the other (2006, 210). These correspondences, termed as mappings, are evident in the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, where elements like travelers map onto lovers and vehicles onto love relationships (Kövecses 2002, 6). However, according to Lakoff and Johnson, the mappings are unidirectional, flowing from the concrete source to the abstract target domain, as per the principle of unidirectionality. This principle implies that while we can understand love in terms of a journey, the reverse is not feasible.

Moreover, it is important to note that metaphors represent asymmetric and partial mappings across domains, where speakers utilize only some aspects of the source domain to understand the target domain. This concept, termed "partial metaphorical utilization" by Lakoff, suggests that not all aspects of the target domain need to be utilized by the source domain in the metaphorical process. For instance, consider the metaphor TIME IS MONEY, which suggests

that time carries a valuable worth, as evident in phrases like "I cannot spare more time on this project," "I've invested a lot of time in my career," "This will save you time," and "He doesn't use his time profitably." In these expressions, elements related to banking, such as investing, saving, spending, and budgeting, are metaphorically applied to time. However, the physical attributes of money, such as putting it in pockets or storing it in a bank, are not transferred to time. Therefore, while time is metaphorically equated with money in terms of value, it doesn't encompass all aspects of monetary transactions. Lakoff and Johnson add that each metaphorical mapping involves a predetermined set of correspondences between entities in a source domain and those in a target domain. These correspondences, once activated, project patterns from the source domain onto the target domain. Nevertheless, the cross-domain correspondences are not arbitrary; rather, they are rooted in our physical and cultural experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002; Shapiro 2010). This idea underscores the interconnectedness of the mind and body, proposing that our cognitive processes are shaped, and possibly dictated by, our interactions with the physical world.

Extensive exploration into cognitive metaphors and their linguistic representations has unveiled a discernible set of recurrent source metaphors employed in structuring conventional target concepts. Kövecses delineates various commonplace source domains, encompassing the human form, health, fauna, flora, architectural constructs, machinery and implements, recreational pursuits, economic transactions, culinary activities, temperature fluctuations, luminosity dynamics, physical forces, and directional cues (2002, 16-20). These metaphors, based on their cognitive utility, are classified into three distinct categories: structural, ontological, and orientational.

### **3.1. Structural Conceptual Metaphors**

In this type of conceptual metaphor, intricate and abstract phenomena are understood in terms of simpler and more tangible experiences. Kövecses elucidates that within a structural metaphor, "the source domain furnishes a comprehensive knowledge framework for the target concept" (2002, 37). For instance, one can interpret the target concept A by drawing parallels to the structural dynamics of source concept B, as exemplified in the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. War, being a concrete concept deeply ingrained in our collective consciousness, is frequently projected onto abstract domains such as argument and love (Lakoff 1987: case study 1; Kövecses 1991). This transference occurs because war, with its multifaceted nature involving strategic planning, tactical maneuvers, engagement, victory, defeat, and negotiation, offers a familiar framework for understanding more intangible concepts. Drawing upon our everyday experiences, we employ the rich tapestry of war-related terminology when navigating the domain of argument: employing strategies to "defeat" opponents' arguments, "attack" weak points, or "retreat" when faced with adversity. Despite the absence of physical combat, verbal exchanges are metaphorically likened to a battlefield, underscoring the pervasive influence of structural metaphors in shaping our understanding of abstract concepts.

### **3.2. Orientational metaphors**

The term orientational metaphor is coined from the fact that most metaphors serving this purpose are related to fundamental human spatial orientations, such as up-down, center-periphery, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002). As a result, these metaphors are grounded in an anthropocentric worldview, where vertical orientation is symbolized by the up-down dichotomy (up representing good and down

representing evil). Common examples include MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN, GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN. Lakoff & Johnson note that there is an "internal coherence to each spatialization metaphor," indicating that their meanings are not isolated occurrences but part of a systematic framework (1980, 14). Kövecses argues that these metaphors can also be termed "coherence metaphors" based on their cognitive function (2000, 63). For instance, the orientational metaphor HAPPY IS UP is part of a coherent system rather than a random linguistic expression. When discussing a concept using the word "up," it typically conveys positive emotions and concepts, as visualized by an increase or upward movement in daily activities. Conversely, "down" is associated with negative concepts and unfavorable emotions. Therefore, these metaphors play a significant role in shaping our understanding and expression of emotions.

### 3.3. Ontological metaphors

Ontological metaphors facilitate the conceptualization of concrete entities as abstract concepts (Kövecses 2000, 25). Hence, these metaphors attribute a sense of existence to concepts that lack physical presence. Ontological metaphors assist individuals in articulating their experiences in tangible terms, facilitating the recognition, description, and measurement of the intangible facets of those experiences. An example of a prominent ontological metaphor in American culture is THE MIND IS AN ENTITY, which portrays the mind as a tangible object susceptible to manipulation and operation, as outlined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 25-29). According to some authors, when experiences are conceptualized into specific objects or materials, they become classifiable, groupable, and quantifiable, enabling reasoning about those experiences. Even when the boundaries of objects in the objective world are unclear, they are still classified. Ontological metaphors encompass two main types: container metaphor, and entity and substance metaphor. The container metaphor, as identified by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), conceptualizes abstract concepts using the structure of tangible containers. Expressions like "He was full of anger" or "She did it in three minutes" illustrate how abstract notions are framed within the context of containers. On the other hand, entity and substance metaphors are ontological metaphors that portray abstract concepts as concrete physical objects. This linguistic mechanism transforms aspects of experience such as events, activities, emotions, and ideas into entities and substances, allowing individuals to refer to them as if they were tangible objects.

## 4. DATA

This paper analyzes three speeches given by Barack Obama between 2008 and 2009 and three speeches given by Donald Trump between 2016 and 2018. It is important to note that all six speeches were delivered on different occasions and on different topics. The speeches that were given by Barack Obama are the following: *A More Perfect Union* (2008), *Health Care Speech* (2009), and *A New Beginning* (2009). On the other hand, Donald Trump's speeches are the following three: *Donald Trump 2016 Campaign Kickoff Speech* (2016), *Shooting in Parkland, Florida* (2016), and *State Union Speech* (2018). The transcriptions of the published texts of the speeches were used in this analysis and not the actual words spoken. Furthermore, all transcriptions were taken from different websites that specialize in United States presidential speeches and public policy. Table 1 presents comprehensive data concerning the speeches analyzed.

Bearing in mind that metaphors are powerful tools in the world of politics that politicians use in order to convey their messages to the audience, the main purpose of the

present study is to discover what types of metaphors are commonly used by politicians in political speeches. Thus, this study will help to discover whether orientational, ontological, or structural metaphors prevail in the speeches of the former two US presidents.

**Table 1** The speeches which were analyzed

	Title	Speaker	Year	Speech Source	Speech Length	Location and Audience
1.	<i>A More Perfect Union</i>	Barack Obama	2008	<a href="https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467">https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467</a>	37 min.	National Constitution Center in Philadelphia Public
2.	<i>Health Care Speech</i>	Barack Obama	2009	Obama's Health Care Speech to Congress - The New York Times (nytimes.com)	45 min.	The White House Congress
3.	<i>A New Beginning</i>	Barack Obama	2009	<a href="https://www.npr.org/2009/06/04/104923292/transcript-obama-seeks-new-beginning-in-cairo">https://www.npr.org/2009/06/04/104923292/transcript-obama-seeks-new-beginning-in-cairo</a>	40 min.	Cairo University in Egypt Public
4.	<i>Donald Trump 2016 campaign kickoff speech</i>	Donald Trump	2016	<a href="https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/">https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/</a>	38 min.	Trump Tower in New York City Public
5.	<i>Shooting in Parkland, Florida</i>	Donald Trump	2018	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/15/politics/transcript-trump-parkland-shooting/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/15/politics/transcript-trump-parkland-shooting/index.html</a>	40 min.	Parkland, Florida Public
6.	<i>State Union Speech</i>	Donald Trump	2018	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/30/politics/2018-state-of-the-union-transcript/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/30/politics/2018-state-of-the-union-transcript/index.html</a>	60 min.	The White House Congress

## 5. METHODOLOGY

Critical Metaphor Theory is employed in this paper to analyze the six political speeches. This approach is selected for its robustness and effectiveness in dissecting the utilization and significance of language within a social context. Political speeches, being intricate compositions often laden with abstraction, require a thorough examination to decipher their intended messages. As a result, Critical Metaphor Theory serves as a valuable tool in identifying, organizing, scrutinizing, and comprehending how abstract ideas are represented in terms of tangible concepts, thereby aiding in comprehension and communication of meanings. Obama's speeches are analyzed firstly then Trump's secondly. Three instances of metaphor usage are highlighted and analyzed per speech. It's crucial to acknowledge that, given space constraints and the impracticality of analyzing every metaphor in both speeches, only recurrent and deliberate metaphors that enhance comprehension of how metaphor functions in persuasion are thoroughly examined and discussed. The metaphor analysis utilized in this paper adheres to the subsequent stages: 1. The selection of speeches. 2. Metaphor

identification. 3. Metaphor interpretation (identifying and classifying concepts). 4. Metaphor explanation (agency, rhetorical, purpose, identifying ideology).

## 6. THE ANALYSIS OF BARACK OBAMA'S SPEECHES

### 6.1. A More Perfect Union (2008)

- 1) "Yes, yes. I said before, and I will say again, that when we started on this journey we did so with an abiding faith in the American people and their ability."

The expression "we embarked on this journey..." represents a structural metaphor (POLITICS IS A JOURNEY). Obama portrays his tenure as President of the United States as a journey, likening the experience to a voyage. Just as journeys culminate in safely reaching a destination, successful political scenarios entail navigating through social, economic, and other challenges. While roads may be rough, "political landscapes" can be fraught with obstacles. In this analogy, the rough roads from the source domain are mapped onto socio-political occurrences (Semino 2008, 56). In the initial instance, Obama discusses a progression toward democracy. There is no literal movement involved, nor a physical attainment of democracy, yet he employs the notion of movement to illustrate global advancement.

- 2) "Each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family."

The POLITICS IS LOVE metaphor suggests that political unity and cohesion are akin to the bonds found within a loving family. In the statement above, Obama employs this structural metaphor to convey the idea that despite pursuing individual goals and aspirations, citizens can still unite under a common national identity and shared values, much like members of a family come together despite their differences. Thus, Obama effectively evokes the idea of America as a family that must come together. The country is not a literal family with parents and siblings; however, this analogy is selected for its evocation of the affection commonly associated with familial relationships. By framing politics as love, Obama emphasizes the importance of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect in achieving collective goals and fostering a sense of belonging and unity among citizens.

- 3) "So, to all of you that have put your heart and soul, not just into our campaigns, but into making schools better."

In the provided excerpt, Obama acknowledges the dedication of American citizens who have passionately contributed to improving schools, stating. This statement employs an ontological metaphor, depicting individuals as vessels containing their thoughts, efforts, and emotions (Thompson 2018, 187). By attributing the action of "putting one's heart and soul" into an endeavor, Obama emphasizes the depth of commitment and enthusiasm with which these individuals have worked towards enhancing the educational system.

## 6.2. Health Care Speech (2009)

- 1) "Our financial system was on the verge of collapse."

Obama portrays the American financial system as a tangible entity on the brink of collapse. By employing an ontological metaphor, he depicts the financial system as a concrete object, emphasizing its vulnerability. This strategy reflects a common tendency in economic discourse to anthropomorphize abstract concepts, drawing on individuals' physical experiences to make sense of the intangible (Shapiro 2010, 243- 247). Moreover, the example underscores the notion that metaphors often stem from individuals' bodily interactions and everyday encounters.

- 2) "We are going to be stronger than ever before."

One of the fundamental metaphors in our foreign policy revolves around the concept of a nation being likened to a person (NATION IS A PERSON). In metaphorical terms, Obama suggests that a nation possesses human-like characteristics. He emphasizes the idea that America, as a person, has the potential to thrive and excel in its endeavors. By invoking solidarity and unity with this person, Obama aims to inspire citizens to deeply care for their country as they would for another individual (Lakoff 2006, 189). Metaphorically, he paints a picture of America as a strong, resilient entity capable of achieving greatness.

- 3) "My health care proposal has also been attacked by some who oppose reform as a "government takeover" of the entire health care system..."

In this instance, Obama attributes entity and substance characteristics to something that doesn't inherently possess them. This metaphor is ontological in nature, where the abstract concept of a "proposal" is portrayed as a tangible object susceptible to attack and damage (Kövecses 2010, 344). By framing his disapproval of those opposed to his proposal in this way, Obama emphasizes the seriousness of the situation.

## 6.3. A New Beginning (2009)

- 1) "We should protect our state, our freedom and the innocent."

The state is anthropomorphized and depicted as an entity with social connections in a global community. Its territory is likened to a home, with neighbors, allies, and adversaries. In addition, states are attributed with inherent characteristics, such as peace-loving or aggressive tendencies. Economic prosperity is equated with the state's well-being, while military prowess signifies its strength. Obama urges Americans to safeguard their interests, employing the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor to instill a sense of urgency and concern. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out, our cultural knowledge and experience of physical conflict facilitate the understanding of abstract political actions. Several linguistic analyses suggest that this is one of the primary functions of war metaphors in political rhetoric (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002; Alexandrescu 2014; Thompson 2018). In this example, the war frame is an effective way of grabbing people's attention and focusing it on the target problem.

- 2) "Employment, agriculture, business—all of these show the steady, if slow, healing of our enormous wound."

The illness metaphor characterizes the financial crisis as a malady afflicting the economy of a nation, necessitating remedial measures for recovery. Like a sick individual,

the economy is portrayed as weakened and in need of care to regain strength and energy. This ontological metaphor implies that the economy, much like a patient, cannot overcome its ailment without external assistance. Thus, the government assumes the role of a doctor tasked with administering the appropriate treatments to facilitate economic healing. This depiction emphasizes the urgency of addressing the crisis and underscores the government's responsibility to foster economic recovery.

- 3) "I can stand here with confidence and say that we have pulled this economy back from the brink."

In the statement "We have pulled this economy back from the brink," Obama uses an ontological metaphor to describe the economy as an object that can be physically pulled back from a dangerous edge. This metaphor imbues the abstract concept of the economy with tangible qualities, allowing people to conceptualize it as something concrete and susceptible to physical actions (Charteris-Black 2011, 78). By portraying the economy as an object on the brink of disaster, Obama emphasizes the precariousness of its situation and the urgency of intervention. This metaphorical framing suggests that concerted efforts were needed to prevent the economy from plunging into crisis, highlighting the importance of decisive action in stabilizing economic conditions.

## 7. THE ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S SPEECHES

### 7.1. Donald Trump 2016 campaign kickoff speech

- 1) "They hate our values and they hate everything we prize as Americans, and we're right, because our country didn't grow great with them."

The conceptual metaphor COUNTRIES ARE PLANTS draws upon the metaphorical potential inherent in the concept of plants (Kövecses 2002, 89). Terms such as "grow," "flourish," and "root," originally associated with vegetation, have undergone semantic transformation and are now used metaphorically in contexts referring to countries and their development. Politicians, like Donald Trump, employ these metaphorical expressions to convey the idea of America's continuous growth and progress, not only economically but also in terms of democracy and strength. The phrase "our country didn't grow great with them" presupposes that countries, like plants, have the potential for growth and vitality.

- 2) "Whirlpool begged the Obama-Biden administration, but I don't want companies moving."

Corporations are considered legal entities, meaning that they, rather than the individuals involved in running or investing in them, are held accountable for their contractual agreements and wrongful actions. However, the concept of personhood attributed to corporations often extends beyond mere legal recognition. Describing a firm as a "person" serves as a rhetorical tool, justifying the treatment of the company as having inherent value separate from its utility to its stakeholders. By likening a company to a person in the phrase "I don't want companies moving", Trump indirectly suggests the ability to exert control and influence over its decisions. This metaphorical framework suggests that organizations possess characteristics akin to those



of individuals. Thus, the structural metaphor ORGANIZATION IS A PERSON / COMPANIES ARE PEOPLE is present in this example.

- 3) "I was brought up seeing my parents having to juggle their budget like the rest of us."

According to Kövecses (2010), different facets of political power can be understood by drawing parallels from domains like games and sports, business, and war. Ida Vestermark (2007) maintains that within the context of sports, politics is viewed as a competition regulated by specific rules, often involving two opposing sides. Political leaders strive to abide by these regulations to secure a fair outcome for all stakeholders. This metaphorical theme portrays the leader as resilient, akin to an athlete competing in a game. It also implies that the leader is alert to potential obstacles, treating politics as a strategic endeavor. When discussing a fair economy, Trump endeavors to persuade people that he is managing the crisis appropriately, transparently, and thoughtfully. The metaphor POLITICS IS A GAME suggests that politics operates similarly to a game, emphasizing strategy, fairness, and vigilance.

## 7.2. Shooting in Parkland, Florida 2018

- 1) "My fellow Americans, today I speak to a nation in grief."

In this statement, the ontological metaphor NATION IS A PERSON is utilized to personify the nation, assigning it human traits and feelings. By depicting the nation as undergoing grief, the speaker portrays it as though it were an individual experiencing mourning or profound sadness. This metaphor enables the speaker to elicit empathy and unity among the audience by encouraging them to empathize with the nation's emotional condition (Sawer 1996, 123). Moreover, it underscores the interconnection between the citizens and the collective entity of the nation, underscoring a shared sense of identity and inclusion. Overall, the metaphor aims to evoke an emotional reaction and underscore the seriousness of the issue at hand.

- 2) "No child, no teacher, should ever be in danger in an American school."

The concept of the CONTAINER image-schema encompasses an interior, an exterior, and a boundary, shaping its fundamental logic. This logic dictates that everything must reside either within or outside a container, and if container A is situated within container B, and B within C, then A is within C. According to Nayak and Mukerjee (2012), containment metaphors serve as a fundamental mechanism through which humans conceptualize abstract emotions. For instance, the expression "in danger" is regarded as a metaphor in which the emotion "danger" is perceived as a container. This illustrates an ontological metaphor where humans, emotions, actions, and activities are conceptualized as containers possessing boundaries and orientations of inclusion or exclusion.

- 3) "Our entire nation, with one heavy heart, is praying for the victims and their families."

The conceptual metaphor NATION IS A PERSON falls under the broader category of personification, as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Personification allows individuals to understand phenomena in terms that align with human motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics. Essentially, the nation is attributed with human-like actions, such as creating jobs, making promises, dealing with situations, and overcoming challenges

like illness. In this instance, Trump demonstrates his willingness to aid while portraying America as a unified entity experiencing grief and sorrow, with him offering prayers for the victims and their families.

### 7.3. State Union Speech

- 1) "Each day since, we have gone forward with a clear vision and a righteous mission -- to make America great again for all Americans."

The POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor is rooted in the experience-based kinesthetic SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema proposed by Lakoff which conceptualizes the achievement of a goal as a journey along a path (2006, 275). Trump employs this structural metaphor to convey the progress and growth of America as a nation. Political decisions are depicted as the path towards achieving the ultimate goal or destination of the journey, shaped by the interests of the political party. Therefore, advancing along this path signifies success in reaching desired objectives, while stagnation or regression implies political failure.

- 2) "Now we want to rebuild our country, and that's exactly what we're doing."

The building metaphor draws from the conceptual framework of A COUNTRY IS A BUILDING. Building a structure entails significant resources such as materials, finances, and collaborative efforts from various individuals like architects and laborers. This analogy holds political relevance as it underscores the need for unity and perseverance to achieve collective objectives. In this context, Trump urges the American populace to commit to fostering the most prosperous and inclusive society. Through the prefix "re-", Trump subtly suggests that the previous administration left American society in disrepair, akin to a dilapidated building in need of urgent refurbishment. This narrative allows him to present himself favorably to the public while criticizing the shortcomings of the previous government.

- 3) "We endured floods and fires and storms. But through it all, we have seen the beauty of America's soul, and the steel in America's spine."

In the expression "the beauty of America's soul," Trump depicts America as a living entity with a soul of great beauty, employing an ontological metaphor to attribute human-like qualities to the nation. Furthermore, the metaphor NATION HAS A BODY attributes physical characteristics to America, characterizing it as both beautiful and adaptable. By doing so, Trump emphasizes the nation's strength and vitality, reinforcing a positive image of America's qualities.

## 8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Obama demonstrates a high level of proficiency in using metaphors to convey his messages effectively. His speeches often convey a sense of optimism and hope for the future, reflected in his use of metaphors that emphasize progress, resilience, and potential. By framing political issues in positive terms and highlighting opportunities for growth and change, he inspires confidence and motivates action among his audience. Table 2 illustrates the overall count of metaphors found in Obama's speeches, as well as the breakdown of structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors.

**Table 2** Total number and distribution of metaphors in Obama's speeches

Speaker	Speech Title	Total Number of Metaphors	Number of Structural Metaphors	Number of Ontological Metaphors	Number of Orientational metaphors
Barack Obama	<i>A More Perfect Union</i> (2008)	28	20	8	0
Barack Obama	<i>Health Care Speech</i> (2009)	37	28	9	0
Barack Obama	<i>A New Beginning</i> (2009)	54	39	15	0

The combined count of metaphors in Barack Obama's speeches totaled 119, comprising 87 structural metaphors and 32 ontological metaphors. Notably, there were no orientational metaphors present in Obama's speeches. Specifically, his *A More Perfect Union* speech from 2008 contained a total of 28 metaphors, with 20 being structural and 8 being ontological. In his 2009 *Health Care Speech*, there were 37 metaphors in total, consisting of 28 structural and 9 ontological ones. Lastly, in his 2009 speech titled *A New Beginning*, there were 54 metaphors identified, with 39 being structural and 15 being ontological.

The analysis has revealed the following 6 main structural metaphors in his speeches: POLITICS IS A JOURNEY (40%), POLITICS IS LOVE (20%), AMERICA IS A PERSON (10%), POLITICS IS WAR (10%), ECONOMY IS A BUILDING (10%), OPPORTUNITIES ARE BEACONS (10%).

The most dominant metaphor that was used in Obama's speech at 40% of the overall pool of metaphors is the POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor. By employing this metaphor, Obama views the unity and prosperity of America as the ultimate goal toward which his leadership journey is directed, with citizens acting as fellow travelers on the same path. The second dominant metaphor at 20% is the POLITICS IS LOVE metaphor which suggests that political unity, cohesion, and cooperation are analogous to the bonds found within loving relationships. In this metaphorical framework, the idea is that political interactions should be characterized by compassion, empathy, and mutual support, much like the dynamics of love within a family or community. The AMERICA IS A PERSON metaphor encompasses 10% of all the structural metaphors in Obama's speech. By likening America to a person, the public can better grasp the country's policies and endeavors through the lens of the president's actions and objectives, as suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Obama employs the metaphor of POLITICS IS WAR (10%) to emphasize the challenges and conflicts faced in political endeavors. This portrayal positions Obama as a president who encourages his constituents to respond with civility and maintain unity during crises. Furthermore, Obama uses the ECONOMY IS A BUILDING (10%) metaphor to assure the public of the stability and strength of the economic foundation, especially during times of uncertainty or crisis. Finally, Obama has employed the OPPORTUNITIES ARE BEACONS (10%) metaphor to inspire hope and optimism among the American people, especially during times of economic uncertainty or social change. By portraying opportunities as beacons, he emphasizes the potential for individuals to overcome challenges and achieve their aspirations.

On the other hand, the ontological metaphors that Obama uses are the following four: NATION IS AN ENTITY (40%), ILLNESS IS AN ENTITY (30%), INFLATION IS AN ENTITY (20%), and EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS (10%). The most significant metaphor

that Obama utilizes is the NATION IS AN ENTITY metaphor which accounts for 40% of the total metaphor findings. By portraying the nation as a cohesive entity working towards shared progress and prosperity, this metaphor is used to emphasize the importance of national unity in addressing challenges. On the other hand, when discussing economic challenges or social issues, Obama employs the ILLNESS IS AN ENTITY metaphor, which stands at 30%, to characterize problems such as poverty, inequality, or unemployment as "illnesses" afflicting the nation. By framing these issues as tangible entities, he emphasizes the urgency of addressing them with targeted interventions and policies aimed at promoting recovery and well-being. When discussing the nation's monetary policy, Obama uses the INFLATION IS AN ENTITY (20%) metaphor to depict inflation as a distinct entity that poses risks to the economy so as to highlight the need for proactive measures to control inflationary pressures and maintain price stability. Finally, the EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS metaphor is the least dominant metaphor, encompassing 10% of the overall findings, and it is used to describe feelings such as hope, fear, or resilience as "containers" that influence people's perceptions, decisions, and actions. By framing emotions in this manner, he underscores the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in addressing social challenges and fostering unity and understanding within society.

The total count of metaphors observed in Donald Trump's speeches amounts to 106, comprising 89 structural metaphors and 27 ontological metaphors. Notably, no orientational metaphors were identified in his speeches. Specifically, his 2016 Donald Trump Campaign Speech contained a total of 37 metaphors, with 20 being structural and 8 being ontological. In his 2018 speech addressing the shooting in Parkland, Florida, there were 32 metaphors identified, consisting of 21 structural and 10 ontological ones. Lastly, his 2018 State Union Speech contained 47 metaphors in total, with 38 being structural and 9 being ontological. Table 3 presents the total number of metaphors identified in Trump's speeches, along with the distribution of structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors.

**Table 3** Total number and distribution of metaphors in Trump's speeches

Speaker	Speech Title	Total Number of Metaphors	Structural Metaphors	Ontological Metaphors	Oriental Metaphors
Donald J. Trump	<i>Donald Trump 2016 campaign</i> (2016)	37	30	8	0
Donald J. Trump	<i>Shooting in Parkland, Florida</i> (2018)	32	21	10	0
Donald J. Trump	<i>State Union Speech</i> (2018)	47	38	9	0

The analysis of Donald Trump's speeches reveals a strategic and deliberate use of metaphorical language to convey his messages and shape public perception. Through a combination of personification, ontological, and structural metaphors, Trump effectively simplifies complex political concepts, making them more accessible and relatable to his audience. The analysis has revealed the following 7 main structural metaphors present in his speeches: POLITICS IS WAR (30%), POLITICS IS A JOURNEY (20%), TAXES ARE PAIN (20%), POLITICS IS A GAME (15%), HISTORY IS WAR (10%), CRISES ARE FOES (5%), COUNTRIES ARE PLANTS (5%), and ARGUMENT IS WAR (5%).

The most common metaphor to appear in Trump's speeches is the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor, constituting 30% of the overall data. By using this metaphor, Trump portrays political adversaries as enemies in a battle for control or dominance and highlights the importance of strategy, tactics, and winning in the field of politics. The second most frequent metaphor is the POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor at 20%. This metaphor is used to portray Trump's political campaign as a journey toward achieving specific goals or objectives. By employing this metaphor, Trump emphasizes the progress that he made and the challenges that he faced, so as to rally supporters around the idea of moving forward together towards a common destination. By using the TAXES ARE PAIN (20%) metaphorical framework, Trump depicts taxes as burdensome, unpleasant, or even harmful to individuals or businesses. This comparison implies that the process of taxation causes negative feelings or hardships similar to those experienced when one is in pain. In addition, he employs the POLITICS IS A GAME (15%) metaphor to characterize political competition as a strategic game where different players vie for power, influence, and victory. The HISTORY IS WAR metaphor stands at 10% of the total metaphor data. This metaphor is used to draw parallels between historical conflicts and contemporary challenges, emphasizing the importance of strength, resilience, and determination in overcoming adversity. Furthermore, by embedding the CRISES ARE FOES (5%) metaphor in his political speeches, Trump influences how the public perceives the issues America is confronting as well as the course of actions that the president is advocating. The COUNTRIES ARE PLANTS metaphor also accounts for 5% of the findings, and is used to depict countries as entities capable of growth, development, and vitality. Finally, by framing argument as war in the ARGUMENT IS WAR (5%) metaphor, Trump emphasizes the importance of assertiveness, strength, and winning, appealing to his supporters' desire for victory and dominance in political discourse.

The most common ontological metaphors that appear in Trump's speeches are the following three: NATION HAS A BODY (50%), EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS (30%), and ORGANIZATION IS A PERSON (20%). Utilizing the metaphor of the nation as a sentient entity, capable of summoning, calling, judging, and feeling, serves as a persuasive rhetorical strategy, attributing justification to presidential actions. The NATION HAS A BODY metaphor effectively portrays the country as a cohesive entity whose actions and emotions mirror the motivations and directives of its leaders. Notably, this metaphor accounts for 50% of all metaphorical data, emphasizing its widespread usage. According to Landtsheer et al. (2008), the act of voting is often driven more by emotional impulses than rational thought processes. Portraying America as a body in need of a political leader who can act as a mender and a caretaker resonates deeply with individuals, as good health is universally cherished as a fundamental element of happiness. In addition, Trump often relies on the EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS (30%) metaphor to highlight that emotions such as fear, anger, or patriotism are contained within individuals or groups, and to suggest that these emotions can be contained, controlled, or unleashed as needed. Finally, the third most common ontological metaphor in Trump's speeches is the ORGANIZATION IS A PERSON metaphor at 20%. It is used to attribute human-like characteristics to organizations or institutions. By portraying organizations as persons, Trump imbues them with qualities such as responsibility or corruption, depending on his rhetorical goals.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed three political speeches given by Barack Obama and three political speeches given by Donald J. Trump. The findings indicate that Both Obama and Trump employ metaphorical language to convey their messages, but they do so in different ways reflecting their distinct leadership styles and communication strategies. Obama tends to use metaphors that evoke optimism and progress, aligning with his message of hope and inclusivity. It can be argued that Obama takes a personal and intimate approach to understanding America. He sees the nation as an individual entity with the ability to hold him accountable, make judgments, and beckon him into action. As a result, Obama holds a deep reverence and affection for this personified version of the country, fostering a relationship characterized by close connection and mutual interaction. In contrast, Trump's metaphors often emphasize competition, strength, and victory, reflecting his confrontational and assertive approach to leadership. Trump perceives America as a determined figure capable of conquering any obstacle, imbuing his speeches with a sense of pridefulness.

The analysis also reveals differences in the frequency and dominance of metaphors between the two leaders. Obama's speeches are characterized by a more balanced distribution of metaphors, with no single metaphor dominating the discourse. In contrast, Trump's speeches exhibit a more concentrated usage of certain metaphors, particularly the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor, which appears most frequently. This suggests a more consistent rhetorical theme in Trump's communication. Furthermore, both leaders employ a combination of ontological and structural metaphors, with structural metaphors being the prevailing type of metaphors they use. It should be noted that there are also differences in the types of metaphors both presidents emphasize. Obama tends to utilize ontological metaphors, such as NATION HAS A BODY and ILLNESS IS AN ENTITY, alongside structural ones. Trump, on the other hand, leans more towards structural metaphors in his speeches such as the POLITICS IS WAR and POLITICS IS A GAME, which reflect his focus on competition and progress. Additionally, neither Obama nor Trump employ orientational metaphors in their speeches.

The present study acknowledges that it may not capture and analyze all metaphors present in the two speeches in a comprehensive manner. Moreover, the identification of metaphors can vary from person to person. What one individual perceives and categorizes as a metaphor might not be recognized as such by another, and vice versa. Consequently, it is essential to recognize that the audience's demographic composition, values, and political affiliations can impact how metaphors are perceived and interpreted. Charteris-Black (2018) suggests that differences in metaphor processing among individuals are influenced by their awareness of resemblances and historical connotations associated with words, which shape how these words are interpreted metaphorically. Thus, by understanding the audience's perspectives and preferences, presidents can effectively employ metaphors to connect with and persuade their listeners.

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## **UPOTREBA METAFORA U POLITIČKIM GOVORIMA: METAFORE U GOVORIMA BARAKA OBAME I DONALDA TRAMPA**

*Politika je borba za vlast sa ciljem sprovođenja političkih ideja u delo. Kada drže govor, političari žele da privuku pažnju javnosti svim raspoloživim sredstvima. Jezik koji koriste ima za cilj da mobiliše birače, da ubedi neodlučne i da napadne političke protivnike. Iz tog razloga se figurativni jezik često pojavljuje u političkim govorima. Metaforom kao lingvističkim sredstvom može se manipulirati i iz pragmatičnih i iz strateških razloga. Metafore koje se susreću u političkim govorima omogućavaju ljudima da shvate složene koncepte tako što ih povezuju sa našim telesnim iskustvima i fizičkim čulima. Iz tog razloga metafore doprinose našem razumevanju političkih pitanja. Ova studija ima za cilj da istraži način na koji političari prenose poruke i ideje upotrebom različitih tipova metafora: ontoloških, strukturalnih i orijentacionih. Da bi se postigao ovaj cilj, ova studija će analizirati tri govora Baraka Obame datih između 2008. i 2009. godine i tri govora Donalda Trampa datih između 2016. i 2018. godine, koristeći model studije koji su predložili Lejkof i Džonson (1980).*

*Ključne reči: politički diskurs, kognitivna lingvistika, metafora, američka politika*



## SMALL GROUP LANGUAGE TEACHING AT TERTIARY LEVEL



UDC 378.147:811.111'243

Elena Kitanovska-Ristoska<sup>1</sup>, Natasha Petrova-Popovski<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education – Bitola, University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Bitola, North Macedonia,

<sup>2</sup>Central Administration Office, University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Bitola, North Macedonia

ORCID iDs: Elena Kitanovska-Ristoska  
Natasha Petrova-Popovski

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6328-2071>  
 <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1644-0738>

**Abstract.** *One of the benefits of the post-method tertiary education is working in small groups. There are plenty of benefits of teaching in small groups since the main focus is put on the needs of the students, while the main objective is their academic skills growth. Teaching language and literature in small groups at tertiary level creates an interactive and engaging learning environment. It promotes critical thinking, active learning, collaboration and cultural exchange, while providing students with individual attention and support. This approach enhances students' understanding and appreciation of language and literature while fostering the development of various skills that are valuable beyond the academic setting. It also leads to quality enhancement of the teaching process, proven by the students' feedback, and by their higher knowledge shown at mid-term and final exams. This study aims to analyze the process of teaching language and literature in small groups of students majoring English at the Faculty of Education – Bitola, considering their skills, designing achievable learning outcomes, and using various ICT tools to fulfill the individual students' needs. The research uses the qualitative paradigm and descriptive method (primarily reflection). The theory is combined with the reinforcement from the practical teaching experience.*

**Key words:** *small group, students, EFL, higher education.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The post method era in language teaching refers to a period in the field of language education that occurred as a reaction to the rigid and prescriptive nature of earlier teaching methods. This period began to take shape in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to form into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is mainly characterized by a shift away from the one-size-fits-all approach to language teaching and move towards more flexible and learner-centered methods. The most prominent concepts associated with the post-method era include:

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Submitted March 26, 2024; Accepted May 11, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Elena Kitanovska-Ristoska

University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bitola

E-mail: [elena.kitanovska@uklo.edu.mk](mailto:elena.kitanovska@uklo.edu.mk)

eclecticism, focus on learner needs, communicative competence, task-based learning, technology integration, reflective practice, cultural awareness and contextualization.

The post-method era in language teaching challenges the notion that a single method or approach is universally applicable to all learners and recognizes the need for flexibility, learner-centeredness and a focus on real-world communication. Educators today recognize that no single method can meet the diverse needs of learners and they advocate for a combination of approaches, techniques and resources based on the specific context and learner characteristics. This allows teachers to select and adapt methods according to the goals, proficiency levels, learning styles and students' cultural backgrounds.

## 2. POST – METHOD ERA KEY FEATURES

Eclecticism is perhaps the most prominent feature since it encourages the teachers to draw on a wide range of teaching techniques, methods and materials instead of adhering to a single method. They are encouraged to choose the most appropriate techniques for their specific teaching context and learners.

The needs and interests of learners are also taken in consideration while discussing this post-method period. Teachers are expected to tailor their instruction to meet the individual needs, goals and preferences of their students. The learner-centered approach acknowledges that not all students learn in the same way or have the same linguistic needs.

There is also an emphasis on developing communicative competence which goes beyond mere grammar and vocabulary knowledge. It includes ability of use language appropriately in real-world situations, with a focus on speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Communicative language teaching is one of the influential approaches that emerge during this era, highlighting the importance of communication in language learning.

Task based language teaching is also a significant feature of the post-method era. It involves students engaging in meaningful, real-world tasks using the foreign language. These tasks could be problem-solving activities, role-plays, or other interactive exercises that encourage practical language use. Language teaching is seen as a dynamic and context-dependent process. Teachers are expected to consider the specific context in which they are teaching, including the socio-cultural and linguistic factors that influence language acquisition.

To be successful in conducting English teaching and learning process, the first step for professors should do is scrutinizing who their students are. Knowing who the students are is essential in English teaching because it is related to what to teach – materials relevant to the students' needs and backgrounds, and how to teach – methods in conveying the materials and ways treating the students. This comes in line with what Mc Neil and Wiles (1990:79) state that a good beginning for professors is to find out some general information about their students. Some authors point that the professors should take into consideration the students' differences with regard to their ability, attainments, levels of motivation etc. Identifying students' characteristics is closely related to learning styles and learning strategies. Knowing students' characteristics will well devise professors to suitably treat their students because each of the students has their own learning styles and distinct intelligences.

Brown (2007:129) states that students learning English language and literature can have visual, auditory or kinesthetic learning styles. According to Brown, visual learners

are good in observing objects, therefore, they prefer to read texts, charts or other graphic information, or even they draw objects. Auditory learners are good in listening. They like listening to lectures, stories and others involving listening. They will enjoy the class and easily understand the materials presented in recordings. Kinesthetic learners like demonstrations and physical activities, body movements. They clearly seem to like activities involving body movements.

Nunan (1999:91) has different classification of students' learning styles. Students in class are classified into concrete learners, analytical learners and auditory-oriented learners. Concrete learners are those who prefer learning by games, pictures, films and video. Analytical are those that like studying grammar, studying alone, finding their own mistakes, having problems to work on. They mainly employ their cognition in learning. Whereas communicative learners are those that like to learn by observing and listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English, using social media in English etc. learning English words by hearing them and learning by conversation. They focus on language use and practice the language they are learning as a means of communication. Whereas authority-oriented learners are those that like their professors explaining everything, writing everything in a notebook, asking questions and learning through discussion.

Beside language learning style, the students have their own language learning strategies which are important in language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement for developing communicative competences. Learning strategies are divided into two groups: direct and indirect. Direct strategies consist of: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies involve: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Therefore, the professors should know, direct and enhance their students' language learning strategies in order that their students can reach the optimal end of their English learning. Comprehending students' characteristics will result in different instruction, or at least different treatment for different students having particular knowledge, skills and behaviors. Differentiating instruction means creating multiple paths so that the students of different abilities, interests or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process. English professors wishing to humanize the classroom experience treat students as individuals, patiently encourage self-expression, seriously listen to learner response, provide opportunities for learning by doing, and make learning meaningful to students. Therefore, according to Eyring (2001:335) they focus on students' needs and become active co-participants in the teaching-learning process.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Research questions and methodology for investigating small group language teaching are essential for understanding its effectiveness, identifying best practices, and informing instructional improvements. Since small group language teaching at a university level is considered an approach whose purpose is to facilitate language learning and proficiency, naturally the basic research question would refer to its effectiveness and outcomes by discovering how does small group language teaching impact language proficiency and communication skills compared to traditional classroom. The next research question would refer to the interaction and engagement by discovering the types of interactions

and engagement patterns occur in small group language teaching and how do they contribute to learning. And the final research question would have to do with the teacher-student dynamic and the way teacher-student relationships and interactions influence language learning outcomes in small group settings. An inevitable segment of a post-method era research would also be technology integration and how does the integration of technology, such as online platforms, digital resources etc., and impact language learning in small groups.

The aim of this research is to produce arguments in favor of the hypothesis that small group language and literature teaching improves the language proficiency and communication skills and motivates the students to take active part in the process of acquisition of knowledge. The attempt to provide answers to the above-mentioned research questions is based on a case study conducted at the English department of the Faculty of Education at the University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Bitola.

The method used in this research is based on teachers' observations gained from the conducted individual interviews with the students at the middle and at the end of the semester to explore in-depth insights and experiences related to small group language teaching. By employing these research questions and methodologies we can get valuable insights into the effectiveness, dynamics and potential areas for enhancement of small group language teaching at tertiary level.

### **3.1. The theory behind small group language teaching**

Before moving to the main discussion on the effectiveness of small group language teaching, we will start with defining this particular approach. Small group language teaching at tertiary level is an approach that focuses on facilitating language learning and proficiency through interactive and collaborative sessions involving a small number of students. The theoretical underpinnings of small group language teaching draw from educational theories, language acquisition theories and pedagogical principles that promote effective language learning in a more interactive setting. Here are some key theoretical aspects:

- Communicative language teaching is a widely adopted theoretical framework that emphasizes communication rather than set of isolated grammatical rules. According to Liao and Zhao (2012) it represents set of goals and processes in learning where the main theoretical concept is the acquisition of communicative competence. In small group language teaching CLT encourages interactive activities, discussions, role-plays, and real-life simulations to promote authentic language use and meaningful exchanges among students;
- Constructivist theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge and understanding through interaction with the environment and other learners. Piaget (1977) theorized that learners get more knowledgeable by thinking about new experiences and comparing them to old experiences. Small group language teaching aligns with constructivist principles by providing an environment where students engage with the language in meaningful ways, collaborate with peers and construct their understanding of the language through social interaction and reflective activities;
- Socio-cultural theory, developed by Vygotsky, emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in cognitive development and learning. Small group language teaching leverages this theory by encouraging students to interact and

negotiate meaning within small, culturally diverse group, this promoting language development through shared experiences and social interactions;

- Task-based language teaching focuses on language learning through the completion of communicative tasks, promoting language use in authentic and meaningful contexts. In small group language teaching, according to Skehan (2003) TBLT can be employed to design tasks that encourage collaboration, problem-solving and effective language use, promoting proficiency and communicative competence.

These theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for designing and implementing small group language teaching strategies that optimize language learning experiences and outcomes for students at the tertiary level. The approach emphasizes communication, collaboration, learner autonomy, and meaningful engagement with the language.

### **Case study: Enhancing understanding and analysis through small group English literature teaching: A Literature Course at the University “St. Kliment Ohridski” – Bitola**

Our particular study explores a small group language teaching with students majoring English language and literature at the English department at the University “St. Kliment Ohridski” in Bitola. The aim was to explore the effectiveness of small group instruction in improving comprehension, critical analysis, and engagement with literary works and encouraging collaborative learning among university students. The case study took place during one semester of fifteen weeks, involving 25 undergraduate first-year students, divided into five small groups of five students each. The effectiveness of the groups in improving comprehension, critical analysis, and engagement with literary works and encouraging collaborative learning was qualitatively and quantitatively measured by the immediate groups’ instructor prof. Elena K. Ristoska.

The case study process and applied research method included several stages, starting from group formation. Students were grouped based on their academic interests and preferences for literary periods (Old and Middle English, Renaissance, Romanticism, Modernism, Post-modernism). Each group had a mix of students to ensure diverse perspectives. Then, the selection of a teaching method followed and the professor employed a student-centered approach, focusing on collaborative discussions, literary debates, close reading exercises and interactive interpretation of texts within the small groups. Materials and resources that were used consisted of primary and secondary literary texts, critical essays, academic journals and digital platforms were used to expose students to a wide range of literary works and scholarly perspectives. In line with the chosen teaching method focused on the students, the instructional activities that were applied encompassed various exploits including group discussions on assigned readings, analytical presentations, literary debates, character analysis exercises, and comparative analysis of literary works. The results for the research were derived through many assessments, such as formative assessments, individual power point presentations, literary reviews, and critical essays. Additionally, peer evaluations were conducted to assess individual contributions to group discussions and activities.

As expected and noted in the research hypothesis, the results proved enhanced understanding and analysis, since students in the small group work demonstrated improved comprehension and critical analysis skills, enabling them to delve deeper into the intricacies of literary works. This was achieved through collaborative discussions and

close reading activities. As for the participation and engagement, that were also observed during the research, students reported higher engagement levels due to the small group setting, which provided a comfortable space for sharing interpretations, debating literary themes and engaging with diverse perspectives. Peer learning and constructive debate, another segments reviewed and qualitatively measured within this study case research work, were up-skilled, since students actively engaged in peer discussions, enabling them to learn from each other's interpretations and viewpoints. Debates facilitated the exploration of various literary theories and approaches. And last, but not the least, small group students work resulted in effective error correction – immediate feedback and error correction during discussions and presentations helped students refine their analytical skills and literary interpretations.

The case study demonstrated the effectiveness of small group teaching in enhancing understanding, critical analysis and student engagement within an advanced English literature course. The results suggest that this approach fosters a collaborative and dynamic learning environment, encouraging active participation, peer learning and deeper literary exploration at the university level. These findings support the aim of the research to produce arguments in favor of the hypothesis that small group language and literature teaching improves the language proficiency and communication skills and motivates the students to take active part in the process of acquisition of knowledge, since all basic elements of studying English language in efficient manner were improved, i.e. understanding and analysis, participation and engagement, peer learning and constructive debate and error correction.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to produce arguments in favor of the hypothesis that small group language and literature teaching improves the language proficiency and communication skills and motivates the students to take active part in the process of acquisition of knowledge and how important are the interactions and engagement patterns in small group language teaching and how do they contribute to learning. The attempt to verify this was based on a case study conducted with first cycle students at the English Department of the Faculty of Education at the University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bitola. It was mainly based on professor' observations, and the regular practice of note-keeping as well as the individual interviews conducted at the middle and the end of the semester.

Based on the findings, the study proved the common belief that the small group teaching is highly effective in teaching language and literature. Small group settings encourage participation and frequent interactions, providing students with ample opportunities to speak, listen and engage in discussions. This heightened engagement leads to improved language fluency and comprehension. Small groups foster effective communication by allowing students to practice the language in a supportive and non-intimating environment. Students gained confidence and fluency by engaging in conversations within their small groups.

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## NASTAVA U MALIM GRUPAMA U VISOKOŠKOLSKOM OBRAZOVANJU

*Jedna od prednosti „post-metodskog“ visokoškolskog obrazovanja je rad u malim grupama. Mnogo je prednosti nastave u malim grupama jer je glavni fokus stavljen na potrebe studenata, dok je glavni cilj razvoj njihovih akademskih vještina. Nastava jezika i književnosti u malim grupama na tercijarnom nivou stvara interaktivno i privlačno okruženje za učenje. Promoviše kritičko mišljenje, aktivno učenje, saradnju i kulturnu razmenu, istovremeno pružajući studentima individualnu pažnju i podršku. Ovaj pristup poboljšava razumevanje i shvatanje jezika i književnosti i istovremeno podstiče razvoj različitih vještina koje su vredne izvan akademskog okruženja. To takođe vodi ka unapređenju kvaliteta nastavnog procesa, što se dokazuje povratnim informacijama od studenata, kao i njihovim boljim znanjem na kolokvijumima i završnim ispitima. Ovaj rad ima za cilj da analizira proces nastave jezika i književnosti u malim grupama studenata engleskog jezika na Učiteljskom fakultetu u Bitolju, uzimajući u obzir njihove vještine, osmišljavanje ostvarivih ishoda učenja i korišćenje različitih IKT alata za ispunjavanje individualnih potreba studenata. Istraživanje koristi kvalitativnu paradigmu i deskriptivnu metodu (pre svega refleksiju). Teorija je kombinovana sa potkrepljenjem iz praktičnog nastavnog iskustva.*

Ključne reči: mala grupa, studenti, IKT alati, engleski kao strani jezik, visokoškolsko obrazovanje





# THE SUBTLE ART OF INTENTIONAL IMPROVISATION: TEACHING ORAL ENGLISH PRACTICE AT UNIVERSITY PARIS NANTERRE

UDC 378.147:811.111'243

**Dana Vučković**

University of Oxford

ORCID iD: Dana Vučković

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7631-4536>

**Abstract.** *This paper explores the trials, tribulations, and triumphs I faced, as a first-time lecturer in the English language and literature, when using a range of teaching methods to develop English oral proficiency with first-year students at University Paris Nanterre (France). It focuses on the challenges faced when applying methodologies proposed by the faculty and the interdisciplinary approaches that successfully encouraged students to leave their comfort zones and confront their linguistic trepidations. I argue that acquiring the skill of 'spontaneous speech' at the B1 and B2 levels should not be assumed as something adopted solely through vocabulary exercises promoting 'native-like' pronunciation. Rather, it is through technical, cognitive and interpersonal training that students gain self-confidence, refine their written and oral comprehension skills and open themselves up to the transformative power of body-language. To justify this argument, I compare students' performances in two English oral classes. After discussing French students' overall reluctance to speak English, analyzing the course syllabi and identifying the advantages and disadvantages of task-based speaking activities, I argue against 'language immersion' as I found it counterproductive in a French classroom setting. Finally, I show how students' hostility towards the oral exam is transformed into a newfound appreciation for multilingualism and multiculturalism.*

**Key words:** *EFL, Oral practice, Culture, Improvisation*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fundamental role oral communication plays in second language acquisition, the lack of emphasis placed on interactive speaking activities in ESL university classrooms in France impedes students from confidently expressing themselves in spoken English. Acquiring the sought-after skill of 'spontaneous speech' at the B1 and B2 levels—according to the Common

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Submitted March 26, 2024; Accepted May 7, 2024

**Corresponding author:** Dana Vučković

University of Oxford

E-mail: [dana.vuckovic@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dana.vuckovic@bnc.ox.ac.uk)

European Union Framework— should not be assumed as something that can be solely adopted through vocabulary exercises promoting ‘native-like’ pronunciation. Rather, through technical, cognitive, and interpersonal training, students are prompted to gain self-confidence, refine their written and oral comprehension skills, and open themselves up to the vulnerability and transformative power of body language. Gilakjani argues that ‘in spite of its importance, the teaching of oral speech and pronunciation has been neglected by teachers in the field of English language teaching’ (Gilakjani 2011, 2). Drawing upon practical experiences, I will compare students’ achievements and underperformances in two classes I taught in the 2022–2023 school year at the University of Paris Nanterre: English Oral Practice I and II. I will briefly begin by prefacing French students’ overall reluctance to speak English both within and outside of the classroom. Next, I will delve into the courses’ syllabi and identify the advantages and disadvantages of task-based speaking activities. Comparing these differences will underline what scholars call the ‘discrepancy between teachers’ beliefs on the focused areas of oral communication and pronunciation and the stated curriculum specifications’ (Shah, Othman, and Senom 2017, 193). Thirdly, I will aim to debunk second language acquisition methods conventionally deemed as successful, notably ‘language immersion’ and explain its counterproductivity in a French classroom setting. Lastly, I will go over the structure and aftermath of the final oral exams, arguing how students’ hostility toward the exam can be transformed into a newfound appreciation for multilingualism and multiculturalism.

## 2. FRENCH STUDENTS’ RELUCTANCE TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

The University of Paris Nanterre, commonly referred to as Nanterre University, is a publicly funded university located in the western suburbs of Paris. Established in 1970, the university is the alma mater of current French President, Emmanuel Macron. Renowned for its academic excellence, Nanterre University fosters a vibrant research community in the fields of political and social sciences, law, and languages. Thanks to the university’s subsidized rates, students pay low to zero tuition fees which, although in theory sounds attractive for universal accessibility, becomes a drawback for students’ overall motivation to study and receive higher grades. This is especially true in countries such as France where ‘academic culture is more precocious and more radical’, replacing ‘the aristocratic ideal of the *honnête homme*’ with a bourgeois model emphasizing scholastic merit.’ (Van Zanten 2014, 331). In French high schools, most students take English classes, however, there continues to be a negative stereotype surrounding French speakers’ poor to non-existent English-speaking skills. This is primarily because English classes in France focus on grammar and memory-based tasks, thereby hindering students from breaking the language barrier and confronting their mistakes in a proactive manner:

In the French system of education, 85 % of the students learn English as their first second language (Truchot 1994, 21). French pupils normally start learning English in *collège* (middle school). It is estimated that 40 % of these continue to do a “BAC” (which corresponds to A-levels) and have another 3 years of English teaching. Even if this is the case, the classes are often overloaded with up to 35 pupils in each class, the teaching is only 3 hours per week, and it is often very theoretical (Truchot 1994, 22). It is suggested that only a minority of French speak English relatively well, and that this minority consists of young people from socially privileged backgrounds (Bakke 2004, 49).

Due to the lack of emphasis placed on oral speech, French students are extremely reluctant to speak up in class as they are afraid that their accent will sound funny, that they will make mistakes and that they will be heavily judged for them. In France, it is especially problematic as ‘bad pronunciation habits are not easily corrected’ (Gilakjani, and Sabouri 2016, 195). Accordingly, learners who always mispronounce a series of phonemes create a lot of problems for the speakers of other languages to understand. This can be very disappointing for French speakers who otherwise have good grammar and lexis knowledge but have difficulties in understanding and being understood by English speakers.

Moreover, the French fight in vain for their language, especially since the fall of the monarchy in 1789. At this time, the French language became the ‘unifying symbol to inspire nationalism of the new Republic’ (Bakke 2004, 37–38). Consequently, the nation takes a certain pride in speaking and mastering the complexities of the French language. This makes it even more difficult for native French speakers to fully immerse themselves in a foreign language, especially when they are surrounded by familiar signs and customary habits such as ‘la bise’, a common greeting where French people exchange kisses on the cheek.

### **2.1. Methodology Challenges**

For English Oral Practice I, course coordinators did not provide lecturers with a defined syllabus. Instead, they wanted lecturers to incorporate vocabulary games and roleplay exercises to encourage students to speak English in a spontaneous way. By not having a syllabus, it was up to the lecturers to introduce spontaneity and improvisation in their teaching methods. Lecturers had the freedom to design the course as they best saw fit, but it was difficult to know where to begin. Although games were a good icebreaker, notably having one student face the others while they guess the word written behind them on the whiteboard, games cannot take up the entirety of a 1.5-hour class. That being said, my method was to work in reverse, which consisted of designing the course based on the outline of the final oral exam. It involved students working in pairs and selecting one out of the following three scenarios: a roleplay dialogue, a short debate, and a storytelling exercise prompted by visual images. Considering that students were at the A2 and B1 levels, I combined and reconfigured exercises that were already used in class to prepare them for the final exam. Many of these included: group discussions or debates around lighter topics such as baguette vs. red wine or more serious subjects involving the rise of artificial intelligence. By establishing end goals at the start of the term, I was able to better cater towards the students’ needs and build lesson plans that helped them gain more self-confidence in their oral speaking abilities.

What failed in this class, however, was trying to get students to memorize academic and non-academic vocabulary sheets for each lesson. As argued by Ally Zhou, ‘an increase in the amount of academic vocabulary should contribute to writing improvement. Yet, the extensive knowledge of academic vocabulary needed to be successful makes learning and teaching a daunting task.’ (Zhou 2009, 35) Course coordinators suggested that lecturers use videos and vocabulary lists to help students familiarize themselves with formal academic language, as well idiomatic expressions, and colloquial terms. In my classroom experience, I found that trying to force students to memorize outdated expressions such as ‘to cost an arm and a leg’ with little to no context was an unsuccessful way of introducing new vocabulary into the class. Instead, I favoured what Zhou calls an ‘incidental and intentional form of learning vocabulary.’ (Zhou 2009, 35) The method consists of introducing

new words via an acquisition process that is less task-oriented and more focused on complimentary learning. To do this, I focused on group work and encouraged students to work on exercises where they had to play the role of detective and guess the correct expression based on contextual understanding. This way, they not only focused on selecting the correct expression, but also on understanding the realistic contexts in which certain expressions are used by native English speakers. Moreover, I played contemporary pop songs students enjoyed listening on a day-to-day basis and asked them to identify words, expressions, or slang terms they wished to better understand and use more frequently. Giving students the freedom to work in pairs and listen to music they can relate to allows them to open up to lecturers and classmates, thereby making the learning process less intimidating and overwhelming.

In the second English class – English Oral Practice II – students were at a B2 and C1 level. Therefore, they were already expected to be familiar with vocabulary terms that would allow them to easily roleplay with given prompts, have basic debates and create stories at a faster and more fluid rate. Accordingly, the focus was placed less on vocabulary and more on making students become more confident in their improvisational skills. For this class, the course coordinator was much more specific in the outline and had a definitive end goal: the students had to present a one-page speech that they would annotate, so that they could read it in a nonchalant and spontaneous way. Although it may seem counterintuitive to associate improvisation with annotation, students were asked to mark down moments in the speech where they would make eye contact, improvise for thirty seconds, and use body language, such as hand gestures. In other words, they would annotate the speech in a way that mimicked their actual speech patterns, thereby helping them read and present what was once a foreign speech in a more personal way. Consequently, it encourages students to gain a set of sub-skills that emphasize ‘the learning objectives of imitating native speakers as well as the development of learners’ communicative competence’ (Hinkel 2010, 113).

This task was created to make students better understand themselves as learners, writers, and speakers. By preparing them with speeches at the start of the semester, students could track their progress and determine how and whether their speech patterns evolved. This allowed them to acquire English-speaking skills in a more holistic way and understand that learning a language does not solely involve regurgitating the vocabulary learnt in class, but also incorporating it into their gesticulations, eye contact and overall body posture. Like English Oral Practice I, this course also favoured group work and encouraged students to step out of their comfort zones. Thanks to the more elaborate course structure of English Oral Practice II, I felt more confident in teaching the class and incorporating new activities that were complimentary to the ones already designed by the course coordinator. It cannot be denied that a syllabus-free class gives lecturers the creative freedom to create a safe, inspiring environment filled with games, discussion groups and linguistic challenges. However, it can be overwhelming for new lecturers to take on ambitious pedagogical tasks that satisfy both the course coordinators’ expectations and the students’ oral communication fluency.

Although both courses motivated students to get into groups and do exercises around roleplaying and improvisation, group activities did not always prove to be the most effective method of encouraging students to speak in English. In fact, once students picked one or two group members at the beginning of the semester, they would remain with the same individuals throughout the entirety of the term, thereby making them extremely reluctant to change groups and speak to new students. For that reason, it was important to

decondition the students to change partners every week so that they could overcome their boundaries and present their skills to other group members.

While changing groups encouraged students to overcome their social inhibitions, they were still reluctant to speak in English with their classmates. As a result, each time I circulated in the classroom, I often heard students conversing in French. As our goal as lecturers was to fully immerse students in the English language, we had to constantly remind them to speak in English, which often resulted in discourteous comments such as: ‘But, Madame, why would we speak in English when we are in France?’. No matter what method was adopted to immerse students in an English-speaking environment, whether it be through in-person dialogues, videos, podcasts, games or roleplaying, students still resorted to speaking in French simply because it was easier for them and felt more natural. I continually reminded students that making mistakes is the first step in not only breaking the language barrier, but also in actively learning the target language instead of passively listening to it from lecturers or other secondary media. In other words, students who listen and actively engage in conversations can ‘participate effectively in communicative interaction and make sense of the incoming messages’ (Hong 2016, 18).

Another challenge involved students’ overwhelming levels of anxiety and stress when it came to their final presentations. Although lecturers are often confronted with students’ higher level of stage fright, it was extremely challenging to motivate first-year students to present in front of others. These repercussions are likely due to the impact of the pandemic and the substantial increase in online classes where students could turn their cameras off and avoid any form of social interaction. Furthermore, many of the students ‘did not have a comfortable learning atmosphere at home and were forced to engage in household chores during the lockdown, bringing about negative impacts on their studies and leaving them depressed and despondent’ (Mishra, Gupta, and Shree 2020, 3). Accordingly, many of them lost their motivation to study, making the e-learning process even more tedious. As this was an underlying obstacle for other lecturers, course coordinators suggested that students record their presentations on their phones and send them via email. This drastically lowered their anxiety levels and made them feel more at ease in the comfort of their own homes. However, it was a counterproductive solution as it gave students the time to rehearse, film, and refile themselves until they were satisfied with the final product. Consequently, it made their final presentations the complete antithesis of spontaneous speech acquisition.

In addition to rehearsed presentations, students struggled with the annotative work in English Oral Practice II, often complaining that an oral speech class should not have writing involved. Moreover, it felt awkward for them to annotate a speech and indicate when and where they would enunciate certain words or incorporate body language. As a result, their presentations became a lot more theatrical and performative instead of spontaneous and well-balanced.

## **2.2. Teaching Approaches to Overcome Methodology Challenges**

### *2.2.1. Incorporate the Students’ Requests into Lesson Preparation*

It is important that lecturers humanize their role as instructors and that students see them as authoritative, but still approachable figures. As they become more acquainted with one another, lecturers could ask students what they would want to learn and eventually incorporate their suggestions in upcoming lesson plans. For example, a student asked if LGBTQ+ rights could be discussed during a class which focused on gender identity. I asked

students to do research on the evolution of LGBTQ+ rights in France and to discuss how members of the LGBTQ+ community are perceived and treated in France and other Francophone countries. By incorporating the subject of Francophone culture, students felt a sense of familiarity and therefore more inclined to discuss the topic in English. Another way to include students' voices into the conversation involves the use of surveys at the start and end of each semester. By asking students what their expectations were going into the class and how they felt toward the end of the semester, lecturers gain clearer insight into students' expectations and learn to step back from their roles as instructors and unlearn certain techniques that were less successful in the classroom.

### *2.2.2. Adapting to Familiarity and Expanding from It*

As themes of Francophone culture were incorporated into students' conversational practices, they also took part in numerous debates to enhance their rhetoric skills. The nation's educational system prides itself on its 'commitment to liberty, equality, justice, and reason.' (Berenson, Duclert and Prochasson 2011, 298) This is primarily achieved through government policy making, cultural discourse and constructive debates, the latter of which are 'currently used in many classrooms all over France where English is being taught in language classes.' (O'Mahoney 2015, 144) The French are known to enjoy debating, whether it be in political chambers, the classroom or even at the dinner table. From an early age, French children are taught to enrich their knowledge and understand the dialectic nature of a debate. By using an activity that students are already comfortable doing in their native language, they became more intrigued to try it in a new language and win the debate. Moreover, it 'prepares students at all levels in the communication skills they need for professional, public and personal life.' (O'Mahoney 2015, 145) When it came to the debate topics, it was extremely helpful to select subjects that were more current and relatable to students. For example: should smoking marijuana be legal or illegal? As the French are notorious for smoking, they were keen to discuss the pros and cons of the smoking culture in their country.

### *2.2.3. Reiterating the Importance of Oral Language Skills*

Students often felt that oral language classes were trivial for their language learning journey, especially due to the low frequency of university evaluations. In oral language classes, students were only graded on two assessments: classroom participation and the final exam. This differs from other science-based courses which involved weekly assessments. Despite the lower number of evaluations, it is crucial for students to incorporate oral speech into their lives. Devoting an entire lesson to explaining the relevance of oral language classes could change students' perspectives and help them better understand the plethora of opportunities gained from learning another language: from travelling abroad, to applying for more fulfilling jobs and making friends from the entire world. Therefore, it is indispensable to explain the relevance of English-speaking skills to students by describing real-life situations. Whether it involves listening to instructions at work, following conversations with colleagues, or engaging in social interactions, oral comprehension skills are vital for navigating everyday situations in an English-speaking environment. In other words, oral speech is fundamental in ESL classrooms because it enhances communication skills, fosters cultural understanding, and facilitates accurate assessment of language proficiency.

### 2.3. Applying Tips to the Final Oral Exams

Applying these tips helped me structure the ‘dreaded’ oral exams in a more accessible and approachable way. By working backwards and focusing on the courses’ end goals, students were made aware of the expectations of the oral exams at the start of the semester. This was achieved by explaining and reviewing the grading rubric so that they could clearly understand how to study effectively and better set their expectations. While the oral exam for English oral practice II was catered toward diminishing student stress levels and asking them to record their speeches, the English oral practice I exams were done in-person. Students worked in pairs and were asked to select one out of three prompts. As these activities were already practiced in class—debates, roleplaying, and storytelling via images—I took the liberty in personalizing the prompts to make it more catered toward their interests and French background. For the debate section, some of the questions focused on whether grading be abolished at Nanterre University or whether social media is detrimental to university students’ mental health. Students could for the most part easily identify and relate to these questions as they are overwhelmed with challenging exams and most often tied to social media applications. As for the image and roleplaying prompts, I encouraged students to describe images or improvise a 5-minute dialogue surrounding the theme of travel. This topic was extremely prevalent throughout the entire semester as many of the students will be embarking on an exchange to non-Francophone countries in the third year of their studies. Not only did talking about familiar subjects ease students into the conversation in a less stressful way, but it also motivated them to talk about their future plans to travel the world and study abroad.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Despite lecturers’ efforts in actively engaging with their students, it is impossible to satisfy every student’s needs. Lesson plans will not always work and oftentimes, it is the exercises that spontaneously come to lecturers’ minds that turn out to be some of the most fruitful. Integrating diverse listening and oral speaking activities into ESL instruction can help learners develop robust oral comprehension skills essential for their linguistic and socio-cultural integration into English-speaking communities. While English Oral Practice II had a more structured syllabus, the design and delivery of the final oral exam went against the course objectives and encouraged students to focus more on their performative and rehearsed English skills rather than on their authentic, spontaneous selves. Although English Oral Practice I did not have a structured syllabus and resulted in a more tedious approach to familiarizing lecturers with students’ needs, they could better prepare students for the final oral exam. Even though these two different courses had the same objective – spontaneous speech– their varying structures encourage lecturers to rebuild language courses in a stress-free, adaptable, and relatable environment. In doing so, they can create a more holistic language learning space that focuses not only on speech and pronunciation, but also on body language, spontaneity, and self-confidence.

**Acknowledgement:** *I wish to express my deepest gratitude for the invaluable teaching experience gained during my year abroad at Nanterre University. Furthermore, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Nanterre University staff and students for not only welcoming me into their community, but also providing me with a supportive environment for teaching and learning. Thank you for granting me the privilege of being a part of this fervent academic establishment.*

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## SUPTILNA UMETNOST NAMERNE IMPROVIZACIJE: NASTAVA USMENE VEŽBE ENGLESKOG NA UNIVERZITETU U PARIZU NANTER

*U ovom radu, bavim se izazovima, problemima i trijumfima sa kojima sam se susretala kao predavač engleskog jezika i književnosti bez prethodnog iskustva, prilikom korišćenja različitih nastavnih metoda za unapređenje usmenog engleskog jezika sa studentima prve godine na univerzitetu Nanter u Parizu, u Francuskoj. Posebno su istaknuta iskušenja na koja sam nailazila prilikom primene metodologija propisanih od strane fakulteta, i u interdisciplinarnih pristupa koji su uspešno podstakli studente da izađu iz zone komfora i suoče se sa svojim jezičkim strepnjama. Zastupam stanovište da sticanje veštine „spontanog govora“ na nivoima B1 i B2 ne treba smatrati nečim što se razvija isključivo kroz vežbanje vokabulara i izgovora „sličnog izvornim govornicima“, već kroz tehničku, kognitivnu i interpersonalnu obuku, kojom studenti stiču samopouzdanje, usavršavaju veštine pismenog i usmenog razumevanja i otvaraju se za transformativnu moć govora tela. Kako bih obrazložila ovu tezu, uporedila sam performanse studenata na dva časa engleskog usmenog izražavanja. Nakon diskusije o nevoljnosti francuskih studenata da govore engleski, analize nastavnih planova kurseva i prednosti i nedostataka govornih aktivnosti, zalažem se protiv „uranjenja u jezik“ jer smatram da je to kontraproduktivno u okviru francuske učionice. Na kraju, pokazujem kako se neprijatnost studenata prema usmenom ispitu pretvorila u novootkriveno poštovanje multilingvizma i multikulturalizma.*

Ključne reči: *Engleski kao strani jezik, govorne vežbe, kultura, improvizacija*



CIP - Каталогизacija y publikaciji  
Nародна библиотека Србије, Београд

80+82

**FACTA Universitatis**. Series: Linguistics  
and Literature / editor-in-chief Violeta Stojić  
. - Vol. 1, no. 1 (1994)- . - Niš : University of  
Niš, 1994- (Niš : Atlantis). - 24 cm

Dva puta godišnje. - Drugo izdanje na drugom  
medijumu: Facta Universitatis. Series: Linguistics  
and Literature (Online) = ISSN 2406-0518  
ISSN 0354-4702 = Facta Universitatis. Series:  
Linguistics and Literature  
COBISS.SR-ID 98733575

