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Reported speech:
corpus-based findings vs. EFL textbook presentations

Summary

Corpus linguistic research shows that EFL textbook grammar descriptions often do not reflect authentic language usage. Based on this background, this paper presents a survey of the presentation of indirect reported speech in EFL textbooks currently used in elementary and secondary schools in Croatia. Results of the corpus-based cross-register research of indirect reported speech are presented in the second part of the paper. The survey findings are then contrasted with the corpus findings to show that EFL textbooks often omit important information regarding the use of indirect reported speech in naturally occurring discourse. The results of this study support the results of Eckhardt's study (2001) on the patterns of usage of indirect reported speech. Due to the small size of the corpus and the lack of an appropriate computer program the conclusions of the present study should be subjected to further verification and re-examination.

Key words: corpus linguistics, EFL, direct speech

Indirektni govor:
rezultati korpusne analize vs. učbeniki za pouk angleščine

Povzetek

Raziskave v korpusnem jezikoslovju kažejo, da slovnice za poučevanje angleščine pogosto ne odražajo avtentične rabe jezika. Skladno s tem, članek povzema, kako hrvaški osnovnošolski in srednješolski učbeniki za pouk angleščine obravnavajo indirektni govor. V drugem delu članka so predstavljeni rezultati korpusne raziskave rabe indirektnega govora v različnih jezikovnih registrih. Primerjava rezultatov obeh raziskav kaže, da tujejezikovni učbeniki pogosto ne obravnavajo rabe indirektnega govora v resničnih vsakdanjih govornih situacijah. Rezultati potrjujejo ugotovitve Eckhardtove študije (2001). Zaradi premajhnega korpusa in neustrezne računalniške obdelave, bo v prihodnje te rezultate treba ustrezno ponovno preveriti.

Ključne besede: korpusno jezikoslovje, angleščina kot tuj jezik, indirektni govor

Reported speech: corpus-based findings vs. EFL textbook presentations

1. Introduction

As a somewhat inexperienced teacher of EFL, I have often despaired over my apparent inability to teach my students certain grammatical structures. Despite my continuing efforts, detailed explanations, numerous exercises and close following of the syllabus and prescribed textbooks, my student seemed unable to communicate in an effective and efficient manner. In the course of my PhD studies, I first turned to cognitive linguistics and subsequently to corpus linguistics to look for possible answers. These two disciplines have at least one notion in common – the notion of prototype. Whereas research in cognitive linguistics shows that EFL students acquire prototypical meaning or usage sooner than less-prototypical meaning or usage, corpus linguistic research of L2 learner language and materials shows that prototypical meanings and structures are often disregarded or not given enough attention to in EFL textbooks. The evidence suggests that textbooks often present artificial, reduced and simplified language. The aim of this study is to present the application of corpus-based findings to the analysis of certain weaknesses in the presentation of grammatical structures in current EFL textbooks.

2. Background

Corpus linguistics has become influential in several areas of applied linguistics (most notably, in the area of SLA and language teaching), developing tools, ideas and resources which are often relevant to researchers, teachers and students alike. More specifically, corpus-based analyses have been particularly relevant to EFL textbook writers and teachers. In the past decade numerous researchers have repeatedly claimed that many decisions regarding foreign-language teaching have been based on nothing more than the intuition of EFL teachers or textbook writers (Gavioli and Aston 2001; Sealey and Thompson 2006; Biber and Reppen 2002; Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007). Following the emergence of corpus linguistics and its in-depth analyses of exact data, these decisions are increasingly being made on the basis of the empirically verifiable results and conclusions of corpus-based analyses. The application of a corpus-based approach to the collections of the learner language has given rise to the research the results of which, as mentioned, are applicable to EFL materials and EFL teaching: computer-aided error analysis, comparisons of learner language with native language (Altenberg and Granger 2001; Shirato and Stapleton 2007; García and Trillo 2007), analyses of the spoken learner language at certain stage of L2 acquisition (Shirato and Stapleton 2007; García and Trillo 2007). In addition to this, corpus linguistic tools have been in use in the language classroom since the 1980s through the analysis of concordances of particular language structures (Ranalli 2003). This approach, in which the students discover the meanings of words on their own or draw conclusions on the rules of usage, has been called "discovery learning" (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007, 320). As concordancing tools usually produce a large amount of data, and students need to have some basic knowledge of the concordancing program, this approach is more suitable for the advanced learners of language.

However, it must be stressed that the usage of concordancing as a means of implementing corpus linguistics in foreign language learning is not synonymous with the implementation of corpus linguistics informed by SLA principles and theories of learning (prototypical structures, "notice-the-gap" theory, multi-sensory approach to FL learning etc.). As Barbieri and Eckhardt (2007) claim, "to date, little or no effort has been made to apply corpus-based findings to LT in a way that reflects current SLA principles and theories." SLA theory and research, as a basis for foreign language teaching, should take into account information language use provided by corpus linguistic research. As a result of the linking of these two disciplines, language structures presented in EFL textbooks are likely to become more authentic.

3. EFL textbook grammar and real language use

Many researchers have compared EFL textbook description of a certain target language structure with the language occurring in authentic, everyday situations (Gilmore 2004; Biber and Reppen 2002; Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007). Perhaps not surprisingly, these studies showed that textbook descriptions of target language structures in many ways do not correspond to the realization of these structures in the naturally-occurring written and spoken discourse.

Since the descent of the Audio-Visual method the umbrella term of language teaching has been the so-called "communicative language teaching" which, as the term itself suggests, puts emphasis on the speaking skill, language experience, personal language use and use of language beyond classroom (Savignon 2002, 10-6) However, despite this relatively new trend in language teaching, textbooks tend to "neglect important and frequent features of the language spoken by the real language users" presenting "a patchy, confusing, and often inadequate treatment of common features of the grammar of the spoken language" (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007, 321), most likely reflecting the wish of their authors to present language as a sequence of well-ordered and comprehensive, easily learnable structures.

As Biber and Reppen (2002) claim, this discrepancy between the textbook language and real language use might be attributable to the following factors: 1) textbook design decisions are often based on the traditions about grammar materials; 2) textbook writers often rely on their intuition when making crucial decisions on the grammar presentation; 3) the real language is often simplified for pedagogical purposes, 4) context and register variations are often disregarded in textbook materials. In their case study (2002), Biber and Reppen analyzed the presentation of selected grammatical features (progressive aspect, lexical verbs and adjectives – noun premodification) from six popular ESL/EFL grammar books using the results drawn from the corpus-based analyses conducted for *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (*LGSWE*). Their analysis revealed numerous illogicalities in textbook grammar descriptions. For instance, it showed that the role of nouns as nominal premodifiers has been omitted in the textbooks, even in those aimed at intermediate and advanced learners of English. In fact, the corpus search has shown that the nouns as premodifiers are very frequent in the written registers, particularly so in newspaper writing. The obvious conclusion is that the design of L2 teaching materials should be in many ways informed by corpus-based findings.

Lawson (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007, 322) suggests that there are four areas of language in which corpus linguistics can bridge the gap between textbook grammar presentation and real language use. Namely, corpora can provide the information on the frequency of occurrence of a particular linguistic feature in real language and point to register variation. Further, corpora also provide information on the discourse characteristics of a particular linguistic feature and its productivity (salience or scope) in real language use. Corpus findings thus become an almost ideal starting point for re-evaluation of the presentation and order of presentation of linguistic features in L2 textbooks.

4. The present study

In the present paper I intend to compare the presentation of reported speech in EFL textbooks to the corpus findings on the real usage of reported speech. The search is limited to the instances of indirect reported speech. The background of this study is the research conducted by Eckhardt (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007) in which she criticized the presentation of indirect speech in popular EFL/ESL grammar textbooks based on the data gleaned from the *LGSWE* corpus. Her survey of EFL/ESL grammar books showed that the authors predominantly focus on the tense backshifting rule, shifting of pronouns and adverbials and "say" and "tell" as reporting verbs. Corpus results did not entirely contradict the textbook presentation of reported speech. However, the results did reveal that there are certain other reporting verbs which are frequently used, but still omitted in grammar textbooks. The results also revealed that the transformational principle (tense backshifting) is not always obeyed in the real language use.

As for direct reported speech, the research conducted by Barbieri (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007) showed that there is an increase in usage of the "new" quotative verbs (*be like,* go *and be all*) in spoken interaction. The usage of these verbs very much depends on their discourse–pragmatic function, as well as on the age of the speaker. One of the conclusions of this research was that the new quotative verbs and the direct reported speech in general are largely neglected in EFL/ESL textbooks.
Based on this background, the research questions for the present study are the following:

1. What are the ways of presentation of indirect reported speech in EFL textbooks (students' books) currently used in Croatian elementary and secondary schools?
2. What is the frequency of occurrence of the selected reporting verbs in two registers (newspapers writing and TV-series script)?
3. What is the distribution of tense combinations in indirect reported speech across registers and for the most frequently occurring reporting verbs?
4. To what extent does the presentation of indirect reported speech in EFL textbooks currently used in Croatian schools reflect real language usage as indicated by the corpus-based analyses of two registers (newspapers writing and TV-series script)?

5. A survey of EFL textbooks

In the first part of this study, I focused on the four textbooks currently used by EFL teachers

in elementary and secondary schools in Croatia. The textbooks surveyed are as follows: *Way to go 5–Students' Book* (Džeba and Mardešić 2007), *New Headway–English Course* (Soars and Soars 2003), *Matrix* (Gude and Wildman 2007) and *New Opportunities–Education for life* (Harris, Mower and Sikorzyńska 2006). Although this is clearly not an exhaustive sample, it includes textbooks that are widely used and well-accepted by EFL teachers in Croatia. I have purposefully avoided high advanced books, which focus on more specialized topics and selected those textbooks which focus on general, everyday English. The general information regarding the selected textbooks is presented in Table 1.

TITLE	PUBLISHED BY	LEVEL	LEVEL (CEF)[1]	TOPICS
Way to go 5–Students' book	Školska knjiga, Zagreb	Upper–Elementary to Pre–Intermediate	A2 (*Waystage*)	sports, holidays, ecology, pets, jobs, movies, family and friends, ads, mysteries
New Headway–English Course	Oxford University Press	Pre–Intermediate	not stated	family and friends, countries, careers, shopping, traveling, literature, history,
Matrix	Oxford University Press	Intermediate	B2 (*Vantage*)	dreams, friends and family, history, traveling, fame, careers, literature, communication
New Opportunities	Longman	Intermediate	B2 (*Vantage*)	traveling, history, sports, movies, media, fame, ads, schools, learning, careers, sights, literature

Table 1: Overview of EFL textbooks used in Croatian schools

5.1 Way to go 5–Students' Book

Way to go 5 is used in Croatian elementary schools with students which have been learning English for at least 4 years. As for the presentation of reported speech, the authors focus on reported statements, questions, commands and requests, giving example for each category:

"I'm tired, "she says to Peter.
She tells Peter (that) she is tired.
She tells him (that) she is tired.

(*Way to go 5*, 83)

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[1] CEF or Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a Council of Europe document which describes competences necessary for effective communication, the related knowledge and skills, as well as situations and domains of communication. This document has been accepted as a reference for foreign language teaching and evaluation across Europe. CEF, as a framework for modern EFL textbooks, emphasizes communicative competence and communicative language teaching and, consequently, presentation of authentic language usage in textbooks.

Reported speech is presented as a mechanical transformation of a hypothetical original sentence in direct reported speech into a sentence in indirect reported speech. Further, "say", "tell", "ask" and "want to know" are the only reporting verbs presented. There is no mention of the tense backshifting rule, and all the examples given are in the present tense, for both the embedded and the reporting verb. The focus is entirely placed on the shifting of pronouns and adverbials, even graphically so: pronouns and adverbials are printed in bold letters. Grammatical unit on reported speech is a part of the lesson on New York. The students are given the task to listen to and report tourists' comments. However, the text itself lacks all the features of the spoken discourse, such as false starts, repetitions, pauses or hesitation devices (Gilmore 2004):

> Takashi: "This is a great place for us because we are interested in art. My wife has read in the tourist guide that there are 250 museums here. I don't know how we are going to choose.

<div align="right">(Way to go 5, 111)</div>

5.2 New Headway–English Course

As in the previously discussed textbook, the authors of *New Headway* focus on indirect reported speech, that is, on reported statements. The only two reporting verbs mentioned are "say" and "tell" and the emphasis is put on the tense backshifting rule: "The usual rule is that the verb form moves *one tense back*" (*New Headway*, 142) The process is again presented as a mechanical transformation of direct reported speech into indirect reported speech, with all the necessary changes:

> "We've met before"
> She said they'd met before.
> <div align="center">(New Headway, 142)</div>

Students are expected to be very familiar with the English tense system. The practice for reported speech is based on reading and writing tasks. As for the sequence of tenses, only past-past and past present tense combinations are presented in the examples.

5.3 Matrix–Intermediate Student's Book

In this textbook, the reported speech is dealt with in more detail. The focus is on reported statements, commands and questions. A lot of space is also given to the changes in verb tenses and other changes in reported speech. This is one of the two selected textbooks in which it is explicitly stated that backshifting applies if the reporting verb is in the past tense: "When the reporting verb is in the past tense, we change the verbs in the direct speech to a tense further back in the past" (*Matrix*, 140). Unlike other textbooks, this textbook provides a variety of reporting verbs. There is a list of other reporting verbs, although it is not clear if the authors followed a particular rule while compiling it. The list includes the following verbs: *add, admit, agree, answer, ask, confess, explain, make (it) clear, order, promise, reply, tell, want to know, go on to say, recommend, offer, suggest.* However, none of these verbs appear in indirect speech sentences presented as examples of use.

5.4 New Opportunities: Education for life!–Intermediate Students' Book

Unlike other textbooks presented, this textbook hasn't got a special grammar section. Presentation of grammar is included within the main body of respective units, usually within the main (spoken or written) text of the lesson. Reported statements and reported questions are dealt with in two separate units. Starting point for the presentation of reported questions is an interview students are supposed to listen to and complete the gaps. However, the text itself lacks the characteristics of spoken discourse (noises, pauses, false starts etc.):

> Friend: What did she want to know?
> José Luis: She asked me what my job was and if any of us had got money problems. She wanted to know why we had come here and whether we were going to make Ireland our home.
> Friend: You were talking a long time.
> José Luis: Yes, she's going to write an article about us. She also asked me if we'd found life difficult when we first arrived. And she wanted to know if the people had been friendly when we first arrived.

(*New Opportunities*, 108)

Artificiality is not necessarily wrong, as Widdowson (in Gilmore 2004) points out: "The whole point of language learning tasks is that they are specially contrived for learning. They do not have to replicate or even stimulate what goes on in normal uses of language. Indeed, the more they seem to do so, the less effective they are likely to be."

This is surely applicable to the lower-level textbooks. However, *New Opportunities* is a textbook aimed at students at the intermediate to upper-intermediate level. Students at this level need to be acquainted with the discourse features found in authentic data, as it is our and our students' goal that they learn the language sufficiently well to be able to use it independently outside classroom.

The only reporting verbs mentioned are, once again, "say", "tell", "want to know" and "ask". The focus is on the changes of pronouns and adverbials and on the tense backshifting. It is explicitly stated that the changes happen when the reporting verb is in the past tense. However, there aren't any examples of the present-present or present-past tense combination.

To conclude, this survey revealed that there is a general consensus regarding the presentation of reported speech in EFL textbooks used in Croatia. First of all, EFL textbooks focus on indirect reported speech. Direct reported speech is taken for granted, that is, presented exclusively as a starting point for transformation into indirect reported speech sentences. Third of all, transformation of direct into indirect speech is presented as a largely mechanical process with the emphasis on the shifting of tenses, adverbials and pronouns. The students are thus under the false impression that there is always a hypothetical sentence in direct speech to be neatly transformed into an indirect speech sentence. However, such a straightforward presentation is also a highly misleading one (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007). Students are bound to come

across a sentence which cannot be directly transformed, particularly in the spoken discourse they are exposed to (predominance of TV- series, movies and music in English language). There are direct speech forms that do not have a grammatically correct indirect speech form and vice versa:

> (txt. 116) It was like: *"Yeah, right, what else is new?*
> ** It was like yeah, right, what else was new.* (Script)

Further, EFL textbooks provide little information regarding the tense that should be used for the main/reporting verb. By presenting exclusively the examples in which the reporting verb is always in the past tense, textbooks implicitly suggest that this is always the case, disregarding other possible tense combinations for the reporting and embedded verbs (present-past, present-present). Textbooks also neglect context-dependent and register-dependent variation (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007), that is, the fact that reported speech is not used in the same way in everyday conversation, newspaper writing or academic essays. Corpus research showed that the presentation of reported speech as a "monolithic phenomenon" (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007) is highly misleading one. The usage of reported speech significantly varies across registers, including the usage of reporting verbs other than "say", "tell" and "ask" and tense combinations other than past-past.

6. Method

In addition to the analysis of the presentation of indirect reported speech in EFL textbooks, the present study also investigates the usage of indirect reported speech in two different registers, newspaper writing and script for a popular TV series ("Friends"). The corpus was drawn from the materials prepared by Enikő Csomay for her PhD-level course[2] *Discourse Analysis: A Corpus Linguistic Perspective* held at the University of Pecs in August 2007. Because this corpus was compiled for the classroom-use only, it must be stressed that it does not meet the criteria expounded by Biber in his article on representativeness (Biber 1993) in corpus design. The conclusions of this research therefore must be discussed and applied to the presentation of indirect reported speech in EFL textbooks bearing in mind the limitations of the corpus used in the analysis.

The sub-corpus of newspaper writing (News) consists of 53 321 words and the TV-series script sub-corpus (Script) consists of 839 937 words. I have chosen the TV-series sub-corpus because it consists of the texts which are in their nature very close to everyday conversation, as this is indeed the nature of this TV-series itself.

As established by the research questions, my intention was to identify which reporting verbs are presented in EFL textbooks used in Croatian schools. The survey revealed that "tell", "say" and "ask" are presented in all four textbooks, with an additional list of 16 reporting verbs in one of the intermediate-level textbooks (*Matrix*). In order to establish the frequency of occurrence of the selected reporting verbs ("say", "tell", "ask" and 16 other verbs) all of these

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verbs were searched in the two sub-corpora using corpus analysis toolkit *AntConc 3. 2. 1*. The output from the searches was then manually sorted in order to eliminate all the instances that were not indirect reported speech. The frequency of occurrence of the selected reporting verbs in the two corpora was normalized to occurrences per 10,000 words to allow for comparisons across corpora of unequal size. Both corpora were untagged.

The instances of indirect reported speech extracted from the output yielded by the search were also analyzed for the verb-tense combinations regarding the reporting and the embedded verb. This analysis was limited to the corpus samples including verbs "say" and "tell", as the previous frequency results have shown that that "say" and "tell" are the most frequent reporting verbs. For the purpose of this analysis, I have limited the possible tense combinations of the reporting and the embedded verb to the following combinations: Past – past, Past – Present, Present – Present and Present – Past.

7. Results

7.1 Frequency

A search using corpus analysis toolkit *AntConc 3. 2. 1.* produced the results in Table 2 and Table 3.

Verbs	Occurrences	Frequency (per 10,000 words)
say	228	45. 6
tell	19	3. 8
ask	10	2
agree	4	0. 8
suggest	4	0. 8
explain	3	0. 6
promise	3	0. 6

Table 2: Occurrence and frequency of reporting verbs in newspaper corpus

Other reporting verbs identified in one of the EFL textbooks (*admit, add, answer, make clear, order, recommend, offer, confess, go on to say* etc.) were excluded from the analysis as they occurred less than 3 times in the whole corpus or did not occur at all.

Verbs	Occurrences	Frequency (per 10,000 words)
say	358	4. 26
tell	298	3. 54
ask	32	0. 38
promise	23	0. 27
offer	4	0. 09
suggest	3	0. 03

Table 3: Occurrence and frequency of reporting verbs in TV-series script corpus

As in previous example, other reporting verbs were excluded from the analysis as they occurred infrequently or did not occur at all in the analyzed corpus.

The results of the analysis show certain interesting patterns of use of indirect reported speech in real language. Not surprisingly, "say" and "tell" are the most frequent reporting verbs in both registers – newspaper writing and TV-series script. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, "say" occurs as reporting verb on average 45. 6 times per 10,000 words in News and 4. 26 times per 10,000 words in Script. "Tell" was significantly less frequent than "say" in News, occurring only 3. 8 times per 10,000 words. On the other hand, "tell" appears more frequently in Script, occurring on average 3. 54 times per 10,000 words.

The frequency of occurrence of the other 17 verbs included in the analysis is not comparable to the frequency of "tell" and "say". In News, the only other verb that appeared somewhat frequently was "ask", occurring two times per 10,000 words. In Script, "promise" and "ask" were the most frequently occurring reporting verbs, after "say" and "tell". The remaining other verbs occurred less frequently than "ask" and "promise" or did not occur at all.

These results are comparable to those obtained by Eckhardt (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007), as her results also showed that "say" and "tell" are by far the most frequent reporting verbs in the analyzed corpora (newspaper writing and conversation). Eckhardt's research also showed that the frequency of occurrence of other reporting verbs included in the analysis could not be compared with the frequency of occurrence of "say" and "tell".

7.2 Tense combinations in indirect reported speech

Regarding the fact that the other reporting verbs occurred relatively infrequently in the two corpora analyzed, I limited the analysis of the verb tense combinations in indirect reported

speech to those corpus samples which included "say" and "tell" as reporting verbs. As already mentioned, the tense combinations of reporting and embedded verbs were classified into the following categories:

	reporting verb	embedded verb
1)	Past	Past
2)	Past	Present
3)	Present	Present
4)	Present	Past

The proportional distribution of the four tense combinations with reporting verbs "say" and "tell", for both registers is illustrated in Figure 1.
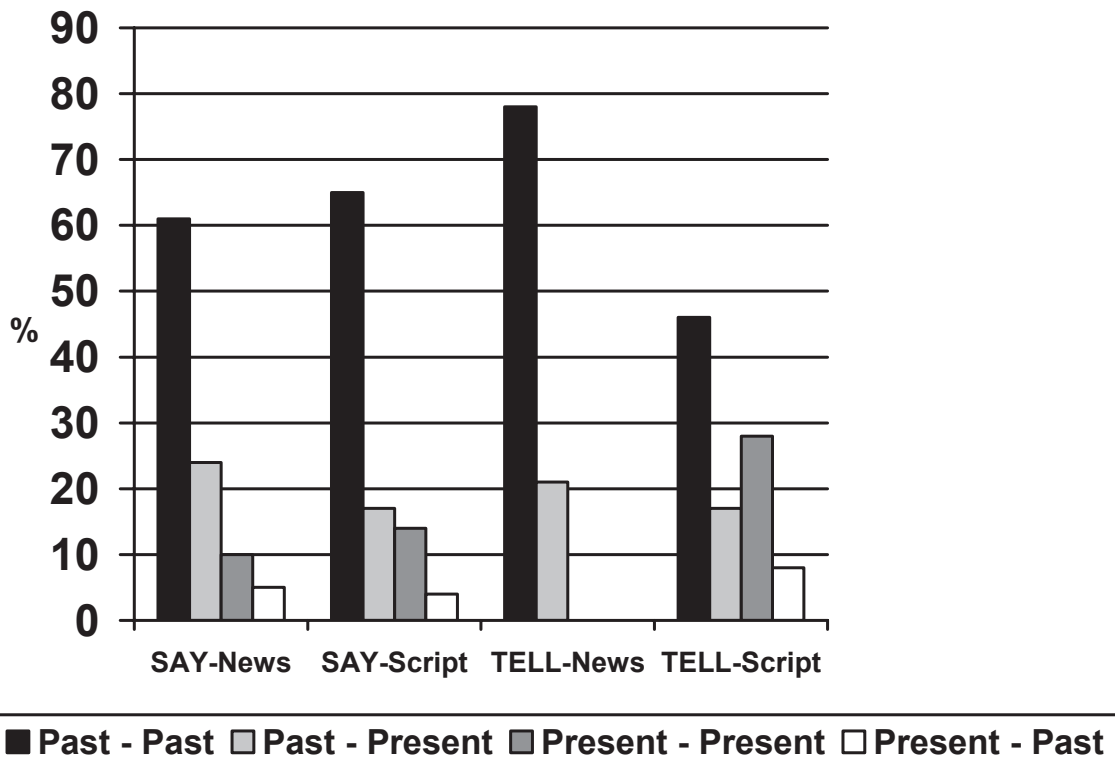

Figure1: Distribution of the four tense combinations in indirect reported speech with "say" and "tell" as reporting verbs, in two registers: News and Script

As shown in Figure 1, the Past-Past tense combination is the most frequent tense combination, accounting for more than 45% of the four tense combinations, for both "say" and "tell" and in both registers, newspaper writing and TV-series script. Looking across corpora, the second most frequent tense combination is Past – Present, accounting for approximately 15 to 25% for both "say" and "tell" and for both registers. Present – Present is the third most frequent combination, accounting for almost 30% of the tense combinations for "tell" in Script, but not appearing at all for "tell" in News corpus. Present – Past is the most infrequent tense combination in both registers.

On the general level, data in Figure 2 also show that past-tense combinations (Past – Past, Past – Present) account for more than 60% of the possible tense sequences in indirect reported speech (approximately 80% for "say" in both registers, 100% for "tell" in News, and 65% for "tell" in Script). This leads to the conclusion that reporting verbs in the past tense are much more frequent than the reporting verbs in the present tense. On the other hand, past tense reporting verb is followed by the present tense embedded verb in approximately 17 to 25% of the cases. Present tense embedded verbs (with either past or present reporting verb) account for approximately 30 to 45% of the cases across registers and for both verbs.

To sum up, past-past tense combination is the most dominant combination in both corpora and for both verbs. However, the results also show that tense combinations other than Past –Past, particularly tense combinations which include embedded verbs in the present tense, cannot be neglected as they account for a significant percentage of the overall distribution of tense combinations in indirect reported speech.

7.3 Discussion

I must emphasize once more that all the conclusions drawn from this study are subject to careful re-examination and verification, as the corpus used for the analysis was compiled for classroom-use only and therefore not representative according to principles of corpus design (Biber 1993). On the other hand, the results of this study are similar to the results of Eckhardt's study (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007) on the presentation of reported speech in EFL/ESL grammar books. However, Eckhardt's research was not limited in terms of corpus used in the study: the corpus analyzed by Eckhardt was drawn from the *Longman Spoken and Written English* (*LSWE*) corpus (Biber and Reppen 2002) and consisted of approximately 5 million words in two separate corpora.

This study consisted of two parts: a short survey of EFL textbooks regarding the presentation of indirect reported speech and the corpus-based research of indirect reported speech, with the focus on the frequency of reporting verbs and tense combinations that occur in indirect speech.

The survey of the four EFL textbooks currently used in Croatian elementary and secondary schools showed that textbook writers predominantly focus on "say", "tell" and "ask" as verbs to be used when reporting what a person has said. A list of several others reporting verbs can be found in only one textbook (*Matrix*). However, these verbs were not used in any of the examples of indirect speech presented in this textbook. All these verbs were nonetheless included in the corpus analysis performed with the concordancing tool *AntConc 3. 2. 1*. The output yielded by the search was then manually sorted to eliminate the concordancing lines which did not contain indirect speech. The results revealed that the reporting verbs "say" and "tell" are far more frequent in both corpora analyzed than any other reporting verb that was included in the search. These results are in accordance with the textbooks, as almost all of them focus exclusively on "say" and "tell" as reporting verbs, presenting only examples that include either of the two at the beginning of an indirect speech sentence.

As for other verbs presented in the textbooks, the only two verbs which appeared relatively frequently in the corpora were "ask" and "promise". However, the analyzed corpora were not large enough to obtain usable results on the frequency of other reporting verbs. On the other hand, Eckhardt's research (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007) did reveal that verbs such as "indicate" or "announce" are common verbs in newspaper texts. This brings into focus the decisions textbook writers make regarding other reporting verbs. In the elementary-level textbook (*Way to go 5*) the emphasis is on the most frequent reporting verbs, "say" and "tell" probably because this is the first time ever students meet with this structure. However, the intermediate-level textbook writers, in their attempt to include a variety of spoken and written texts, which is recommended by *Common European Framework for Languages*, should also present other frequently used reporting verbs. Decisions regarding which verbs to include should be based on corpus findings.

The results of the study also showed that the Past – Past tense sequence for the reporting and embedded verb is the most frequently used tense combination in indirect reported speech. However, in the elementary-level textbook (*Way to go 5*) the focus is exclusively on the Present-Present tense combination. On the other hand, intermediate level textbooks focus almost exclusively on the Past-Past tense combination. As the Past – Past tense combination is obviously the prototypical tense combination for the indirect speech, it is not clear why only Present – Present sequences are presented in the elementary-level textbook. One possible reason is the wish on the part of the authors to keep grammatical explanations as simple and as neat as possible. However, although this is an elementary-level textbook, students who use it have been learning English for at least 4 years and should be rather well acquainted with the tense system in English. As Present-Present sequence is not prototypical for indirect reported speech, I can't be sure that presenting only this structure facilitates the acquisition of indirect speech.

As opposed to the elementary-level textbook, intermediate-level textbooks place emphasis on the tense backshifting rule and Past-Past tense combination. This does not contradict the corpus findings, which reveal that Past – Past is the most frequent combination. However, intermediate-level textbooks fail to mention other possible combinations which, as the corpus findings show, play a rather important role in everyday language (for e.g. Present – Present tense sequence in TV-series script corpus). Intermediate-level students should therefore be made aware of the existence and contexts of use of other tense combinations.

The research also showed that the use of indirect reported speech varies across registers. Instances of indirect speech are much more frequent in newspaper writing than in conversation. The results of the present study revealed that the reporting verb "say" occurs in newspaper writings 45.6 times per 10,000 words, and only 4.26 times per 10,000 words in TV-series script. However, the variations regarding the context and the domain of use of indirect reported speech are completely neglected in the textbooks. Again, as much as this approach is acceptable for the elementary-level students of English, higher-level students should be made aware of the existing differences. By not pointing out these differences, the textbook authors send an implicit message that indirect speech is used in a highly uniform manner across different

registers. In reality, research (Barbieri and Eckhardt 2007) has shown that speakers of American English commonly rely on new quotative verbs "be like" and "go", as well as on the traditional verb "say", to quote direct speech. Needless to say, these options are not presented in the EFL textbooks surveyed in this study.

8. Conclusion

Many EFL teachers intuitively feel that there is a serious flaw in the descriptions of target grammar structures in the EFL textbooks they use in their classrooms. One of the possible reasons for this is given by corpus linguistic research: many EFL textbooks fail to reflect the actual language use.

This study compared the presentation of indirect reported speech in EFL textbooks to results of the corpus-based cross-register research of the authentic spoken and written texts. The comparison showed that, although not always in contradiction with corpus findings, EFL textbooks in many ways fail to present reported speech as used in naturally occurring spoken and written discourse.

In current language teaching practice and theory the emphasis is put on communicative language competence. This notion was also the leading idea behind the extensive research which resulted in the compilation of the internationally accepted *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Many EFL textbooks, however, still present grammar in a traditional way, typically focusing on direct-indirect speech sentence transformation and tense backshifting when describing indirect reported speech. On the other hand, they fail to present examples of the authentic use of direct and indirect reported speech which is, as the research shows, largely context and register-dependent.

In the past, textbook authors were forced to rely on their own intuition when making decisions about language use and the order and manner of presentation of grammar structures. In some cases, their decisions were correct. In some cases, though, they were wrong. The advent of corpus linguistic research opens up a whole array of new possibilities for textbook authors. They can now rely on the results of numerous empirical studies of real language use to make informed decisions regarding the presentation of language in EFL textbooks. This should lead to the improvement of the currently used teaching materials and consequently facilitate the language learning process for EFL students.

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APPENDIX 1: EFL textbooks

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