

English
Language
Overseas
Perspectives and
Enquiries

Vol. 14, No. 1 (2017)

Addressing Learners' and Teachers' Needs: Keeping up with a Changing EFL World

Journal Editors: SMILJANA KOMAR and MOJCA KREVEL

Editors of ELOPE Vol. 14, No. 1: KIRSTEN HEMPKIN,
MELITA KUKOVEC and KATJA TEŽAK



University of Ljubljana
FACULTY OF ARTS

Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts
Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani

Ljubljana, 2017

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

811.111'243(082)
37.091.3:81'243(082)

ADDRESSING learners' and teachers' needs : keeping up with
a changing EFL world / editors Kirsten Hempkin, Melita Kukovec
and Katja Težak. - Ljubljana : University Press, Faculty of Arts =
Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete, 2017. - (ELOPE : English
language overseas perspectives and enquiries, ISSN 1581-8918 ; vol.
14, no. 1)

ISBN 978-961-237-930-8
1. Hempkin, Kirsten
290394624

Contents

Kirsten Hempkin, Melita Kukovec, Katja Težak **7**

Introduction

PART I: ARTICLES

Melita Kukovec **13**

Human Rights Education in Foreign Language Learning
 Vključevanje učenja o človekovih pravicah v učenje tujega jezika

Lilijana Burcar **25**

Social Ills of (Global) Capitalism under Scrutiny in American Literature Classes:
 “Teaching to Transgress”
 Zlá (globalnega) kapitalizma pod kritičnim drobnogledom skozi obravnavo ameriške
 književnosti: »Učenje s preseganjem«

Mirjana Želježič **39**

Debate in the EFL Classroom
 Debata pri pouku angleščine

Mirjana Semren **55**

A Longitudinal Study of the Acquisition of Verbal Morphology in the EFL
 Classroom
 Longitudinalna raziskava usvajanja glagolskega oblikoslovja pri učenju angleščine kot
 tujega jezika

Danijela Šegedin Borovina **75**

Croatian EFL Learners’ Interlanguage Requests: A Focus on Request Modification
 Izražanje zahtev hrvaških učencev angleščine kot tujega jezika v vmesnem jeziku s
 poudarkom na modifikaciji

Nataša Gajšt

95

Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Slovene as L1 in Teaching and Learning of Business English at Tertiary Level

Odnos študentov do uporabe maternega jezika pri poučevanju in učenju poslovne angleščine v terciarnem izobraževanju

PART II: BOOK REVIEW

Janez Skela

115

A Review of the Scientific Monograph *Međukulturna kompetencija u nastavi stranih jezika. Od teorijskih koncepata do primjene (Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching: From Theoretical Concepts to Applications)* by Ana Petavić

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Kirsten Hempkin

Melita Kukovec

Katja Težak

University of Maribor
Slovenia

Introduction

English Language Teaching is an enormously dynamic, extensive and varied research discipline, underpinned by one fundamental question: how best to meet the needs of our learners and teachers, especially in our increasingly globalised and technologized world. The papers included in this special volume of *ELOPE* reflect this. While it may seem at first glance that they have little in common, all of the contributions are similar in sharing research important for classroom practice, reporting on addressing flaws in the curriculum, implementing appropriate teacher training techniques or learning strategies, all with the aim of developing the skills our learners need to be able to negotiate the challenges they face inside and outside the classroom.

As Melita Kukovec, from the Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor, claims in her paper “Human Rights Education in Foreign Language Learning,” one of the greatest challenges our learners face is living in a world in which human rights violations are commonplace. She identifies the need for the full implementation of HRE (Human Rights Education) in Slovene schools at all levels of education, arguing that the foreign language classroom provides the ideal setting for this education to take place, proposing this as a solution to the rising levels of violence and intolerance in Slovenia and elsewhere. As a teacher trainer, Kukovec is particularly interested in how to prepare future teachers for the vital role they will play in HRE, and outlines some of the strategies that have been implemented at her own institution to develop the necessary skills, paying particular attention to tasks aimed at raising critical awareness.

The need to critically engage with society is also strongly reflected in the paper “Social Ills of (Global) Capitalism under Scrutiny in American Literature Classes: ‘Teaching to Transgress’” by Lilijana Burcar, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Burcar uses American literary texts, such as Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, to develop critical literacy among her students so that they gain an understanding of how the mechanisms of institutional patriarchy and racism are key to capitalist social relations. In calling for a return to the use of socially engaged texts, Burcar challenges the dominant post-modernist approach. The value of this engagement becomes evident when considering how her students begin to use the critical skills they have honed in such a way to reflect on their own society. Using the example of the refugee crisis, Burcar describes how her students were able to counterbalance the “stigmatising discourse” surrounding this issue, perpetuated by the media and state institutions, and see the wider racial mechanisms at play.

Critical thinking is also at the heart of the paper “Debate in the EFL Classroom” by Mirjana Želježič, this time in combination with communicative competence. Želježič makes a compelling case for the use of debate in the EFL classroom, arguing that it is the ideal vehicle for developing these two vital skills (describing CT as the main educational goal and CC as the most important

goal of the communicative paradigm). As Želježić points out in her paper, CEFR demands both critical thinking and communicative competence at the B2+ level, describing a speaker who can express an opinion on a complex topic and argue for it. This, she argues, is debating; however, she very carefully defines what communicative competence actually means, identifying a gap in current EFL practice. Želježić claims that what is being taught in schools is oral production rather than oral interaction. Drawing on sociocultural theories of language, she points out that language is a social and cultural phenomenon, which only exists in interaction with others, and which is not reflected by the predominant individual-student-centred pedagogical practices of teaching (and assessment) employed at present.

Intercultural competence, an aspect of EFL that has garnered increased attention in recent years, is the subject of the work by Ana Petravić *Međukulturna kompetencija u nastavi stranih jezika. Od teorijskih koncepata do primjene (Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching: From Theoretical Concepts to Applications)*, reviewed by Janez Skela of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. Skela provides a detailed overview of Petravić's work, guiding the reader through the concepts and ideas she presents. He points out the relevance of her work, discussing how Petrović clarifies some of the confusing terminology surrounding this issue, how she details the evolution of intercultural competence and its impact on classroom practice, and outlines some of the key theoretical models which have informed intercultural education. Skela is also at pains to stress the importance of Petravić's work, how it reflects the importance of teaching intercultural competence in our ever internationalised and globalised world, meaning that it cannot be simply compartmentalised but must be placed at the very heart of language education. What also comes across most clearly from Skela's review is that Petrović is an author and expert that we can trust, and that her work is one that is of use to anyone who has an interest in intercultural education and language teaching.

As well as the broader competences we wish to develop in our learners as teachers of English as a foreign language, we are also committed to guiding our students to accurate and effective language use. Two papers, both from Croatia, present insightful and highly relevant research into language acquisition among learners of English as a foreign language. In the paper "A Longitudinal Study of the Acquisition of Verbal Morphology in the EFL Classroom," the author Mirjana Semren, from the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Split, discusses the results of a research project in which the order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes and verb tenses was studied in the interlanguage of Grade 6, 7 and 8 Croatian learners. Despite some criticism of morpheme studies, the author believes that it still has much to contribute to SLA research, and sets out to complement the existing body of work with her own results. While presenting her conclusions, the author draws our attention to the implications the work has for classroom practice and to particular interest to other researchers who may embark on a similar study. She also indicates the potential for future research to clarify some of their findings, considering, for example, the impact of affect, extending the length of the study, and limiting the number of participants.

The second paper focusing on language acquisition is "Croatian EFL Learners' Interlanguage Requests: A Focus on Request Modification" by Danijela Šegedin Borovina, from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split. This paper presents research on pragmatic competence, specifically how it develops in the interlanguage of Croatian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at various levels of proficiency. The focus is placed on request modification and the use of internal and external supportive moves within it. The results of this

study, which indicated that learners demonstrated little pragmalinguistic development, carry implications for future classroom practice, as the authors suggest, more should be done in EFL classrooms in Croatia to address this issue.

Classroom practice, in particular using English as the language of instruction, is also thoughtfully addressed in “Students’ Attitudes towards the Use of Slovene as L1 in Teaching and Learning of Business English at Tertiary Level” by Nataša Gajšt, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Maribor. Gajšt states in her paper that while research on monolingual instruction is extensive in “general” English, it has been largely neglected in English for Special Purposes. She therefore carried out a study among her own students in an attempt to begin to redress this imbalance, testing primarily to what extent her learners believe English should be used in their language classes. The results she reports are highly relevant for ESP practitioners, as defining the contexts in which monolingual instruction is appropriate has clear implications for ESP methodology.

The papers in this special edition of ELOPE present a wide range of research, from strategies for guiding our learners to think critically and argue their perspective, training them in engaging with others respectfully and with empathy, encouraging them to uncover the covert mechanisms at work in our capitalist system, to exploring aspects of their language acquisition, and considering the subsequent implications for classroom practice. Yet, while they may differ in focus, they all reflect the one unchanging concern that lies at the core of EFL research – how best to address our learners’ and teachers’ needs, and to equip them with the tools to fully function as competent English users and educators in the contemporary world.



Part I

Articles

Human Rights Education in Foreign Language Learning

ABSTRACT

Today's world is marked by numerous violations of human rights. As teachers, we would like to believe that future violations can be prevented through human rights education which empowers individuals to build and promote a universal human rights culture. Young people should be given the chance to practise what it means to live together in an open and free society while at school; they, therefore, need to be equipped with a knowledge of human rights and the skills to put these rights into practice.

The paper addresses issues relating to including lessons on human rights into Slovene primary and secondary education as part of the foreign language learning syllabus, as well as the need to empower future teachers to react appropriately if their students reject other people's perspectives out of hand, or even express radical ideas in class that run contrary to democratic values. It also presents various strategies for enabling future teachers to develop the skills necessary to implement human rights education.

Keywords: human rights; education; personal development; foreign language learning

Vključevanje učenja o človekovih pravicah v učenje tujega jezika

POVZETEK

Na osnovi aktualnih dogodkov lahko sklepamo, da današnji svet zaznamuje kršenje človekovih pravic. Učitelji verjamemo, da tovrstne kršitve lahko preprečimo z vključevanjem izobraževanja o človekovih pravicah tudi v pouk tujega jezika, ki omogoča posameznikom, da prispevajo k oblikovanju in širjenju splošne kulture človekovih pravic. Mladim moramo dati priložnost, da pri pouku doživljajo in spoznavajo, kaj pomeni živeti skupaj v odprti in svobodni družbi, zato jih moramo opremiti ne le s poznavanjem človekovih pravic, ampak tudi z znanjem o tem, kako si te pravice priboriti v vsakdanjem življenju.

Prispevek obravnava vključevanje učnih ur na temo človekovih pravic v slovensko osnovnošolsko in srednješolsko izobraževanje pri pouku tujega jezika in hkrati nakazuje potrebo po tem, da moramo bodoče učitelje usposobiti, da bodo ustrezno reagirali, če bodo njihovi učenci v razredu izražali radikalne ideje, ki nasprotujejo demokratičnim vrednotam ali pa preprosto neosnovano zavračali mnenja drugih. V nadaljevanju predstavi strategije, ki bodočim učiteljem omogočajo razvijanje kompetenc, potrebnih za izvajanje pouka, ki temelji na človekovih pravicah.

Ključne besede: človekove pravice; izobraževanje; osebni razvoj; učenje tujih jezikov

Human Rights Education in Foreign Language Learning

1 Introduction

Every learner wants to be understood, respected, treated equally, and graded fairly. Being taught by a professional is one of our rights. Teacher education should, therefore, provide future teachers with the appropriate knowledge and skills to cater for various learners' needs and rights. The paper addresses two issues: first, including lessons on human rights into Slovene primary and secondary education as part of the foreign language learning syllabus and secondly, the need to empower future teachers to react professionally in addressing those needs. It presents various strategies for enabling future teachers to develop the skills necessary to implement human rights education (HRE). The paper is divided into four sections: the introductory section defines human rights education, learning through human rights and its relationship with peace education; the second section investigates how HRE principles are incorporated into Slovene legislation and the curricula, not only in Citizenship Education but also into other subjects. It also describes the initial stages of implementing these principles into lessons at primary and secondary level. The third section deals with addressing human rights issues in foreign language learning and provides some suggestions for human rights teaching activities; the fourth section discusses pre-service teacher training at the Faculty of Arts in Maribor and the tasks that enable student-teachers to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes for critical interpretation and evaluation of their learners' beliefs and the behaviour which creates a framework for their professional practice.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights are inherent to all human beings, regardless of national or ethnic origin, sex, religion, language or any other status. They are the foundation of equality, freedom, justice, and peace. The Universal Declaration, which has contributed to the development of human rights such as the freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, was adopted in 1948. Since 2005, various policy documents developed by the United Nations, for example the World Programme with a Plan of Action for Human Rights Education (United Nations 2006), have advocated that the treatment of human rights should become an integral part of the education system. It is education that creates close ties between humans, plays the vital role of building a culture of peace and condemning the instances that undermine democracy and tolerance. Education can help to counteract poverty, establish social justice, enforce human rights, exercise democracy, achieve cultural diversity, raise environmental awareness, and promote peace. Promoting peace through education is fundamental to UNESCO's endeavours. According to UNESCO (2005), human rights education is part of the right to education and the knowledge of these rights is a basic tool which guarantees respect for the rights of all. "Human rights education (HRE) is an international movement to promote awareness about the rights accorded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related human rights conventions, and the procedures that exist for the redress of violations of these rights" (Amnesty International 2005, 7). According to Tibbitts (1996) and Reardon (1997), it encompasses training, educational, awareness-raising, and learning activities.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997, 5) defines human rights education as a part of life-long learning in the following way:

training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes directed to: (a) the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; (b) the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity; (c) the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups; and, (d) the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society.

Felisa Tibbitts, the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Human Rights Education Associates, presents three models for understanding contemporary human rights education practice: from the philosophical-historical point of view, the Values and Awareness Model which applies to social sciences and arts; from the legal-political point of view, the Accountability Model which is applicable in the media, health, and social services; and from the psychological-sociological standpoint, the Transformational Model, applying to human rights as a part of women’s development, community development, economic development, and minority rights. These models refer to particular target groups, contents and strategies relating to human development and the social change framework (Tibbitts 2002, 163).

The aim of the Values and Awareness Model is to foster critical thinking among learners; the objective of the Accountability Model is to enable development within certain professions and target groups, while the aim of the Transformational Model is to stimulate personal empowerment which leads towards activism for change. Human rights education models can be presented in a modified version of the “learning pyramid”: at the bottom, we would find the Values and Awareness Models, in the middle there would be the Accountability Model, and at the top, we could place the Transformational Model. The Values and Awareness Model includes some examples of lessons related to human rights as a part of citizenship, history, social sciences and law-related education classes in schools, and themes related to human rights are integrated into both formal and informal youth programming, such as the arts, Human Rights Day, and debate clubs.

The learning objectives of HRE are threefold: knowledge obtained by learning *about* human rights; skills developed through learning *for* human rights; and attitudes or values acquired by learning *through* and *in* human rights. When learners are educated in human rights, they acquire numerous desirable skills: they practise active listening, learn how to find information, participate in groups and get organized, develop communication skills, apply critical thinking, use argumentation, recognize prejudices and manipulation, acquire the ability to cooperate and peacefully resolve conflicts, and promote human rights in their local community and globally (Tibbitts and Fernekes 2011).

It is important to understand that human rights education means more than simply disseminating information about human rights. According to Struthers (2014, 55) “education must promote respect for these rights”, but it can only do so if the teachers choose to apply humanistic principles in their classroom teaching and create a supportive learning environment. In order to educate through human rights, teachers must use every opportunity to show respect for their learners’ rights, treat them fairly, allow the learners to express their opinions, make them responsible for their own learning, and earn the learners’ respect in return. When the learners are educated through human rights, they develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions, work on their personal growth, awaken their curiosity, keep an open mind, learn to respect differences, to foster/promote solidarity and to support those in danger of human rights violations, as well as develop a sense of dignity, fairness, freedom, equality, and respect. Therefore, human rights

education not only has much in common with the contemporary education system in general; it is, consequently, education in the broadest sense of the word.

2 Human Rights Education in Slovene Schools

Our investigation into whether Slovenian school legislation incorporates any human rights education principles revealed that they are integrated into all of our curricula. While these principles are enshrined in the curricula, as a teacher trainer, I feel that there is still not enough emphasis given to them, especially in foreign language classes, which would be an ideal setting to explore them. This conclusion derives from the premise that education should enable “negotiation between cultures” (Coulby 2016, 246), which reflects one of the main ideas of intercultural education. In foreign language classrooms, of course, two cultures at least are always brought into contact.

The principles of HRE were first explicitly mentioned in the Elementary School Act (*Zakon o osnovni šoli 1996*)¹ which lists, among others, the following learning objectives: to educate for mutual tolerance, encourage respect of difference and cooperation with others, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and above all, to promote the ability to live in a democratic society, while also educating for universal cultural values arising from European traditions. Likewise, similar principles are also found in the Grammar Schools Act (*Zakon o gimnazijah 2006/7*)² where the following objectives are mentioned: to educate for the responsible protection of freedom, for tolerance, peaceful co-existence and respect for all people; to develop and protect one’s own cultural tradition and acquaint oneself with other cultures and civilisations; to educate for universal cultural values arising from European traditions; to develop willingness to establish a free, democratic and socially just country, independent critical judgment and responsible behaviour; and to develop an awareness of human rights and acceptance of responsibilities. As Tibbitts and Fernekes (2011, 91) say:

Human rights education in many countries intersects with democratic citizenship education, by taking the core concepts of citizenship education and applying them both more universally and more critically. In that way, knowledge about key concepts and facts and issues of civic disposition and civic skills are applied to the areas of global social responsibility, justice and social action.

In Slovenia, human rights education began with Citizenship Education. In 1995 *The White Book on Education in Slovenia* was published, determining a new legislation which regulated the entire education system from pre-school up to higher education. Citizenship education was introduced as a compulsory subject in 1996 as ‘Citizenship Education and Ethics’ at the primary school level, based on a “common European heritage of political, cultural, and moral values” (Šimenc and Sardoč 2013, 366). This was conceived as a cross-curricular topic, a part of other compulsory subjects at the secondary school level, such as history and geography. Furthermore, citizenship education was later included into a compulsory subject called Civic Culture in grade 9 of primary schools and as an optional subject in secondary schools; while in vocational schools, citizenship education is an integral part of social science subjects. Human rights education is thus integrated at all levels, primarily into the work during class periods, but also into various other subjects such as Patriotic and Citizenship Education and Ethics and

¹ Available at: <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO448>

² Available at: <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO450>

Health Education, and last but not least, and importantly, foreign languages, since they are well suited for addressing the issues of universal cultural and human values. Unlike other subjects, a foreign language is equally new/novel to the learners of different cultural backgrounds; learning it requires extensive communication, negotiation and frequent expressions of opinions, while various interactions promote cooperation and teamwork, and discussion topics can most easily be linked to numerous human rights issues.

At this point it is worth mentioning one of my first generation students, Alenka Elena Begant (1965–2014) who carried out pioneering work by founding the Slovene branch of “Education as an Instrument for Peace (EIP)-School for Peace”, which was the first Slovene organisation dedicated to human rights education. In January 2010, she founded the Centre for Citizenship Education. The Centre extended the work of EIP-Slovenia and was also responsible for monitoring local and national elections. She was internationally recognized as an active member of the Slovene branch of Amnesty International and of the Board of Democracy and Human Rights Education in Europe Network (DARE). She participated in HREA, the global human rights education and training centre and her unfulfilled wish was to train more human rights defenders in Slovenia and abroad.

As an English language teacher, she began to integrate the principles of human rights education into her lessons and she often invited student teachers to observe her work with the learners. In addition, she participated in the creation of an interactive learning tool, based on the ideals of human rights, non-discrimination, inclusion, and democracy that was acknowledged by the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Elena also authored, edited and translated many human rights education manuals, including the Council of Europe’s “Compass” and Amnesty International’s “First Steps” (Human Rights Education Team 1996). She was a great motivator and an inspirational co-worker. Unfortunately, her sudden and untimely death resulted in a significant setback in the development of HR education in our country.

The foundations of human rights education in Slovenia have thus been put in place, so let us examine how it works in practice. Peace education could be considered as a pre-cursor of human rights education. A culture of peace is introduced into our schools from an early age and is developed throughout a life-long process of learning values and skills. Since skills can only be learned through practice, teachers need to promote active and cooperative learning. It seems that the expansion of individualism, violence and the lack of tolerance in the contemporary world make this increasingly difficult. Teachers can only be successful if they have been properly trained, as you cannot teach human rights in a way that contradicts them. Including peace education into our subjects offers a solution to tackling the rising levels of violence; it enables us to reduce impatience and intolerance, it encourages responsibility and promotes the development of intercultural competencies. Therefore, it is crucial to educate our teachers in a way that enables them to address issues such as conflict resolution, violence prevention, cyberbullying, mediation, etc., particularly since this applies to all of our learners, including minority, migrant and also refugee children.

The basic principles of human rights education cover the notions of tolerance, responsibility, identity, equality, justice, freedom, solidarity, security, and peace. Human rights can serve as a basis for the analysis of related principles of practice for inclusion, non-discrimination, and active participation leading to the development of human dignity, diversity and social justice. Human rights activities provide learners with the skills, knowledge and attitudes which they will need to work towards a world free of human rights violations. These factors are incorporated in each of the activities when a participative, interactive educational methodology is used.

- *Knowledge:* Learners learn about the existence of human rights documents, try to understand the rights contained in them, which are inalienable and can universally be applied to all human beings, and they become aware of the consequences if/when human rights are violated. This helps them in the protection of their own and other people's rights.
- *Skills:* Learners learn to listen to others, make moral analyses, cooperate with their peers or partners; they learn how to communicate, solve problems, and to ask questions. This helps them understand the world around them, improve the quality of their and other people's lives and become pro-active in the protection of human rights.
- *Attitudes:* Learners experience how important human rights are, realise that human dignity is inherent in all people, that everybody's rights should be respected, that cooperation yields better results than the creation of conflicts, that we are responsible for our actions, and that we can improve our world if only we try. This promotes learners' moral development and prepares them for positive actions, as they become more patient or willing to help if their peers cannot cope with the pace of progression, more tolerant of other people's mistakes, and they learn to behave more politely in taking turns.
- *Methodology:* Participative, interactive methodology enables children to become fully involved in learning. An active learning approach is based on learning from peers and is conducive to critical reflection.

3 Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

In a foreign language classroom, learners do not only develop linguistic and communicative competences but also become familiar with other cultures. According to Byram (2008) developing the appropriate skill set to reflect on our own and other cultures provides a basis for respect and increased tolerance, contributes to other ways of thinking, and even broadens learner's understanding of their own cultural belonging. When we are teaching English, pupils can learn about English-speaking countries and cultures, while at the same time they reflect upon their own identity and compare the two. It is interesting to discover that in the process of developing intercultural competence their own identity is even strengthened.

As previously stated, foreign language classrooms seem to be ideal for addressing human rights issues. Language skills can be used to study a plethora of interesting current themes relating to other countries. For example, teachers can use a short text dealing with a campaign against racism in the United States or Great Britain to teach English vocabulary. By doing this, we would pursue the objective of providing students with an understanding of the human rights issues that people are facing in other countries, as well as the knowledge of a foreign language. Teachers can use authentic materials from foreign newspapers, TV and radio news, social networks or literature.

In a foreign language class students have ample opportunities to talk and discuss various issues. Discussion topics such as human rights, values, gender inequality and discrimination, and similar, can stimulate a variety of opinions, which leads to an increase in learners' motivation and a decrease in impatience, thus making learners both more responsible and autonomous, and, consequently more mature. When learners achieve a certain degree of maturity, this enables teachers to use less authoritarian teaching styles and become more relaxed. It is much easier to be kind if the learners respond to politeness and not only to the power of authority.

Apart from discussions, learners also develop their speaking skills by doing role-plays. Role-playing does not only improve student understanding of given situations but also encourages empathy

and critical thinking (Shapiro 2012; Rivers 2015). The next type of activities recommended for learning the basic principles of human rights are various games and projects where there are many possible acceptable views of the issues and which do not allow only one correct answer. They are played or carried out in groups or teams, requiring the cooperation of all participants, who actively explore the subject matter, not simply passively receiving the teacher's point of view but also revealing and sharing their own feelings and opinions.

In the process of learning a foreign language, it is also customary for learners to correspond with their peers in other countries (A Parcel of English Project, pen pals/friends, and video calls/conferences). This can be made more interesting if apart from more common, everyday details they also exchange information about political systems, current social issues, the treatment of minorities and any other issues relating to human rights. Unfortunately, many teachers avoid those problematic topics, because of their own fear of creating a conflict situation.

3.1 Suggestions for Human Rights Teaching Activities

When teaching human rights, the lesson structure recommended by *Prvi koraki* (Human Rights Education Team 2009) consists of a warm-up motivation task, usually in the form of brainstorming or open-ended questions, followed by a concrete task, first done individually or in small groups and then as a whole class discussion leading to final conclusions, and ending by a follow-up assignment.

Teachers first select a general topic from a current event (for instance the American elections) or choose an interesting theme (like tolerance) that is prescribed by the curriculum. Then, they need to decide which knowledge, skills, and attitudes they want the students to develop. When they find appropriate teaching materials, they select either more conventional activities such as reading a text and responding to it in a discussion and essay, or less conventional ones like a project, a debate, or writing a story or a poem.

Usually, the biggest problem for the teachers is the evaluation of the learner's performance, since several factors need to be taken into consideration, as we are not only assessing their knowledge but also skills and attitudes. It might be helpful if they consider evaluation criteria which include students' contribution to discussions, their participation in and results of group work activities, and the quality of their assignments. To assess the development of skills and attitudes, we need to evaluate to what extent the learner keeps the task or its purpose in mind, cooperates with group members, works without disturbing others, completes a fair share of work or even finds new ways to improve group work. We might also consider assessing learners' open-mindedness by determining if the learner tries new ways of doing things, considers all sides of an issue, puts facts before feelings in discussions or changes conclusions in the light of new facts. If we really aim at developing values, we must offer our learners a chance to assess themselves and also their peers. The First Steps self-assessment questionnaire requires learners to rate themselves in the following categories (by marking themselves with A = very good, B = good, C = OK, D = very poor): respect for others, interest in others, listening to others, remaining on task, being sensitive to others' needs, having a fair judgement of others, cooperating with others, thinking before acting, being honest, helping others, and admitting errors. If the learners are involved in a constructive evaluation of themselves and their peers, they tend to become more responsible for their behaviour, and if the results of teacher and learner assessment differ, this provides an excellent opportunity for discussion and negotiation.

4 Pre-Service Teacher Training

Why should teachers be familiar with human rights? Our society becomes more multicultural every day and “the need for human rights education is more urgent than ever” (Osler and Starkey 2010, 26) to promote the ideas/ideals of justice and peace. Human rights educators aim at achieving critical human rights consciousness as their main goal. As teachers, we need to foster critical human rights consciousness which enables students to perceive the human rights dimensions of a problem-oriented exercise, and makes them develop strategies for resolving conflict situations; students must take an active role in the promotion and protection of these rights; they need to acquire the ability to critically evaluate responses, respond creatively, select the most appropriate option, and make responsible decisions with confidence. A multicultural classroom situation is becoming a reality, and it should be fully exploited for its numerous benefits.

So far, Slovene teachers have had ample experience in catering for the needs of minority children, particularly in the mainly bilingual schools along the Italian and Hungarian borders, rendering integration relatively easy. They have also had ample opportunities to work with learners from other ex-Yugoslav republics (Croats, Serbians, Bosnians, and Albanians from Kosovo) and Roma children, who all have to learn Slovene first in order to be able to participate in class, since neither the teacher nor their classmates share their mother tongue. Discussions with teachers suggest that foreign language classes do not present an obstacle for the migrants’ integration, but rather the opposite. Recently, there has been much discussion of our schools accepting and including refugee children, but this time mainly from non-European countries and with radically different cultural backgrounds. Refugee children often feel isolated, alienated, they struggle from discrimination, their fundamental human rights have been violated (Hieronymi 2009), all of which has psycho-social consequences that our teachers should well understand. Since classrooms run on HRE principles are most appropriate for accepting refugee children, teacher education should prepare future teachers for coping with such situations and human rights education principles seem to be the best solution in meeting the need for appropriately trained teachers.

According to Tibbitts (2002, 162), HRE programming requires an interactive pedagogical approach: “The language of HRE speaks of being relevant to daily life and to employing methodologies that engage participants in skill, attitudinal, as well as knowledge development”. This participatory or interactive teaching approach increases learner’s motivation, and is humanising and practical, since the kind of learning it enables more likely leads to changes in behaviour than a pure lecturing approach (ARRC 2003). The following features of pedagogy are representative of those promoted by proponents of HRE (see ARRC 2003; Gollob, Krafp and Weidinger 2010, 32–33):

- Experiential and activity centred: involving the solicitation of learners’ prior knowledge and offering activities that draw out learners’ experiences and knowledge;
- Problem-posing: challenging the learners’ prior knowledge;
- Participative: encouraging collective efforts in clarifying concepts, analysing themes and doing the activities;
- Dialectical: requiring learners to compare their knowledge with those from other sources;
- Analytical: asking learners to think about why things are and how they came to be;
- Healing: promoting human rights in intra-personal and interpersonal relations;
- Strategic thinking-oriented: directing learners to set their own goals and to think of strategic ways of achieving them;

- Goal- and action-oriented: allowing learners to plan and organise actions in relation to their goals.

Finally, we need to establish to what extent human rights education principles are integrated into the syllabus of Didactics of English courses at the Faculty of Arts. “There is a globalization trend in teacher education, emphasizing the role of teachers to make judgments based on human rights in their teaching profession” (Adami 2014, 30), particularly in the sense of ‘learning to become’ in relation to judgement and justice. It is safe to say that human rights principles are vastly relevant to (future) teachers’ work and therefore significantly present in almost every aspect of our syllabus. In combination with the two additional principles of responsibility and accountability, they basically present a framework for teacher’s professional practice.

We provide student teachers with various kinds of knowledge: the skills – to be able to compare and interpret; the attitude – to be respectful, tolerant, open-minded and genuinely inquisitive; the ability to acquire new knowledge – to learn how to learn. However, we also equip them with the ability to critically evaluate or interpret learners’ beliefs and behaviour. The tasks we carry out make it possible for the student teachers to exercise their intellect, think critically and document or keep track of the changes in their personal and professional development. Let me mention only some of them:

- *Profile of a language learner* – Student teachers collect the data for an in-depth description of an English learner by first conducting an assessment of the learner’s proficiency based on the CEFR self-assessment grid; secondly they establish the learner’s learning style and/or multiple intelligences through a questionnaire, and thirdly, they conduct an interview with the learner on their personal experience as a language learner, their motivation, beliefs about the language and its learning, their autonomy as a language learner, about their achievements and possible problems or difficulties in their language learning as the learner sees them. Lastly, they write a short evaluation of their findings and their work on this assignment which includes their thoughts on a potential support that could be offered to the learner in question or some suggestions to his/her teacher. They also describe how their work on this assignment has influenced or perhaps even changed their views and knowledge of the various factors that affect foreign language learning and have been addressed and discussed during the course. Profiling learners raises student teachers’ awareness of the different cultural and social backgrounds of their future learners, teaches them to respect individuality and prepares them to search for different ways of supporting their learners.
- *Letter to my teacher* – The students’ task is to analyse the teaching of one of their English teachers from the viewpoint of some of the principles which characterise English language teaching in the modern world and have been addressed during the course. They write a personal letter to the chosen teacher in which they reflect on and comment on some of the characteristics of that teacher (behaviour, preferred teaching styles and roles, techniques and activities used, patterns of interaction, etc.) and his/her teaching from the viewpoint of the principles, concepts, topics and issues that are conducive to efficient language learning. Special attention is paid to the teacher’s behaviour with regard to their respect for human rights and their reactions to conflict situations. They will not, actually, send their letter to the teacher – the form of a personal letter to a particular, real English teacher will allow them to use their experience as a learner and help them support their statements with empirical evidence.

- *And then it happened ...* – Report on a critical classroom event. One of the competences that all “good” teachers have and which student teachers need to develop is the ability to respond, in a principled way, to unexpected and problematic events or situations in the classroom. In the modern teaching profession, it has been recognised that these events/situations (often called ‘critical incidents’), if analysed, are a valuable source of information that the (student) teacher can use in order to make principled and effective pedagogical decisions. It needs to be emphasised, however, that ‘critical’ here does not mean an extreme situation or event. The ‘criticalness’ of a critical incident will often be discovered only after one has invested enough time and deliberate thinking about the event or situation. Students have to think about the lesson they have just taught and recall one or more events/situations when something happened which, for some reason, was ‘critical’ or unexpected in either a positive or negative sense because it influenced the course of the lesson or activity and their teaching. For instance, a learner said or did something which positively (or negatively) influenced the course of a lesson (expressed a radical idea that runs contrary to democratic values or simply rejected other learner’s perspectives out of hand); or an activity that they had prepared was too difficult for the learners and needed to be done differently. For the chosen event students provide a detailed description, including their thoughts, feelings, comments and write an evaluation with suggestions for future actions.
- *Making the most of your coursebook* – Students analyse a coursebook unit with regard to some of the principles of modern post-method language teaching. They think about how a particular learning material relates to one or more of the assumptions of humanistic education, one or more of Kumaravadivelu’s macrostrategies, Stevick’s criteria for the choice of ‘whole-learner’ materials and Tomlinson’s principles of materials development, Thornbury’s ‘text-topic-task’ strategy, etc. and what problems the teacher might expect when using this particular material in class. Based on their findings, student teachers adjust the chosen coursebook materials to specific learners’ needs.
- *Reaction paper* – Humanising Language Learning – Student teachers critically reflect on the content and ideas contained in an ELT-related academic piece of writing in which the author addresses (presents and discusses) a specific topic, problem, question, or issue within the broader area of teaching and learning. They are referred to ELT-related magazines such as English Teaching Professional, ELT-Journal or on-line journals such as *Humanising Language Teaching* (<http://www.hltmag.co.uk>). They do not write a summary of the article but their reaction to it, their personal and professional response to some of the points and the ideas presented by the author.
- *Reflective journal* – English Didactics Portfolio is a selected collection of student teachers’ work and their personal and professional development during a course of study. Basically, creating an EDP means collecting and critically reflecting on student’s work and learning during the course, thus providing evidence of their development, both personally and as a future teacher during their studies, especially when compared with their aspirations and set goals. Student teachers are required to write their reflective journal on a weekly basis. A weekly entry should contain their reflections on 2–3 events/situations that happened during this course which they find important, valuable or challenging as a student teacher and a future English teacher. They comment on, question, challenge, or respond to each of these experiences by expressing their thoughts and feelings.
- *Self-evaluation* – After each lesson, student teachers spend some time reflecting on their experience of putting their plan into action and make notes on interesting details and

important events, thus creating a starting point for completing a self-evaluation form. Among more obvious issues such as how far the students feel that they have achieved their teaching aims, on what they have based their answer, what has become clearer or what they have learnt; students also describe how satisfied they are with the lesson, how the learners felt during the lesson (interested, relaxed, bored, etc.), what evidence proves that, and in what way their teaching contributed to that; whether they treated all learners as individuals and with respect, tried to include most of them equally, praised the learners for their cooperation and encouraged them, allowed them to express their opinion and really listened to them, resolved conflicts in a peaceful manner, and addressed any cultural differences.

5 Conclusion

The paper aimed at addressing firstly, the issues of including human rights education principles into Slovene primary and secondary schools as part of the foreign language learning syllabus, and secondly, at empowering future teachers of English to implement HRE in their teaching. The described tasks and strategies suggest how to enable future teachers to develop not only appropriate attitudes towards their learners but also knowledge and skills through the critical interpretation and evaluation of their learners' beliefs and behaviour, which leads to the creation of a sound framework for their professional practice.

In the teaching profession, we frequently need to make judgments based on human rights; therefore, it is not enough to acquire knowledge about human rights as an addition to the syllabus, human rights education needs must be met as a matter of course in educational institutions. Through human rights education, we can empower teachers and learners to develop the skills and attitudes that promote equality, dignity and respect, not only in the classroom but also in our community, society and worldwide; and consequently, to become better people. We believe that upon conclusion of their studies, our future English teachers are well equipped to become true professionals in their field and successful or efficient educators who will know how to value, respect, and protect all human rights. In conclusion, let me quote Kofi Annan, former secretary general of the United Nations who once said: "Human rights education is much more than a lesson at school or a theme of the day; it is a process to equip people with the tools they need to live the lives of security and dignity."³

References

- Adami, Rebecca. 2014. "Toward Cosmopolitan Ethics in Teacher Education: An Ontological Dimension of Learning Human Rights." *Ethics and Education* 9 (1): 29–38. doi:10.1080/17449642.2014.890272.
- Amnesty International. 2005. *Amnesty International Report 2005: The State of the World's Human Rights*. London: Amnesty International Publications.
- ARRC [Asia-Pacific Regional Resource Center for Human Rights Education]. 2003. *What is Human Rights Education? Human Rights Education Pack*. Bangkok: ARRC.
- Byram, Michael. 2008. *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Coulby, David. 2006. "Intercultural Education: Theory and Practice." *Intercultural Education* 17 (3): 245–57. doi:10.1080/14675980600840274.

³ Speech delivered on International Human Rights Day. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/education/2016/02/10-quotes-on-the-power-of-human-rights-education/>

- Council of Europe. 1950. *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as Amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.
- Cassidy, Claire, Richard Brunner, and Elaine Webster. 2013. "Teaching Human Rights? 'All Hell Will Break Loose!'" *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 9 (1): 19–33. doi:10.1177/1746197913475768.
- Gollob, Rolf, Peter Krafp, and Wiltrud Weidinger, eds. 2010. *Educating for Democracy. Background Materials on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Educating for Teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Hieronymi, Otto. 2009. "Refugee children and their Future." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 2008: 6–25. doi:10.1093/rsq/hdn058.
- Human Rights Education Team. 1996. *Partners in Human Rights Education. First Steps: A Manual for Starting Human Rights Education*. London: Amnesty International International Secretariat. <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/education/pihre/content.htm>.
- . 2009. *Prvi koraki: metodični priručnik za poučevanje človekovih pravic*. Edited by Kristina Božič and Simona Kemperle. Translated by Alenka Elena Begant et al. Ljubljana: Amnesty International Slovenije. <http://www.amnesty.si/j7/images/UCP/prvi%20koraki%20druga%20izdaja%20-%20int.pdf>.
- Krek, Janez, and Mira Metljak. 2011. *Bela knjiga o vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Sloveniji. [The White Paper on Education in Slovenia]*. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.
- Osler, Audrey, and Hugh Starkey. 2010. *Teachers and Human Rights Education*. Oakhill: Trentham Books.
- Reardon, Betty A. 1997. "Human Rights as Education for Peace." In *Human Rights Education for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by George J. Andreopoulos and Richard Pierre Claude, 21–34. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Rivers, Anissa. 2015. "Emphatic Features and Absorption in Fantasy Role-playing." *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis* 58 (3): 286–94. doi:10.1080/00029157.2015.1103696.
- Shapiro, Shawna, and Lisa Leopold. 2012. "A Critical Role for Role-Playing Pedagogy." *TESL Canada Journal* 29 (2): 120–30.
- Struthers, Alison. 2014. "Human Rights Education: Educating about, through and for Human Rights." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 19 (1): 53–73. doi:10.1080/13642987.2014.986652.
- Šimenc, Marjan, and Mitja Sardoč. 2013. "Citizenship Education in Slovenia." In *ICCS 2009 Encyclopaedia: Approaches to Civic and Citizenship Education around the World*, edited by John Ainley and Wolfram Schulz, 366–68. Amsterdam: IEA.
- Tibbitts, Felisa. 1996. "On Human Dignity: A Renewed Call for Human Rights Education." *Social Education* 60 (7): 428–31.
- . 2002. "Understanding What We Do: Emerging Models for Human Rights Education." *International Review of Education* 48 (3–4): 159–71. doi:10.1023/A:1020338300881.
- Tibbitts, Felisa, and William R. Fernekes. 2011. *Teaching and Studying Social Issues. Major Programs and Approaches*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.
- UNESCO. 2005. "Education. Human Rights Education." <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/human-rights-education/>.
- United Nations. 1997. *International Plan of Action for the Decade of Human Rights Education*. Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- . 2006. *Plan of Action. World Programme for Human Rights Education. First Phase*. New York and Geneva: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Lilijana Burcar
 University of Ljubljana
 Slovenia

2017, Vol. 14 (1), 25-38(126)
 revije.ff.uni-lj.si/elope
 doi:10.4312/elope.14.1.25-38
 UDC: 821.111(73).09:37.091.3

Social Ills of (Global) Capitalism under Scrutiny in American Literature Classes: “Teaching to Transgress”*

ABSTRACT

The article foregrounds the importance of honing critical literacy through socially engaged literature. Dealing with literature in an engaged and critical way can help students to develop critical thinking skills and a systemic understanding of burning social issues that inform their own living realities. Critical literary pedagogy and socially engaged literature play a key role in developing students’ understanding of why and how institutional racism and institutional patriarchy constitute key operating mechanisms of capitalist social relations, which is why constructs of race and gender should never be looked upon as mere add-ons, let alone as a matter of mere culture and hence individual prejudice. In this sense, the article directly challenges the prevailing postmodernist approach in mainstream studies and teachings of literature. It calls instead for the restoration of socially engaged literature to school curricula and for a return to the contextually analytical and systemic (materialist) approach towards literature.

Keywords: capitalism; institutional racism; institutional patriarchy; socially engaged literature; critical pedagogy

Zlá (globalnega) kapitalizma pod kritičnim drobnogledom skozi obravnavo ameriške književnosti: »Učenje s preseganjem«

POVZETEK

Članek izpostavlja vlogo in pomen družbeno angažirane literature in kritične pedagogike pri vzpostavljanju družbene ozaveščenosti in kritične pismenosti med študirajočo populacijo. Kritična pedagogika in družbeno angažirana literatura imata moč, da spodbujata kontekstualno obravnavo vprašanj, s katerimi se ukvarjajo dela, in da ponudita sistemsko razdelani vpogled v razumevanje institucionalnega patriarhata in rasizma kot operativnega mehanizma kapitalističnega sistema. To predstavlja odmik od ozkoglednega in depasiranega razumevanja rasizma in seksizma kot izrastka osebnih predsodkov, saj gre tu za depolitizirano zamenjavo posledic z vzroki. S tem presežemo omejitve in zablode, ki jih na področju literarnih študij in pedagoškega posredovanja predstavlja kulturni preobrat s poudarkom na postmodernističnem pristopu. Članek tako zagovarja nujno povrnitvi družbeno angažirane literature v fakultetne predavalnice in nujnost sistematično kontekstualnega pristopa do njene obravnave.

Ključne besede: kapitalizem; institucionalni rasizem; institucionalni patriarhat; družbeno angažirana literatura; kritična pedagogika

* This part of the title has been inspired by bell hook’s influential book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (Routledge: New York and London, 1994).

Social Ills of (Global) Capitalism under Scrutiny in American Literature Classes: “Teaching to Transgress”

1 Introduction

Literature, be it realistic or fantastic, does not exist in a vacuum. Far from being self-enclosed and escapist, literary works are firmly rooted in concrete everyday realities, for it is from these that they draw their basic ideas and concepts, and which they feed back into the system in their refurbished, reconstructed or regurgitated forms. Because literary works are embedded in specific historical contexts and social relations, which in turn inform their content and form (Eagleton 2002, 5–6), literature is one of the discursive ways in which social reality is constantly addressed and reinstated. Literature therefore represents a form of communication with reality (Sell 2002) and constitutes an indispensable part of social discourse (Achinger 2012). As such, it actively shapes our perception and understanding of the world alongside its underlying social structures and accompanying symbolic orders. This in turn makes literature one of the pivotal tools of an ongoing and broader socialization (among adults and youngsters alike) and “an integral part of a social structure” (Rice and Waugh 2001, 103). The understanding of literature as a social discourse is also a key ingredient of critical pedagogy, which rests on the cultivation of critical literacy through systemic and contextually embedded analyses of literature in general and socially engaged literature in particular.

Because works of fiction spring from specific socio-historical contexts, it is impossible for narratives not to build their worlds and subject positions without at least invoking, directly or indirectly, the socio-economic systems and concrete materializations in which they themselves are embedded. In the context of the global re-imposition of the capitalist order, it is more than imperative for critical literary pedagogy and socially engaged literary studies to keep in the foreground the fact that in this kind of social setting, literary texts can play completely different, even mutually exclusionary roles. By merely incorporating unexamined “values and preoccupations, beliefs and prejudices” (Bennet and Royle 2004, 177) of the system premised on systemic exploitation and structural oppression into their literary worlds, some works of fiction inevitably act as guardians and gatekeepers of this very same and by now globally re-entrenched social order. In contrast, very few other literary works will put emphasis on “knowledge and social structures” (Bennet and Royle 2004, 177) to act as conveyors of much needed systemic and essential insights. Socially engaged literary texts can therefore act as welcome and much needed examiners and challengers of the unjust capitalist system, providing a springboard for fostering critical understanding and social awareness (Eagleton and Milne 1996). Within the field of critical literary pedagogy, in other words, attention is necessarily drawn to the fact that literary texts partake in the globally re-imposed capitalist reality either by variously supporting and legitimizing the differential power relations based on class, and further reinforced through constructs of race and gender, or by exposing and challenging the very production of structural inequalities, pointing in the process to their (socio-economic) origins and to the ideological mechanisms that help to sustain them. For this purpose, critical literary pedagogy differentiates between the concept of ideation on one hand and ideology on the other (Eagleton 1991), avoiding in this way the pitfalls of mainstream literary criticism according to which everything and anything – that is, any kind of talk about social organization regardless of its goals and structural features – is already an ideology. Critical

pedagogy instead understands ideology to be a system of manipulation that subsists on churning out constructions of artificial difference and inferiority, on inventing and inscribing otherness, and on presenting and rationalizing such constructs and fake hierarchies as natural realities precisely in order to justify and entrench the capitalist system's exploitative social relations.¹ In this sense, informed critical literary pedagogy necessarily draws on post-colonial studies, world-system theory, Marxist and socialist theory and systemic feminist studies.

An interdisciplinary approach like this, and the systemic acquisition of this kind of knowledge among students through the critical lens of socially engaged literature, requires a sustained effort on the part of teachers committed to critical analytical pedagogy. Its aim is to help students to develop a contextual understanding of complex social issues raised in and through novels and to acquire analytical techniques necessary for the cultivation of synthetic insights and critical literacy on their own. The Early American literature classes and seminars on American literature that students attend in their first year of studies at the Department of English at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana are geared towards facilitating and fostering this kind of analytical thinking through contextual and systemic analysis of socially engaged American literature. In these courses, students learn step by step that racialized and gendered constructs of otherness lie at the heart of the Western capitalist social orders and their imperialist projects. Contrary to common belief heavily promoted by the liberal mainstream, students come to see that contemporary forms of Western racism and patriarchy are not self-originating and independent systems that supposedly simply run alongside capitalism, intersecting with it only occasionally or even accidentally. This kind of contextual understanding is crucial. Rather than racism and sexism being just a matter of individual prejudice and discrimination, categories of race and gender – which are subject to constant modifications and modernizations within the context of the global consolidation of capitalist social order – continue to be essential to the maintenance of institutionalized racism and institutionalized patriarchy (premised on the breadwinner model) in Western capitalist nation states. Both institutional patriarchy and racism have been key structural features and central operating mechanisms of the Western capitalist system since its inception. The maintenance of these two has played a central role in the orchestrated pursuit of the greater accumulation of private wealth concentrated primarily in the hands of the top few beneficiaries of the system. Both institutionalized racism and patriarchy should therefore be seen as subsets of capitalist socio-economic relations rather than seemingly separate ones or even separate cultural phenomena. They are capitalism's building blocks: they play a key role in the hierarchical stratification, divisive segmentation and further devaluation of the legally exploited labour force, naturalizing the super-exploitation of those constituted as gendered and

¹ Mainstream literary criticism, dominated by the cultural turn and postmodernist literary studies that speak of meanings as always already fragmented and elusive or endlessly deferred and beyond meaningful recovery, is a major disadvantage when it comes to fostering critical literacy. Postmodernist literary theory views literary texts as self-enclosed systems of language games with meanings supposedly being “decentered, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic” (Eagleton 1996, vii) and never fully or really there. Mainstream literary criticism does not view literature as a part of a larger social structure, let alone as “an embodiment of social ideology or a critique of it” (Eagleton and Milne 1996, 11). In place of in-depth and systemic understanding of the issues at hand, it breeds apathy and conformity to the system, whose proponents (via think-tanks, foundations and other outlets) are ironically heavily focused on the production and circulation of very specific meanings, by means of which imperial occupations are justified, exploitation naturalized and camouflaged as a form of freedom and democracy, and racism and sexism subtly promulgated most often under the neo-racial pretext of colour-blindness and under the postfeminist rubric of promoting disempowering constructs of femininity as women's personal empowerment (Jha 2016; McRobbie 2009).

racialized others (Spector 2014, 120–22). In this sense, the students' understanding of racial and gendered discourses and their concrete material effects is tied to a broader yet basic socio-historical framework. This kind of basic contextualization is crucial for students' acquisition of social awareness and functional knowledge, on the basis of which they are not only better able to connect seemingly isolated issues into a larger picture but also to recognize the way these paradigms are being transplanted into their own immediate social milieu. Only through developing this kind of complex and contextual understanding are they better able to also fight the ideology and resist the harmful processes exported to this corner of the world under the demands and auspices of the globally the re-entrenched capitalist order.

2 Institutional Racism and Patriarchy through Socially Engaged Literature: Getting to Grips with the Basic Socio-historical Context

2.1 Racism

As pointed out by postcolonial theorists and historians, European imperial expansion and consolidation of the capitalist order was marked by the invention of modern biological or scientific racism, which was used to justify the dispossession of the local populations, their extermination or enslavement and exploitation (Thompson 2013). Racism as an ideology rests on the grounds of systemic othering, which rests on stripping people of the attributes of their humanity. Scientific racism, an export product of Western imperial powers, was used as a key ideology: for the first time in modern history, skin colour was taken as an object of negative projections and inscriptions of imaginary insufficiencies to be associated with the people the West was to colonize, dispossess and exploit. In this process, a neutral biological characteristic was turned into a socially re-inscribed one to be invested with negative projections on the basis of which an entire group of people, primarily through denial of reason, would be re-defined as inadequate and an aberration from the human norm (a standard thus appropriated and preserved for the whites).² In this way, the West would rationalize the imposition of object status upon its newly racialized others, justifying and naturalizing their utter exploitation. African and African-American slave labour became one of the driving engines of capital accumulation and a hidden prerequisite for the consolidation of capitalist production in Europe (Mullings 2005, 671). In this respect, as aptly observed by Taylor, “constructs of biological and cultural inferiority of African-Americans are as old as the US itself: how else could the political and economic elite of the US rationalize enslaving Africans [and the genocide of Native Americans] at the same time that they were simultaneously championing the rights of men” (2016, 23) for the upper crust of white British aristocracy and American businessmen in the making. And because racism, as Taylor further reminds us, is not “an abstract idea molded in isolation from the wider phenomenon of economic exploitation and inequality that pervades all of American [and Western capitalist] society” but rather structurally or “intimately bound up with them” (2016, 194), the abolition of “capitalist slavery” (Mullings 2005, 672) did not signal the end of institutional and systemic racism. This institution continues to be crucial for the US and its top elite, the system's direct beneficiary: it guarantees the continual supply of extra cheap and controllable workforce (Pessin 2016). This is also why constructs about the inferiority of African-Americans and newly racialized groups continue to be perpetuated in an open or disguised manner.

² Students seem to find Jane Elliot's documentary *The Bluest Eye* to be most conducive towards their understanding of how these constructs are made and put into place.

The students' most powerful recognition of the symbiotic and structural relationship between racism and capitalism arises from their dealing with Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. This novel dissects the history of the Middle Passage and the slave plantation system, and traces the incorporation of freed African-Americans into the Northern version of "racial capitalism" after the abolition of slavery (Childs 2009, 294). The plight of African-Americans, who as free but racialized wage-slave labour are confined to the lowest occupational ranks of the industrial sector in steel manufacturing and the meat industry or pressed into the domestic service of whites, is aptly captured in the passage which describes a young girl being given a job as a domestic in the household of her abolitionist benefactors. Upon leaving the house after just landing the job, the girl's eyes lock with the eyes of a figurine standing on a shelf in the kitchen where she was to conduct her daily chores. The figurine is a symbolic reminder and enforcer of her real standing in the white household, which is a micro cosmos reflecting the social structuration and positioning of racialized others as wage-slaves in the broader context of the so-called "racial capitalism":

With those assurances, Denver left, but not before she had seen, sitting on a shelf by the back door, a blackboy's mouth full of money. His head was thrown back farther than a head could go, his hands were shoved in his pockets. Bulging like moons, two eyes were all the face he had above the gaping red mouth. His hair was a cluster of raised, widely spaced dots made of nail heads. And he was on his knees. His mouth, wide as a cup, held the coins needed to pay for a delivery or some other small service, but could just as well have held buttons, pins or crab-apple jelly. Painted across the pedestal he knelt on were the words "At Yo Service." (Morrison 1987, 225)

With this understanding kept in mind – that is, that institutional racism is central to capital accumulation – students also come to see why it was not a coincidence that slavery was replaced by the economy of so-called convict leasing, with labour supply now again recruited exclusively from African-Americans. In this way, the official myth that racial discrimination ended with slavery and the received notion that racial prejudices still persistent today are just an old remnant of the past going back to the period of slavery (and are supposedly in no way connected with later history or the current state of affairs in the US) are both rendered problematic and dispelled.

Imprisoned in large numbers for minor or imaginary offenses (such as not being contracted to white employers and found loitering after their working hours), African-Americans at the turn of the century constituted an even cheaper supply of captive labour in comparison to the former system of slavery, as there would be no overhead costs involved for the capital (Taylor 2016, 111). Convict-labour leasing also represents the beginning of the criminalization of black poverty and racializing of crime, that is, "the practice of linking crime to blacks as a racial group, but not whites ... in the name of securing a stable [prison] workforce" (Taylor 2016, 120) for white capital, with "rampant exploitation of Black labour" thus again being "contingent on the denigration of Black humanity" (Taylor 2016, 119). Students get to know that well into the 20th century, African-Americans were excluded as a group from social security programmes and other benefit schemes under the New Deal. After WWII, they were not allowed to move into suburban districts the government subsidized in an effort to give rise to the white middle-class. Instead, African-Americans remained housed in segregated urban areas (where schools were to be deliberately underfunded) with restricted access to social housing, which allowed private landlords "to charge Black tenants more for inferior housing" while "refusing to maintain their properties" in order to drive the profit margin up (Taylor 2016, 113). Pointedly, in line

with the racist devaluation and dehumanization of black life, white America interpreted the “rat infestation and health problems” that resulted from such impossible living conditions to be the result of “Black people’s inferior hygiene instead of the racist-capitalist manipulation of the housing market” (Taylor 2016, 113). The conditions created by government policies like these would push African-Americans into taking out subprime loans at the turn of the 21st century, which the speculative banking industry would target especially at African-Americans as the poorest among the poor. The industry made its money by charging higher interest rates than for ordinary, that is, prime loans, and by levying extra fees on delayed instalments, knowing from the start that these loans could never be paid off (Abdur-Rahman 2008, 42). Racism is the building block of the capitalist system, which is why it is systemic and structural rather than merely individual: primarily, it “can be defined as policies, programs, and practices of public and private institutions that result in greater rates of poverty, dispossession, criminalization, illness, and ultimately mortality of African Americans.” (Taylor 2016, 19)

One of the key realizations made by students in the classes on socially engaged American literature is that at “the root of modern racism is exploitation” (Spector 2014, 121), and that “[i]n the United States, as contemporary racialized groups were incorporated by conquest and/or labor exploitation, the state created and maintained racial hierarchies and racialized citizenship” (Mullings 2005, 673) so that even fewer social-economic rights could be granted to those constructed as racialized others. Systemic racism plays a structural role in creating and securing a continuous supply of unprotected and easily controllable workforce, while driving an artificial wedge between those who should stand united in their struggle for their basic rights regardless of their skin colour. In this sense, the instigation of racial hatred and media-driven implantation of racist constructs and attitudes in the minds of the rest of the not so visibly but in fact also exploited and oppressed population serves as a tool of manipulation. It creates an atmosphere of terror directed at those at the receiving end of racist policies while crucially averting attention away from real social problems and their structural origins, which in reality also constrict those who believe themselves to be the beneficiaries of imaginary white privilege and therefore supposedly exempt from oppression. In her review of Taylor’s *From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation*, Pessin correctly points out that “racism is not an aberrational atrocity in an otherwise equal or just society, but is central to obscuring the greater inequality that exists within the United States [and other Western countries] as a whole” (2016, n. p.). These insights become crucial also for students’ understanding of their local environment at the present moment.

2.2 The Students’ Perspective

We are witness to the implantation and spread of racism in countries which were once at the head of the Non-aligned movement and which were deeply dedicated to the fight against colonialism and racism, as this was an indispensable part of their socialist agenda. The kind of education the older and middle-aged generations received on these issues stands in stark contrast to the discourse and lack of education that the media and the establishment put into circulation today. The insights gained by students into the origins and the workings of racism through our dealings with socially engaged literature turn out to be of crucial importance for their own understanding of the so-called refugee crisis. Equipped with the historically contextual and structural understanding of racism they gain in their literature classes, they are better able to not only fully grasp the larger framework within which the so-called refugee crisis is being produced but to also act on this knowledge and thus operate in their own local environments to the best of their abilities as a counterforce to the official stigmatizing discourse. In this sense, rather than

being prey to racism (and nationalism), they can see through the political establishment's scare tactics and media distortions, drawing attention to the mechanisms of racial othering also for others. Students report that what they learn in their literature classes they also very often share with their circle of friends and family members. When dealing with Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, students in the Anglo-American feminist literary studies group were asked to connect the issue of institutionalized racism that the novel dissects by deconstructing the Eurocentric racialized and gendered paradigm of the beauty myth to the situation they are faced with in their own social milieu.

2.3 Students' Responses

Students came up with insightful and meaningful responses, which in terms of content analysis fall roughly into two sections. The responses in the first section show that students are not only perfectly capable of seeing through the "fear mongering" and the "extreme othering" of the refugees but that they are also able to connect this with the West's new brand of a more perfidious form of racism, so-called cultural racism, which is used to prop up and justify the contemporary imperialist agendas which lie at the root of people's suffering and displacement. At the same time, in their analyses students recognize that the geopolitical space of which they themselves are part has been subject to the spread and heavy propagation of nationalism after 1991, with both nationalism and racism sharing a common ideological trait, that is, othering. From this point on, their responses show the ways in which students understand cultural racism to work, and how it ties in with the imperial agendas of the powers that use fear-mongering as a disciplinary discourse among their own population and as a vehicle for producing a marginalized, extremely vulnerable and hence thoroughly exploitable category of people.

SECTION 1

Student A:

In fact, what the media are doing is fear mongering. They portray the European culture as a stable, unified and justified (sometimes explicitly through religion) entity and the immigrants as the other, a violent foreign force that is here to destroy the foundations on which European culture is built. This in turn creates a binary opposition where there is none: Europe is not a melting pot, there is no single European culture, nor should the immigrants be labelled as dire Muslim extremists on their way to take over the world.

Student B:

Slovenia is to some extent dealing with a different kind of problem. Police brutality towards a certain race is minimal ... This could be the consequence of not having the racial diversity the USA, for example, has. However, this does not mean we are not dealing with similar problems. Our issues perhaps focus more on various ethnic groups, such as the Roma people and people of different former Yugoslav countries. These issues have been around since ... independence.

In the past years, Slovenia along with the rest of EU has been facing the European migrant crisis which largely increased racist beliefs in our area. The western invasions of these countries, a consequence of which to some extent is the migrant crisis, has sent people into exile. It is hypocritical of our policies [sic] to not accept these migrants after contributing to their move in the first place. While many people initially wouldn't have issues with immigrants, mass media is greatly increasing and in many cases creating these racist beliefs.

Student D:

Slovenia is already severely burdened by a nationalistic, conservative, and church-driven ideology, which makes the population even more prone to discrimination against people of different race, nation or religion. ... The EU actively participated in establishing a sinister atmosphere ... By allowing member states to erect fences along their national borders ..., the EU actively participated in portraying the refugees as people with bad intentions. By doing so, the EU contributed to the rise of racism and nationalism in times when they are least needed.

Student C:

Europeans have constantly been trying to show how they are better than the Americans but it turns out that racism is just as much alive in Europe as in America. ... All Muslims were suddenly marked as terrorists and all refugees were [presented as though they were] here with a hidden agenda ... "All Muslims are bad", and "Europe will be destroyed" were two most commonly uttered phrases during the most critical times of the migrations. This is racism in its most typical and distinctive form, and people don't even realize it. Mass media is the main transmitter of these ideas. They have started to spread the fear ... although the real threat comes from the western superpowers and their greedy tendencies to get whatever they want with no regard for other people. They started this war because of their own interests and now when people are suffering because of it, they want to transfer the blame on them.

Student G:

Together with the strict policies of the EU, the media played a crucial role in implanting fear and hatred of refugees into the hearts and minds of the European people. ... the results are the extreme othering, with a great number of Europeans convinced they are not in any way obliged to help the affected peoples since they are just terrorists anyway, and the legitimization of war in the Middle East under the pretext of uprooting terrorism.

Student E:

The refugees are seen as the Other. Even though they were forced to leave their home countries because of the conflicts that were in the main part caused by the imperialist interference of western countries into their politics with the intent to put into power political allies or puppets that would grant them access to the area's natural wealth. .. Despite the fact that as Slovenians (and therefore Slavs), we would also be perceived as unwanted immigrants in many Western countries, a large number of the Slovenian population bought into the image of refugees as the ungrateful economic migrants that the West painted.

SECTION 2

Student F:

The refugee crisis has been widely publicized ... As a creed, Islam is perceived as a major threat to other religions, namely, Christianity. The image that the corporate media disseminates shows the Islamic religion as very strict, conservative and one in which violence is often used for punishing disobedience ... In this respect, the Catholic Church is presented as a positive counterpart to Islam although the same description fits the Catholic Church just the same. Both religions also prop up the patriarchal social order, where the gendered position and the subjection of women is seen as something natural. ... The problem is also labelling all refugees as potential terrorists, who could wreak chaos all over Europe ... The hysteria about terrorist attack has been present since the 9/11 and is fuelled by the mainstream media. However, one

must always question the reasons for such drastic actions. Overall, the white “majority” has been dominating, colonizing and oppressing the countries of the third world for the longest time. . . . Like any minority, the refugees are definitely being presented as the Other, someone who is on the opposite side of the scale in every aspect, be it social, or cultural, and the differences are often presented as insurmountable, which cements the minority in a rigid socioeconomic status.

Student H:

There is no doubt that Western imperial interests are to blame for the recent flow of refugees into Europe. We (meaning the developed Western world) are to blame for the wars that forced millions of people from their homes. Yet far from accepting responsibility and helping our fellow humans, the refugee crisis is being used to create new, sharper demarcation lines between ethnic groups and usher in a new era of racism. . . . I believe there is something more going on here than politicians using fear mongering to gather support. We are living in a time when capital and corporations, not states are becoming the dominant power structures. Cheap labour force with as few rights as possible is the lifeblood of capital. Refugees represent just that. By marginalizing them, through racist constructs and portraying them as the enemy, the millions of refugees are being placed in a position where they are easily exploited. . . . By pushing them to the furthest margins, almost completely out of sight, we also deny them basic rights that are afforded to every member in our society. Thus we have set the stage for the creation of a new class, one that is even lower than our already miserable lower classes. A class of invisible slaves.

Students arrived at these insights on their own, yet they would not exist in this kind of form or content had it not been at least partially for the systemic acquisition of knowledge they received on these issues through close engagement with socially engaged American literature throughout their studies. This points to the crucial role critical literary pedagogy can play by focusing on a systemic and sustained investigation of the social issues raised in socially engaged literature.

2.4 Patriarchy

If institutional racism is one of the key structural features of capitalism and driving mechanisms of profit accumulation in Western capitalist states, so is institutional patriarchy. Students come to learn this through the analysis of works of fiction such as Alcott’s *Little Women*, Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *Jazz*, Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street* and more systemically in their Anglo-American feminist studies, one such moment being when we return to *The Bluest Eye* via Churchill’s *Top Girls*. One of the first systemic and historical understandings gained by the students is that the rise of industrial capitalism was premised upon the domestication and housewifization (Prügl 1996) of women. Industrial capitalism namely “put into place new patriarchal structures and ideologies” (Mies 1998, ix), most notably the institution of the nuclear patriarchal family, the breadwinner model and the doctrine of two separate spheres of private and public domains. Within this setup, social reproductive work and women were to be confined to the latter. Capitalism rests on the redefinition of social reproductive work (such as child-care and elderly care) as non-work and as a matter of private and individual concern rather than social and collective responsibility. It insists on women doing this kind of work out of love and for free solely within the confines of their homes, arguably as a natural extension of their femininity (Federici 2014, 8). By keeping this kind of work in the private sphere (through various institutional mechanisms such as limited public care facilities and long and unpaid maternity and parental leaves), capital can expropriate a much bigger share of the common wealth created by its workers for itself instead of diverting it towards the creation and

maintenance of an extensive network of full-time and affordable nurseries, kindergartens and after-school care facilities as well as fully employed and professionally trained child-minders, which would benefit communities and enable women to work full-time.

That is why after WWII, capitalist states, in stark contrast to the socialist ones, merely modified the breadwinner model to the so-called 1.5 version. Low-income and middle-income women have been most frequently encouraged either to leave their employment completely after the birth of their first child, or to combine the burden of fulltime childcare with precarious and sporadic forms of employment such as temporary, part-time or home-based work for mothers. Part-time work, let alone home-based work, “neither promotes [women’s] financial autonomy nor relieves them from being chiefly responsible for childcare” and housework (Ciccia and Bleyenbergh 2014, 8). In fact, part-time work for women in the US does not come with social benefits and entitlement to unpaid maternity leave, one of the earliest forms of precarious work targeted specifically at women. As a result, women’s full-time employment in the formal sector and their socio-economic independence in capitalist patriarchies has been the preserve of only a handful of women in the West. Their exit out of domesticity has most often proceeded on “the basis of the broadening of informal feminine working conditions in the home economy” (Sauer and Wohl 2011, 117). That is, it has proceeded on the backs of racialized minority women and immigrant women who, once recruited into these insecure and unprotected domestic jobs, find themselves marginalized and locked up in even more exploitative semi-formal or informal arrangements than their mistresses in the formal economy. Their unprotected working conditions depend entirely on the “circumstances and whims” of their private in-household employers (Busch 2013, 541). In the more recent history of the US, Latin-American migrant women have replaced African-American women as nannies and domestic servants in middle and upper-class households, with African-American women being diverted into part-time jobs in the public or private service sector. As racialized and underpaid labour of immigrant women is pressed into private service to alleviate the burden of social reproduction for well-to-do women, the question is what happens with these women’s own childcare arrangements in a capitalist racial patriarchy where an extensive network of institutionalized and affordable childcare is underdeveloped or so underfunded as to be virtually non-existent. In 2010 for example, public childcare facilities in the US could accommodate only 4% of the children between three and four years of age whose mothers were employed (Gornick and Hegewisch 2015, 22). This is an issue that we encounter in both *The Bluest Eye*, where African-American women and their children are left to their own devices, and in Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*.

Cisneros’s work of fiction tangentially addresses some of the basic structural problems that shape the social realities and individual trajectories of Mexican-American immigrant women who find themselves racialized and cooped up inside a ghetto/barrio. Amongst the most explicit vignettes dealing with institutionalized capitalist patriarchy is the story about Marin, a Puerto-Rican girl who is staying with her aunt’s family in Chicago. Marin is a teenager who “can’t come out” of the house to talk or play with the younger children from the neighbourhood (Cisneros 1991, 23–24). A few pages later it transpires that the main protagonist and her sister “never see Marin” because she must stay indoors and mind the children “until her aunt comes home from work”, most probably from “downtown” or some other affluent white district “because that’s where all the best jobs are” (Cisneros 1991, 26). Students thus come to see that in order to secure any kind of employment, including that of a domestic maid or nanny in the affluent suburbs, racialized and poor women in such economies are forced to pass childcare on to other members in the family, elderly parents, aunts and sisters, or pass it on to the oldest daughters in the family.

This increases the strain on their minimal resources and time management, while transferring childcare to the oldest daughters in the family increases their chances of ending up as school dropouts (Harris 2004). Yet, with the majority of Latin-Americans living under the constant threat of deportation, this kind of marginal existence that Marin is reduced to is even more precarious and unstable.

Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* also brings up the issue of the Bracero program and with it, the way secondary and racialized economic status is legally imposed upon Latin-American migrants. Their secondary status derives from being officially labelled as temporary non-immigrant workers. This kind of categorization means that they can be "legally exempted from laws on minimum employment standards, collective bargaining and the provision of social services and programs such as unemployment insurance, social assistance, old age pensions, etc." (Sharma 2001, 427). And, just as importantly, to legally enter the US Latin-Americans, unlike other groups entering the US, must already be contracted to their employers, most often agribusinesses, and are required to put in at least six months of trial work before they can change their employer otherwise they lose the money they have earned. Immigration policies and conditions attached to legal entry into the US provide a backdoor for rampant exploitation. Students get to know the specifics of this system in our dealing with Russell Banks' *Rule of the Bone*, where a white teenage boy narrator teams up with an elderly Jamaican man. He serves as a mentor to the boy and this is what the reader gets to see through the eyes of his pupil, who undergoes a major re-education:

The deal was they were supposed to work on the apple trees in the spring and then in June the same crew was supposed to go to Florida on a bus and cut sugarcane all summer for a different company and come back north in the fall and pick apples. Once you signed on you couldn't quit until six months were up without losing all the money that you'd earned so far and your work permit so if you left the camp you were like an international outlaw, an illegal alien plus you were broke. (Banks 1996, 155–56)

3 Conclusion

In their dealings with socially engaged American literature, students come to see that government-endorsed deportation regimes play a crucial role in governing the racialized secondary status and the debased working conditions of Latin-American immigrants, while the profit-driven privatized prison-industrial complex ensures the ongoing racialization and hence the controllability and pliability of the labour of African-Americans as US citizens. Through such investigations, students come to realize that both institutional racism and institutional patriarchy are operating mechanisms and building blocks of a concrete socio-political system rather than detached and self-enclosed phenomena. Or, as put by Mullings (2005, 675, 668), students come to see that both "racialized and gendered labour forces continue to be central to old and new forms of accumulation" with racism and gendered oppression "linked to structures of power that emerge through processes of accumulation and dispossession within local and transnational contexts". This is of primary importance for students' holistic and in-depth understanding of socially engaged literature in the seminar on feminist literary studies as well, where they learn to view gender constructs as intricately tied to institutional racism and vice versa, rather than as separate categories that mainstream literary criticism introduces and leaves hanging on as mere add-ons.

One of the many meaningful insights gained and voiced by students in American literature classes and in the Feminist literary seminar is that far from helping to address these issues the election of a “technically black” president (Street 2009, xxxvi, 103) on a colour-blind platform served to sweep them under the carpet. It camouflaged structural inequalities and allowed them to mushroom in the midst of the economic crisis. This also explains the emergence of the #Blacklivesmatter movement during the spontaneous and massive uprisings against police brutality in urban district areas across the US. It was here that “municipalities and state legislatures [often headed by black mayors] cut social services and critical aspects of the public sector intended to mitigate the worst aspects of poverty”, while at the same time they would send in police troops “to clean up the consequences” (Taylor 2016, 123). Their task was to “police poverty while instilling fear” and to help fill up the municipal coffers (depleted by lower taxes for the capital and the rich) by imposing more and heavier fines on the residents for minor or invented traffic offences through increasing “the practice of race-based stops” (Taylor 2016, 123, 125). Critical literary pedagogy that takes socially engaged literature as its springboard for the investigation and systemic understanding of burning social issues can produce enlightened outcomes even in a short period of time. As noted by one of the students in our feminist literary classes: “Electing a black president enabled the American people to feel progressive without actually dismantling the racist structures in place in their society.”

This article has been concerned with the demonstration of how social issues are to be addressed in literature classes through an integrated systemic approach and how socially engaged American literature should be contextualized and taught without falling prey to postmodernist relativism and the so-called cultural turn. Critical pedagogy, which rests on the cultivation of systemic understandings and in-depth contextual analyses of the social reality referenced by and through literature, is a potential building block of future grassroots movements and the informed struggle for systemic and wholesome, rather than partial, and co-opted social justice. Students’ informed responses and the contextualized understandings they gained in such classes are living proof that language acquisition and literature teaching, in order to be meaningful for the social formation of students and pupils alike, need to go beyond mechanistic linguistic approaches or superficially descriptive and plot-oriented approaches towards literature. Critical literary pedagogy, with its focus on systemic contextualized analysis and informed understanding of social injustices, serves as a clarion call for literature and language classes alike to become more rather than less context-oriented.

Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0265).

References

- Abdur-Rahman, Sufiya. 2008. “NAACP Sues Twelve Subprime Mortgage Loan Companies.” *Crisis* 115 (1): 42.
- Achinger, Christine. 2012. “Threats to Modernity, Threats of Modernity: Racism and Antisemitism through the Lens of Literature.” *European Societies* 14 (2): 240–58. doi:10.1080/14616696.2012.676449.
- Banks, Russell. 1996. *The Rule of the Bone*. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers.
- Bennet, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. 2004. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Harlow, New York and London: Pearson Longman.

- Burcar, Lilijana. 2014. *American Literature and Its Socio-Political Context*. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete.
- . 2015. *Restavracija kapitalizma: repatriarhalizacija družbe*. Ljubljana: Sophia.
- Busch, Nicky. 2013. "The Employment of Migrant Nannies in the UK: Negotiating Social Class in an Open Market for Commodified In-Home Care." *Social & Cultural Geography* 14 (5): 541–57. doi:10.1080/14649365.2012.736528.
- Childs, Dennis. 2009. "'You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet': *Beloved*, the American Chain Gang, and the Middle Passage Remix." *American Quarterly* 61 (2): 271–97. doi:10.1353/aq.0.0075.
- Ciccia, Rosella, and Inge Bleyenbergh. 2014. "After the Male Breadwinner Model? Childcare Services and the Division of Labor in European Countries." *Social Politics* 22 (4): 1–30. doi:10.1093/sp/jxu002.
- Cisneros, Sandra. 1991. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Eagleton, Terry. 1991. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London and New York: Verso.
- . 1996. *The Illusions of Postmodernisms*. Oxford and Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- . 2002. *Marxism and Literary criticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Eagleton, Terry, and Drew Milne, eds. 1996. *Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader*. Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Federici, Silvia. 2014. *Caliban and the Witch*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.
- Gornick, Janet C., and Ariane Hegewisch. 2015. "Gender, Employment and Parenthood: The Consequences of Work-Family Policies." In *Lessons from Europe? What Can Americans Learn from European Public Policies*, edited by Daniel Kelemen, 17–42. Los Angeles: Sage/CQ Press.
- Harris, Anita. 2004. *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Jha, Meeta Rani. 2016. *The Global Beauty Industry: Colorism, Racism, and the National Body*. London and New York: Routledge.
- McRobbie, Angela. 2009. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage.
- Mies, Maria. 1998 *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Morrison, Toni. 1987. *Beloved*. New York: Plume.
- Mullings, Leith. 2005. "Interrogating Racism: Toward an Antiracist Anthropology." *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 34: 667–93. doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.32.061002.093435.
- Pessin, Haley. "Exploding the Post-Racial Myth." [Review of *From #Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation* by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.] *International Socialist Review*, Issue 101, Summer 2016. <http://isreview.org/issue/101/exploding-post-racial-myth>.
- Prügl, Elisabeth. 1996. "Home-Based Workers: A Comparative Exploration of Mies's Theory of Housewifization." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 17 (1): 114–35. doi:10.2307/3346904.
- Rice, Philip, and Patricia Waugh, eds. 2001. *Modern Literary Theory*. London: Arnold.
- Sauer, Brigitte, and Stefanie Wohl. 2011. "Feminist Perspectives on the Internationalization of the State." *Antipode* 43 (1): 108–28. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00813.x.
- Sell, Roger, ed. 2002. *Children's Literature as Communication. The ChiLPA project*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Sharma, Nandita. 2001. "On Being *Not* Canadian: The Social Organization of 'Migrant Workers' in Canada." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 38 (4): 415–39. doi:10.1111/j.1755-618X.2001.tb00980.x.
- Spector, Alan. 2014. "Racism and – Crisis and Resistance: Exploring the Dynamic between Class Oppression and Racial Oppression." *Humanity & Society* 38 (2): 116–31. doi:10.1177/0160597614534345.
- Street, Paul. 2009. *Barack Obama and the Future of American Politics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahatta. 2016. *From #Blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books.
- Thompson, Debra. 2013. "Through, against and beyond the Racial State: The Transnational Stratum of Race." *Journal Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26 (1): 133–51. doi:10.1080/09557571.2012.762898.

Debate in the EFL Classroom

ABSTRACT

Relying primarily on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and The National EFL Syllabus, this paper focuses on the highest ranking goals within formal foreign language (L2) education: the development of communicative competence (which the communicative paradigm regards as the most important goal of contemporary language teaching), and of critical thinking (CT) ability, which is widely recognised as the main general education goal. It also points to some of the discrepancies generated by tensions between the fact that language is a social and cultural phenomenon that exists and evolves only through interaction with others, and individual-student-centred pedagogical practices of teaching (and assessment) – which jeopardise the validity of these practices. Next, it links the official educational goals to the cultivation of oral *interaction* (rather than oral *production*) in argumentative discursive practices in general and in structured debate formats in particular, which are proposed as an effective pedagogical method for developing CT skills and oral interactional competence in argumentative discursive events, especially on B2+ levels.

Keywords: sociocultural theory; oral production and oral interaction competence; critical thinking, debate

Debata pri pouku angleščine

POVZETEK

Članek se osredotoča na najvišje vrednotene cilje znotraj formalnega tujejezikovnega izobraževanja (v skladu s *Skupnim evropskim jezikovnim okvirjem* in *Učnim načrtom za gimnazije – angleščina*): na razvoj sporazumevalnih zmožnosti, ki – v skladu s komunikacijsko paradigmo v (tuje)jezikovnem poučevanju – velja za najpomembnejši cilj sodobne jezikovne pedagogike, ter na razvoj sposobnosti kritičnega mišljenja, ki jih izobraževalni sistemi v svetu navajajo kot krovni izobraževalni cilj. Opomni na nekatere diskrepance, ki jih generirajo trenja med dejstvom, da je jezik družbeni in kulturni fenomen, ki obstaja in se razvija zgolj v interakciji z drugimi, ter na posameznika osredinjene pedagoške prakse poučevanja (in ocenjevanja) – kar kompromitira veljavnost teh praks. Izobraževalne cilje naveže na kultiviranje *govornega sporazumevanja* (za razliko od *govornega sporočanja*) v polemičnih/argumentativnih diskurznih praksah nasploh oziroma v strukturiranih debatnih formatih, ki jih utemeljuje kot učinkovito učno metodo za razvoj kritičnega mišljenja in govorne interakcijske zmožnosti v polemičnih diskurznih dogodkih, zlasti na B2 in višjih jezikovnih ravneh.

Ključne besede: sociokulturna teorija; govorna sporočilna in govorna interakcijska zmožnost; kritično mišljenje; debata

Debate in the EFL Classroom

Language is not only a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual brain; it is also fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of contexts for myriad practical purposes. The time has come for SLA [second language acquisition] to recognize fully the theoretical and methodological implications of these facts, a crucial implication being a need to redress the imbalance of perspectives and approaches within the field, and the need to work towards the evolution of a holistic, bio-social SLA. (Firth and Wagner 2007, 768)

1 Introduction

The above quote is taken from the article Firth and Wagner first published in 1997 (*The Modern Language Journal*), and was based on the paper they presented at the International Association of Applied Linguistics conference in Finland in 1996. Their paper caused the kind of reactions that are more common in the world of rock&roll than in the circles of applied linguistics. Diane Larsen-Freeman reports of “palpable excitement” among the audience, describing their conference session in terms of a paradigm shift:

The perceived dominance of a cognitive, mentalistic orientation to second language acquisition (SLA) had been challenged. Scholars who had previously felt excluded found a rallying point in the Firth and Wagner paper; those who believed that their positions had been ignored felt empowered in a way that they had not before. (2007, 773)

Their presentation (and the related article) addressed the growing discontent owing to the persistent imbalance in the ontological and epistemological basis of foreign/second language (L2) research: language is a social phenomenon, yet studies of language acquisition, discourse use and communicative competence are limited to the individual, and as such, bound to cognitive theories (cf. Firth and Wagner 2007; Larsen-Freeman 2007; Vygotsky 1978; Cook 2011; Tollefson 2011). Their contention was/is that such a restriction within the research field impedes further development of theories of second/foreign language acquisition. Of course, in their praiseworthy attempt to reset the course of studies in applied linguistics, they did not operate in a void; their performance was indebted to the work of a number of predecessors, perhaps most obviously to that of Lev Vygotsky, the founder of sociocultural theory (SCT).

The stir they created was (and continues to be) indicative of the shortcomings of the so-called communicative approach in L2 language teaching, which is supposed to be informed by the very same underlying theories and holistic stance suggested by the above quote. This paper focuses on oral communicative competence at higher levels of language proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001), which, inevitably, goes hand in hand with another educational goal: the systematic development of critical thinking (CT).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001), first published after the first and before the second publication of Firth and Wagner’s contentious paper, continues the tradition of the “communicative approach” (cf. ESOL Examinations 2011, 8,16), providing descriptors for language users in a variety of social contexts – and betraying its flaws in the process. As the definitive document in the area of L2 policy and implementation, it shapes all national L2 documents within the EU. Teachers across the EU find a bold promise (in

the “Notes for the user section”) that they will find in it “all [they] need to describe their objectives, methods and products.” Unsurprisingly, it is a promise that the document cannot always fulfil.

In harmony with the supreme goal of the communicative paradigm, the CEFR’s descriptions of the B2 speaker depict a remarkably proficient person capable of either articulating a standpoint on a complex subject or discussing it argumentatively (i.e., debating). They are deemed able to “give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail” and “keep up with an animated discussion, identifying accurately arguments supporting and opposing points of view. Can express his/her ideas and opinions with precision, present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.” (Council of Europe 2001, 58, 78), which leads us to conclude that the CEFR expects B2 speakers to be linguistically and interactionally competent people capable of critical thinking (CT).¹

The obvious question is: Do we really teach all that? My PhD research (Želježič 2016) has shown that teachers themselves receive no or negligible training in interactional competence and CT. The “matura” (i.e., the school-leaving exam) catalogue provides no instructions on how to test and assess these competencies, but focuses primarily on *oral production skills*, reducing interactional elements to the vaguely phrased “participation in conversation” (Ilc et al. 2012, 18). As a result, our students are much less experienced in oral interaction than CEFR suggests. Whilst recent generations of secondary school students in Slovenia seem to have reached the highest average speaking proficiency level ever,² it is impossible to claim that they are equally competent in “presenting and responding to complex lines of argument [in an animated discussion] convincingly” (Council of Europe 2001, 78). Results of the empirical part of the above mentioned PhD research (Želježič 2016) demonstrate that while, in theory, oral *production* competence may receive as much attention as oral *interaction* competence, it does not do so in practice. They also reveal the inadequate and unsystematic development of critical thinking (both among teachers and students) as well as of interactional competence in argumentative discursive practices – suggesting that educational provision falls short of meeting the official educational goals in this respect.

Two decades after the milestone contribution of Firth and Wagner we cannot but agree with Skela, who notes (in his introduction to the Slovene edition of the Common European Framework of Reference) that a closer look into EFL syllabi and coursebooks reveals “the fact that the prevalent organising principle of contemporary coursebooks – and with it probably also teaching practices – remains to be a grammar-based syllabus”, and that in L2 teaching “four decades of communicative approach have in many cases added but a superficial layer of communicative components” (Skela 2011, 130; own translation). Consequently, it should come as no surprise that although it is exactly development of communicative competence that is stated as “the primary aim of contemporary L2 teaching”, there are “no systematically developed ways of teaching it” (Skela 2011, 126).

As far as developing CT faculties is concerned, relevant research suggests any significant improvement relies on a systematic approach over an extended period of time (cf. Bennet

¹ The descriptions are echoed in The National EFL Syllabus in Slovene academic secondary schools, the so-called *gimnazije* (e.g., Učni načrt 2008, 26).

² The claim is based on more than 25 years of my own teaching experience and a number of discussions with EFL teachers.

2004, Abrami et al. 2008, Hatcher 2006, Van Gelder 2005, Lakoff 2006). All definitions of CT presuppose, whether implicitly or explicitly, proficiency in (and further development of) competencies and mental activities such as inferring, analysing, synthesising, understanding of one's own thought processes, interpreting and arguing – all of which the above (CEFR-defined) speaker necessarily possesses – as neither presenting nor responding to *complex lines of argument* can be *convincing* unless it is structured systematically and verbalized in a language that conveys points of view of some *complexity*. CT does not exist outside language; the richer one's vocabulary the better equipped they are to think; the more motivated they are to think, the richer the vocabulary they need to articulate their thoughts; the more complex the topic, the more nuanced and critical the required thinking – and the deeper the vocabulary pool one needs to rely upon (cf. Vygotsky 1978; Dennett 2013).

In the light of the situation outlined above, it is the aim of this article to recommend debate as a genre/didactic method that addresses the part of communicative competence conspicuously sidelined in our educational provision – *interactional* competence at the B2 (and above) level. It attempts to argue in favour of a systemic approach, one that would actually introduce and cultivate the missing elements of argumentative interaction in our EFL educational provision, thus providing guidance and instruction in the areas of communicative approaches that are considered sufficiently covered, but are, in effect, neglected.

All of the above serves as an explanation of a combination of factors that sparked my interest in debate in the EFL classroom. It was in April 2009, when I first heard Slovene university students (none of whom was a student of English) debate in English, that I was confronted with a rather disconcerting realization: their CT skills, articulacy and interaction skills were in stark contrast with those of our students of English; at the same time they were perfectly in tune with the CEFR descriptions of B2+ level learners' interaction competence. The event decided my PhD orientation and basic research questions, which required an in-depth analysis of a number of educational documents (including CEFR and The National EFL Syllabus) on the one hand and the practical application of the goals and standards stipulated in them on the other. All research questions revolved around debate as an (in)appropriate and (in)effective pedagogical method for developing oral communication skills and CT, and resulted in a case study conducted in three classes of students at a Slovene academic secondary school (in each case including a full cohort of students).

2 Rationale behind Debate in Education

By using the term *debate* we refer to a *structured and regulated communicative event* on a debate motion that enables a confrontation of two opposing views.³ Through a debate two sets of perspectives/values/policies are established, one arguing in support of the motion and the other opposing it. A generic definition of debate that is quite compatible with this description is the one proposed by Akerman and Neale (2011) in their research report on the effects of debate on primary school, secondary school and university students:

Broadly speaking, debate can be described as a formal discussion where two opposing sides follow a set of pre-agreed rules to engage in an oral exchange of different points of view on an issue. Formal debates are commonly seen in public meetings or legislative assemblies,

³ To this end a number of debate formats are available, one of the more common ones being, for instance, the British Parliamentary Debate Format. For basic information on debate formats cf. <http://www.idebate.org/about/debate/formats>;

where individuals freely choose which side of an issue to support, and also in schools or university competitions, where the participants are often assigned a particular side for which to advocate. (2011, 9)

In Slovenia debate as a competitive discipline was introduced by *Zavod za odprto družbo* (The Open Society Institute) in 1996, and has since 1999 continued to be promoted by its successor *Za in proti, Zavod za kulturo dialoga* (Pro et Contra, Institute for Culture in Dialogue). Slovene secondary school and university debaters have managed to gain considerable international recognition, putting Slovenia on the world debate map as a force to be reckoned with. Yet, what is perhaps more noteworthy is that since 1997 the institute has been organising educational seminars not only for debaters and debate mentors, but also for teachers who wish to use debate as a teaching method in class rather than – or at least not only – in debate clubs. While it signals a degree of awareness of the gaps in our educational practices among teachers, it by no means signifies that these gaps are being suitably and systematically addressed.

On the practical level, the need for debate in the pedagogical context is simple enough to explain: it is not only a dialogic genre that presupposes an intense form of interaction, but is also often addressed in connection to the development of CT (see Branham 1991; Snider and Schnurrer 2006; Zompetti 2011). It cultivates controversy and sophisticated language use. In other words, it is a form of speech that is – in the context of the so-called Western democratic culture – considered to be privileged.

Speculatively, debate is justified through the theories that informed Firth and Wagner's (2007) concerns, most notably Vygotsky's discovery of the social origin of higher mental functions: social interaction is a basic prerequisite for linguistic, mental and character development. The learning of a language is (as any other learning) a dialogic process. As claimed by John-Steiner and Mahn in the article "Sociocultural Approaches to Learning and Development: A Vygotskian Framework" (1996), the relationship between individuals forms a basis for cognitive and linguistic mastery. Luoma, too, reminds us of Vygotsky's proposal "... that social interaction plays such a fundamental role in the development of human cognition that cognition should be studied as a social rather than an individual concept." (2004, 102)⁴

The two most often quoted and argued contributions of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT) are his explanations of the relationship between the inter- and intra-personal level and the so-called zone of proximal development (ZPD). He advanced them in the framework of child (developmental) psychology, but, as stated above, they have proved their significance within L2 theories as well.⁵

Vygotsky shows that human consciousness is intricately (and necessarily) connected with culture and society, and that language is both the source of social behaviour and consciousness, and the most perfect tool of human consciousness (language as a tool of mediation). His most accessible explanation of the relationship between the interpersonal and intrapersonal in a development of higher mental processes is to be found in his article "The Genesis of Higher Mental Functions" (1981):

⁴ See also Aljaafreh and Lantolf 1994; Lantolf 2006.

⁵ Among the most prominent applied linguists that base their work on sociocultural theory are, for instance Lantolf, Johnson, Kasper, van Lier, Kozulin and John-Steiner.

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition. We may consider this position as a law in the full sense of the word, but *it goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions*. Social relations or relations among people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships. (as cited in Johnson 2001, 185; my emphasis)⁶

Vygotsky surmounted the Cartesian limitations between the external and internal, proving that the processes of internalisation take place in co-dependence between individuals and external factors. Rather than a simple imitation of patterns (meanings, ways, etc.) these processes entail idiosyncratic interpretations and/or adaptations, which, in turn, transform these external factors. In other words, this is a dynamic (and also a two-way) process, which causes the existent level of cognitive development to expand in the direction of the potential level of cognitive development. But for this expansion to be fostered, learning has to take place in the zone of proximal development (ZPD) – defined by Vygotsky as the difference between a quantified (“measured”, tests-assessed) level of development and a level of (potential) development that individuals would exhibit if guided by a more experienced person or more advanced peers (Vygotsky 1978, 86).

To put it differently, SCT views learning as linked to “collaboration” rather than “acquisition”; as mediated through social interaction rather than through students’ thought processes. SCT does not link learning to acquiring information, but – more holistically – to the development of a personality with the competencies that empower an individual to enter and take part in social interactions. The question is, however, how participation in interactive activities creates the conditions that are conducive to learning and development – the so-called “affordances”. Especially intrigued by this question are theoreticians of the so-called ecological approach in L2 acquisition, such as, for instance, van Lier and Chun. Chun (2011, 675) says:

According to SCT, there is no single set of characteristics of social interaction that constitute affordances for all learners. Rather, affordances arise out of the successful tailoring of the interaction to the developmental level of individual learners. They occur when the interaction enables the participants to construct a “zone of proximal development” for the learner — that is, the learners come to be able to perform a language feature through the scaffolding provided by an interlocutor when they are not able to do so independently. The aim of interaction (including corrective feedback) is to assist the learner to move from other-regulation in the zone of proximal development to self-regulation where the learner is finally able to use a linguistic feature correctly without assistance.

The above quote may perhaps more readily refer to earlier phases of language acquisition, but the same principles apply also in the later phases of the development of an individual's language (or any other intellectual) competence.

It seems that the avant-garde lucidity of Vygotsky's SCT can only be understood from a contemporary perspective: rather than the actual level of development he was interested in

⁶ We take this quote from Johnson because it is more expressive than that in *Mind in Society*, where Vygotsky gave a more modest explanation of this part of the internalisation of higher psychological functions (1978, 57).

the potential level of development. Focused on development rather than on performance, his theory stands in explicit opposition to the standard practices in language teaching and testing that continue to be marked by the belief that language interaction is but a cognitive and psycholinguistic activity.

Interestingly enough, contemporary cognitive theory seems to be finding some common ground with SCT in this respect. This was most befittingly captured in a public lecture that Daniel Dennett gave to the Royal Geographic Society in London on 22/5, 2013: the most serious thinking and problem-solving is interactive. It is only in collaboration and confrontation with other thinking individuals that we can overcome limitations and prejudices that are part of our instinctive legacy, meaning that interaction is not only a prerequisite for that development of oral communicative competence but is also crucial in terms of the development of CT faculties.

This brings us to the issue of the practical implications of SCT for L2/EFL pedagogy, and the issue of debate in EFL teaching respectively. In *The Art of Non-conversation* Johnson (2001) states that Vygotsky developed the notion of ZPD in order to “address (...) the problem of teaching practices” (2001, 186). Compatible with the statement is Lantolf’s observation: “One of the most intriguing topics for future research is whether the appropriate pedagogical interventions can be designed to promote the development of conceptual and associated linguistic knowledge to enable learners to use the L2 as a mediational artefact” (2006, 103). In response, this article aims to offer debate as one of the appropriate pedagogical methods.

However, it must first be established that there is no dialogic teaching method currently cultivated in the context of EFL classroom with the express purpose of developing oral interaction skills and CT. The obvious “candidate” is dialogue/interview with the teacher, the only existing dialogic form of *testing* students’ oral *interactional* competence in EFL in our school system.

In Marycia Johnson’s book *The Art of Non-conversation* (2001) she proves the differences between assessment interviews and authentic interviews to be so big that the results of such testing are considered to be non-valid, and calls oral testing “conversations” simply – non-conversations. To put it differently, the so-called dialogues/interviews with the teacher have so little to do with teaching and practising interactional competence in argumentative discursive events that they cannot be credited with validity. They do not aim to foster interactional skills such as negotiating, holding one’s ground in a debate on a complex topic and building and responding to arguments (while at the same time considering the sociocultural conventions and questioning one’s presuppositions, for instance).

This paradoxical situation could be described as follows: although it has been established that interaction is a prerequisite for the development of both oral communicative competence and CT faculties, the only form of testing it – dialogues/interviews between teachers and students – do not, in fact, build interactional competence in students.

In order to propose debate as an answer to this situation, some rigorous scientific evidence proving the correlation between debates on the one hand and CT and argumentative interaction on the other should be presented. Admittedly, despite the lively theoretical debate outlined above, such evidence has begun to accumulate only recently. The good news is that the volume of this evidence is substantial.

3 PRO Debate: Evidence and Recommendations

In 2007 the 1–2 issue of *Šolsko polje (School Field Journal)* published “the best contributions addressing the use of rhetoric, critical thinking and pedagogy” (2007, 5; own translation) from the first international conference on argumentation, rhetoric, debate and the pedagogy of empowerment *Thinking and Speaking a Better World*. One of them is the article by Mateja Glušič Lenarčič from Gimnazija Celje-Center (an academic secondary school) titled “Revising Vocabulary and Teaching Essay Writing Through Debate: Why Use Debate Techniques for Teaching a Foreign Language?”. In it she states: “Debate is a very efficient and challenging method of teaching a foreign language. It enables you to revise new vocabulary and teach students how to organise their thoughts and ideas sensibly. (...) They become genuinely interested in different topics and also learn to think logically and critically” (2007, 157).⁷

While this is a tentative attempt to link debate to communicative and CT competence with a degree of scientific merit, Sam Greenland, an Australian teacher of EFL in Hong Kong, was among the first to do so in compliance with established research standards. He measured these competencies in his doctoral thesis titled *Assessing student performance in classroom debates: a valid and unbiased measurement* (2009). Based on a case study involving secondary school students, his research showed that debate is an effective didactic activity in the context of EFL classroom, enabling teachers to develop and assess both oral interactional competence and CT.⁸ It also confirmed debate to be a genre that develops these competencies irrespective of whether students are more or less linguistically and/or academically successful. Still, his sample (the total number of participants was 453 – cf. Greenland 2009, 41) was not extensive enough to provide irrefutable evidence of the links between the observed competencies and debating activities.

The first text to seriously address this deficiency is the report *Debating the evidence: an international review of current situation and perceptions*, written by Rodie Akerman and Ian Neale, published by The English-Speaking Union in 2011. The authors presented a detailed review of existing research from around the world, looking for scientific data linking debate to the development of CT and communicative competence.⁹ Approximately 50% of the studies that this report takes into account are based on debate as classroom activity; the other half is focused on debate tournaments. From the perspective of EFL teaching, the former are of greater importance than the latter, as they are concerned with *the whole classroom /all students* rather than the more select group of competitive debaters.

The report (Akerman and Neale 2011) presents four key positive effects related to active participation in debate (and other Forensics) activities:

1. considerable improvements in academic attainment (in a group of American ‘high schoolers’ from the most marginalized districts, “African American males who took part in debate were 70% more likely to complete school than their peers.” (2011, 5);

⁷ At the second International Conference on Argumentation, Rhetoric, Debate and the Pedagogy of Empowerment in Ljubljana in 2008, Kate Shuster spoke extensively about the correlation between debate and CT. Herself a debater and debate coach, she argued that there was a generally acknowledged but (until then) not also scientifically confirmed link between debate and development of CT.

⁸ The case study was based on twelve classes of students from each of the two state schools involved – in his own words “... a full cohort of students (every student in a single year group in a single school).” (Greenland 2009, 38).

⁹ Searching through academic databases, they identified over 800 references, which they eventually narrowed down to 51 studies, all of them published no earlier than 1990.

2. developing critical thinking; both qualitative and quantitative research prove participation in debate develops one's ability to think critically;
3. debate improves communication skills;
4. participating in debates boosts debaters' aspirations, confidence and cultural awareness.

Increases in critical thinking ability (up to 44%) were found regardless of the measurement used, although most of the studies used the Watson-Glaser test, which measures five abilities:

- defining a problem;
- selecting relevant information for its solution;
- recognising assumptions;
- formulating and selecting relevant hypotheses;
- drawing valid conclusions and judging the validity of inferences. (Akerman and Neale 2011, 19, 21)

The Watson-Glaser definition of CT is, of course, by no means the only one; some are more and some are less elaborate, some based on consensus among a large group of specialists,¹⁰ some are authored by one person.¹¹ However, all definitions contain elements pertaining to any debate; they all presuppose and build upon the ability to do research, to infer, analyse, build and refute arguments. In other words, all definitions describe mental and verbal activities that are based on credible and relevant information.

In this respect the report findings agree with contemporary research in teaching/enhancing CT (Van Gelder 2005; Hatcher 2006; Abrami et al. 2008; Zompetti 2011): systematic development of CT with emphasis on regular practice results in a marked improvement in CT ability.

It is also noteworthy that students who took part in debate and other competitive speech activities “were found to gain statistically significantly higher scores in a state writing test and a national (ACT) reading test” (Akerman and Neale 2011, 14).

Credibility of the findings is further corroborated by students' views on the effects of debate in class: “Student perception data indicates that engaging in debate activities increases engagement and motivation in a subject, improves subject knowledge and helps students apply their learning to real-world situations.” (Akerman and Neale 2011, 16). Students themselves believe that active participation in debates “... leads to improvements in their communication and argumentation skills, including improved English when it is not their first language” (Akerman and Neale 2011, 22).

Other effects of debate as a teaching method that Akerman and Neale (2011, 17–18) report on are an improved ability to work in a team, development of interactional competence, considerable gains in research skills and improved writing competence.

¹⁰ The lengthy definition used in the study by Abrami and colleagues (2008), for instance, was agreed by 46 eminent researchers in the field of CT.

¹¹ Hatcher, a professor of philosophy (and CT teacher), proposes a definition that attempts to distance CT from logical reasoning and creative thinking: “CT is thinking that tries to arrive at a judgement only after honestly evaluating alternatives with respect to available evidence and arguments.” (2006, 251).

All the results they included in their report are based on longitudinal studies involving hundreds of participants, yet the authors are prudent enough to call our attention to the fact that measuring these achievements is a complex task, and that final results may be tampered by “unobserved factors” such as, for instance, social status and parental education.

Included in the Akerman and Neale report is a contribution by Anitha and Anitha (undated), who, as secondary and tertiary level teachers of EFL in Singapore, articulate an interesting observation: they relate the noticeable progress in communicative competence of students to the fact that they experience debate as a *meaningful* communicative task (2011, 16). They also note that the formal rules of a particular debate format promote rather than inhibit accurate expression. As students are expected to present clear arguments, they do their best to comply with the expectations, thus improving their own performance as well as inspiring and helping less advanced peers.

This observation of Anitha and Anitha is compatible with the views of those who, alongside Vygotsky, regard interaction as a tool for (foreign) language learning and as a competence in its own right. As stated by Kasper and Rose (2002, 34), interaction is neither a context of learning nor a mechanism of language production; instead, it is learning itself. In other words, language/communication is both a cognitive and social phenomenon – as Vygotsky’s quote on the two levels of cultural development (social and intrapsychological) makes clear (see above). Personal development is not possible without intervention of better qualified, more skilled or experienced individuals; it is only in interaction with others (in ZPD) that individuals can reach for a goal, solve a problem, gain understanding of a concept, develop an argument, etc.

It is wholly unsurprising – from the point of view of SCT (and the double function of language: language as the tool of both communication and learning) – that the Akerman and Neale report (2011) is not limited exclusively to the effects of debate in English classes (regardless of whether English is the native or a foreign language), but also takes into account studies of debate as a teaching method in *any* subject and in *any* language. One of them is a case study from an Israeli secondary school, published in the article “Fostering Students’ Knowledge and Argumentation Skills Through Dilemmas in Human Genetics” in 2001 by Zohar and Nemet. Akerman and Neale state they report “dramatic gains in argumentation ability”, but warn against attributing them prematurely to debate practice alone, for students might have “been encouraged to use patterns of thinking that they possessed all along but did not normally utilise in the classroom, or had reinforced skills that were already present but not usually valued in class” (2011, 23). Despite their caution, they suggest that the practical value of debate lies in the *opportunity* it creates for students to develop argumentative thinking and speaking. What counts is what happens in a specific situation in class, where teachers and students have an opportunity to adapt a particular debate format to their own needs and preferences, and to do so in a creative, critical or playful manner. In other words, respecting rules in dialogic events is essential, yet debate formats are inherently flexible: in the classroom context it is possible to negotiate and transform them, depending on abilities, wishes, educational goals, etc. An example of such an adaptation stated in the report is a transformation of a debate format into *constructive controversy*, described as “similar to debate but distinguished from it by the fact that after debating both sides of a position, the group of students work together to find and write about a solution that is acceptable to all the participants” (2011, 16). If students can re-fashion discursive events according to their own preferences, they also tend to find them more meaningful and be more motivated to engage in them.

Akerman and Neale conclude that regular debate and debate-related activities will improve students' argumentative discourse – an important part of CT and higher levels of communicative competence – at the same time recommending further investigation, “particularly around the experience of students for whom English is a second language” (2011, 25).

Two years after their report, The English-Speaking Union published the article “Research shows that persuasive speech aids pupils' development” (2013), in which they presented new evidence about the relationship between dialogic/debate formats and CT, i.e., between the development of argumentative discursive practices and public speaking on the one hand and general cognitive development and improved academic results on the other. Subjects in the three-year scientific study comprised over a thousand students and their teachers, and conclusions based upon this research provide further proof that oral interactional competence is crucial in achieving educational goals at all levels.

In standardised tests children who were part of the programme (mostly eleven-year-olds) achieved results that exceeded those of other children by 6% to 19%. Children whose native language was not English were among those who benefited most: “Whilst the improvements were widely spread, they were particularly high for children of lesser ability, pupils for whom English is a second or additional language, and boys.” Implicitly, the study confirmed that – just like the development of CT – interactional competence cannot be attained without appropriate instruction, systematic practice and feedback. In other words, the study suggests that the success of a communicative event seems to depend upon the volume of communicative experience; *drill* seems to be crucial; *uses promptos facit*.

Another piece of evidence comes from Slovenia: in autumn 2013 the Slovenian debate organization *Za in proti, Zavod za kulturo dialoga* (Pro et Contra, Institute for Culture in Dialogue), published the results of an international research project called *Untangling Debate*, with Anja Šerc as project coordinator and editor. The four countries involved in the research were Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Romania. Their aim was to either prove or disprove the positive impact of debate methodology on CT skills, on the processes of socialisation in active citizenship, and on empathy and understanding the other (Šerc 2013, 5–6). The students involved in the research were between 14 and 18 years of age; 50% of the participants had been involved in debate for more than a year (debaters) and the other 50% not involved in debate at all (non-debaters).¹² (The total number of respondents from Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia was 805.) The impact of debate on their CT skills was measured by the Watson-Glaser test, the conclusion of which was that “debate has a significant contribution on the development of critical thinking skills, but not all of them can be directly related to the definition of critical thinking as measured by the Watson-Glaser test” (2013, 21). So apart from the measured CT skills, active participation in debate also develops CT skills such as, for instance, “ability to recognize and name argumentation tricks” (2013, 21) and “analytical skills, synthesis, broader perspective about a problem” (2013, 22).¹³

Yet another contribution comes from the University of La Verne in California: in his doctoral thesis “Research practices of successful world universities debate championship debaters”

¹² The two groups were formed as it was established that statistically significant differences between them occurred only after at least one year of systematic practice.

¹³ Equally important, the results also prompted a discussion on, and an understanding of, the aspects of CT that debate does *not* teach – and on how this could be improved.

(2013), John F. Patrick contends that even the best debaters – world championship tournament winners (that he puts in the category of the so-called “independent self-directed learners”) – only make progress if they talk to and debate with others. Analysis of the collected evidence led Patrick to conclude that independent study of the relevant sources, with no exchange of opinions and critical reflection in interaction with others, yields neither in-depth understanding nor appropriate verbalisation of the study material. In other words, if there is no or too little interaction, an individual’s CT and communicative potential simply do not develop.

Evidence on the correlation between debate on the one hand and CT and argumentative interaction on the other provides the necessary rationale to legitimately propose debate as an effective methodology for developing CT skills and communicative competence in oral interactions, especially on B2+ levels. Nevertheless, debate as a teaching method has its critics too.

4 CONTRA Debate: Scruples and Reservations

The following are two of the most common objections to debate found in relevant literature:

- debate is potentially dangerous because it offers a training ground for manipulators and demagogues (e.g., Šerc 2013);
- by requiring student-debaters to defend one and reject the other side of a debate motion, debate format strengthens a dichotomous, oppositional logic, which is, in and of itself, reductionist, simplifying complex problems and balanced dilemmas (e.g., Kennedy 2007).

Both of these are, of course, genuine concerns that one needs to examine.

A legitimate response to the above criticism relies exactly on this implicit extremism. In fact, the unreal (even irrational) nature of the oppositional frame forces debaters to find some common centre of gravity, a common denominator – or else risk speaking incoherently, or even at crossed purposes. In other words, the format itself requires defining “the grey area” allowing for the kind of confrontation that enables a coherent dialogue to take place at all. Unless debaters can adapt to the logic of the arguments of their opponents, they reduce credibility of their own. To put it differently, the *pro and contra* format does not necessarily degrade into a black-and-white presentation of controversial issues. Instead, it can serve as an effective tool in explaining multifaceted social problems. In fact, one could argue that it is impossible to *go beyond* dualism without first going *through* dualism. Or, as we are reminded by Young, “... since Hegel, dichotomies have been accepted ways of broaching complex topics” (Young 2009, 10).

The confrontational frame within which debate takes place has yet another distinctly positive effect: it equips debate participants with the skills and knowledge that enable them to cope with conflicts that take place outside the classroom. Kennedy quotes a part of the article “The Art of Debating” (1998) in which “the authors assert that ‘most people do not know how to argue logically while staying calm’ and that in-class debates can enable students to learn to argue constructively” (Kennedy 2007, 186).

A most sensible critique of debate comes from the ranks of those who – while warning against the pitfalls of debate – use the language of debate itself. They speak of self-compliance, of dangerous enthusiasm about *debating skills* themselves, about the rhetoric that makes it unclear what the speaker actually proposes, or makes the brilliant yet superficial discourse compensate

for a lack of understanding and critical analysis. What happens in such a case has little to do with empowerment and a lot to do with a specific adjustment to the *status quo*. In the editorial to an issue of the journal *Vzgoja in izobraževanje*, Zora Rutar Ilc alerts against such an absence of systemic criticism in debate, which goes hand in hand with creating an elite among the well-adjusted. Her warning addresses both the question of defining CT (are we talking about skills or a notional apparatus capable of systemic criticism?) and the question of developing a culture of negotiating, objecting, defending, etc. These are, indeed, the questions we need to repeatedly confront ourselves with, and debate(-related) formats can be appropriate genres in which to address them.

Apart from the above-mentioned oppositional frame, there are other “safety fuses” deterring debaters from sliding into superficiality and/or demagoguery inherent in debate. One such element is the ability of critical listening not only in debaters but also in the audience/listeners (Snider and Schnurer 2006, 9; Kennedy 2007, 184). Critical reflection of a discursive event is, as stated by Hall (1999), an integral part of the development of interactional competence. A number of authors contend that critical reflection is to be followed by a phase of active participation in a discursive practice if it is to develop a *habit* of CT, attentive listening and argumentative speaking; it is only after the new habit overcomes our instinctive tendency to emotionally charged thinking and acting that we are protected against our own nature (e.g., Lakoff 2006; Van Gelder 2005; Kennedy 2007). In other words, the best remedy against the potential demagoguery of debaters is – more debate. Or in the words of Fishbone (2008, 261): “Once this culture permeates society, it will be the strongest bulwark against demagoguery because people talking among themselves will erode the simplicity of the demagogue’s solution.” Similarly, the deeper our understanding of different topics, the better we are equipped to recognise weak arguments, logical fallacies and/or demagoguery. *Debating* a particular topic requires a more in-depth understanding of that topic than *presenting* or *lecturing* (Kennedy 2007, 184). Nevertheless, the potential positive sides of debate are bigger than its possible negative effects only if and inasmuch as we are aware of them and capable of bringing them to the attention (and understanding) of students.

5 Conclusion

In *The Skills of Argument* (1991), Deanna Kuhn, a professor of psychology and pedagogy at Columbia University, argued that people are generally bad at critical thinking and argumentative speech – a conclusion that is compatible with what cognitive science has to say on the subject (e.g., Van Gelder 2005; Lakoff 2006; Dennett 2013) as well as with the findings of researchers of CT (e.g., Hassan and Madhum 2006; Hatcher 2006; Abrami et al. 2008). They all contend that for measurable gains in CT and interactional competence to take place students need to *regularly participate* in relevant discourse activities while being given *systematic guidance and feedback*.

Although debate as a competitive genre has been present in Slovenia for over two decades, and although the need for it has been acknowledged by many teachers, it has not, in effect, made its way into our EFL classrooms. As demonstrated in the empirical section of my PhD research (Želježič 2016), the most common reasons teachers state for not introducing it in their EFL classes are: they feel inadequately trained to teach debate (lack of knowledge), they don’t know how to test the skills developed in debate (lack of assessment criteria), and they feel the syllabus and matura exam guidelines do not really require them to do so.¹⁴ Given that in our EFL

¹⁴ These reasons are more fully explained in the empirical part of my PhD research (2016).

classrooms there are no regular didactic practices aimed at the development of interactional and CT competence, the third of the above reasons is indicative of a significant mis-match between the B2-and-above descriptors of L2 speakers in CEFR and The National EFL Syllabus on the one hand, and the deeply entrenched educational practices on the other.

If we are serious about developing communicative competence in dialogic discourse on controversial topics in the context of the EFL classroom, then it is necessary to cultivate some form of argumentative interaction, and to do so repeatedly and systematically. While it is a fact that students have never been better at oral production in EFL, it is also true that within our educational system their oral *production* abilities will typically be taken for oral *interaction* abilities – which betrays a common misconception in both understanding and implementing the so-called *communicative approach* in our educational practices. In the current situation, a few recommendations to FL teachers as to how to overcome this issue cannot even begin to address it appropriately. On the contrary, a superficial approach promoting debate in the classroom can, in effect, do more harm than good (cf. Šerc 2013, 31). This is why this article resists such a temptation. Instead, it sheds light on the need for a slight but distinctive shift in awareness about teaching and learning oral communication skills, paving the way for a more thorough treatment of the subject in the, hopefully, near future.

In this spirit, let us attempt to articulate perhaps the main reason why this paper privileges debate over other forms of interactive discourse. Debate is contained within the rules that are more apparent than those governing interaction in the workplace, at school, on the street or within a family. In certain respects, these rules are also more demanding. Interaction in the workplace, at school etc. is, like debate, part of the process of learning and adapting to institutional norms and their respective ideological frameworks. Yet, unlike these forms of interaction, debate provides a context for questioning these adaptations and ideological frameworks, and negotiating their alternatives. As a matter of fact, not only does debate make such a questioning possible, it actually demands it, shedding light on complex issues requiring preliminary research and critical thinking skills. This is why different formats of debate are the type of communicative events that can be truly emancipatory (see Llano 2010; Shuster 2005; Snider and Schnurrer 2006; Snider 2007; Zompetti 2011). And in the hands of trained and confident teachers debate formats can provide a meaningful challenge to students, prompting them to develop the very understanding, knowledge and skills the CEFR and The National EFL Syllabus value and “prescribe” as their principal educational goals.

References

- Abrami, Philip C., Robert M. Bernard, Evgueni Borokhovski, Anne Wade, Michael A. Surker, Rana Tamim, and Dai Zhang. 2008. “Instructional Interventions Affecting Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions: A Stage 1 Meta-Analysis.” *Review of Educational Research* 78 (4): 1102–34. doi:10.3102/0034654308326084.
- Akerman, Rodi, and Ian Neale. 2011. *Debating the Evidence: An International Review of Current Situation and Perceptions*. The English Speaking Union. http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/ESU_Report_debatingtheevidence_FINAL.pdf.
- Aljaafreh, Ali, and Lantolf, James P. 1994. “Negative Feedback as Regulation and Second Language Learning in the Zone of Proximal Development.” *The Modern Language Journal* 78 (4): 465–84. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02064.
- Bennett, Deborah J. 2004. *Logic Made Easy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

- Branham, Robert James. 1991. *Debate and Critical Analysis: The Harmony of Conflict*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Chun, Dorothy M. 2011. "Computer-Assisted Language Classes." In *Handbook of Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Vol. II., edited by Eli Hinkel, 663–80. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cook, Vivian. 2011. "Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Europe." In *Handbook of Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Vol. II., edited by Eli Hinkel, 140–54. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dennett, Daniel. "Tools to Transform Our Thinking." Public lecture in Royal Geographic Society, May 22, 2013. Accessed January 20, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJsD-3jtXz0>.
- El Hassan, Karma, and Ghida Mahdum. 2007. "Validating the Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal." *Higher Education* 54 (3): 361–83. doi:10.1007/s10734-006-9002-z.
- ESOL Examinations. 2011. *Using the CEFR: Principles of Good Practice*. University of Cambridge. Accessed April 7, 2017. <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/126011-using-cefr-principles-of-good-practice.pdf>.
- Firth, Alan, and Johannes Wagner. 2007 [1997]. "On Discourse, Communication, and (Some) Fundamental Concepts in SLA Research." *The Modern Language Journal* 91 (Focus Issue): 757–72. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.1997.tb05480.
- Glušič Lenarčič, Mateja. 2007. "Revising Vocabulary and Teaching Essay Writing Through Debate: Why Use Debate Techniques for Teaching a Foreign Language?" *Šolsko polje* XVIII (1–2): 147–58.
- Greenland, Sam. 2009. "Assessing Student Performance in Classroom Debates: A Valid and Unbiased Measurement." PhD diss., University of Sidney. http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/greenland_HKStudy_2010.pdf.
- Hall, Joan K. 1999. "Prosaics of Interaction." In *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, edited by Eli Hinkel, 137–51. Cambridge University Press.
- Hatcher, Donald L. 2006. "Stand-Alone Versus Integrated Critical Thinking Courses." *The Journal of General Education* 55 (3–4): 247–72. doi:10.1353/jge.20070002.
- Ilc, Gašper, Alenka Ketiš, Aleksandra Komadina, Ana Likar, Simona Meglič, and Irena Zorko Novak. 2012. *Predmetni izpitni katalog za splošno maturo – angleščina*. Ljubljana: Državni izpitni center.
- Johnson, Marycia. 2001. *The Art of Non-Conversation*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- John-Steiner, Vera, and Holbrook Mahn. 1996. "Sociocultural Approaches to Learning and Development: A Vygotskian Framework." *Educational Psychologist* 31 (3–4): 191–206. doi:10.1080/00461520.1996.9653266.
- Kasper, Gabriele, and Keneth R. Rose. 2002. *Pragmatic Development in a Second Language*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- Kennedy, Ruth. 2007. "In-Class Debates. Fertile Ground for Active Learning and the Cultivation of Critical Thinking and Oral Communication Skills." *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* 19 (2): 183–90. doi:10.1.1.583.7966.
- Kuhn, Deanna. 1991. *The Skills of Argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, George. 2006. *Whose Freedom?* New York: Picador.
- Lantolf, James P. 2006. "Sociocultural Theory and the L2: State of the Art." *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 28 (1): 67–109. doi:10.1017/S0272263106060037.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 2007. "Reflecting on the Cognitive-Social Debate in Second Language Acquisition." *The Modern Language Journal* 91 (1): 773–87. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00668.

- Llano, Steve. 2010. "Global Debate. News about Debating on Planet Earth. Steve Llano Responds to Criticisms of Debate." <http://globaldebateblog.blogspot.si/2010/02/steve-llano-responds-to-criticisms-of.html>.
- Luoma, Sari. 2004. *Assessing Speaking*. Cambridge University Press.
- Patrick, John. 2013. "Research Practices of Successful World Universities Debate Championship Debaters." PhD diss., University of La Verne. <http://gradworks.proquest.com/35/73/3573688.html>.
- Rutar Ilc, Zora. 2006. "Kritično mišljenje – resnični izziv." *Vzgoja in izobraževanje* XXXVII (6): 3.
- Shuster, Kate. 2005. *Speak Out! Debate and Public Speaking in the Middle Grades*. New York: International Debate Education Association.
- Snider, Alfred, and Maxwell Schnurer. 2006. *Many Sides: Debate across the Curriculum*. New York – Amsterdam – Brussels: International Debate Education Association.
- Snider, Alfred. 2007. *Frontiers of the 21st Century: Argumentation, Debate and the Struggle for a Civil Society*. New York: International Debate Association.
- Skela, Janez. 2011. "Opredelitev tujejezikovne sporazumevalne zmožnosti v Skupnem evropskem jezikovnem okviru." *Sodobna pedagogika* 2: 114–33.
- Šerc, Anja. 2013. *Untangling Debate*. Ljubljana: Za in proti, Zavod za kulturo dialoga.
- The English-Speaking Union. 2013. "Research Shows that Persuasive Speech Aids Pupils' Development." <http://www.bedfordshire-news.co.uk/university-bedfordshire-study-finds-kids-stronger-public-speaking-skills-better-tests/story-21723258-detail/story.html>.
- Tollefson, James W. 2011. "Ideology in Second Language Education." In *Handbook of Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Vol. II., edited by Eli Hinkel, 801–16. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Van Gelder, Tim. 2005. "Teaching Critical Thinking: Some Lessons from Cognitive Science." *College Teaching* 53 (1): 41–46.
- Vygotsky, Lev Semyonovich. 1978. *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Young, Richard F. 2009. *Discursive Practice in Language Learning and Teaching*. University of Wisconsin-Madison: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo. 2008. *Učni načrt. Angleščina. Gimnazija*. Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport.
- Zompetti, Joseph P. 2011. *Reasoned Rationales*. New York, London and Amsterdam: IDEA.
- Želježič, Mirjana. 2016. "Poučevanje in ocenjevanje govorne zmožnosti v angleščini kot tujem jeziku v luči ideološke funkcije izobraževalnega sistema." PhD diss., University of Ljubljana.

A Longitudinal Study of the Acquisition of Verbal Morphology in the EFL Classroom

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the order of the acquisition of grammatical morphemes in the interlanguage of Croatian pupils of English as a foreign language (EFL). The order of acquisition was determined for nine grammatical morphemes. Additionally, the selected morphemes were combined to form the four verb tenses so as to determine the order of their emergence in the pupils' verb-morphology repertoire. The study was conducted on a corpus of 36 transcribed recordings of parts of classroom interaction. The pupils' speech production was elicited by various task-based activities. The suppliance of nine grammatical morphemes was investigated by means of obligatory occasion analysis (Brown 1973) which examined their obligatory and correct use. The obtained results revealed progress only in the acquisition of the present tense copula *be*. The emergence of verb tenses was partly identified due to the insufficient suppliance of grammatical morphemes in the pupils' speech production.

Keywords: order of acquisition; grammatical morphemes; verb tenses; task-based activities; obligatory context

Longitudinalna raziskava usvajanja glagolskega oblikoslovja pri učenju angleščine kot tujega jezika

POVZETEK

V prispevku predstavljamo raziskavo, ki ugotavlja, v kakšnem vrstnem redu hrvaški učenci angleščine kot tujega jezika v vmesnem jeziku usvajajo devet slovničnih morfemov. Dodatno smo izbrane morfeme opazovali tudi pri tvorjenju štirih glagolskih časov, da bi ugotovili, v kakšnem vrstnem redu in obsegu se pojavljajo pri usvajanju glagolskega oblikoslovja. Za raziskavo smo uporabili 36 transkripcij zvočnih posnetkov delov razrednih interakcij. Govorne odzive učencev smo spodbudili s pomočjo na nalogah zasnovanih dejavnosti. Uporabo/pojavnost devetih slovničnih morfemov smo proučevali na osnovi obvezne situacijske analize (Brown 1973), s katero smo raziskali obvezno in pravilno rabo morfemov. Rezultati dokazujejo učenčev napredek samo pri usvajanju sedanjika veznega glagola *biti*. Zaradi pomanjkljive rabe glagolskih morfemov v govoru učencev je bilo tvorjenje glagolskih časov le delno dokazano.

Ključne besede: vrstni red usvajanja; slovnični morfemi; glagolski časi; na nalogah temelječe dejavnosti; obvezno sobesedilo

A Longitudinal Study of the Acquisition of Verbal Morphology in the EFL Classroom

1 Introduction

There has always been a certain amount of curiosity regarding how people acquire a second language (L2). Research in first language (L1) acquisition that sought to investigate the acquisition of grammatical morphemes provided the impetus for second language studies commonly referred to as *morpheme studies*. These studies were carried out to investigate whether there was a universal order of acquisition and whether it was identical to or different from that found in L1 acquisition. Based on the findings of grammatical morpheme research, Dulay and Burt (1980, 325) claimed that the discovery of a common acquisition sequence in an L2 was “surely one of the most exciting and significant outcomes of the last decade of second language research”. Although the acquisition of morphological features was a starting point for numerous morpheme studies, more recent studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) investigate the tense-aspect system and the emergence of verbal morphology. This paper attempts to provide new insights into the order of acquisition of both grammatical morphemes and verb tenses in EFL classroom settings in Croatia. The first part of the paper provides a theoretical framework for the study, which is followed by the results of the data analyses.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Morpheme Order Studies

Much of the early morpheme studies of the 1970s focused on the order of the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. These studies were both cross-sectional and longitudinal, although the former prevailed. The studies employed *obligatory occasion analysis* as a tool for investigating the accuracy with which learners of L2 English performed a number of grammatical morphemes.

It was Roger Brown (1973) who first developed this method and applied it in his longitudinal study of L1 acquisition. He examined the emergence of 14 morphemes in three children’s acquisition of English to see how many times per recording each morpheme occurred in *obligatory contexts*, i.e., occasions on which a native speaker is obliged to use a particular morpheme. When a morpheme was supplied in 90% or more of these obligatory contexts in three successive recordings, the child was regarded as having acquired that morpheme. Brown found a remarkable amount of invariance in the orders of acquisition among the three children.

Dulay and Burt (1973), adopting Brown’s procedure and a subset of his morphemes, attempted to find such an order for Spanish children learning English as an L2. Each obligatory context for a morpheme was scored on a three-point scale: a missing morpheme counted as zero (“*She’s dance.*”), a misformed morpheme as 0.5 (“*She’s dances.*”) and a correct morpheme as one point (“*She’s dancing.*”). Their results showed that three groups of children acquired eight morphemes in a common order despite differences in hours of exposure to the L2 and different language backgrounds. Expanding their research, Dulay and Burt (1974, 49) concluded that the L1 has no impact on the order of acquisition due to a “strikingly similar” order for both Spanish and Chinese children.

Their findings led to many other studies which replicated the basic design of their research while varying the conditions and changing the number of morphemes studied. Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974) found a common acquisition order for both Spanish and non-Spanish adults which differed from the L1 order. The acquisition order Hakuta (1974) obtained for a Japanese girl, however, did not match the orders obtained by Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974). Larsen-Freeman (1975) used different elicitation tasks which led her to conclude that the learners' L1s made little difference to the acquisition orders; nevertheless, some differences in the orders occurred in speaking and writing tasks. She also concluded that language instruction and the amount of exposure to English do not have much effect on morpheme orderings.

Although the popularity of morpheme studies declined in the 1980s, there have been a few recent studies which inquired into other aspects of acquisition, along with the acquisition of grammatical morphemes. Unlike the early morpheme studies, these studies analysed the influence of the learning environment (Makino 1980; Pica 1983), the impact of age (Pak 1987), the use of learning strategies (Billings 1999) or, for example, the influence of affective factors (Wang 2000).

Morpheme studies have been subject to considerable criticism. The identification of obligatory occasions seemed to be disputable due to the problem of counting repetitions which could be counted as either one obligatory occasion or two for a certain morpheme (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005). Furthermore, the research has been restricted to a small set of morphemes without paying attention to allomorphic variation. A more serious criticism was that the morphemes brought together disparate aspects of grammar such as features of the verb phrase (e.g., past regular, past irregular, progressive *-ing*, third person singular *-s*) and features of the noun phrase (e.g., plural *-s*, possessive *'s*, articles) (Cook 1993). An additional flaw of morpheme studies was found in the level of the accurate suppliance of grammatical morphemes, ranging from 60% to 80% or even 90%, depending on the researcher (Lakshmanan and Selinker 2001). Finally, it has also been claimed that the accurate suppliance of a morpheme in an obligatory context "does not necessarily mean the learner knows its function(s)" (Long and Sato 1984, 260). Contrary to what some critics have alleged, far too many studies have provided concrete evidence for commonalities in the acquisition orders of grammatical morphemes regardless of a learner's native language background, age, learning conditions, amount of exposure to English or type of elicitation task (Ortega 2009).

2.2 Studies of Tense-Aspect Acquisition

Although early morpheme studies reflected the interest of SLA in determining acquisition orders, the acquisition of morphological features in terms of the tense-aspect system has been intensively studied in more recent years through meaning-oriented and form-oriented approaches. The meaning-oriented approach was larger in scope since it also included pragmatic and lexical means of temporal expression. The form-oriented approach, which concentrated exclusively on verbal morphology, investigated acquisition sequences, the influence of the lexical aspect and the influence of discourse structure (Bardovi-Harlig 2000).

Form-oriented studies of the acquisition of verbal morphology differed in many ways from the earlier morpheme studies. First, they examined the tense-aspect system in its own right, thus avoiding the criticism of morpheme studies, which combined disparate morphological features. Second, they were rather more longitudinal than cross-sectional in design and third, acquisition was defined in terms of emergence rather than approximation to target-language accuracy (Ellis 2008).

Research of emergence orders in the acquisition of verbal morphology related to the expression of the past has been most widely investigated by Bardovi-Harlig (1997, 2000). According to Bardovi-Harlig (2000), four general principles in the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology have been established. First, the development of temporal expression is slow and gradual and second, form often precedes function. Third, irregular morphology precedes regular morphology and fourth, when acquiring compound verb tenses, a verb with a verbal suffix is acquired prior to an auxiliary verb.

Even though studies of the acquisition of tense-aspect morphology prevail, inquiry into learners' use of morphemes via obligatory occasion analysis still has much to offer SLA. The information it provides serves as a basis for testing the influence of different variables on the morpheme order such as, for instance, the number of morphemes, the design of the study, the methodology applied or the learners' L1. Therefore, this paper attempts to expand morpheme order studies by implementing a longitudinal approach to examine the order of the acquisition of grammatical morphemes and verb tenses in the interlanguage of Croatian L2 pupils of English.

3 Aims of the Study

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the suppliance of grammatical morphemes regarding their obligatory and correct use, and how is it distributed in the speech production of Croatian elementary school pupils over the three-year period of learning?

RQ2: What is the order of the acquisition of grammatical morphemes and verb tenses obtained by Croatian elementary school pupils in each year of learning? Are there any differences among acquisition orders over the three-year period of learning?

RQ3: Is there any improvement in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes and verb tenses over the three-year period of learning?

RQ4: Which of the two grammatical morphemes, past regular or past irregular, is acquired earlier?

RQ5: When acquiring compound verb tenses, which of the two grammatical morphemes, auxiliary verb or verbal suffix, is acquired earlier?

4 Methodology

4.1 Participants

The participants were 20 Croatian-speaking pupils from an elementary school in the Split-Dalmatia County. The same group of pupils took part in this study over the three-year period of data collection, i.e., in Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8. Sixth grade elementary school pupils participating in the first year of research (2008/2009) were aged 11–12, seventh grade elementary school pupils in the second year of research (2009/2010) were aged 12–13, while eighth grade elementary school pupils in the third year of research (2010/2011) were aged 13–14. All the pupils started their EFL studies in the first grade, since English is a compulsory school

subject within the Croatian education context.¹ According to the national curriculum (Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia 2011), eighth grade pupils completing elementary education are expected to reach the CEFR A2 level.²

Since the author was the pupils' former English language teacher and therefore knew both the pupils and their parents rather well, the parents most willingly gave their oral consent for this research. Furthermore, the school headmaster, the parents and the children were all informed about the aims of the research and the data collection procedure.³

4.2 Data Collection

The data collection included 36 tape-recorded samples (15 in both the first and the second years of research and 6 in the third year of research) of parts of the EFL classroom interaction. The average length of each recording was 15 minutes. The recordings were made by the teacher, while the author took notes about the pupils' verbal behaviour during the recording sessions. As a result, accurate recordings without data loss were obtained. All of the data were transcribed, and in addition, checked against the tape recordings. The transcription of the audio samples was conducted by the author, who designed her own notation symbols following suggestions from transcription literature (DuBois 1991; Edwards 2001; Edwards and Lampert 1993). Data were collected through various task-based activities (Harmer 1999; Ur 1999; Thornbury 2005) designed to elicit the use of grammatical morphemes.

4.2.1 Selection and Coding

The grammatical morphemes selected in this study were those forming the following verb tenses: *simple present*, *present continuous*, *simple past* and *present perfect*. The *simple present* comprised the third person singular (*-s*), the *present continuous* comprised the auxiliary verb *be* and the progressive (*-ing*), the *simple past* comprised both the past regular and the past irregular and finally, the *present perfect* comprised the auxiliary verb *have* and the past participle (*-en*).

Apart from the seven chosen morphemes, two more were selected: the present tense copula *be* (*am*, *are*, *is*) and the past tense copula *be* (*was*, *were*). These morphemes were added since the examples found in the corpus, as in the question-answer exchange *Are there a TV in your bedroom? No, it isn't* or as in *He was be at home*, drew attention to the difficulties in the pupils' speech production caused by their use.

The nine morphemes included in this study were those that had been analysed in previous morpheme order studies belonging to both the early and more recent period in SLA. The only exception was made regarding the acquisition of morphemes constituting the *present perfect* since their acquisition was partly investigated in some of the recent studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig 1997, 2000).

¹ For more information regarding the Croatian education system, visit the website of the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sport, <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2501>, accessed 13 April 2017.

² A2 level global descriptor: "Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need." (Council of Europe 2001, 24).

³ According to the *Ethical Code for Research with Children* (Ajduković and Kolesarić 2003), either oral or written parental consent is required for children under the age of 14.

The use of grammatical morphemes is illustrated by the following examples from the corpus:

- third person singular (-s)
He gets up er seven o'clock in the morning. (Grade 6)
- auxiliary verb *be*
*What **is** the teacher doing now? (Grade 6)*
- progressive (-ing)
My grandmother is sleeping. (Grade 6)
- past regular (-ed)
*I think ... I er ... **ruined** her clothes or something like that. (Grade 7)*
- past irregular
*Then ... he **went** to ... hospital. (Grade 7)*
- auxiliary verb *have*
*I **have** never been in Dubrovnik. (Grade 8)*
- past participle (-en)
*I want to go somewhere exotic like China ... Peru. I have never **been** nowhere like that. (Grade 8)*
- present tense copula *be* (*am, are, is*)
*My friends er **are** never er ... more important than my family because my family in life **is** on er first ... place. (Grade 7)*
- past tense copula *be* (*was, were*)
*Because it **was** really great and er it ... **was** funny and we **were** all together. (Grade 8)*

The grammatical morphemes in this study were examined in obligatory contexts (Brown 1973). However, they were not scored according to the three-point scale scoring procedure (Dulay and Burt 1973). The idea of modifying the research method derived from a suggestion by Larsen-Freeman (1975) and Bardovi-Harlig (2000), who encouraged changes in the research design to verify the validity of the previous morpheme order findings.

The use of morphemes was examined regarding their obligatory and correct suppliance. When a morpheme was supplied in a context which required the presence of a particular morpheme, its use was considered obligatory. When a morpheme was supplied in its correct grammatical form and context, its use was considered correct. The suppliance of obligatory and correct use was coded for each of the nine morphemes. The obligatory use of a particular morpheme was coded by counting all the obligatory occasions for that morpheme. The correct use was coded similarly, i.e., by counting all the correct instances for the same morpheme. If a pupil said *After school we went in a park and then...we buy er ice-cream*, the obligatory occasions for the use of the irregular past were created twice (*went, bought*), whilst the correct use of the desired morpheme was produced only once (*went*). Therefore, the suppliance of the irregular past was coded as two obligatory uses and one correct use.

Coding of grammatical morphemes according to their obligatory and correct use was performed in every transcribed tape recording for each pupil across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8. The data were coded in a slightly modified version of the coding table originally developed by Larsen-Freeman (1975).

4.3 Data Analysis

Having coded the morphemes, the data were transferred to MS-Excel tables for further analysis. Statistical analyses of the obtained data were conducted using the *SPSS* programme package for *Windows 17.0*. This section includes data analysis procedures for each of the research questions.

The suppliance of grammatical morphemes (RQ1) was analysed with regard to the total number of their obligatory and correct uses. The total number of obligatory uses was identified as the sum of all coded obligatory occasions for a particular morpheme and the total number of correct uses as the sum of all coded correct instances for the same morpheme. The total number of obligatory and correct uses was determined for each of the nine morphemes in all the transcribed tape recordings across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8.

The order of the acquisition of grammatical morphemes (the first part of RQ2) was determined by the *group score method* (Dulay and Burt 1974). The group score for a particular morpheme was obtained by computing a ratio of the total number of its correct uses to the total number of its obligatory uses. The resulting quotient was then multiplied by 100 and expressed as a percentage. Once group scores were computed for each of the nine morphemes, the morphemes were then ranked according to *decreasing group score* to yield a sequence of acquisition. The advantage of this method, as stated by Dulay and Burt (1974), is that even pupils who produce just one obligatory occasion for a morpheme can be included in the group score. The potential danger of this method is that the contribution of only one obligatory occasion does not necessarily indicate that the pupil has actually acquired the specific morpheme. Thus, the *group means method* (Dulay and Burt 1974) was applied in order to minimize that danger. According to this method, all pupils with fewer than three obligatory occasions for the morpheme in question were eliminated from the sample. Mean functor scores were computed for each of the nine morphemes and the acquisition sequence was obtained by ranking the morphemes according to *decreasing mean functor score*.

The order of the acquisition of verb tenses (the first part of RQ2) was determined by grouping the data on obligatory and correct uses of the nine morphemes around the four tenses. The *simple present* included instances of obligatory and correct uses for the third person singular (*-s*) and the present tense copula *be*, while the *present continuous* implicated the suppliance of the auxiliary verb *be* and the progressive (*-ing*). The *simple past* comprised the suppliance of the past regular, the past irregular and the past tense copula *be* and, finally, the *present perfect* incorporated the use of the auxiliary verb *have* and the past participle (*-en*). The group score method (Dulay and Burt 1974) was the only method used in establishing the order of the acquisition of verb tenses since it was the primary method of speech analysis in this study. The acquisition sequence was obtained by ranking the verb tenses in decreasing order of accuracy.

The acquisition sequences of the grammatical morphemes obtained by both methods across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 were compared using Spearman rank order correlations to verify the stability and reliability of the obtained data. The same type of correlation was used to compare the sequences of morphemes and verb tenses obtained only by the group score method across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 to determine if there were any differences among acquisition sequences during the three years of learning (the second part of RQ2).

Improvement in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes and verb tenses (RQ3) was analysed with regard to the significance of differences in their acquisition across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8. To determine the significance of the differences over the three-year period of learning,

an average accuracy score was calculated. The average accuracy score could be calculated only for the pupils who exhibited instances of correct use for the morphemes and verb tenses in their speech production. For each of the nine morphemes, the average accuracy score was computed as a ratio of the portion of correct uses for a particular morpheme supplied to the portion of obligatory uses for that morpheme. The same procedure was used to determine the average accuracy score for each of the four verb tenses. The average accuracy score for both morphemes and verb tenses was established by Friedman's nonparametric test. In situations where the average accuracy score for the morphemes and verb tenses across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 could not be calculated, Wilcoxon's nonparametric test was used for Grade 6 and Grade 7.

To determine which of the two morphemes, past regular or past irregular, Croatian elementary school pupils acquire earlier (RQ4), the data on the suppliance of their correct use along with the orders of their acquisition based on the group score method were analysed. When analysing which of the morphemes constituting the *present continuous* and the *present perfect*, i.e., the auxiliary verb or verbal suffix, Croatian elementary school pupils acquire first (RQ5), the data regarding the suppliance of their correct use and their acquisition orders based on the group score method were studied.

5 Results

The following sections present the research results. The obtained results are displayed according to the research questions.

5.1 Results on the Suppliance and the Distribution of Grammatical Morphemes regarding Their Obligatory and Correct Uses

This subsection reveals the findings addressing RQ1. The suppliance of grammatical morphemes along with their distribution in obligatory and correct uses was examined across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8.

TABLE 1. Overall suppliance of grammatical morphemes across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8.

Grade	Suppliance of grammatical morphemes		TOTAL
	Obligatory use (%)	Correct use (%)	
6	1495 (59%)	1060 (41%)	2555 (100%)
7	1800 (57%)	1355 (43%)	3155 (100%)
8	455 (58%)	325 (42%)	780 (100%)

The results in Table 1 show that obligatory and correct uses of the morphemes were almost equally supplied by the same group of pupils during the three years of learning. Higher suppliance in the obligatory use of the morphemes was provided by Grade 6 pupils when compared to Grade 7 and Grade 8 pupils. Grade 6 pupils showed 2% more suppliance in obligatory use than Grade 7 pupils and 1% more suppliance than Grade 8 pupils. However, the correct use of the morphemes

by Grade 7 pupils was supplied 2% more in comparison to Grade 6 pupils and 1% more in comparison to Grade 8 pupils. Despite the differences in obligatory use across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8, it can be claimed that task-based activities promote speech production, as the use of grammatical morphemes in obligatory contexts reached approximately 60%. These activities, according to Ur (1999), foster target language production among the majority of pupils by being highly motivating and enjoyable.

TABLE 2. Distribution of obligatory and correct suppliance of grammatical morphemes across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8.

Grammatical morpheme	Grade					
	6		7		8	
	obligatory use (%)	correct use (%)	obligatory use (%)	correct use (%)	obligatory use (%)	correct use (%)
–s	307 (21%)	155 (15%)	139 (8%)	65 (5%)	27 (6%)	10 (3%)
auxiliary verb <i>be</i>	124 (8%)	88 (8%)	121 (7%)	97 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
–ing	124 (8%)	124 (10%)	121 (7%)	121 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
past regular (–ed)	128 (9%)	71 (7%)	156 (9%)	70 (5%)	55 (12%)	27 (8%)
past irregular	288 (19%)	165 (16%)	426 (24%)	258 (19%)	167 (37%)	103 (32%)
auxiliary verb <i>have</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
–en	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	22 (1%)	7 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>be</i> (<i>am, are, is</i>)	347 (23%)	331 (31%)	638 (35%)	627 (46%)	90 (20%)	90 (28%)
<i>be</i> (<i>was, were</i>)	177 (12%)	148 (14%)	177 (10%)	129 (10%)	116 (25%)	95 (29%)

Although Table 2 presents the results on the distribution of obligatory and correct suppliance of morphemes across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 (RQ1), the focus is entirely on the distribution of their correct suppliance. This is due to the inevitable influence of numerous factors such as the type, presence or duration of a particular communitive activity, and also the number of pupils included in the speech production causing variability in the obligatory use of grammatical morphemes under study, making it more difficult to analyse. The influence of these factors will be discussed later.

From Table 2 it is apparent that the two most frequently supplied morphemes with regard to their correct use across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 are the present tense copula *be* and the past irregular. The copula *be* (*am, are, is*) accounted for 31% of correct suppliance in Grade 6, which, quite expectedly, rose to 46% the following year (Grade 7) and decreased by 18% in the last year of learning (Grade 8). Unlike all other morphemes, the past irregular is the only morpheme which underwent an increase in the suppliance of its correct use over the three-year period of learning. Grade 7 pupils displayed an increase of 3% in comparison to Grade 6 pupils (16% in Grade 6 and 19% in Grade 7). A much higher increase in the correct suppliance of the past irregular appeared among Grade 8 pupils (32%) in comparison to Grade 6 and Grade 7 pupils.

The correct use of the past tense copula *be* and the past regular showed a similar pattern of suppliance. In other words, the suppliance of these morphemes falls in Grade 7 and then rises again in Grade 8. Surprisingly, Grade 6 pupils most frequently supplied the correct use of the third person singular (*-s*) over the three-year period of learning. A sharp decrease in the suppliance of the same morpheme was demonstrated by both Grade 7 and Grade 8 pupils. In Grade 7, the correct suppliance of this morpheme falls to 5%, with a dramatic decline to just 3% in Grade 8.

The correct use of the morphemes comprising compound verb tenses (the *present continuous* and the *present perfect*) was only partially, if at all, supplied during the three years of learning. Although the suppliance of both morphemes constituting the *present continuous* slightly decreased in Grade 7, their use was entirely excluded from speech production in Grade 8. Pupils across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 showed no suppliance of the morphemes forming the *present perfect*. The only exception was the correct use of the past participle which was 1% in Grade 7. The absence of the two morphemes constituting this tense is not surprising since the *present perfect* is not introduced to pupils in Grade 6. The exception in the use of the past participle could be accounted for by incorrect coding since the past participle and the past irregular, in most cases, have the same form.

Having examined the distribution of grammatical morphemes across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8, it remains for us to address whether the more correct suppliance in the use of morphemes is a prerequisite for their earlier acquisition. To answer this, the order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes was analysed.

5.2 Results on the Acquisition Orders of Grammatical Morphemes and Verb Tenses

The first part of this subsection conveys the results addressing the first part of RQ2, thus initially exhibiting the acquisition orders of the grammatical morphemes followed by the acquisition orders of the verb tenses obtained in Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8. The second part of this subsection discloses the results related to the second part of RQ2.

It can be observed in Table 3 that the present tense copula *be* and the past tense copula *be* were the first acquired morphemes in Grade 6, thus showing the highest accuracy scores (95.4% for the present tense copula *be*, 83.6% for the past tense copula *be*). The progressive (*-ing*) was ranked in third position with an 82.3% accuracy score, while the auxiliary verb *be*, with an accuracy score of 71%, was in fourth position. Also, the progressive (*-ing*) was higher in rank when compared to the third person singular (*-s*), which was the last morpheme acquired with an accuracy score of 50.5%. It seems that the past irregular was acquired earlier than the

TABLE 3. Order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes in Grade 6.

Method / Rank Grammatical morpheme	Group means method (%)	Rank	Group score method (%)	Rank
-s	45.3	7	50.5	7
auxiliary verb <i>be</i>	63.2	4	71.0	4
-ing	79.5	3	82.3	3
past regular (-ed)	58.4	5	55.5	6
past irregular	55.7	6	57.3	5
auxiliary verb <i>have</i>				
past participle (-en)				
<i>be (am, are, is)</i>	91.6	1	95.4	1
<i>be (was, were)</i>	82.2	2	83.6	2

$r_{gs, gm} = 0.96; p < .05, p < .01$

past regular, although these morphemes displayed a relatively similar level of accuracy differing by only 1.8% (57.3% for the past irregular, 55.5% for the past regular). To conclude, the acquisition sequence by Grade 6 pupils shows the following order: present tense copula *be*, past tense copula *be*, progressive (-ing), auxiliary verb *be*, past irregular, past regular and third person singular (-s).

TABLE 4. Order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes in Grade 7.

Method / Rank Grammatical morpheme	Group means method (%)	Rank	Group score method (%)	Rank
-s	47.4	6	46.8	6
auxiliary verb <i>be</i>	73.1	3	80.2	3
-ing	81.1	2	84.3	2
past regular (-ed)	41.2	7	44.9	7
past irregular	54.9	5	60.6	5
auxiliary verb <i>have</i>				
past participle (-en)			31.8	8
<i>be (am, are, is)</i>	97.8	1	98.3	1
<i>be (was, were)</i>	67.1	4	72.9	4

$r_{gs, gm} = 1; p < .05, p < .01$

As the results in Table 4 illustrate, the highest accuracy score in Grade 7 was attained for the present tense copula *be* (98.3%), thus ranking this morpheme first. The progressive (*-ing*) was placed second since it was used accurately 84.3% of the time. This morpheme was acquired earlier than the auxiliary verb *be*, which generated a slightly lower accuracy score, differing from the progressive by only 4.1%. Observing the table above, it can be noticed that the past tense copula *be* is fourth (72.9%), whereas the past irregular is fifth in rank (60.6%). Furthermore, the past irregular was acquired earlier (in fifth position) than the past regular (in the seventh position). The past participle (*-en*) was ranked in the last position with only a 31.8% accuracy score. Finally, the resulting sequence for Grade 7 pupils is: present tense copula *be*, progressive (*-ing*), auxiliary verb *be*, past tense copula *be*, past irregular, third person singular (*-s*), past regular and past participle (*-en*).

TABLE 5. Order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes in Grade 8.

Grammatical Morpheme	Method / Rank	Group means method (%)	Rank	Group score method (%)	Rank
<i>-s</i>				37.0	5
auxiliary verb <i>be</i>					
<i>-ing</i>					
past regular (<i>-ed</i>)		47.0	4	49.1	4
past irregular		59.4	3	61.7	3
auxiliary verb <i>have</i>					
past participle (<i>-en</i>)					
<i>be (am, are, is)</i>		100.0	1	100.0	1
<i>be (was, were)</i>		83.2	2	81.9	2

$r_{gs, gm} = 1$; $p < .05$, $p < .01$

The findings presented in Table 5 only partly reveal the rank order of grammatical morphemes in Grade 8, due to their insufficient suppliance. As can be noted, the highest accuracy scores were obtained for two morphemes, the present tense copula *be* (100%) and the past tense copula *be* (81.9%), giving these morphemes the first and second position in the rank order. The rank order for the past regular and the past irregular in Grade 8 seems to follow the same pattern of acquisition as in Grade 6 and Grade 7. Specifically, it appears that the acquisition of the past irregular precedes the acquisition of the past regular, since Grade 8 pupils achieved a higher accuracy score for the past irregular (61.7%) than the accuracy score achieved for the past regular (49.1%). The lowest level of accuracy was found for the third person singular (*-s*) (37%). In sum, the sequence of acquisition by Grade 8 pupils is as follows: present tense copula *be*, past tense copula *be*, past irregular, past regular and third person singular (*-s*).

As in the case of morphemes, the acquisition sequences of verb tenses were observed in each year of learning (Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8). The results are presented here.

TABLE 6. Order of acquisition of verb tenses in Grade 6.

Tense \ Method / Rank	Group score method (%)	Rank
<i>Simple present</i>	74.3	2
<i>Present continuous</i>	76.6	1
<i>Simple past</i>	64.8	3
<i>Present perfect</i>		

The data in Table 6 indicate that the *present continuous* is the first acquired tense due to the highest percentage of its accuracy score (76.6%). The *simple present* was positioned second with a slightly lower accuracy score (74.3%), whereas the *simple past* was the last acquired tense. Thus, the acquisition sequence identified by Grade 6 pupils shows the following order: *present continuous*, *simple present* and *simple past*.

TABLE 7. Order of acquisition of verb tenses in Grade 7.

Tense \ Method / Rank	Group score method (%)	Rank
<i>Simple present</i>	89.1	1
<i>Present continuous</i>	82.2	2
<i>Simple past</i>	60.2	3
<i>Present perfect</i>		

The ranking results displayed in Table 7 indicate a decrease from the 89.1% accuracy score attained for the *simple present* to the 82.2% accuracy score for the *present continuous*. The data also point to a much higher decrease in the level of accuracy obtained for the *simple past* (60.2%) in comparison to the *simple present* and the *present continuous*. Based on these findings, the acquisition sequence by Grade 7 pupils is the following: *simple present*, *present continuous* and *simple past*.

TABLE 8. Order of acquisition of verb tenses in Grade 8.

Tense \ Method / Rank	Group score method (%)	Rank
<i>Simple present</i>	85.5	1
<i>Present continuous</i>		
<i>Simple past</i>	66.6	2
<i>Present perfect</i>		

From Table 8 it can be seen that the ranking order in Grade 8 was identified in the acquisition of only two verb tenses: the *simple present* and the *simple past*. An accuracy score of 85.5% gave the first position to the *simple present*, while the *simple past* was ranked second due to a lower accuracy score of almost 20%. As presented in the above table, it can be stated that the *simple present* emerges before the *simple past* in the interlanguage of Grade 8 pupils.

Correlations between the acquisition sequences of grammatical morphemes obtained by both methods across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 are reported under each table. These results indicate remarkably high correlations reaching statistical significance at the .01 level ($r = 0.96$ in Grade 6; $r = 1$ in both Grade 7 and Grade 8). Furthermore, there was a significant correlation between acquisition sequences obtained by the group score method in Grade 6 and Grade 7 at the .05 level ($r = 0.79$) and in Grade 6 and Grade 8 at the .01 level ($r = 1$). Also, acquisition sequences in Grade 7 and Grade 8 correlated significantly at the .05 level ($r = 0.9$). According to these findings, it can be stated that Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 pupils exhibit relatively similar acquisition sequences of morphemes. Since acquisition sequences were detected for just two or three verb tenses, the Spearman rank correlation coefficients for the same group of pupils over the three years of learning could not be computed.

5.3 Results on Improvement in the Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes and Verb Tenses

This subsection presents the results resolving RQ3. The grammatical morphemes for which average accuracy scores could be calculated include the present tense copula *be*, the past tense copula *be*, the past regular and the past irregular. The differences in the acquisition of the present tense copula *be* across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 (Table 9) reached statistical significance at the .05 level ($\chi^2=8.667$; $df=2$; $p < .05$). Moreover, it is the only statistically significant difference despite the appearance of relatively similar average accuracy scores in Grade 6 (98.8%) and Grade 7 (97.8%), undergoing an increase to 100% in Grade 8. It appears that this seemingly non-existent variability in the accuracy score made these differences statistically significant.

TABLE 9. Average accuracy score/differences in acquisition for the copula *be* (*am, are, is*) across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8.

Grammatical morpheme	Grade	Number of pupils (N)	Average accuracy score (%)	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	$\chi^2=8.667$; $df=2$; $p < .05$
<i>be</i> (<i>am, are, is</i>)	6	10	98.8	1.98	95.50	100.00	
	7	10	97.8	2.52	93.30	100.00	
	8	10	100	.00	100.00	100.00	

Furthermore, it appears that there are no statistically significant differences in both the acquisition of the past tense copula *be* ($\chi^2=3.467$; $df=2$; $p > .05$) and the past regular ($\chi^2=2.741$; $df=2$; $p > .05$) across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8. As for the past irregular, the differences in its acquisition over the same period were not found to be significant.

TABLE 10. Average accuracy scores for *-s*, the auxiliary verb *be* and *-ing* for Grade 6 and Grade 7.

Grammatical morpheme	Grade	Number of pupils (N)	Average accuracy score (%)	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>-s</i>	6	17	45.3	24.92	.00	81.50
aux. verb <i>be</i>	6	18	63.2	36.22	.00	100.00
<i>-ing</i>	6	18	79.5	19.88	33.30	100.00
<i>-s</i>	7	12	39.5	31.57	.00	83.30
aux. verb <i>be</i>	7	13	73.1	23.67	25.00	100.00
<i>-ing</i>	7	13	81.1	24.09	25.00	100.00

Regarding Table 10, it can be noted that the use of *-s* leads to a decrease in the average accuracy score between Grade 6 (45.3%) and Grade 7 (39.5%). However, an increase in the average accuracy score for the auxiliary verb *be* and the progressive (*-ing*) is evidenced between Grade 6 and Grade 7. Nevertheless, there are no statistically significant differences in both the acquisition of the auxiliary verb *be* and the progressive, as well as in the acquisition of *-s* between the two years of learning.

The average accuracy scores, alongside the significance of differences in the acquisition of verb tenses across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8, could be calculated for the *simple present* and the *simple past*. Differences in the acquisition of the *simple present* across the three years of learning do not indicate any statistical significance ($\chi^2=2.714$; $df=2$; $p>.05$). Also, the acquisition of the *simple past* did not reveal any differences reaching statistical significance over the same period of learning. Similar results with regard to the significance of differences in the acquisition of the *present continuous* between Grade 6 and Grade 7 were found. Although the average accuracy score for the *present continuous* underwent an increase from 70.5% to 80.2%, no significant statistical differences were shown in its acquisition.

5.4 Results on the Acquisition of the Past Regular and the Past Irregular

The findings presented hereafter answer RQ4. The results from Table 2 indicate that pupils across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 always more often correctly supplied the past irregular in comparison to the past regular. Grade 6 pupils used the past irregular 9% more correctly than they used the past regular, whereas Grade 7 pupils used it 14% more correctly. This higher percentage of correct suppliance in the use of the past irregular as opposed to the past regular was as much as 10% higher in Grade 8 when compared to Grade 7. According to the rank order results (Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5) it is evident that pupils across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 always provided higher accuracy scores for the past irregular than for the past regular.

5.5 Results on the Acquisition of Compound Verb Tenses

In view of the acquisition of compound tenses (RQ5) starting with the *present continuous*, it is remarkable that both Grade 6 and Grade 7 pupils showed more correct use of the verbal suffix in

relation to the correct use of the auxiliary verb *be*, even though the correct suppliance between these morphemes varied by only 1% in Grade 7 and by 2% in Grade 6 (Table 2). Regarding the same tense, it can be further noted that the progressive *-ing* tends to occupy a higher position in the rank order in both Grade 6 (Table 3) and Grade 7 (Table 4) due to its higher accuracy score when compared to the auxiliary verb *be*. As for the *present perfect*, the acquisition of this tense could not be investigated at all.

6 Discussion

The final part of this paper discusses the research results. The discussion is conducted following the research questions.

6.1 Suppliance and Distribution of Grammatical Morphemes regarding Their Obligatory and Correct Use

As mentioned in section 5.1, the unequal distribution of morphemes may be attributed to the type of communicative activity. On the one hand, some of the designed activities were not applied at all in this study. For instance, a questionnaire designed to elicit the use of the auxiliary verb *have* and the past participle was not applied in Grade 8 due to the pupils' refusal. On the other hand, task-based activities differed in the amount of morphemes supplied during speech production. For example, role-plays provided a wider range of morphemes when compared to other types of activity, such as starting with the same question and thus eliciting the same morpheme. It should be further pointed out that the duration of communicative activities might have affected the distribution of the grammatical morphemes under study. Despite the approximately 15-minute time frame, the flow of the activities was not interrupted until reaching a communicative goal, which resulted in more obligatory use for some of the morphemes.

One of the reasons for the lack in the suppliance of morphemes in the use of not only the *present perfect*, as previously indicated, but also in the use of the *present continuous* in Grade 8, can be found among the pupils. In situations where Grade 8 pupils were not motivated enough to participate in a predetermined communicative activity, they were given the opportunity to select another type of task-based activity due to their entirely voluntary participation. Furthermore, the number of pupils engaged in speech production seems to have an impact on the distribution of morphemes. It can be noted that the number of pupils involved in the target language production varied, which resulted in an uneven suppliance of grammatical morphemes over the three-year period.

6.2 Acquisition Orders of Grammatical Morphemes and Verb Tenses

When comparing morpheme orders (Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5), it can be observed that the rank order could not be determined for the morphemes constituting the *present continuous* (Table 5) and the *present perfect* (Table 3 and Table 5) due to, as previously explained, the lack of their suppliance. As for the past participle (Table 4), its position in the rank order could be ignored for several reasons. First, the acquisition of this morpheme was not intended to be investigated separately but along with the acquisition of the auxiliary verb *have*, since both constitute the *present perfect*. Second, it is positioned last in the rank order and third, it is most probably, as noted before, a case of incorrect coding.

The comparison of acquisition orders (Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8) indicates that some of the features regarding tense acquisition in Grade 7 are present in both Grade 6 and Grade 8. Specifically, the *simple past* seems to emerge last not only in Grade 7 but also in Grade 6. Also, it seems that the *simple present* is the first tense to emerge in Grade 7 and the following year in Grade 8.

It is interesting to point out that the results regarding acquisition orders showed that higher levels of correct suppliance in the use of either morphemes or verb tenses is not a necessary prerequisite for their earlier acquisition. As for morphemes, it appears that more frequent correct suppliance as a prerequisite for earlier acquisition can be found in Grade 6 and Grade 7 but not in Grade 8. On the one hand, the findings have revealed that Grade 6 and Grade 7 pupils most frequently correctly supplied the present tense copula *be* which, by being positioned first in the rank order, seems to be acquired first. On the other hand, Grade 8 pupils seem to acquire the past irregular somewhat later since this morpheme, despite displaying the highest levels of correct suppliance, was ranked third. As for verb tenses, similar results have been found. While Grade 7 pupils showed the greatest level of correct suppliance for the *simple present*, which accordingly took the first position in the rank order, Grade 6 and Grade 8 pupils revealed the opposite. Despite the highest frequency of correct suppliance for the *simple present* in Grade 6 and the *simple past* in Grade 8, the two tenses were positioned second.

6.3 Improvement in the Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes and Verb Tenses

Even though there were no statistically significant differences in the acquisition of the past tense copula *be* and the past regular, the obtained results should be cautiously interpreted rather than suggesting no improvement in the acquisition of these morphemes over the three-year period due to the relatively small number of pupils in the sample (N=8 for the past tense copula *be*, N=7 for the past regular). Furthermore, an increase in the average score for both the auxiliary verb *be* and the progressive (*-ing*) is supported by the previous rank order results. These results indicate an improvement from the fourth position in Grade 6 (Table 3) to the third position in Grade 7 (Table 4) for the auxiliary verb *be*, whereas the progressive changed from the third rank order position in Grade 6 (Table 3) to the second position in Grade 7 (Table 4).

6.4 Acquisition of the Past Regular and the Past Irregular

The obtained findings strongly suggest that pupils across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 acquire the past irregular prior to the past regular. This claim is supported by both the results on the suppliance of grammatical morphemes and the rank order results.

6.5 Acquisition of Compound Verb Tenses

The acquisition of the *present continuous* could not be investigated in Grade 8 due to, as already mentioned, no suppliance in the use of its constituent elements, thus resulting in no ranking order for these morphemes. For the same reason, the acquisition of the *present perfect* could not be investigated despite the data displaying occurrences of the use of the past participle (*-en*) in Grade 7 since, as specified before, this might be the case of incorrect coding.

7 Conclusions

The aim of this study is to shed more light on the acquisition of verbal morphology in the interlanguage of Croatian L2 pupils of English. Research into grammatical development was based on the orders of acquisition of grammatical morphemes and verb tenses with special emphasis on the principles of tense-aspect acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). The findings of the study pointed to several conclusions.

The suppliance of grammatical morphemes seems to be related to both the type of communicative activity and the pupils. On the one hand, more frequent use of a particular task-based activity might provide more obligatory and thus possibly more correct use in morpheme suppliance. Based on the findings, it may be concluded that the range of morphemes in the pupils' target language production depends on the type of communicative activity. Some activities provide a wider use of morphemes, unlike some other activities which focus on the use of only specific morphemes. Therefore, the impact of a task-based activity type on morpheme suppliance should be further investigated. On the other hand, the frequency in the use of communicative activities varied across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 due to pupils' preferences. Since this study was based on the pupils's voluntary participation, future research regarding the influence of affective factors (e.g., motivation, attitude towards foreign language learning) should also be undertaken.

Although the research design in this study was modified, it can be concluded that Croatian L2 pupils of English demonstrate homogeneity in the sequences of acquisition of grammatical morphemes across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8, as indicated by the Spearman rank order correlations. However, since the grammatical morphemes exhibit slightly different ranking orders when their acquisition in each year of learning is observed separately, it can be further concluded that the universality of acquisition sequences can only be justified from the statistical point of view, as claimed by Luk and Shirai (2009). In addition, the less than clear insight into the acquisition sequences of compound verb tenses necessitates further research not only into the compound tenses but also into some other compound tenses (e.g., *past continuous*). In addition, the research should be further extended to include the acquisition of verbal morphology, with temporal reference viewed separately (present vs. past).

The findings obtained by this research, although showing significant differences only in the acquisition of the present tense copula *be* across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8, do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that there was no evidence of morphological improvement, but rather imply that it was somewhat more difficult to identify it over the three-year period of learning. It seems that the length of this longitudinal study should therefore be extended to a much longer period. Also, the relatively small number of pupils participating in this study might have led to less evident improvement in the acquisition of both grammatical morphemes and verb tenses. Further research should hence be conducted as a case study, thus focusing on a few pupils, which might presumably lead toward more explicit evidence of grammatical improvement.

The results showing that irregular morphology precedes regular morphology point to the conclusion that Croatian L2 pupils of English acquire verbal morphology according to the third principle (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). Although inconclusive, the results also indicate that Grade 6 and Grade 7 pupils acquire the verbal suffix first and only subsequently the auxiliary verb, thus following the fourth principle (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). It can be further concluded, based on the overall findings which reveal the slow and gradual acquisition of both grammatical morphemes and verb tenses, that pupils across Grade 6, Grade 7 and Grade 8 follow the first principle of tense-aspect acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig 2000).

References

- Ajduković, Marina, and Vladimir Kolesarić, eds. 2003. *Ethical Code for Research with Children*. Zagreb: Croatian Government's Council for Children. State Office for the Protection Family, Maternity and Youth.
- Bailey, Nathaline, Carolyn Madden, and Stephen Krashen. 1974. "Is There a "Natural Sequence" in Adult Second Language Learning?" *Language Learning* 1: 235–43. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1974.tb00505.x.
- Bardovi-Harlig, Kathleen. 1997. "Another Piece of the Puzzle: The Emergence of the Present Perfect." *Language Learning* 47 (3): 375–422. doi:10.1111/0023-8333.00015.
- . 2000. *Tense and Aspect in Second Language Acquisition: Form, Meaning and Use*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Billings, Marion. 1999. "Greedy to Know English: A Case Study." Master's thesis, University of Regina.
- Brown, Roger. 1973. *A First Language*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Cook, Vivian. 1993. *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia. 2011. *Croatian National Curriculum*. <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2501>.
- DuBois, John W. 1991. "Transcription Design Principles for Spoken Discourse Research." *Pragmatics* 1 (1): 71–106. doi:10.1075/prag.1.1.04boi.
- Dulay, Heidi C., and Martina K. Burt. 1973. "Should We Teach Children Syntax?" *Language Learning* 23 (2): 245–58. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1973.tb00659.x.
- . 1974. "Natural Sequences in Child Second Language Acquisition." *Language Learning* 24 (1): 37–53. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1974.tb00234.x.
- . 1980. "On Acquisition Orders." In *Second Language Development: Trends and Issues*, edited by Sascha W. Felix, 265–328. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Edwards, Jane A. 2001. "The Transcription of Discourse." In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen and Heidi E. Hamilton, 321–48. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Edwards, Jane A., and Martin D. Lampert, eds. 1993. *Talking Data: Transcription and Coding in Discourse Research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ellis, Rod. 2008. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, Rod, and Gary Barkhuizen. 2005. *Analysing Learner Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hakuta, Kenji. 1974. "A Preliminary Report on the Development of Grammatical Morphemes in a Japanese Girl Learning English as a Second Language." *Working Papers in Bilingualism* 3: 18–43.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 1999. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London: Longman.
- Lakshmanan, Usha, and Larry Selinker. 2001. "Analysing Interlanguage: How do We Know What Learners Know?" *Second Language Research* 17 (4): 393–420. doi:10.1177/026765830101700406.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 1975. "The Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes by Adult Learners of English as a Second Language." PhD diss., University of Michigan.
- Long, Michael, and Charlene Sato. 1984. "Methodological Issues in Interlanguage Studies: An Interactionist Perspective." In *Interlanguage*, edited by Alan Davies, Clive Criper and A. P. R. Howatt, 253–80. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

- Luk, Zoe Pei-sui, and Yasuhiro Shirai. 2009. "Is the Acquisition Order of Grammatical Morphemes Impervious to L1 Knowledge? Evidence from the Acquisition of Plural *-s*, Articles, and Possessive *'s*." *Language Learning* 59 (4): 721–54. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9922.2009.00524.x.
- Makino, Taka-Yoshi. 1980. "Acquisition Order of English Morphemes by Japanese Secondary School Students." *Journal of Hokkaido University of Education* 30 (2): 101–48.
- Ortega, Lourdes. 2009. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. London: Hodder Education.
- Pak, Yunhwa. 1987. "Age Difference in Morpheme Acquisition among Korean EFL Learners: Acquisition Order and Acquisition Rate." PhD diss., University of Texas, Austin.
- Pica, Teresa. 1983. "Adult Acquisition of English as a Second Language under Different Conditions of Exposure." *Language Learning* 33: 465–97. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1983.tb00945.x.
- Thornbury, Scott. 2005. *How to Teach Speaking*. Harlow, England: Longman.
- Ur, Penny. 1999. *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Li. 2000. "Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes: A Case Study of Lan." Master's thesis, University of Regina.

Croatian EFL Learners' Interlanguage Requests: A Focus on Request Modification

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the development of pragmatic competence in the interlanguage of Croatian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at three proficiency levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced). It investigates the way Croatian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) use internal and external supportive moves to modify their requests. Data were collected using an oral Discourse Completion Test consisting of ten school-related situations. The research participants were 60 EFL learners aged between 11 and 18. The coding categories developed in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) and adapted by Schauer (2009) were used to analyse the data. Overall results indicated that the request production of EFL learners showed little variation regarding the type of modification and frequency of their use. Results also indicated weak evidence of pragmalinguistic development across levels, particularly in the use of grounders. The infrequent use of request modification suggests that pragmatic instruction should be included in FL classrooms to facilitate the development of L2 pragmatic ability.

Keywords: pragmatic competence; Croatian EFL learners; interlanguage requests; internal modification; external modification

Izražanje zahtev hrvaških učencev angleščine kot tujega jezika v vmesnem jeziku s poudarkom na modifikaciji

POVZETEK

Članek obravnava razvoj pragmatične kompetence hrvaških učencev angleščine kot tujega jezika na treh ravneh jezikovne zmožnosti v vmesnem jeziku [interlanguage]: začetni, nadaljevalni in višji. Proučuje uporabo notranjih in zunanjih podpornih strategij, s katerimi hrvaški učenci angleščine kot tujega jezika modificirajo izražanje zahtev. Podatke smo zbirali s testom dopolnjevanja diskurza, ki ga je sestavljalo deset s šolo povezanih situacij. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 60 učencev angleščine kot tujega jezika, starih od 11 do 18 let. V analizi smo uporabili kodirne kategorije, ki so jih razvili za potrebe projekta *Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project* (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). Slednje je pozneje prilagodil Schauer (2009). Rezultati so pokazali, da učenci pri izražanju zahtev uporabljajo omejeno število variacij glede na vrsto modifikacije in na pogostost njihove uporabe. Rezultati so obenem nakazali šibek pragmajezikovni razvoj glede na raven jezikovne zmožnosti, predvsem pri uporabi t.i. *grounders*, s katerimi utemljujejo zahteve. Na podlagi teh rezultatov predlagamo večje vključevanje pragmatičnih vsebin v pouk tujega jezika za spodbujanje pragmatične zmožnosti v L2.

Ključne besede: pragmatična zmožnost; hrvaški učenci angleščine kot tujega jezika; izražanje zahtev v vmesnem jeziku; notranja modifikacija; zunanja modifikacija

Croatian EFL Learners' Interlanguage Requests: A Focus on Request Modification

1 Introduction

Becoming communicatively competent in the target language involves far more than acquiring the syntactic, lexical and phonological systems of that language (Richards 2006). This “missing link” has often been described as the learners’ ability to use their second language in authentic communication and the ability to adjust their utterances to the sociocultural requirements of a communicative situation. Experience teaches us that this “bridge” between “the classroom-acquired” second language knowledge and the use of language in real life is the most difficult to cross in foreign language learning. In various models of communicative competence this “missing link” has been called pragmatic competence (see for example Bachman 1990; Bachman and Palmer 1996; Council of Europe 2001). The main aim of this paper is thus to examine the development of pragmatic competence in the interlanguage of Croatian EFL learners by analysing the use of internal and external modification in their L2 requests.

The present study is structured in the following way: section 2 provides the theoretical background of the study, focusing on pragmatic competence, interlanguage pragmatics and the speech act of requesting. This section includes a brief overview of relevant studies and presents the typology of speech act modifiers that were used. Section 3 presents the research methodology, including the participants, instrument and data collection procedure, while section 4 presents the results and discussion. Section 5 concludes the paper, suggesting directions for future research while also addressing the study’s limitations.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Pragmatic Competence and Interlanguage Pragmatics

In Bachman and Palmer’s model of communicative language ability (Bachman and Palmer 1996), pragmatic knowledge appears for the first time as one of two key components of this ability. The other component of the communicative language ability is organizational knowledge, which comprises grammatical and textual knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge includes sociolinguistic and functional knowledge and enables us “to create or interpret discourse by relating utterances or sentences and texts to their meaning, to the intentions of language users, and to relevant characteristics of the language use setting” (Bachman and Palmer 1996, 69). Sociolinguistic knowledge refers to the knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for creating and interpreting utterances which are acceptable in a particular communicative situation. Functional knowledge refers to “knowledge of pragmatic conventions for expressing acceptable language functions and for interpreting the illocutionary power of utterances or discourse” (Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović 2007, 99). In the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 2001), communicative language competence includes linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Pragmatic competence comprises discourse competence, functional competence and design competence. Discourse competence is the ability of a user/learner to arrange sentences in sequence so as to produce coherent stretches of language. This component is concerned with the use of spoken discourse and written texts in communication for particular functional purposes (Council of Europe 2001, 123–29). It is important to note that each of

these competences is described through a series of sub-competence and illustrative descriptors carefully describing the specific skills of a learner at a particular level.

Within the field of second language acquisition (SLA), the development of pragmatic competence in foreign language learners is researched as the key topic of the discipline known as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). According to Kasper and Rose (2002, 5), ILP can be divided into two sections: the study of second language use and the study of second language learning. As the study of second language use, ILP examines how non-native speakers “comprehend and produce action in the target language.” As the study of second language learning, ILP examines how L2 learners “develop the ability to understand and perform action in the target language” (Kasper and Rose 2002, 5). The term “action” in both definitions refers to different types of speech acts. According to Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008, 112), there are two “central” research questions in the field of interlanguage pragmatics: one of them is how learners produce requests and other speech acts in a second language and the other refers to the linguistic means L2 learners employ for mitigating the force of their speech acts. The present study thus explores the linguistic means Croatian learners of English as a foreign language use to modify their requests.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to mention that Leech (1983) made a distinction between the areas of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics refers to the grammatical side of pragmatics and includes the resources or means used to convey specific communicative acts. These resources include direct and indirect strategies, pragmatic routines and a range of modification devices used to soften or intensify a particular speech act (Martínez-Flor 2004). Sociopragmatics is defined as “the sociological interface of pragmatics” (Leech 1983, 10). Sociopragmatics refers to social factors such as the degree of imposition and the status and social distance between interlocutors which influence the choice and performance of a particular speech act. The present study deals with the pragmalinguistic aspects of learners’ requests. Sociopragmatic variables are included in the research methodology, but only as a way of providing a more precise description of request scenarios (see section 3.3).¹

2.2 The Speech Act of Requesting

Requests are very frequent in everyday communication, both inside and outside the foreign language classroom. Requesting involves much more than just choosing an appropriate linguistic form: the speaker must take into account the socio-cultural context of the communicative situation which, among other factors, includes the social status of the interlocutor, the impositive nature of this speech act as well as the social distance between the interlocutors (Brown and Levinson 1987). According to Halupka-Rešetar (2014), inappropriate use of requests by foreign language learners may lead to misunderstanding or even a complete breakdown of communication. Kasper and Rose (2002) state that foreign language learners need a significant amount of time to acquire the ability to choose linguistic forms appropriate to a certain speech situation. The development of the pragmatic aspects of interlanguage requests is particularly problematic in the context of foreign language classrooms. Specifically, the pragmatic aspects of any linguistic form are addressed to a limited extent in this setting (Barron 2000). This means that learners of a foreign language are in a complex situation where they need to use requests frequently inside and, presumably, outside the classroom, but are often unsure which linguistic device to choose. This explains why requests have attracted researchers’ attention more than any other speech act within the field of interlanguage pragmatics.

¹ For a more detailed discussion on sociopragmatic variables, see Brown and Levinson (1987, chapters 3, 4 and 5).

According to Searle (1979), requests belong to the category of directives. Requests are “attempts... by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest ‘attempts’ as when I invite you to do it or suggest that you do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it” (Searle 1979, 13). Requests represent attempts by the speaker to engage the hearer in some future action which would be beneficial for the speaker (Barron 2000). In other words, the illocutionary point of requests is to get the world to match the words (Searle 1979). Requests can also be described as pre-events, as they express the speaker’s expectation toward some prospective action (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). Asking somebody to do something for you is often impositive and may be interpreted by a hearer as an intrusion upon his or her “territory.” Requests are thus often described as non-hearer supportive (Barron 2000) or as face-threatening (Brown and Levinson 1987). According to Brown and Levinson (1987, 65) “certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker.” Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, 11–12) state that “hearers can interpret requests as intrusive impingements on freedom of action, or even as a show in the exercise of power; speakers may hesitate to make the request for fear of exposing a need or risking the hearer’s loss of face. The abundance of linguistic options available for requesting behaviour testifies to the social intricacies associated with choice in mode of performance.”² Requests call for redressive action and require mitigation in order to compensate for their impositive effect on the hearer (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). The speaker can minimize the impositive nature of the request by choosing an indirect strategy of requesting instead of a direct one and by “softening” the requesting strategy further by adding internal and external modification to the request.

According to the CCSARP Coding Manual, the core of the request sequence is known as the Head Act, “a minimal unit which can realize a request” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, 275). It is the only obligatory part of the request. The Head Act can be realized by using different request strategies, which can be defined as the obligatory choice of the level of directness. There are three main request strategies: direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect strategies (for a more detailed account of this categorization, see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). The non-obligatory parts of a request are supportive moves which modify the impact of the request by either aggravating or mitigating its force. Different types of request modification are presented in the next section.

2.3 Request Modification

In addition to selecting a particular request strategy, learners can decrease or increase the force of their request by using internal and/or external modification. The categories of the classification

² This comment was made in the first chapter of the book entitled *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989). It presented the results of the large-scale project known as the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP). The project was set up by the authors to investigate cross-cultural and intralingual variation in two speech acts: requests and apologies. The general goal of the project was to establish the patterns of requests and apology realizations under certain social situations across different languages and cultures and between native and non-native speakers. The study collected data from college students speaking seven different languages or language varieties (Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German and Hebrew). The instrument used in this project (Discourse-Completion Test or DCT) was later used in its original or modified form by numerous researchers in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. The project is also valuable for its classification of request strategies into nine categories, which ranged from the most direct to the least direct, as well as for the classification of internal and external modification strategies into categories. This classification is frequently used in interlanguage request studies.

scheme used in this study are based on the CCSARP Coding Manual (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) and Schauer’s (2009) adaptations of this manual. Some of the categories which appear in the abovementioned taxonomies did not appear in our corpus and thus were excluded from the current analysis (for example, aggravating supportive moves).

Internal modifiers, as their name implies, are found within the Head Act and are a part of the request proper. Internal modifiers are lexical and syntactic devices which are used by the speaker to mitigate the force of the request. External modifiers (also called supportive moves) are elements that are “outside” the request Head Act. They either precede or follow the request Head Act and their function is to modify the illocutionary force of the request (Flores Salgado 2008). Tables 1 and 2 give the taxonomy of internal and external modification used in this research. Only those modifiers which were found in the corpus are included in the overview. The examples provided in the tables were found in the corpus collected for the purposes of this study.

TABLE 1. Overview of internal modifiers.

Internal modification (syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders)			
	Name	Definition/function	Example
1.	Conditional clause	employed by speakers to distance themselves from the request	<i>I'd be grateful <u>if you could</u> help me with that.</i>
2.	Politeness marker	“an optional element added to a request to bid for co-operative behaviour” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, 283)	<i>Can you <u>please</u> explain me some maths problems?</i>
3.	Past tense Modals	past tense forms such as <i>could</i> or <i>would</i> make the request appear more polite (Schauer 2009)	<i><u>Would</u> you like to sit with me this class?</i>
4.	Marked Modality	<i>might</i> and <i>may</i> make the request appear more tentative (Schauer 2009)	<i><u>May</u> I borrow your notebook please?</i>
5.	Consultative Device	“expressions by means of which the speaker seeks to involve the hearer directly bidding for cooperation” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, 283)	<i><u>Would you mind</u> to give me one chewing gum?</i>

TABLE 2. Overview of external modifiers.

External modification			
	Name	Definition/function	Example
1.	Alerter	linguistic device that is used to get the interlocutor’s attention; precedes the Head Act (Schauer 2009)	<i><u>Hey</u> can you help me with this?</i>

2.	Preparator	“short utterance that intends to prepare the interlocutor for the request; can follow or substitute the Alerter” (Schauer 2009, 92)	<i>Do you have some glue and can I borrow it- please?</i>
3.	Grounder	“The speaker gives reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her request, which may either precede or follow it” (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, 287).	<i>Hey, I am celebrating my birthday today. Can you give – can you come?</i>
4.	Obtaining a pre-commitment	speaker precedes the request by an utterance that represents an attempt to get a pre-committal	<i>Could you do something for me?</i>
5.	Apology	“The speaker apologizes for posing the request and/or for the imposition incurred” (Halupka-Rešetar 2014, 34).	<i>I am sorry, can you give me your notebook? I need it.</i>
6.	Combination	The speaker uses a combination of two or more external modification devices to modify his or her request.	<i>Do you have that maths task? I've lost the notebook where I wrote it... so I'd be grateful if you could help me with that.</i>

2.4 Comparative and Cross-Sectional Studies on Request Modification: An Overview

In this section the studies examining the learners’ use of internal and external modifying devices are briefly reviewed. The majority of these studies to date have taken a comparative focus, examining and highlighting differences in request production between learners of a language and native speakers (Faerch and Kasper 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012). Studies with a cross-sectional design include participants at various stages of language proficiency (Rose 2009; Göy, Zeyrek and Otcu 2012; Halupka-Rešetar 2014). This review will be limited to comparative and cross-sectional studies in which the participants were learners of English as a foreign language.

As a part of the CCSARP project, Faerch and Kasper (1989) examined internal and external modification in the interlanguage request realization of Danish learners of English and compared the results to the data obtained from the native speaker corpus. Compared to native speakers, learners overused the politeness marker *please* and showed a tendency towards overcomplexity in the use of syntactic downgraders. Grounders were the single most frequently used external modifier. The learners also showed a tendency towards “verbosity” which was defined as “preference for propositional explicitness where native speakers would prefer shorter and more implicit modes of expression” (Faerch and Kasper 1989, 245).

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) examined the patterns of internal and external modification in the request production of advanced Greek EFL learners, comparing the results with those of native speakers of British English. The results have shown that Greek learners generally underused lexical and phrasal downgraders, especially the politeness marker *please* and consultative devices. On the other hand, the learners overused disarmers and preparators. The author concluded that the underuse of the politeness marker and consultative devices was a result of the influence

of the learners' mother tongue. In Greek culture, these expressions are intuitively associated with formality rather than politeness and therefore are less readily used by Greek speakers. In a later study, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012) also examined patterns of internal and external modification but this time in requests made by low proficiency EFL learners. The results were compared to those of American English speakers. The results again indicated that the learners significantly underused internal modification and showed a preference for external modification, especially grounders. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012) pointed out that internal modification may not be a part of low proficiency learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire because of its complexity and the need for additional processing. External modification, according to the author, is syntactically less complex and thus acquired more easily. The author also emphasized the need for the early introduction of pragmatic instruction in EFL classrooms.

In 2009 Rose examined the use of alerters, supportive moves and the politeness marker *please* in the interlanguage requests of secondary school EFL learners (aged from 13 to 17) from Hong Kong. The aim of this study was to look for evidence of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic development across three groups of learners. The results showed that the mean frequency of alerters increased with the proficiency level, while the frequency of *please* on the other hand decreased with the proficiency level. Learners in the advanced group were to a limited extent using supportive moves to mitigate their requests. Rose (2009) concluded that the appearance of supportive moves indicated the beginning of the pragmatic expansion stage in request development.

Göy, Zeyrek and Otcu (2012) investigated the development of internal request modification in requests made by Turkish learners of English at two proficiency levels (beginners and higher proficiency learners). In line with the previous studies, results have shown that beginner learners underused syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders. Higher proficiency learners showed very slow development in the use of both subtypes of internal modification. The authors stated that these results suggested weak attentional control over pragmatic knowledge and that the reason for the slow pragmatic development must be multicausal.

Halupka-Rešetar (2014) examined the types and frequency of usage of internal and external modification in the request production of ESP students at an intermediate proficiency level. Learners' request production showed limited variation with respect to the type of modification and the frequency of their use. Among the supportive moves, grounders were used the most frequently, and almost exclusively. The politeness marker *please* and conditional clauses were most frequently used among internal modification.

It must be noted that most of the studies on interlanguage request modification have concentrated on foreign language learners of intermediate and/or advanced language proficiency. "Little research has been conducted on low proficiency FL learners in relation to their interlanguage pragmatic production. Further research is needed with adult learners at lower proficiency levels and in a foreign language context in order to examine the stages of learners pragmatic development and the pragmalinguistic features of learners' speech act production during this low proficiency stage. Such an examination will provide a more complete picture of L2 speech act performance" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012, 164). This comment has been singled out precisely because this is the aim of the present study: to describe the internal and external modification strategies in request production by learners of English as a foreign language at three levels of proficiency, including low-proficiency, intermediate and advanced learners of English. The participants at the beginning and intermediate levels of proficiency are, however, not adults but young learners of English (aged between 11 and 14). This paper is thus an attempt to add to the growing body of

knowledge on FL speech act performance by extending cross-sectional work to Croatian learners of English.

3 The Study

3.1 Aim

Following Halupka-Rešetar (2014) and Rose (2009), the research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What types of internal and external modification devices are used most frequently by Croatian learners of English as a foreign language at three levels of proficiency (beginner, intermediate and advanced)?
2. Is there evidence of pragmalinguistic development?

This study can be described as cross-sectional and pseudo-longitudinal, as its main goals were to analyse the “current state” of the learners’ ability to modify the speech act of requesting and to look for evidence of pragmalinguistic development across proficiency levels.

3.2 Participants

The participants were learners from secondary and elementary schools in two Croatian counties, all native speakers of Croatian, who were selected from three proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced (20 learners per group, 60 in total). The beginners’ group included Grade 5 learners (age: 11 years) who had at that point been learning English for 4 years (since Grade 1). The intermediate group comprised of Grade 8 learners (age: 14 years) who had been learning English for 8 years. The advanced group included secondary school learners (age: 18 years) who had been learning English for 12 years (they were in their final year of secondary school, Grade 4).

There was initially a plan to use a proficiency test to measure the learners’ English proficiency. However, this was not possible because there was not sufficient access granted to the participants for the placement test, questionnaire development and final data collection. It is, however, common practice in ILP request studies to use placement in language courses to identify general levels of language proficiency and, consequently, general levels of pragmatic competence (see for example Félix-Brasdefer 2007, 260). The decision was made to use the time available to develop the research instrument and collect relevant data. Following similar existing research (Rose 2009; Félix-Brasdefer 2007), the learners’ respective grades were equated to proficiency levels (grade 5 learners-beginner group; grade 8 learners-intermediate group; grade 4 learners/secondary school-advanced group).³

³ According to the *Code of Ethics for Research Involving Children* (published by the Croatian Council for Children in 2003), parental consent is required for children under the age of 14. In accordance with this legal requirement, written parental consent for all participants under 14 was obtained via parent-teacher meetings. Children older than 14 (secondary school learners) gave their own written consent for their participation in the research. All participants were informed about the research in terms appropriate to their age. They were also told that their data would be treated as strictly confidential.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

EFL learners' responses were elicited using the form of an oral discourse completion test (DCT). The questionnaire contained 10 different school-related situations and was developed through the processes of exemplar generation and metapragmatic assessment (for a detailed description of the procedure, see Rose 2009). The ten situations reflect different relationships in the classroom (learner asking something from another learner, learner requesting something from a teacher), different degrees of imposition (low-imposition requests/high-imposition requests) and difference in social dominance (for example, a learner posing a high imposition request to the teacher vs. a learner posing a high imposition request to his/her peer). The corpus collected for the purpose of the present study contained 480 requests. Table 3 provides an overview of the ten request scenarios selected for this study (for a full description of the scenarios, see Appendix 1).

TABLE 3. Request scenarios.

Item	Hearer	Description
1 (=, L)	learner	borrow glue
2 (HD, H)	teacher	postpone written exam
3 (=, H)	learner	invite to birthday party
4 (=, L)	learner	borrow notebook
5 (HD, L)	teacher	repeat question
6 (=, H)	learner	explain maths exercise
7 (=, L)	learner	sit together
8 (HD, H)	teacher	postpone oral exam
9 (HD, H)	teacher	volunteer for oral exam
10 (=, L)	learner	clean blackboard

HD indicates hearer dominance; = indicates equal speaker-hearer status; L indicates low imposition requests; H indicates high imposition requests

Data collection was carried out in Croatian to ensure that the participants could understand the scenarios and task. Participants were provided with a questionnaire containing the request scenarios, which were described in Croatian. The task was carefully explained to the learners, and the first request scenario was done as an example to make sure learners knew what was expected of them. Participants were given audio voice recorders and taught how to operate them. They completed their questionnaires individually by recording their answers in English. Participants were also given an option to say "I don't know" if they did not know how to formulate a request (for more on opting out, see Rose and Ono 1995). Data were transcribed for coding and classified according

to the taxonomies provided in tables 1 and 2, with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0) used to analyse the data. The total frequency and percentage of internal and external modification strategies were calculated. Where possible, the chi-square test was used to establish whether differences among the three groups of learners were significant. In addition, examples from the corpus were provided for most of the modification strategies found in learners' requests.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results Regarding Learners' Overall Use of Internal Modification

Table 4 displays the overall results for the use of internal modification strategies across three proficiency levels.

TABLE 4. Overall results for the use of internal modification across three proficiency levels.

Internal modification	f	%
syntactic downgraders		
conditional clause	6	1.9%
lexical and phrasal downgraders		
politeness marker please	195	61.5%
past tense modals	102	32%
marked modality	3	1%
consultative device	8	2.5%
Combination	3	1%
TOTAL	317	100%

Table 4 reveals that the participants did not use syntactic downgraders very frequently in their requests. Eight different types of syntactic downgrader (interrogative, negation of preparatory condition, subjunctive, aspect, tense etc.) were enumerated in the CCSARP Coding Manual (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). However, Croatian EFL learners used only the conditional clause to syntactically modify their requests. Grade 5 learners (beginners) did not use syntactic modification at all. In Grade 8 (intermediate learners), the conditional clause appeared only once, while Grade 4 learners (secondary school, advanced group) used the conditional clause in five requests. The following are examples of its use:

Please, teacher, if you could not ask me this... this day today... I didn't learn very well for today. (learner 45,⁴ request scenario 8 – postponing oral exam, advanced group)

⁴ In the corpus collected for the purpose of this study, numbers were used instead of names to protect learners' anonymity.

I would like to ask you if you could... if you could ask me tomorrow. (learner 46, request scenario 8 – postponing oral exam, advanced group)

The low frequency of syntactic downgraders is in line with the results of various other studies (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Göy, Zeyrek and Otcu 2012; Hassall, 2012; Halupka-Rešetar 2014) which found that the underuse of syntactic downgraders is a typical feature of L2 request production. Faerch and Kasper (1989, 237) observe that “the mitigating function of syntactic downgraders is not inherent in the grammatical meaning of syntactic structures: it is a pragmatic, “acquired” meaning that derives from the interaction of the structure with its context and requires... extra inferring capacity on the part of the addressee.” The politeness function of syntactic downgraders is thus implicit rather than explicit. Woodfield (2012, 22) states that syntactic modifiers “may take time to acquire”: it is possible that the development of these structures in learners’ request production depends on learners’ noticing the pragmatic aspects of these structures. Göy et al. (2012) suggest that pragmatic development starts with a period of the under-use of syntactic downgraders. Internal modification seems to be “particularly sensitive to level of proficiency and may not be part of low proficiency learners’ pragmalinguistic repertoire” (Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012, 5). These conclusions are applicable to our learners’ request production, although the use of conditional sentences in the advanced group may be accepted as a very weak sign of pragmalinguistic development in the formulation of interlanguage requests.

4.2 Results regarding Learners’ Use of Lexical and Phrasal Modifiers

Lexical and phrasal downgraders were used far more frequently than syntactic modifiers. The politeness marker *please* and past tense modals (*could* and *would*) were used in more than 93% of requests containing any kind of internal modification. This result is also in line with previous similar studies (Schauer 2009). Table 5 displays the frequency and percentage of *please* and past tense modals by proficiency level. Other lexical and phrasal downgraders (marked modality, consultative device, combination) were used infrequently and thus are not included in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Internal modification: lexical and phrasal downgraders.

	Lexical and phrasal downgraders			
Level	could f (%)	would f (%)	please f (%)	TOTAL
beginner	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	33 (16.9%)	35
intermediate	39 (76%)	12 (23.5%)	72 (36.9%)	123
advanced	11 (21.6%)	38 (74.5%)	90 (46.2%)	139
TOTAL	51	51	195	297
Chi-square test	N/A	N/A	$\chi^2 = 26.123$ $p < 0.001^*$	

N/A = expected frequencies are less than 5

*hypothesis confirmed at $p \leq 0.05$

The past tense modals *could* and *would* were much less frequently used than the politeness marker *please*. Beginner learners used both modals only once, while their use in advanced and intermediate groups follows a contrasting pattern: intermediate learners used *could* in 39 instances, while advanced learners used this modal in 11 requests. On the other hand, intermediate learners used *would* in 12 requests, while the frequency of use in advanced requests increased to 38.

A statistically significant difference was found in the use of *please*. The difference was statistically significant at a $p \leq 0.05$ level of the Chi-square test. As table 5 shows, the use of *please* steadily increased across levels, from 33 instances of this marker in beginner requests to 90 instances in advanced requests. This result is in contrast to the results of previous similar studies. The results of research carried out by Hill (1997) and Rose (2009) have shown that the frequency of *please* decreased with the level of proficiency, prompting the authors to describe this occurrence as a development in the direction of the native speaker norm. The decrease in the use of *please* meant that the advanced group used other lexical and phrasal modifiers more frequently. In order to further examine the use of *please* in our corpus, I have also analysed the position of *please* within learners' requests. According to Hill (1997), the politeness marker can be used in sentence-initial, sentence-final and the intra-sentential position. The positioning of the politeness marker at the end of the request or within the request was interpreted by Hill (1997) as a sign of pragmatic development. Table 6 displays the positioning of *please* across proficiency levels.

TABLE 6. Positioning of politeness marker across proficiency levels.

Level	Positioning of <i>please</i>			TOTAL
	sentence-initial f (%)	intra-sentential f (%)	sentence-final f (%)	
Beginner	10 (12.8%)	17 (23.6%)	6 (13.3%)	33
Intermediate	23 (29.5%)	23 (31.9%)	26 (57.8%)	72
Advanced	45 (57.7%)	32 (44.4%)	13 (28.9%)	90
Total	78 (100%)	72 (100%)	45 (100%)	195

The results presented in table 6 are somewhat inconclusive. It is difficult to establish any kind of pattern regarding the positioning of *please* or confirm the results and conclusions of previous studies. It is interesting to note that intermediate learners used *please* in all three positions in almost equal proportions, while the frequency of use in advanced learners' requests decreased steadily from a sentence-initial *please* to a sentence-final *please*. The intermediate group used *please* in the sentence-final position more frequently than the advanced group, while the advanced group used *please* in the middle of the sentence more frequently than the intermediate group. Both groups used the politeness marker in all positions more frequently than the beginner group. Further research is necessary to explain these patterns of use, that is, to explain why the frequency of use did not decrease with the level of proficiency.

There are several reasons for the frequent use of *please* across all proficiency levels. The learners' preference for the politeness marker *please* can be explained by its "double function as illocutionary force indicator and transparent mitigator" (Faerch and Kasper 1989, 233). Faerch and Kasper (1989, 233) also claim that learners tend to choose *please* to modify their requests because they want to "adhere to the conversational principle of clarity, choosing explicit, transparent, unambiguous means of expression rather than implicit, opaque, and ambiguous realizations. These qualities are exactly fulfilled by politeness marker." There are two key aspects of *please* which make it a preferable choice in requesting. The first aspect is "the ease" with which *please* becomes part of a request: it can precede the request proper as "an introduction" to the request; it can be placed at the end of the request in order to emphasize the illocutionary force of the request and decrease its impositive force (Trosborg 1995). The politeness marker *please* is syntactically and pragmatically fairly simple and requires minimal capacity for psychological processing. Another possible reason for the frequent use of *please* in learner requests may be the effect of formal instruction. *Please* appears relatively early in classroom discourse and EFL textbooks. The use of *please* thus seems to follow the path of learners from other L1 backgrounds (Göy at al. 2012). The following are examples of its use:

Please give your glue. (learner 8, request situation 1 – borrowing glue, beginner group)

Can you please teacher give the test tomorrow? (learner 22, request situation 2 – postponing written exam, intermediate group)

Can you please delete the blackboard instead of me? (learner 51, request situation 10 – cleaning the blackboard, advanced group)

To sum up, the frequent use of the politeness marker *please* and past tense modals is not "unexpected" since these lexical downgraders are not "difficult to incorporate in a sentence and are taught very early in the language classroom" (Schauer 2012, 170). On the other hand, the absence of other types of internal modification points to the lack of linguistic means at all proficiency levels.

As mentioned earlier, other lexical and phrasal downgraders were rarely used across all proficiency levels. For example, there were only eight instances of a consultative device in the whole corpus of learners' requests. It is worth mentioning that only advanced learners used this type of modification in their requests. The following are examples of its use:

Please, teacher, would you be so kind and tell me your question again? (learner 40, request situation 5 – repeating the question, advanced group)

Would you be so kind and explain me this task? (learner 49, request situation 6 – explaining a maths exercise, advanced group)

Would you be so kind and not interrogate me this lessons? (learner 41, request situation 10 – cleaning the blackboard, advanced group)

The appearance of the consultative device in advanced requests may be interpreted as a sign of pragmalinguistic development. However, it was noted by the author that the advanced groups' teacher used the expression *would you be so kind* relatively frequently. As can be seen from the above examples, some of the learners have incorporated this expression into their interlanguage and have been using it in hearer-dominant and high-imposition situations.

4.3 Results regarding Learners' Use of External Modification

The group analysis for external modification use in the requests of Croatian EFL learners is summarized in Table 7.

TABLE 7. Frequencies and percentages of overall external modification use.

Level	External modification					
	alterter	preparator	grounder	obtaining a pre-commitment	apology	combination
Beginner	6 (4.5%)	0	0	0	0	0
Intermediate	53 (40.1%)	0	16 (40%)	0	0	0
Advanced	73 (55.3%)	3	24 (60%)	1	3	8
Total	132 (100%)	3	40 (100%)	3	1	8

With the exception of alterters and grounders, external modifiers appeared relatively infrequently in the participants' responses. The use of alterters increases across levels, with beginning-level learners using this modifier in 6 instances and advanced-level learners in 73 instances. Alterter is also the only type of external modifier used by beginners.

The results have shown that advanced learners used a greater variety of external modification devices than intermediate and beginner-level learners. In addition to 73 alterters and 24 grounders, advanced learners' requests also featured one instance of obtaining a pre-commitment, three preparators, three apologies and eight requests in which the learners used a combination of different types of external modification. Due to the low frequencies, additional statistical analysis (the Chi-square test) could not be carried out. It must be emphasized that a range of external modification devices – however limited – appeared only in the requests made by advanced learners. From the developmental perspective, the increase and variety in the use of external modification (albeit limited) may be described as development. The following are examples of obtaining a pre-commitment, apology and preparator:

Do you have some glue and can I borrow it please? (learner 57, request situation 1 – borrowing glue, advanced group)

Please do me a favour and wash the board instead of me. (learner 49, request situation 10 – cleaning the blackboard, advanced group)

I am sorry, can you repeat your question? (learner 60, request situation 5 – repeating the question, advanced group)

Teacher, may I ask you something? Can you please postpone the test? (learner 41, request situation 2 – postponing written exam, advanced group)

In addition to alerters, grounders were the most frequently used external modifier in the corpus. Intermediate learners used this type of external modification in 16 requests. As mentioned above, there were 24 instances of this modifier in the replies given by the advanced-level learners. These results are in line with the results of previous similar studies (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Woodfield 2012; Halupka-Rešetar 2014) which have shown that grounders are the most frequent supportive move in interlanguage request production. The length and the propositional content of this modification device varied with regard to the proficiency level. Intermediate-level learners used relatively short and simple grounders to support their requests. The following are examples of its use:

Teacher, can you please repeat the question? I didn't hear. (learner 34, request situation 5 – repeating the question, intermediate group)

Man, I am alone. I want you to sit with me. (learner 25, request situation 7 – sitting together during lessons, intermediate group)

Could you borrow me your notebook? I forgot to take my own. (learner 21, request situation 4 – asking for notebook, intermediate group)

Yo, friend, could you sit next to me? I am lonely. (learner 37, request situation 7 – sitting together during lessons, intermediate group)

Teacher, please don't ask me this class. I couldn't learn, I was in Split. (learner 30, request situation 8 – postponing oral exam, intermediate group)

Although some of these requests were ungrammatical (the use of the verb *borrow*, the expression *don't ask me*), the main purpose was achieved: learners managed to soften the impositive force of requests by successfully incorporating a grounder in the immediate context of their requests. According to Flores-Salgado (2008, 159–60), “a restricted grammatical competence does not necessarily interfere with the pragmatic function of the form.” These learners have a sufficiently developed pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence to assess the contextual characteristics of a speech situation, choose an appropriate linguistic device for their requests and modify them accordingly. On the other hand, the limited scope of their grammatical competence results in mistakes. As mentioned before, the appearance of supportive moves is a sign of the beginning of the pragmatic expansion stage in interlanguage requests (Kasper and Rose 2002; Rose 2009). According to Rose (2009, 2358) this is “no mean feat in a context which affords so little opportunity to actually use the target language for communication.”

Grounders found in advanced learners' requests were longer and more detailed than the grounders found in intermediate learners' requests. For example:

Will you clean the blackboard instead of me? I have some infection on my arms on my hands so I can't do it. (learner 43, request situation 10 – cleaning the blackboard, advanced group)

Teacher, please, can you... can you set the time of writing test next week? We have to study more this week. (learner 44, request situation 2 – postponing written exam, advanced group)

Some advanced learners showed a tendency towards verbosity:

Hey... would you come to my birthday party next week? I will -we will go to Radošić and have a really good time. Please come. I really would like to -you to be there. (learner 51, request situation 3 – birthday invitation, advanced group)

Some of the information included in this request seems redundant and over-explicit. After posing the question in the first part of her utterance, the learner repeated the information contained in the question twice more (*Please come. I really would like to -you to be there*). She also supported her request by using a lengthy grounder (*we will go to Radošić and have a really good time*). According to Flores Salgado (2008, 161), the over-use of supportive moves demonstrates that these learners both “had the grammar to construct an explanation and the pragmalinguistic knowledge to mitigate the request in order to convey negative or positive politeness. The use of supportive moves was ... indicative of learners’ pragmalinguistic competence, not incompetence.” On the other hand, the learners did not have sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge “to assess when the use of one or more segments of a supportive move were appropriate and effective.”

The over-use of supportive moves, that is, a tendency towards verbosity is described by Faerch and Kasper (1989, 245) as one of the “most conspicuous interlanguage-specific features.” The authors suggest that this “the more the better” principle is a result of “the conflicting experience of language learners at a stage in their interlanguage development which is well beyond the threshold level of communicative competence but still a long way before near-nativeness.” Learners probably want to show that they are proficient enough to produce a lengthy utterance in a foreign language.

5 Conclusion

The present study examined the use of internal and external modification in the requests of Croatian learners of English at three levels of proficiency. The aim was to establish the patterns of internal and external request modification use and to examine whether the learners at different levels of proficiency differ in the frequency and “quality” of modifiers they use to soften the force of their requests.

The results show that syntactic modification occurs very rarely at the intermediate and advanced levels, and does not occur at all in beginner-level requests. *Please* is the most frequently used lexical downgrader, followed by past tense modals. Contrary to the results of previous studies, the use of *please* increased with the proficiency level. Intermediate and advanced learners used *please* more frequently than beginner level learners. Albeit infrequently, advanced learners used some other types of lexical and phrasal downgraders (for example, consultative devices). These results may be interpreted as indicators of pragmalinguistic development in the use of lexical and phrasal downgraders.

Results for external modification also indicate a small degree of pragmalinguistic development. Specifically, learners at the intermediate and advanced levels of learning used grounders as supportive moves for their requests, which seems to indicate the beginning of the pragmatic expansion stage in request development (Kasper and Rose 2002; Rose 2009). Results have also shown that some advanced-level learners tend to be too verbose when modifying their requests, thus making the requests appear repetitive and over-explicit.

The overall conclusion of this study is that Croatian EFL learners infrequently used both types of modification (with the exception of alerters, the politeness marker *please* and grounders). Modification devices occurring in learners’ requests are most likely the result of instruction. The fact that the range of modification devices used by learners is very limited (even at the advanced level of learning) suggests that more should be done to include pragmatic instruction in the EFL curriculum to teach pragmalinguistic forms and their sociopragmatic aspects, along

with pragmatic functions and sequential organization of requests (Félix-Brasdefer 2007). Future research should examine the reasons for the limited use of request modifiers, including both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic perspectives. In addition to the usual explanation (no pragmatic instruction), other possible reasons – such as the relationship between pragmatic and grammatical competences – should be further explored.

There are several limitations of this study that need to be addressed. The first limitation concerns the use of elicited data in the examination of the EFL learners’ pragmalinguistic development. It should be noted that elicited data in general cannot reflect fully how learners would react in the foreign language classroom or, indeed, in a real-life (authentic) request situation. Next, the research topic was somewhat narrow, as pragmalinguistic aspects of requesting comprise a small part of the learners’ pragmatic competence. The third limitation refers to the design of the study. This study employs a cross-sectional design and consequently provides a very limited insight into learners’ pragmalinguistic development. In general, a longitudinal study with a small number of participants would provide a more detailed description of learners’ pragmatic development. According to Rose (2000, 29), “ILP research should routinely incorporate” both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies.

References

- Bachman, Lyle F. 1990. *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, Lyle F., and Adrian S. Palmer. 1996. *Language Testing in Practice: Designing and Developing Useful Language Tests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bagarić, Vesna, and Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović. 2007. “Defining Communicative Competence.” *Metodika* 8 (1): 94–103.
- Barron, Anne. 2000. “Acquiring ‘Different Strokes’: A Longitudinal Study of the Development of L2 Pragmatic Competence.” *gfl-journal* 2: 1–29. <http://www.gfl-journal.de/2-2000/barron.pdf>.
- Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, Juliane House, and Gabriele Kasper, eds. 1989. *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen Levinson. 1987. *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Economidou-Kogetsidis, Maria. 2008. “Internal and External Mitigation in Interlanguage Request Production: The Case of Greek Learners of English.” *Journal of Politeness Research* 4: 111–38. doi:10.1515/PR.2008.005.
- . 2012. “Modifying Oral Requests in a Foreign Language: The Case of Greek Cypriot Learners of English.” In *Interlanguage Request Modification*, edited by Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis and Helen Woodfield, 163–202. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Economidou-Kogetsidis, Maria, and Helen Woodfield, eds. 2012. *Interlanguage Request Modification*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Faerch, Claus, and Gabriele Kasper. 1989. “Internal and External Modification in Interlanguage Request Realization.” In *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, edited by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House, and Gabriele Kasper, 221–47. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Félix-Brasdefer, César J. 2007. "Pragmatic Development in the Spanish as a FL classroom: A Cross-Sectional Study of Learner Requests." *Intercultural Pragmatics* 4 (2): 253–86.
- Flores Salgado, Elizabeth. 2008. "A Pragmatic Study of Developmental Patterns in Mexican Students Making English Requests and Apologies." PhD diss., Macquarie University.
- Göy, Elif, Deniz Zeyrek, and Bahar Otcu. 2012. "Developmental Patterns in Internal Modification of Requests. A Quantitative Study on Turkish Learners of English." In *Interlanguage Request Modification*, edited by Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis, and Helen Woodfield, 51–86. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Halupka-Rešetar, Sabina. 2014. "Request Modification in the Pragmatic Production of Intermediate ESP Learners." *ESP Today* 2 (1): 29–47.
- Hassal, Tim. 2012. "Request Modification by Australian Learners of Indonesian." In *Interlanguage Request Modification*, edited by Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis and Helen Woodfield, 203–42. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Hill, Thomas. 1997. "The Development of Pragmatic Competence in an EFL Context." PhD diss., Temple University.
- Kasper, Gabriele, and Kenneth Rose. 2002. *Pragmatic Development in a Second Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman
- Martínez-Flor, Alicia. 2004. "The Effect of Instruction on the Development of Pragmatic Competence in the English as a Foreign Language Context: A Study Based on Suggestions." PhD diss., Universitat Jaume I.
- Martínez-Flor, Alicia, and Esther Usó-Juan. 2006. "Learners' Use of Request Modifiers across Two University ESP Disciplines." *Ibérica* 12: 23–41.
- Richards, Jack C. 2006. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, Kenneth R. 2000. "An Exploratory Cross-Sectional Study of Interlanguage Pragmatic Development". *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 22: 27–67.
- . 2009. "Interlanguage Pragmatic Development in Hong Kong, Phase 2." *Journal of Pragmatics* 41: 2345–64. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2009.04.002.
- Rose, Kenneth R., and Reiko Ono. 1995. "Eliciting Speech Act Data in Japanese: The Effect of Questionnaire Type." *Language Learning* 45: 191–223. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1995.tb00438.x.
- Searle, John. 1979. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schauer, Gila. 2009. *Interlanguage Pragmatic Development (The Study Abroad Context)*. London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Trosborg, Anna. 1995. *Interlanguage Pragmatics. Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Woodfield, Helen. 2012. "'I Think Maybe I Want to Lend the Notes from You.' Development of Request Modification in Graduate Learners." In *Interlanguage Request Modification*, edited by Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis, and Helen Woodfield, 9–50. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Woodfield, Helen, and Maria Economidou-Kogetsidis, eds. 2012. *Interlanguage Request Modification*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.

Appendix 1. Final Questionnaire (English Version)

Instructions: Imagine that you are in the English class and you have to speak only English. There are 10 situations below in which you want to ask your friends or teacher to do something for you. The teacher will read each situation one at a time. After each situation is read, think about what you have heard and say what you think you would say in each situation. If you don't know what you would say, simply say 'I don't know'.

1. You want to ask your classmate to lend you his/her glue. What would you say?
2. You want to ask your teacher whether he/she could postpone a written exam. What would you say?
3. You want to invite your classmate to your birthday party. What would you say?
4. You want to ask your classmate to give you his/her notebook. What would you say?
5. You want to ask your teacher to repeat his/her question. What would you say?
6. You want to ask your classmate if he/she could help you with maths. What would you say?
7. You want to invite your classmate to sit with you in your desk. What would you say?
8. You want to ask your teacher whether he/she could postpone an oral exam. What would you say?
9. You want to ask your teacher if you could volunteer for an oral exam. What would you say?
10. You want to ask your classmate to clean the blackboard instead of you. What would you say?

Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Slovene as L1 in Teaching and Learning of Business English at Tertiary Level

ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, the monolingual (English-only) approach to English language teaching and learning has prevailed. In recent years, however, the trend of using students' first language (L1) in teaching and learning English as a foreign language has re-emerged. However, the research on the use of L1 in teaching English for specific purposes is far from extensive. The aim of this study was to investigate the use of Slovene as the students' L1 in teaching and learning Business English at tertiary level. The specific objectives were to determine the students' attitudes towards the teachers' and the students' use of Slovene during Business English lessons and the students' use of Slovene in learning Business English. The present study was quantitative, with data gathered via a questionnaire. The results show that, on the one hand, there is some inclination towards the use of L1 both in class and during their study of Business English. On the other hand, the preference towards the use of predominantly (or exclusively) English in class is also present and is positively correlated with the level of students' knowledge of English. The results are of value to English language teachers as they suggest the contexts in which students' L1 could be used in the process of teaching and learning English for specific purposes.

Keywords: mother tongue/L1; Business English instruction; language functions; non-language functions; language learning efficiency

Odnos študentov do uporabe maternega jezika pri poučevanju in učenju poslovne angleščine v terciarnem izobraževanju

POVZETEK

V zadnjih desetletjih je prevladoval enojezični pristop k poučevanju in učenju angleščine kot tujega jezika. Kljub temu pa se vse več študij ukvarja s proučevanjem vključevanja maternega jezika učencev v pouk angleščine kot tujega jezika. Vendar pa raziskave o uporabi maternega jezika pri poučevanju angleščine kot tujega strokovnega jezika niso zelo pogoste. Namen te študije je raziskati rabo slovenščine kot maternega jezika študentov pri poučevanju in učenju poslovne angleščine na terciarni stopnji s ciljem ugotoviti odnos študentov do učiteljeve rabe slovenščine in do njihove lastne rabe slovenščine med predavanji iz poslovne angleščine in pri njihovem učenju. V ta namen je bila izvedena kvantitativna raziskava, pri kateri smo z vprašalnikom pridobili mnenje študentov ekonomskih in poslovnih ved. Rezultati so pokazali, da nekateri študenti težijo k rabi slovenščine tako med predavanji kot tudi pri učenju poslovne angleščine, drugim pa je bližje enojezični pristop k usvajanju poslovne angleščine. To so predvsem študenti, ki imajo dobro ali odlično znanje poslovne angleščine. Rezultati so lahko koristni za poučevanje angleščine kot tujega jezika, saj kažejo na različne faktorje, ki vplivajo na usvajanje tujega jezika.

Ključne besede: materni jezik; poučevanje poslovne angleščine; jezikovne funkcije; nejezikovne funkcije; učinkovitost učenja tujega jezika



Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Slovene as L1 in Teaching and Learning of Business English at Tertiary Level

1 Introduction

There is an ongoing debate in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) about the inclusion or exclusion of the students' first language (L1) in this process. On the one hand, there is a school of thought that advocates the use of English only and the complete exclusion of students' L1 in class, i.e., both the teacher and the students should not resort to their L1 in the context of foreign language instruction and acquisition, with Krashen (1981) being the main supporter of this approach. On the other hand, there are those who support the inclusion of students' L1 in EFL teaching and learning (Deller and Rinvoluceri 2002; Tang 2002; Nation 2003; Widdowson 2003; Brooks-Lewis 2009) because they see the use of L1 as beneficial for a number of reasons (as a means of lessening the anxiety of students with a lower level of foreign language proficiency regarding their use of the foreign language, building students' self-confidence, giving L1 equivalents of foreign language terms, etc.).

Teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) shares a number of common features with teaching English for general purposes (EGP), as we can argue that both ESP and EGP are part of the English language and, consequently, one can adopt a similar (if not the same) method for teaching (and learning) either ESP or EGP. However, the main differences between these two 'areas' of English are shown in the context of teaching and in the purpose of instruction. That is, teaching and learning of ESP is carried out in order to obtain the knowledge of a specific segment of the English language which will be used in specific professional and/or vocational contexts. Students taking ESP courses learn English in order to be able to perform specific communicative tasks in English in their field of specialization. One of the main differences between ESP and EGP is seen in the use of specialized terminology pertinent to a given professional domain. Putting these differences between ESP and EGP aside, we can state that language teaching methods which are used in the context of EGP can also be applied in ESP teaching and learning contexts, as noted above.

In recent decades, a growing body of literature which recognises the importance of the use of students' L1 in this process has emerged (see, for example, Burden 2000; Tang 2002; Nation 2003; Dujmović 2007; Bouangeune 2009; Brooks-Lewis 2009; Cianflone 2009; Kovačić and Kirinić 2011; Debreli and Oyman 2015). Most frequently, these studies focus on teaching and learning English for general purposes. Nevertheless, this topic has also been investigated within the teaching and learning of English for specific purposes (see, for example, Fakharzadeh 2009; Kavaliauskienė 2009; Taylor 2014; Carrió-Pastor and Vallés 2015; Xhemaili 2016).

Studies on the use of students' L1 in foreign language teaching and learning have been performed also by Slovene researchers. These studies address the use of Slovene at different stages of language learning, from primary to tertiary education, and in different contexts (see, for example, Skela 1994, 2010; Grosman 2001, 2009; Pižorn 2008; Sešek 2009; Holc 2010; Stare Pušavec 2013). The use of Slovene as L1 in the teaching of foreign languages for specific purposes, however, has not been widely studied (Plos and Puklavc 2015).

The aim of this paper is to add to the body of knowledge on the use of Slovene as L1 in the process of teaching and learning English for specific purposes by reporting on our study, which aimed to

establish students' attitudes towards the use of Slovene as their first language (L1) in teaching and learning Business English at tertiary level. To achieve this goal, a quantitative study was performed which focused on the attitudes of students taking Business English courses at tertiary level within their economics and business and business administration undergraduate studies.

The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 gives a theoretical framework for the study. In Section 3, a presentation of the study design is given and in Section 4 the results of our study are presented and discussed. Finally, Section 5 summarizes the main findings with the implications of the findings for ESP teaching and for future research into the topic concerned.

2 Theoretical Framework

A huge variety of English (or any other foreign language) teaching methods have been advocated both past and present. As regards the use of L1 in teaching a foreign language (L2), we find methods that either welcome the inclusion of L1 or support the view that L1 should not be present in foreign language classes at all.

Historically, the grammar-translation method was largely dominant in foreign language teaching (Cook 2001a). As its name suggests, this method focuses on grammatical rules and structures as the basis for the instruction of L2 with the translation of different texts from one language to another. Although it supports the use of students' L1 (as a reference system for learning L2), it is not a method which would encourage the acquisition of communicative language skills because "most of the interaction in the classroom is from the teacher to the students [and there is] little student initiation and little student-student interaction" (Larsen-Freeman 2000, 16). Further, this method focuses mainly on reading and writing and little attention is given to listening and speaking (Larsen-Freeman 2000).

In contrast to this method, which utilized L1 in English language instruction, a number of well-established methods advocating 'English only' classes were developed in the past. These methods are, among others, the direct method and the audio-lingual method (Cook 2001a). The main principle behind the direct method is that in order to be able to communicate in L2, the students must learn how to think in that language. This method emphasises speaking over reading and vocabulary over grammar. "The initiation of the interaction goes both ways, from teacher to students and from student to teacher, although the latter is often teacher directed. Students converse with one another as well" (Larsen-Freeman 2000, 29). The audio-lingual method focuses on functional use of L2. Although it focuses on language structures (learning of vocabulary is not in the centre of attention) and although student-student interaction in L2 is common with this method, L2 is actually taught via drills (Larsen-Freeman 2000, 46–47).

Recently, emphasis has been given to the communicative approach, which focuses on the acquisition of communicative competence as the goal of learning a foreign language. It encourages the use of L2 "during communicative activities [and] for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework" (Larsen-Freeman 2000, 132). Carreres (2006) states that the communicative approach excludes the students' L1 from the EFL classroom, as it is considered as "counter-productive in the process of acquiring a new language, holding students back from expressing themselves freely in L2 and thus doing more harm than good" (as cited in Topolska-Pado 2011, 11).

The more recent approaches to foreign language learning are the task-based approach (Nunan 2004) and the content-based approach (Larsen-Freeman 2000). The main characteristic of the

first approach is its aim of creating a learning environment for students which would enable them to use L2 as naturally as possible in their communication to complete a given task (Larsen-Freeman 2000, 144). Concerning this approach, L1 use for the completion of tasks can be either an advantage or a disadvantage (i.e., the students may rely on the use of their L1 too much, which would reduce their use of L2). Regarding the content-based approach, which combines learning the language and some other specialized content, as is typical of ESP courses, (Larsen-Freeman 2000, 137), we see the benefit of L1 use mainly in the context of specialized terminology explanation (i.e., providing L1 equivalents of L2 terms).

As we have seen, opposing views and methods concerning the use of students' L1 in EFL teaching exist both in theory and in practice and all of these methods have benefits and drawbacks for the students' acquisition of English as a foreign language. Focusing on the 'English only' stance, the advocates of this approach argue that students should be immersed into English (as their L2), i.e., they should be exposed to as much English language input as possible, as this increases their acquisition of English (Cook 2001a). According to this belief, the thought processes associated with L1 and L2 should be kept apart, which means that in order to learn 'how to think' in English (and, consequently use English efficiently), students should not be exposed to their first language during EFL instruction (Cook 2001a).

However, the opponents of the 'English only' approach argue that the use of students' L1 in class is beneficial for a number of reasons. For example, students can benefit from L1 inclusion because they may feel safer in the English classroom, their progress can be faster at the beginner level, they may understand grammar better by comparing English (as L2) and L1 grammatical structures, and vocabulary similarities and differences may be presented (and learned) more easily; the students can basically draw on their knowledge of their L1 to facilitate their learning of English (Deller and Rinvoluceri 2002, 10). From the teacher's perspective, by juxtaposing the two languages, they may develop their students' linguistic awareness of different aspects of both languages (Deller and Rinvoluceri 2002). Also, the use of students' L1 may prove useful as it provides a short-cut for giving instructions and explanations where the cost of the L2 is too great; it builds up interlinked L1 and L2 knowledge in the students' minds (Cook 2001b, 418). Similarly, Ostovar-Namaghi and Norouzi (2015, 620) suggest the use of the students' mother tongue, if necessary, to make students feel safe if they cannot express themselves fully in L2 and as a background to the activities for teaching the four language skills (i.e., reading, listening, speaking and writing). Further, L1 can be used to avoid potential misunderstandings, to help students with comprehension if the explanation in L2 is ineffective, to facilitate different language learning strategies and to raise students' metacognitive awareness, etc. (Ostovar-Namaghi and Norouzi 2015).

When foreign language teaching and learning occurs in a classroom setting, a great deal of interaction/communication takes place between the students and the teacher as well as between the students themselves. In class, communication between the teacher and the students occurs for 'language teaching' purposes, or for 'class management' purposes. For example, the teachers' use of language for 'language teaching' purposes may include explaining lesson aims and learning objectives, giving task instructions, explaining language-related issues such as grammar, vocabulary, functions, or checking comprehension, etc. As regards 'class management' purposes, the teacher uses language, for example, to build a rapport with the students, to discuss administrative issues related to class and so on. The communication between students themselves mainly revolves around language learning activities (e.g., speaking tasks, teamwork or pair-

work communication) but it also addresses other course-related issues. In an EFL class, this communication can be carried out primarily in English, but some of it can also be conducted in the students' L1. The choice of L1 use in different situations in the classroom setting depends on a number of factors, including the purpose of communication, the teacher's chosen method of foreign language teaching, the students' English language (as a foreign language) proficiency and their learning styles as well as students' attitudes towards learning English and a variety of emotional and psychological aspects (e.g., students' fear of making mistakes, discomfort, anxiety, motivation, etc.).

2.1 Research Questions

Based on the above considerations and previous research into the topic under discussion, and taking into account the context of our study (i.e., the use of Slovene as the students' L1 in teaching and learning Business English at tertiary level), our research was carried out to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the students' opinions regarding the overall use of Slovene and English and the teacher's use of Slovene and English in class in different situations?

RQ2: What are the students' opinions regarding the impact of the use of English and Slovene on their learning of Business English?

RQ3: What are the students' views about their own use of Slovene in a Business English class?

3 The Study

3.1 Study Participants

The participants in this study were the first-year, second-year and third-year students of economics and business (i.e., undergraduate university programme 'Economics and Business Studies' – BUN; BUN1, BUN2, BUN3) and of business administration (i.e., undergraduate higher professional education programme 'Business Administration' – BVS; BVS1, BVS2, BVS3)¹ at the Faculty of Economics and Business, the University of Maribor. The total number of students taking part in this study was 174 (BUN1 – 31, BUN2 – 24, BUN3 – 14; BVS1 – 31, BVS2 – 31, BVS3 – 43). One-hundred and eleven (111) students were female and 63 were male. Their average age was 21.05 years. The students had Business English as their selected foreign language.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study was collected via a questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire was based on the existing questionnaires on the use of mother tongue in foreign language classrooms (Liao 2006; Al Sharaeai 2012; Calis and Dikilitas 2012; Mutlu and Bayram and Demirbüken 2015). The adaptations to the existing questionnaires were made primarily in that we focused on Business English and not on general English.

¹ The students enrolled in the BUN programme, have, on average, a higher level of English language knowledge than the students enrolled in the BVS programme.

In order to identify the opinions of our students regarding the use of Slovene in the teaching and learning of Business English, the students were asked to give their opinions on a number of statements concerning various aspects of mother tongue use by teachers and by students both in class and when studying. The total number of statements was 23. For these statements, a 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = *totally disagree*, 2 = *disagree*; 3 = *partially agree*; 4 = *agree*; 5 = *totally agree*). In addition, the students had to state the perceived level of their Business English knowledge. The two demographic questions in the questionnaire were gender and age. The questionnaire was administered in the summer semester of the academic year 2015/2016.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software (version 21). The questionnaire's internal consistency reliability was calculated by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results of this analysis showed that the questionnaire was reliable (Cronbach Alpha = .755).

4 Results and Discussion

In this section, we present and discuss the results of our analysis of the students' attitudes towards the use of Slovene in teaching and learning Business English.

For each set of statements related to our research questions, we ran ANOVA tests in order to see if there were any statistically significant differences in the students' responses among the six groups of students (i.e., BUN1, BUN2, BUN3, BVS1, BVS2, and BVS3). This was necessary due to the differences among the groups of students in terms of their level of English language knowledge. Apart from the analysis of the degree of students' agreement with the statements in the questionnaire, we also performed correlation analyses (Pearson product-moment coefficient) and cross-tabulations to establish any potential links between them. The results are presented and discussed for each research question separately.

4.1 Research Question 1

The first research question (RQ1) aimed to establish two things: i.e., the students' opinions regarding the overall use of Slovene in Business English class and their opinions regarding the teacher's use of Slovene and English in different situations. The students had to state their degree of agreement with the following statements:

S1: Business English lectures should be entirely in English (neither the students nor the teacher should use Slovene).

S16: I would like my teacher to use as little Slovene as possible during Business English classes.

S17: I prefer if my Business English teacher uses Slovene in class when we discuss matters related to class and not to the course contents (e.g., setting dates, administrative matters, etc.).

S18: I prefer if my Business English teacher uses Slovene in class when she gives task instructions (course contents related tasks).

The ANOVAs for this set of statements revealed that there were significant differences ($p < .5$) among the responses of the six groups of students participating in our study. This is why we present and comment on the results for each statement separately. The average degrees of agreement with the statements related to RQ1 are presented in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1. Students' opinions regarding the use of Slovene and English in Business English class in different situations, N= 174.

	BUN1 (n=31)		BUN2 (n=24)		BUN3 (n=14)		BVS1 (n=31)		BVS2 (n=31)		BVS3 (n=43)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S1: English only for T & Ss	3.29	.973	3.58	.974	3.00	1.109	2.77	1.117	2.87	1.118	2.70	1.264
S16: T uses ENG as little use of SLO as possible	3.29	.973	3.67	1.090	3.43	.852	2.84	1.157	2.77	.990	2.74	1.274
S17: T uses SLO _ class matters	3.61	1.116	3.21	1.215	3.79	1.122	3.87	1.024	3.16	1.128	3.63	1.176
S18: T uses SLO _ task instructions	2.90	.870	2.25	1.032	2.86	.864	3.32	1.107	3.03	1.048	3.35	1.089

Table 1 shows that, overall, BUN students agreed to a higher degree than BVS students that Business English classes should be carried out in English only and that Slovene should not be used at all. The highest average degree of agreement with the belief that Business English classes should be delivered in English only (S1) was observed with the BUN2 group, followed by the BUN1 group. On the other side of the scale, the lowest degree of agreement was observed with BVS3 students, followed by BVS1 students. The post hoc ANOVA test for these statements (Turkey HSD) revealed that the opinions of students in the BUN2 group were significantly different from the opinions of the BVS3 group ($r=.809$, $p<.05$).

Table 1 also shows that the students in the BUN2 group would prefer their teacher to use Slovene in class as little as possible (S16) the most, followed by BUN3 students, and that BVS3 students would tend to disagree with this statement the most, followed by BVS2 students, which is in a way consistent with the results obtained for S1. This was also confirmed by the post hoc ANOVA test (Turkey HSD), which showed a significant difference between the opinions of BUN2 students and of BVS2 ($r=.892$, $p<.05$) and BVS3 students ($r=.922$, $p<.05$).

As regards the teacher's use of Slovene for talking about class-related matters such as administration (S17), we found that BVS1 and BVS3 students would prefer such matters to be discussed in Slovene the most, while BUN2 and BVS2 students would like this the least. However, we should point out that all the average scores are above 3 for all groups, which means that the students would either partly agree or agree with the statement (N=174, overall M=3.54, overall SD=1.146). The post hoc ANOVA test (Turkey HSD) did not reveal any statistically significant differences among the groups' responses to this statement.

Looking at the students' attitudes towards the teacher's use of Slovene when giving task instructions (S18), we found that, on average, BVS students would much rather receive these instructions in

Slovene than BUN students, who would prefer their teacher to give task instructions in English and not in Slovene. The post hoc ANOVA test (Turkey HSD) showed a statistically significant difference between the BUN2 and BVS1 group ($r=-1.073$, $p<.05$) and between the BUN2 and BVS3 group ($r=-1.099$, $p<.05$).

Studying the significant positive correlations between the statements related to RQ1 (Pearson product-moment coefficient), we found, among other things, that those students whose overall opinion was that neither the students nor the teacher should use Slovene during Business English lectures (S1) also agreed that their teacher should use as little Slovene as possible during class (S16) (BUN1: $r=.436$, $p<.05$; BUN2: $r=.0641$, $p<.001$; BVS1: $r=.667$, $p<.001$; BVS2: $r=.545$, $p<.001$; BVS3: $r=.779$, $p<.001$). On the other hand, the negative correlations established between the statements related to RQ1 were that those students who would prefer their teacher to use as little Slovene as possible (S16) would not wish their teacher to use Slovene when talking about course-related matters (S17), which was statistically significant in the BUN2 group ($r=-.719$, $p<.001$). Similarly, those students who would prefer their teacher to use predominantly English (S16) would not wish to receive task instructions in Slovene (S18) (BUN1: $r=-.360$, $p<.05$; BUN3: $r=-.438$, $p<.05$; BVS1: $r=-.478$, $p<.001$; BVS3: $r=-.707$, $p<.001$). In addition, the students in BVS1, BVS2 and BVS3 groups who would like English-only classes (S1) disliked the fact that the teacher would give task instructions in Slovene (S18) (BVS1: $r=-.424$, $p<.05$; BVS2: $r=-.423$, $p<.05$; BVS3: $r=-.787$, $p<.001$), which in fact makes sense as these two approaches contrast.

Apart from these correlations, we established significant positive correlations between the statements S17 and S18. That is, those students who preferred that the teacher used Slovene when matters related to class and not to course contents were discussed (S17) also preferred that the teacher give task instructions in Slovene (S18). This correlation was statistically significant for the BUN2 group ($r=.719$, $p<.001$), BVS1 group ($r=.449$, $p<.05$), BVS2 group ($r=.644$, $p<.001$) and BVS3 group ($r=.718$, $p<.001$).

Based on these results obtained in relation to RQ1, we can place our students into two groups, i.e., those students who prefer that their teacher uses English only in Business English class (or at least as little Slovene as possible) and those who would welcome the use of Slovene in class (e.g., for giving task instructions and for discussing class and course-related administrative matters). To find the reason for these two distinct groups, we looked at whether the students' perceived level of their Business English (BE) knowledge was an influencing factor. There was a significant correlation between the students' perceived level of their BE knowledge and the opinion that the BE teacher should use English only (S1). We found that those students who considered their knowledge of Business English to be very good or excellent were also more inclined to having English-only classes than those who rated their knowledge of Business English as very bad or bad. Out of all 6 groups, BUN2 students were the strongest as regards their level of English language proficiency.

4.2 Research Question 2

The second research question (RQ2) addressed the *beliefs of students regarding the impact which the use of Slovene and English in class has on their learning of Business English*. The statements in the questionnaire referring to this question were:

S2: BE teacher should use English and Slovene during classes because this facilitates my understanding of the lecture's contents.

S3: The use of Slovene during BE classes reduces the amount of BE that I receive in class and I do not like this.

S4: Slovene should be used in Business English classes because it is important to be aware of the differences between English and Slovene.

S6: I am motivated to learn Business English if the teacher uses only English during BE classes.

S12: I learn the contents of BE lessons faster if the teacher uses English only.

Similar to the statements for RQ1, the ANOVA tests revealed some statistically significant differences in the answers among the six groups of students in our study. For that reason, the data is again presented for each statement and group separately (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. Students' beliefs about the impact the use of Slovene and English in class has on their learning of Business English, N= 174.

	BUN1 (n=31)		BUN2 (n=24)		BUN3 (n=14)		BVS1 (n=31)		BVS2 (n=31)		BVS3 (n=43)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<i>S2: T's use of ENG + SLO / comprehension</i>	3.45	1.028	2.96	1.160	4.50	.760	4.10	1.248	4.13	1.088	3.88	1.179
<i>S3: T's use of SLO_less ENG input = dislike</i>	2.87	1.056	2.96	1.517	1.86	1.099	2.13	.957	2.45	1.207	2.60	1.137
<i>S4: SLO_ENG differences awareness</i>	3.16	1.003	2.96	.301	3.93	.917	3.94	.892	3.71	1.039	3.70	.964
<i>S6: ENG only motivation to learn</i>	3.45	1.028	3.67	1.049	3.36	.842	2.52	.926	2.97	1.303	2.81	1.180
<i>S12: ENG only_learn BE contents faster</i>	3.16	.860	3.67	.917	3.21	.802	2.65	1.082	3.00	1.125	2.81	1.097

As we can see in Table 2, the BUN3 group considered the use of Slovene by the teacher as a very important factor for their comprehension of the course contents (S2), followed by the BVS2 and BVS1 groups. This could be due to the fact that the BUN3 course is delivered at C1 (CEFR) level, which some students may find challenging. On the other hand, the students in BUN2 group did not perceive the teacher's use of Slovene as something which would facilitate their comprehension of the contents of BE lectures. The post hoc ANOVA test (Turkey HSD) for this

statement revealed significant differences between the responses of the BUN3 group and BUN1 group ($r=.048$, $p<.05$) and BUN3 group and BUN2 group ($r=1.542$, $p<.05$); BUN2 group and BVS1 group ($r=-1.138$, $p<.05$), BUN2 group and BVS2 group ($r=-1.171$, $p<.05$), BUN2 group and BVS3 group ($r=-.925$, $p<.05$).

In connection with the amount of English language input in class (S3), we observed that BUN3 students did not dislike the teacher's use of Slovene. On the other hand, BUN2 and BUN1 groups disliked the fact that the teacher's use of Slovene reduces the amount of Business English they are exposed to in class. The ANOVA post hoc test (Turkey HSD) for this statement, however, did not reveal any statistically significant differences among the six groups.

The BUN1 and BUN2 groups were the only groups that did not consider the use of Slovene in Business English class as an important factor in raising awareness of the differences between English and Slovene. The average scores of these two groups were significantly lower than those of the other four groups. Significant differences in responses were thus observed between the BUN1 group and BVS1 group ($r=-.774$, $p<.05$), and between the BUN2 group and BVS1 group ($r=-.977$, $p<.05$) (Turkey HSD). Both BVS1 and BUN3 students agreed the most with the statement that Slovene should be used in order to raise awareness of the differences between English and Slovene.

Overall, BUN groups demonstrated higher degrees of agreement with the statement that the teacher's English-only approach in BE lessons is a motivator for learning Business English (S6) to those of BVS groups. Again, there were differences between the average scores per group, i.e., BUN1 average was significantly different to the BVS1 average ($r=.935$, $p<.05$), while the BUN2 average differed significantly from the BVS1 average ($r=1.151$, $p<.05$) and BVS3 average ($r=.853$, $p<.05$) (Turkey HSD).

Regarding the speed of learning the contents of BE lessons faster if the teacher uses English only (S12), we found that the BUN groups reported a higher level of agreement with this statement than the BVS groups, with BUN2 being at the top and BVS1 at the bottom. The difference in the responses was statistically significant between the BUN2 group and BVS1 group ($r=1.022$, $p<.05$) and BVS3 group ($r=.853$, $p<.05$) (Turkey HSD).

To gain further insight into the students' perceptions regarding the impact which the use of Slovene and English in class has on their learning of Business English in general, we performed a set of correlation analyses for each group of students (Pearson product-moment coefficient). We found a number of both positive and negative correlations between the statements for each group. We established that the students who considered the teacher's use of Slovene as the facilitator of their understanding of the lesson's contents (S2) also agreed that Slovene should be used to raise awareness of the differences between English and Slovene (S4) (BUN1: $r=.574$, $p<.01$; BUN2: $r=.431$, $p<.05$; BUN3: $r=.781$, $p<.01$; BVS1: $r=.545$, $p<.01$; BVS2: $r=.506$, $p<.01$; BVS3: $r=.743$, $p<.01$). On the other hand, the students who were motivated to learn BE because the teacher uses only English (S6) also reported that they learn the contents of BE lessons faster if the teacher uses only English (S12) (BUN1: $r=-.631$, $p<.01$; BUN2: $r=-.648$, $p<.01$; BUN3: $r=-.676$, $p<.01$; BVS1: $r=.422$, $p<.05$; BVS2: $r=.614$, $p<.01$; BVS3: $r=.524$, $p<.01$).

On the other hand, we found that in four out of six groups, the students who were motivated to learn Business English because the teacher uses only English in class (S6) would disagree that Slovene facilitates their understanding of lesson contents (S2) (BUN1: $r=-.484$, $p<.01$;

BVS1= $r=-.448$, $p<.05$; BVS2: $r=-.538$, $p<.01$; BVS3: $r=-.615$, $p<.01$). Some students also disliked the teacher's use of Slovene as it reduced the amount of English they receive in class (S6 and S3) (BUN1: $r=.516$, $p<.01$; BUN2: $r=.701$, $p<.01$; BVS2: $r=.497$, $p<.01$; BVS3: $r=.742$, $p<.01$). Similarly, those students who disliked the fact that the teacher's use of Slovene reduced the amount of English language input they receive in class (S3) did not consider it important to have the differences between English and Slovene pointed out (S4) (BUN1: $r=-.451$, $p<.01$; BUN2: $r=-.529$, $p<.01$; BVS1: $r=-.497$, $p<.01$; BVS2: $r=-.424$, $p<.05$; BVS3: $r=-.633$, $p<.01$). The students who are motivated to learn Business English because their teacher uses English only in class (S6), tended to dislike the use of Slovene as a way of pointing out the differences between English and Slovene (S4) (BUN1: $r=-.429$, $p<.05$; BUN2: $r=-.488$; $p<.05$; BVS1: $r=-.563$, $p<.01$; BVS2: $r=-.524$, $p<.001$; BVS3: $r=-.532$, $p<.01$).

Similar to our findings on the first research question, we also established that we can divide the students into two distinct groups. Again, there was the 'English only' group that considered the 'English only' approach to be a positive motivating factor for learning Business English. They agreed that they learn Business English faster this way, but they also saw no need for the differences between English and Slovene to be highlighted in class. The other group, i.e., the group that would not be against the use of Slovene in class, considered it important to be aware of the differences between the two languages. Also, they agreed that the use of Slovene in class facilitates their understanding of contents addressed within the Business English course. Similar to RQ1, the students' perceived level of their Business English language knowledge was a factor which influenced their attitudes towards the use of English and/or Slovene in class. That is, the students with a perceived higher level of BE tended to lean towards the 'English only' classes.

4.3 Research Question 3

The third research question (RQ3) focused on the attitudes of students towards and their use of Slovene or English during Business English lessons. For this question, two groups of statements had to be rated: (a) *the statements concerning the students' attitudes towards their use of Slovene/English in class*, and (b) *the statements concerning their actual use of Slovene /English in class*. The statements included in the questionnaire to determine our students' attitudes towards their use of Slovene/English in class are given below. The results for these two groups of statements are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

(a) Students' attitudes towards their use of Slovene /English in class

S5: During lessons, the BE teacher should allow the students to express themselves in Slovene when they feel that they cannot express themselves adequately in English (e.g., during discussions).

S7: I feel under pressure when I have to use English only during Business English classes.

S8: I feel less stressed if the BE teacher occasionally uses Slovene during class to explain something.

S9: I feel strange if I have to speak in English with my classmates when we do group assignments in class, even when tasks are 'discuss the topic'/'discuss the advantages and disadvantages of xxx'.

S10: I want to be able to speak Slovene during BE classes when I feel that I need to.

S11: The BE teacher should insist that the students use only English during lessons (should make us use English only).

S15: It is not important that I speak only English in class as long as I complete all the tasks that I have to.

TABLE 3. Students' attitudes towards their use of Slovene / English in class, N= 174.

	BUN1 (n=31)		BUN2 (n=24)		BUN3 (n=14)		BVS1 (n=31)		BVS2 (n=31)		BVS3 (n=43)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<i>S5: Teacher allows Ss use SLO (need)</i>	3.48	.890	2.67	.917	3.50	1.092	3.58	1.205	3.58	1.119	3.77	1.088
<i>S7: Use ENG only = pressure</i>	2.94	1.315	2.21	1.474	2.86	1.610	3.13	1.335	3.32	1.326	3.51	1.387
<i>S8: Occasional use of SLO = feel less stressed</i>	3.32	1.194	2.75	1.391	3.79	1.251	4.03	1.110	4.03	1.016	3.84	1.132
<i>S9: ENG = strange group discussions</i>	2.74	1.094	2.17	1.167	2.86	1.292	2.94	1.482	3.16	1.293	3.47	1.099
<i>S10: Use SLO if need</i>	3.39	.919	2.63	1.096	3.64	1.277	3.74	1.125	3.71	1.101	3.77	1.212
<i>S11: T insists on Ss use ENG only</i>	3.00	1.183	3.63	1.209	2.71	1.069	2.45	1.121	2.81	.980	2.56	1.221
<i>S15: Can use SLO if tasks completed</i>	2.68	1.077	2.25	1.113	3.29	.914	3.42	1.311	3.13	1.284	3.30	1.059

On average, BVS students felt under greater pressure if they were forced to use English only in class (S7), which was most evident in the BVS3 group. On the other hand, BUN students would not feel under pressure in the same situation. The post hoc tests (Turkey HSD) revealed statistically significant differences between the BUN2 and BVS2 group ($r=-1.114$, $p<.05$) and between the BUN2 and BVS3 group ($r=-1.303$, $p<.05$). These results are consistent with the fact that the occasional use of Slovene in class would make students feel less stressed (S8). This is especially true for the BVS1 and BVS2 groups. Interestingly, only BVS2 and BVS3 students would feel odd if they had to speak in English during group discussions (S9). This is surprising since the aim of these activities is to practice speaking and enhance students' fluency in English. Their responses were significantly different from the responses of BUN2 students (BVS2: $r=-.995$, $p<.05$; BVS3: $r=-1.298$, $p<.05$).

Almost all groups except the BUN2 (and partially BUN1) group would prefer to be able to use Slovene when they feel that it is necessary (S10). The inclination to use Slovene was more evident in BVS groups and it was also strong in the BUN3 group. Similar results were observed with S15, i.e., the students felt that their use of Slovene in class is acceptable as long as they complete all the tasks. Again, BUN2 and BUN1 students did not seem to agree with this. BUN2 groups differentiated the most from the BVS1 group ($r=-1.169$, $p<.05$) and BVS3 group ($r=-1.052$, $p<.05$). Also, the same groups of students except the BUN2 group would prefer the teacher to allow students to use Slovene if they feel that they cannot express themselves adequately in English, e.g., during discussions (S5) (BUN2 and BVS1: $r=-.914$, $p<.05$; BUN2 and BVS2: $r=-.914$, $p<.05$; BUN2 and BVS3; $r=-1.101$, $p<.05$), and only the BUN2 group was more likely to agree that the teacher should make students use English only during Business English lessons (S11). Here, the strongest and the most significant difference was again between the BUN2 group and BVS1 and BVS3 groups (BVS1: $r=1.173$, $p<.05$; BVS3: $r=-1.067$, $p<.05$).

(b) Students' actual use of Slovene /English in class:

S13: I tend to speak in Slovene rather than in English when we do group-work (or pair-work) in class.

S14: When we do group-work (or pair-work) in class, we talk to each other in Slovene because this makes us more efficient (e.g., we finish the task faster).

S19: When I have to say something in English during the lesson, I first think of what I want to say in Slovene and then I translate that into English.

S20: When I have to write in English, I first think of what I want to write about in Slovene and then I translate that into English.

S21: In a BE class, I speak Slovene to my classmates when I'm explaining a point in the lesson to them.

S22: In a BE class, I speak Slovene to my classmates when I need to ask them to explain a point in the lesson to me.

S23: If my classmates start talking to me in Slovene while we are working on a task in class, I still prefer (continue) to speak in English.

The results of students' responses regarding their actual use of Slovene and/or English in class are shown in Table 4.

On average, BVS3 and BUN3 students stated that they preferred to use Slovene when doing some activities in groups (or in pairs) the most; however, their inclination to do so did not differ in statistical significance from the other groups (Turkey HSD). The same was not the case with statement 14, where statistically significant differences were established between the BUN2 group and BVS3 group – BUN2 students would tend to disagree that the use of Slovene during group work activities would make them more efficient (average = 2.88), whereas the BVS students would agree to this (average= 4.00 = 'agree').

Regarding statement S19 (think first in Slovene then speak in English), BUN2 group's responses differed radically from the rest as they disagreed with this statement the most. Interestingly, BVS students (all three groups) would prefer this approach the most (among all six groups) with the BVS3 group leading, followed by the BVS1 group. Very similar results were observed with

TABLE 4. Students' actual use of Slovene / English in Business English class, N= 174.

	BUN1 (n=31)		BUN2 (n=24)		BUN3 (n=14)		BVS1 (n=31)		BVS2 (n=31)		BVS3 (n=43)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<i>S13: Use SLO in group-work</i>	3.55	.888	3.25	1.327	3.93	.997	3.45	1.028	3.45	1.121	3.72	1.076
<i>S14: SLO use in group = more efficient</i>	3.52	.786	2.88	1.116	3.57	1.158	3.61	1.230	3.65	1.199	4.00	1.024
<i>S19: Think first in SLO than speak in ENG</i>	3.10	1.165	2.08	1.349	3.29	1.684	3.55	1.207	3.39	1.358	3.91	.868
<i>S20: Think first in SLO than write in ENG</i>	3.32	1.275	2.25	1.391	3.50	1.454	3.55	1.234	3.45	1.179	4.00	.926
<i>S21: Use SLO – explain sth. to classmates</i>	4.00	.894	3.54	1.021	3.86	.949	3.87	1.231	3.90	.908	4.05	.925
<i>S22: Use SLO to ask classmates for explanation</i>	3.97	.948	4.08	1.018	4.36	.842	4.06	.964	4.03	.836	4.44	.734
<i>S23: Insist on ENG if others use SLO</i>	1.77	1.055	2.00	1.216	1.57	.646	1.71	.864	1.74	.773	1.42	.587

statement S20 (think first in Slovene then write in English) where the BUN2 group again stood out from the other groups. Similar to before, BVS groups relied on Slovene when wanting to write something in English, with the BVS3 and BVS1 groups again being in the lead.

Focusing on the student-to-student interaction in class which is not task related, we observed that all groups have a high tendency to use Slovene when either asking their classmates for an explanation or explaining something to their classmates – all groups had average scores well above than 3.5. On the 5-point Likert scale, this means that overall they tend to do so frequently. This shows that students, including those who prefer 'English only' classes, do not consider communication with their classmates which is not task related as part of English language

learning and an opportunity to maximize their use of English in class (despite the fact that they require ‘English only’ communication from the teacher). However, the reason for this behaviour might also be that they consider it odd to discuss some matters with their colleagues in English while they share the same first language.

Although many students would opt for ‘English only’ classes, S23 revealed that they would not insist on using English (or would not continue to use English) when they start talking to them in Slovene (the average score for S23 was between 1.42 and 2).

Looking at the correlations between these statements, we found that those students who would rather use Slovene during pair-work and group-work would also tend to use Slovene either to explain a point in the lesson to their classmates (S13 + S21: $r=.383$, $p<.001$) or ask their classmates for an explanation (S13 + S22: $r=.317$, $p<.001$); also, we established that those students who would rather use Slovene than English in group activities believed that the use of Slovene makes group-work more efficient (S13 + S14: $r = .659$, $p<.01$). The same students would also tend to think in Slovene first about what they have to say in English.

Regarding those students who would think in Slovene first about what they have to say or write in English, we found that they would tend to disagree with the statement that the BE teacher should insist on the students’ use of only English during lessons (should make them use English only). Indeed, they would prefer the teacher to allow the students to use Slovene if they felt like they could not express themselves adequately in English. These results indicate that the students who rely on Slovene for communication either with their classmates and/or teacher would not like the classes to be delivered entirely in English, or that the teacher should not insist on them using English only in class.

As with the previous two research questions, our study established a division into two groups of students. The ‘English-only’ group included those students who do not tend to use Slovene in group-work (pair-work) activities and also do not use Slovene in their preparation for speaking/writing tasks. On the other hand, the students who do welcome the use of Slovene during Business English classes tend to use Slovene in group-work (pair-work) activities and tend to use Slovene in their preparation for speaking/writing. They also see the use of Slovene as a contributing factor to their efficiency in task completion. The level of Business English knowledge again played an important role in the students’ responses.

5 Conclusion

Our study investigated business students’ attitudes towards the use of Slovene in Business English courses. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that our students can be divided into two distinct groups as regards their attitude towards the use of Slovene when learning Business English. On the one hand, we have a strong group of students who would prefer ‘English only’ classes, since they see this approach as beneficial and motivating for their acquisition of Business English. These are also the students who, on average, perceive their knowledge of English either as very good or excellent. On the other hand, there are the students who rely on Slovene in their learning of Business English, usually because their English language knowledge is relatively poor and the possibility of using Slovene makes them feel less anxious.

Another important conclusion which can be drawn from our study is that in all six groups there were students who would prefer ‘English only’ classes and students who would like to use

Slovene, too. In other words, what is perceived as useful and motivating for the study of Business English by some students is considered as demotivating by others.

The findings of this study therefore have some significant implications for teaching practice. The true challenge for the teacher is to find a balance between these opposing attitudes, since, in our opinion, they are both valid and have to be taken into account to attain the ultimate goal of teaching and learning, i.e., that our students become competent and confident users of English. The teacher could address these differences in students' opinions regarding the L1 use in class by explaining to students who prefer 'English only' classes why Slovene could or should be used in class (for instance, to raise awareness of the differences between the two languages, to present specialized terminology English and the equivalent terms in Slovene). On the other hand, those students who rely on the use of Slovene (mainly due to their lower level of English language proficiency) should learn that the more they use English and the less they rely on Slovene (even though the use of English might make them feel uncomfortable), the faster they will improve their English language proficiency. The latter could be achieved by arranging classroom work in mixed-ability groups, building on students' motivation and confidence through language tasks that are challenging, yet not too difficult to complete.

In conclusion, we should state that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' recipe for the use of L1 in class, as each teaching situation is different and requires the teacher to make a judicious decision regarding the use of L1. Future research on the use of L1 in the context of ESP teaching and learning which would focus on the individual aspects of teachers' and students' L1 use in various ESP contexts is thus welcome.

References

- Al Sharaeai, Wafa Abdo Ahmed. 2012. "Students' Perspectives on the Use of L1 in English Classrooms." Master's thesis, Iowa State University. <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3905&context=etd>.
- Brooks-Lewis, Kimberly Anne. 2009. "Adult Learners' Perceptions of the Incorporation of Their L1 in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning." *Applied Linguistics* 30 (2): 216–35. doi:10.1093/applin/amm051.
- Burden, Peter. 2000. "The Use of the Students' Mother Tongue in Monolingual English 'Conversation' Classes at Japanese Universities." *The Language Teacher Online* 24 (6). http://jalt-publications.org/old_tlt/articles/2000/06/burden.
- Calis, Eda, and Kenan Dikilitas. 2012. "The Use of Translation in EFL Classes as L2 Learning Practice." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 46: 5079–84. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.389.
- Carrió-Pastor, María Luisa, and Inmaculada Tamarit Vallés. 2015. "A Comparative Study of the Influence of the Mother Tongue in LSP and CLIL." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 178: 38–42. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.143.
- Cianflone, Eugenio. 2009. "L1 Use in English Courses at University Level." *ESP World* 8 (22): 1–6. http://www.esp-world.info/Articles_22/PDF/L1%20use%20in%20English%20Courses%20at%20University%20Level.pdf.
- Cook, Vivian. 2001a. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. London, New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2001b. "Using the First Language in the Classroom." *Canadian Modern Language Review* 57 (3): 402–23. doi:10.3138/cmlr.57.3.402.

- Debreli, Emre and Nadire Oyman. 2015. "Students' Preferences on the Use of Mother Tongue in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms: Is It the Time to Re-examine English-only Policies?" *English Language Teaching* 9 (1): 148–62. doi:10.5539/elt.v9n1p148.
- Deller, Sheelagh, and Mario Rinvoluceri. 2002. *Using the Mother Tongue: Making the Most of the Learner's Language*. London: English Teaching Professional; Addlestone: Delta.
- Dujmović, Mauro. 2007. "The Use of Croatian in the EFL Classroom." *Metodički obzori* 2 (3): 91–101.
- Fakharzadeh, Mehrnoosh, and Abbas Eslami Rasekh. 2009. "Why's of Pro-First Language Use Arguments in ESP Context." *English for Specific Purposes World* 8 (5): 1–10.
- Grosman, Meta. 2001. "Zavest o materinščini pri pouku tujih jezikov." In *Materini jezik na pragu 21. stoletja = The mother tongue on the doorstep of 21st century: Zbornik Mednarodnega simpozija Materini jezik na pragu 21. stoletja, Portorož, 2. december 1999*. 32–39. Ljubljana: Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo.
- . 2008. "Slovenščina in tuji jeziki – s stališča učenca." In *Jeziki v izobraževanju: zbornik prispevkov konference, Ljubljana, 25.–26. septembra 2008 = Languages in education: proceedings, Ljubljana, September 25–26, 2008*, 165–74. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.
- Holc, Nada. 2010. "Večjezičnost kot dejstvo, cilj, obogatitev." In *Drugi tuji jezik v osnovni šoli*, edited by Lilijana Kač et al., 38–73. Ljubljana: Zavod RS za šolstvo.
- Kavaliauskienė, Galina. 2009. "Role of Mother Tongue in Learning English for Specific Purposes." *ESP World* 8 (1): 1–12. http://www.esp-world.info/Articles_22/issue_22.htm.
- Kovačič, Andreja and Valentina Kirinič. 2011. "To Use or Not to Use: First Language in Tertiary Instruction of English as a Foreign Language." In *1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, Sarajevo, May 5–7 2011*, 150–59. http://eprints.ibu.edu.ba/26/1/FLTAL%202011%20Proceed%20Book_1_p150-p159.pdf.
- Krashen, Stephen. 1981. *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 2000. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press.
- Latsanyphone, Soulinavong, and Souvannasy Bouangeune. 2009. "Using L1 in Teaching Vocabulary to Low English Proficiency Level Students: A Case Study at the University of Laos." *English Language Teaching Journal* 2 (3): 186–93. doi:10.5539/elt.v2n3p186.
- Liao, Posen. 2006. "EFL Learners' Beliefs about and Strategy Use of Translation in English Learning." *RELC Journal* 37 (2): 191–215. doi:10.1177/0033688206067428.
- Mutlu, Gizem, Dilan Bayram, and Buket Demirbüken. 2015. "Translation as a Learning Strategy of Turkish EFL Learners." *International Journal on New Trends in Education & Their Implications (IJONTE)* 6 (2): 236–45.
- Nation, Paul. "The Role of the First Language in Foreign Language Learning." *Asian EFL Journal* 5(2): 1–8. http://asian-efl-journal.com/june_2003_pn.pdf.
- Nunan, David. 2004. *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ostovar-Namaghi, Seyyed Ali and Shabnam Norouzi. 2015. "First Language Use in Teaching a Foreign Language: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Findings." *US-China Foreign Language* 13: 615–22.
- Pižorn, Karmen. 2008. "Vpliv domačih govorcev angleščine na rabo slovenščine pri pouku angleščine v slovenskih šolah." In: *Učenje in poučevanje tujih jezikov na Slovenskem: pregled sodobne teorije in prakse*, edited by Janez Skela, 215–25. Ljubljana: Tangram.
- Plos, Alenka, and Nada Puklavec. 2015. "Učiteljeva raba materinščine pri pouku tujega jezika stroke – da ali ne?" In: *Raziskovanje tujega jezika stroke v Sloveniji*, edited by Violeta Jurković and Slavica Čepon, 53–83. Ljubljana: Slovensko društvo učiteljev tujega strokovnega jezika. <http://www.sdutsj.edus.si/RaziskovanjeTJSvSloveniji>.

- Sešek, Urška. 2009. "Naša učiteljica pa ves čas govori angleško!: pomen učiteljeve rabe jezika pri tujejezikovnem pouku." *Vestnik za tuje jezike*, 1 (1/2): 113–19.
- Skela, Janez. 1994. "Materinščina pri poučevanju in učenju tujega jezika: zmota, potreba ali pravica?" *Uporabno jezikoslovje* 3: 72–83.
- . 2010. "Tuji jeziki in materinščina: vljudni gostje v našem domu ali vsiljivci?" In *Pot k jezikovni politiki v izobraževanju*, edited by Joseph Lo Bianco, Barica Marentič-Požarnik and Milena Ivšek, 136–64. Ljubljana: Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo.
- Stare Pušavec, Tanja. 2013. "Uporaba materinščine pri pouku tujega jezika." In *Turizem, izobraževanje in management: soustvarjanje uspešne poslovne prihodnosti: 4. znanstvena konferenca z mednarodno udeležbo, 24.–25. oktober 2013, Portorož: zbornik povzetkov = proceedings*, 263–64. Koper: Založba Univerze na Primorskem.
- Tang, Jinlan. 2002. "Using L1 in the English Classroom." *English Teaching Forum* 40 (1): 36–43.
- Taylor, Pimsiri. 2014. "Mother Tongue and Identity in a Thai ESP Classroom: A Communities-of-Practice Perspective." *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* 7 (1): 76–90.
- Topolska-Pado, Jadwiga. 2011. "Use of L1 and L2 in the EFL Classroom." *Zeszyty Glottodydaktyczne* 3: 11–25.
- Widdowson, Henry. 2003. *Defining Issues in English Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Xhemaili, Mirvan. 2016. "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Mother Tongue in Teaching and Learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Classes." *ANGLISTICUM. Journal of the Association for Anglo-American Studies* 2 (3): 191–95.



Part II

Book Review

A Review of the Scientific Monograph *Međukulturna kompetencija u nastavi stranih jezika. Od teorijskih koncepata do primjene (Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching: From Theoretical Concepts to Applications)* by Ana Petravić

1 Introduction

Međukulturna kompetencija u nastavi stranih jezika: Od teorijskih koncepata do primjene, a reference book written by respected scholar and experienced language teacher Ana Petravić, presents in one volume an up-to-date guide to the core areas of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching.

As soon as I picked up this manuscript, which is 369 pages long (together with a fifteen-page long extensive bibliography), I thought that reviewing it would be a demanding but important task. I was right. The monograph is very comprehensive, as it examines numerous central areas and key concepts of intercultural competence and their applications in foreign language teaching. Despite its comprehensiveness, the topics are dealt with and future developments mapped out in a very accessible way. In a matter-of-fact but supportive tone, the author clearly, thoroughly, and incisively discusses the relationship between language and culture and leads the reader to consider all the essential theoretical, empirical and practical principles underpinning our understanding of culture and its role within language teaching methodology. By working towards an understanding of culture in foreign language education, the book examines how foreign language culture teaching has developed, where it currently stands, and what directions to take for future research on this topic.

The book as a whole resonates with the recognition of an unbreakable bond between language and culture that motivates foreign language teaching profession's implicit commandment that *'thou shalt not teach language without also teaching culture'* (Higgs 1990, qtd. in Lessard-Clouston 1997). Thus, if our premise is that language and culture are from the start inseparably connected, then ineluctably we must also grapple with the notion that *language teaching is indeed culture teaching*. Or, as Maley (1993, 3) puts it: "These are educational issues which reach out well beyond mere language teaching. Culture teaching is an aspect of values education. As such it offers a welcome opportunity for transcending the often narrow limits of language teaching."

2 How is the Book Structured?

The book is divided into seven main chapters, each identifying and addressing the many facets of culture teaching and intercultural competence that influence foreign language methodology. As such, they give a wide perspective on 'culture as language and language as culture' pedagogy, and how understanding culture aids in successful and enriching language learning. The chapters comprise the following topics:

1. Introduction (*Uvod*)
2. Conceptualisation of intercultural competence in foreign language teaching – the horizontal level of theoretical models (*Konceptualizacija me ukulturne kompetencije u nastavi stranih jezika - horizontalna ravan teorijskih modela*)
3. Conceptualisation of intercultural competence development – the vertical level of theoretical models (*Konceptualizacija razvoja me ukulturne kompetencije – vertikalna ravan teorijskih modela*)
4. The applied models of intercultural competence – European instruments for supporting the development of intercultural competence (*Primijenjeni modeli me ukulturne kompetencije: europski instrumenti za podupiranje razvoja me ukulturne kompetencije*)
5. Research-supported conceptualisations of intercultural competence – the horizontal and vertical levels (*Empirijski utemeljene konceptualizacije me ukulturne kompetencije - horizontalna i vertikalna ravan*)
6. Example areas and instances of application of intercultural competence models (*Egzemplarna podruja i primjeri primjene modela me ukulturne kompetencije*)
7. In lieu of a conclusion (*Umjesto zaključka*)

The chapters are organized thematically, from general to specific, from global to local. The author helps the reader cross 'the intercultural competence river' by means of three main stepping stones: theory, research and practice, addressing in turn the conceptualisation of intercultural competence on these three distinctive levels.

Chapter 1 serves as the foundation for the succeeding sections. It *meticulously* summarizes and discusses three main notions or constructs – *intercultural competence*, *culture* and *interculturality*. The author makes us aware that these constructs are extremely complex, as they integrate various academic disciplines and the traditions of those disciplines. As a result of the vast literature, the author narrows down the analysis of these interdisciplinary constructs to traditions in foreign language teaching and applied linguistics. Special attention is devoted to clarifying the confusing overlaps in terminology. The need for clarification of terminology is important as it is far from being a harmonious and stable pool of significations. Because recent years have resulted in ample research on communication across cultures often carried out within the context of different academic traditions, the meanings of terms used by authors often differ. Some time ago, for example, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) found over three hundred definitions of culture in their study (Lessard-Clouston 1997), which clearly illustrates the difficulty and scope of the issues involved in culture and teaching about culture. Thus, to avoid confusion, this chapter critically analyzes the diversity of nomenclature, and finally clarifies how the terms are used in this work.

The chapter also summarizes, in a nut-shell, the evolution of intercultural competence and how it has been positioned in different intercultural contexts, including in Croatia. I find highlighting

the evolutionary perspective of intercultural competence crucial because, despite the fact that, today, culture teaching may reflect almost an axiom in second- and foreign-language pedagogy, it often remains unclear to many foreign language educators just how this has come to be the case and what impact this has on their classroom practice.

The construct of communicative competence has been subject to constant evolution in the past five decades, and continues to be so. Globalization has, namely, presented language teachers and learners with the challenge of coping in all the more frequent *intercultural* situations. The most frequent term to describe this type of communication is *intercultural communication*. A growing interest in intercultural communication has led to the expanding of the construct of communicative competence and resulted in a new construct called *intercultural competence* or *intercultural communicative competence*. In the light of these changes, in many foreign language curricula objectives have shifted from developing the learners' communicative competence to developing their *intercultural* (communicative) competence (Dombi 2013).

As a point of departure for the operationalization of communicative competence in foreign language pedagogy, the author sets out to identify the key theoretical, applied and empirical models of this construct. Proceeding from pedagogically motivated models (i.e., those well suited to foreign language teaching) of intercultural competence, the author deploys the following guiding principles/criteria for a critical overview: an adequate horizontal differentiation of the component parts of intercultural competence; the inclusion of a cognitive, affective and pragmatic dimension of the construct of intercultural competence; the incorporation of the vertical elaboration with regard to the progression of learning; the transparency of the relation between foreign-language and intercultural competence, and between language and culture; and finally, an adequately – in foreign-language teaching terms – defined notion of culture upon which a model is based.

In the monograph's core chapters, the author, using these criteria, analyzes numerous *theoretical component models* (Chapter 2), *theoretical developmental models* (Chapter 3), *applied models* (Chapter 4), and *research-supported models* of intercultural competence (Chapter 5). Chapter 5 gives an overview of empirical research on intercultural competence (e.g., Šenjug Golub 2013; Eberhardt 2013; Liddicoat 2006, 2011; Liddicoat and Scarino 2013) within different age groups of learners (primary-school children, teenagers and young adults and adults); emphasis is also on presenting directions of research and identifying current trends.

This extremely comprehensive, thorough, trustworthy, critical and incisive discussion of the models or frameworks of intercultural competence includes both the most relevant and well-known existing models, as developed by Byram (1997, 2009), Bennett (1986, 1993, 1998), and the *CEFR* model (*Common European Framework of Reference*; Council of Europe 2001), as well as several other less well-known ones, including Caspari and Schinschke's model (2007 and 2009), Roche's model (2001), Witte's model (2006 and 2009), and the *FREPA* model (*A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures*; Council of Europe 2012).

In the detailed and up-to-date analysis of models of intercultural competence, the author presents what features these models share and what makes them distinct from one another, and thus makes it possible to fathom the importance of the construct in language education today. The text is interspersed with and supported by many excellent visual representations (diagrams and graphs), which makes the reading much easier.

The different levels and aspects of intercultural competence models outlined and discussed in these four chapters clearly show that our understanding of what culture means in foreign language education is extremely varied. The analysis recognizes that the context for language, culture, and communication is society, and thus emphasizes the social sciences as a foundation. Through the analysis of the theoretical frameworks, which have greatly influenced current foreign language pedagogy – in both theory and practice – the author provides different ways of defining culture, stresses various dimensions of culture at different points, and highlights major differences between varied and unique intercultural contexts. For foreign language teachers and learners in their own unique (intercultural) teaching situations, different aspects of culture may well be more or less important at various levels of language proficiency, the degree of cultural proximity between the source language and the target language can influence the acquisition process, and different levels of intercultural competence can be distinguished.

In Chapter 6, the author exemplifies the function of the analysed models in four separate areas: (1) language policy documents regulating language education (i.e., curriculum design), (2) instructional tasks for developing intercultural competence, (3) intercultural competence assessment tools, and (4) pre-service and in-service training of foreign language teachers. These four areas are looked at and presented from two perspectives – the European language policy perspective, and the perspective of the situation in Croatia. In other words, the chapter presents how the issues discussed on a European level are relevant to language education in Croatia.

In terms of the methodology of culture teaching, the author makes it clear that a *laissez-faire* approach is not adequate. Lessard-Clouston (1997) puts it clearly – “Just as we are intentional in terms of what grammatical structures we teach and how, so, too, must we be systematic about our culture teaching. A whole range of techniques exists, but our learners benefit most when our culture lessons and the cultural aspects of our language teaching are well planned and developed.”

We evaluate our students’ language learning, but, in the same way, “evaluation of their culture learning provides them with important feedback and keeps us accountable in our teaching. Culture learning assessment has been neglected in foreign language education, and this is something that must be addressed if we are to enable students to truly understand and profit from this aspect of their foreign language classes” (Lessard-Clouston 1997).

In terms of both pre- and in-service teacher training, the author states clearly that language “teachers ought to receive both experiential and academic training, with the aim of becoming mediators in culture teaching” (Singhal 1998; qtd. in Thanasoulas 2001).

3 Concluding Remarks

By way of conclusion, we should reiterate the main premise of the book: the teaching of culture and the development of intercultural competence should become an integral part of foreign language instruction (Thanasoulas 2001). Or as Peck (1984) put it, ‘Culture should be our message to students and language our medium’. Although culture creates and solves problems, “we need not be wary of culture in the foreign language context, even though it is also evident that there are still aspects of culture in foreign language education that do need further research and understanding” (Lessard-Clouston 1997).

The structure of the book is designed to allow different groups of readers to focus on different

parts of the book according to their interest and need. Taking into account the monograph's theoretical, empirical and applied character, it seems a perfect choice for anyone professionally involved in foreign language teaching – for beginning and practising foreign language teachers, students on undergraduate and postgraduate courses, mentors, coursebook authors, language policy makers, curriculum designers, test developers, and finally, scholars in the field of applied linguistics and foreign language teaching. As this book offers an important contribution towards an understanding of culture in foreign language education, I am sure it will transform its readers' personal views on what intercultural competence dimensions should be included in foreign language teaching, and how they should be taken into account.

Unique among other texts that mostly offer a reduced (or even simplified) view of intercultural competence only, this monograph gives, by addressing the conceptualisation of intercultural competence on three distinctive levels – theory, research and practice – a much more comprehensive, in-depth, all-round and multifaceted treatment of culture teaching.

From all the above, it is evident that this top-of-the-range monograph will serve as an important resource and guide for anyone professionally involved in language education in general, and in foreign language pedagogy specifically.

References

- Dombi, Judit. 2013. "A Mixed-Method Study on English Majors' Intercultural Communicative Competence." PhD diss., University of Pécs. http://pea.lib.pte.hu/bitstream/handle/pea/.../Dombi_Judit2013_dissertacio.pdf.
- Lessard-Clouston, Michael. 1997. "Towards an Understanding of Culture in L2/FL Education." *The Internet TESL Journal* III (5): n.p. <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Lessard-Clouston-Culture.html>.
- Maley, Alan. 1993. Foreword to *Cultural Awareness*, by Barry Tomalin and Susan Stempleski, 3. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Peck, Deborah. 1984. "Teaching Culture: Beyond Language. Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute." <http://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/curriculum/units/1984/3/84.03.06.x.html>.
- Petravić, Ana. 2016. *Međukulturna kompetencija u nastavi stranih jezika: Od teorijskih koncepata do primjene*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- Thanasoulas, Dimitrios. 2001. "The Importance Of Teaching Culture In The Foreign Language Classroom." *Radical Pedagogy* 3 (3): n.p. http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy/The_Importance_of_Teaching_Culture_in_the_Foreign_Language_Classroom.html.

Part III

List of Contributors

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Lilijana Burcar

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts
Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
lilijana.burcar@ff.uni-lj.si

Nataša Gajšt

University of Maribor, Faculty of Economics and
Business
Razlagova 14, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia
natasa.gajst@um.si

Melita Kukovec

University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts
Koroška cesta 160, 2000 Maribor, Slovenia
melita.kukovec@um.si

Mirjana Semren

University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and
Social Sciences
Sinjska 2, 21000 Split, Croatia
mdukic@ffst.hr

Janez Skela

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts
Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
janez.skela@ff.uni-lj.si

Danijela Šegedin Borovina

University of Split, Faculty of Humanities and
Social Sciences
Sinjska 2, 21000 Split, Croatia
dsegedin@ffst.hr

Mirjana Želježič

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts
Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
mirjana.zeljzic@ff.uni-lj.si

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

ELOPE English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries

ELOPE publishes original research articles, studies and essays that address matters pertaining to the English language, literature, teaching and translation.

Submission of Manuscripts

Manuscripts should be submitted for blind review in electronic form using the Faculty of Arts (University of Ljubljana) OJS platform (<http://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/elope/about/submissions>). Only one contribution by the same author per volume will be considered. Each paper should be accompanied by abstracts in English and Slovene (between 150 and 180 words each) and keywords. Abstracts by non-native speakers of Slovene will be translated into Slovene by ELOPE. Please be sure to have a qualified native speaker proofread your English-language article. Suggested length of manuscripts is between 5,000 and 8,000 words.

Manuscript Style and Format

The manuscript should be in the following format:

- title in English,
- abstracts in English and Slovene,
- the text should be divided into introduction; body of the paper (possibly subdivided); and conclusion.

The text should be preferably written in Word format (OpenOffice and RTF files are also acceptable). Please observe the following:

- 12-point Times New Roman font size,
- 2.5 cm page margins on all sides,
- 1.5-point line spacing,
- left text alignment,
- footnotes should be brief (up to 300 words per page; 10-point Times New Roman font size).

For resolving practical style and formatting queries, please see the articles in the latest on-line issue (<http://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/elope/issue/current>) or contact the technical editor.

References

References should comply with *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition, 2010) author-date system. A Quick Guide to CMS is available here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (please choose the Author-Date tab).

Final note

Please note that only manuscripts fully adhering to the ELOPE Guidelines for Contributors will be considered for publication.

English
Language
Overseas
Perspectives and
Enquiries

ELOPE Vol. 14, No. 1 (2017)

Journal Editors

Smiljana Komar, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Mojca Krevel, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Editors of ELOPE Vol. 14, No. 1

Kirsten Hempkin, Melita Kukovec and Katja Težak, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Editorial Board

Lisa Botshon, University of Maine at Augusta, United States of America; Michael Devine, Acadia University, Canada; Dušan Gabrovšek, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Michelle Gadpaille, University of Maribor, Slovenia; Meta Grosman, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Adolphe Haberer, University of Lyon, France; Allan James, University of Klagenfurt, Austria; Victor Kennedy, University of Maribor, Slovenia; Bernhard Kettemann, University of Graz, Austria; J. Lachlan Mackenzie, VU University Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tomaž Onič, University of Maribor, Slovenia; Roger D. Sell, Åbo Akademi University, Finland; Andrej Stopar, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Rick Van Noy, Radford University, United States of America; Terri-ann White, University of Western Australia, Australia

Editorial Secretary

Gašper Ilc, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Technical Editor

Andrej Stopar, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Proofreading

Kirsten Hempkin, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Editorial Policy

ELOPE: English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries is a double-blind, peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes original research articles, studies and essays that address matters pertaining to the English language, literature, teaching and translation.

The journal promotes the discussion of linguistic and literary issues from theoretical and applied perspectives regardless of school of thought or methodology. Covering a wide range of issues and concerns, ELOPE aims to investigate and highlight the themes explored by contemporary scholars in the diverse fields of English studies.

English
Language
Overseas
Perspectives and
Enquiries

Published by

Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts
Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani
Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
For the Publisher: Branka Kalenič Ramšak, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts

Issued by

Slovene Association for the Study of English
Slovensko društvo za angleške študije
Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia
Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana
Oddelek za anglistiko in amerikanistiko, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani
Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

The journal is published with support from the Slovenian Research Agency.

The publication is free of charge.

Universal Decimal Classification (UDC)

Kristina Pegan Vičič

Journal Design

Gašper Mrak

Cover

Marjan Pogačnik: *Zimsko cvetje*, 1994
7.6 x 10.0 cm; colour etching, deep relief
Owner: National Gallery, Ljubljana,
Photo: Bojan Salaj, National Gallery, Ljubljana

Printed by

Birografika Bori

Number of Copies

130

doi:10.4312/elope.14.1

Online ISSN: 2386-0316

Print ISSN: 1581-8918



University of Ljubljana
FACULTY OF ARTS



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.