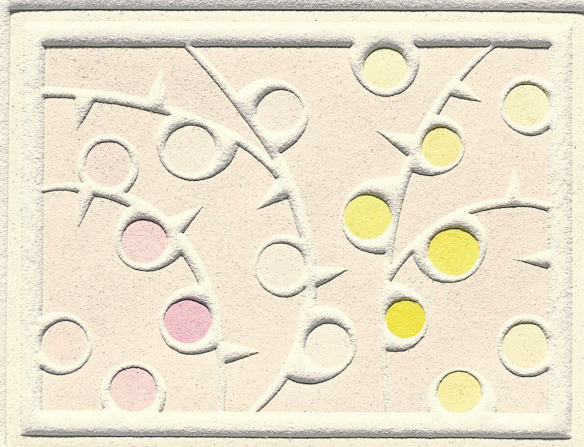


**E**nglish  
**L**anguage  
**O**verseas  
**P**erspectives and  
**E**nquiries



Editors: SMILJANA KOMAR and UROŠ MOZETIČ

**AS YOU WRITE IT: ISSUES IN LITERATURE,  
LANGUAGE, AND TRANSLATION IN THE  
CONTEXT OF EUROPE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Slovensko društvo za angleške študije  
*Slovene Association for the Study of English*

Oddelek za anglistiko in amerikanistiko, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani  
*Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana*

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## CONTENTS

### LANGUAGE

#### **Gašper Ilc** **9**

No Can Do Modal Verbs

*Križi in težave z naklonskimi glagoli*

#### **Frančiška Lipovšek** **23**

From Slovene into English: Identifying Definiteness

*Iz slovenščine v angleščino: kako prepoznati določnost*

#### **Hortensia Pârlog** **39**

A Seemingly Insignificant Romanian Word and its English Equivalents

*Navidezno nepomembna romunska beseda in njeno prevajanje v angleščino*

#### **Tatjana Paunović, Milica Savić** **57**

Discourse intonation - Making it work

*Besedilna intonacija*

#### **Maja Stergar** **77**

A Taste of Slovene Culinary Masterpieces with a Pinch of Contrastive Analysis

*Slovenske kuharske mojstrovine s ščepcem protistavne analize.*

#### **Bledar Toska** **89**

Dialogizing Communication through Pragmatic Markers

*Dialogiziranje sporazumevanja s pomočjo pragmatičnih označevalcev*

### LITERATURE

#### **Frédéric Dumas** **101**

Copycat: duplication and creation in American Psycho and Lunar Park by Bret Easton Ellis

*Posnemovalec: podvajanje in ustvarjanje v Ameriškem psihi in Luninem parku Breta Eastona Ellisa*

---

<b>Fernando Galván</b>	<b>113</b>
------------------------	------------

---

Metaphors of Diaspora: English Literature at the Turn of the Century

*Metafore diaspore: angleška književnost na prelomu stoletja*

<b>Ksenija Kondali</b>	<b>125</b>
------------------------	------------

---

Deconstructing the Text and (Re)Constructing the Past: History

and Identity in Geraldine Brooks' People of the Book

*Dekonstrukcija teksta in (ponovna) konstrukcija preteklosti:*

*zgodovina in identiteta v romanu People of the Book izpod peresa Geraldine Brooks*

<b>Ivana Marinić, Željka Nemet</b>	<b>139</b>
------------------------------------	------------

---

Two Languages, Number One Authors: The Influence of Bilingual Upbringing

on the Literary Accomplishments of Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss

*Dva jezika, dva vrhunska pisatelja: vpliv dvojezične vzgoje na literarno ustvarjanje Roalda Dahla*

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHING

<b>Steve Buckledee</b>	<b>159</b>
------------------------	------------

---

Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

*Motivacija in usvajanje drugega jezika*

<b>Kirsten Hemplin</b>	<b>171</b>
------------------------	------------

---

Exploring Stereotypes: Scottish and Slovene Jokes in the Classroom

*Raziskovanje stereotipov – škotske in slovenske šale v razredu*

<b>Janez Skela, Urška Sešek, Mihaela Zavašnik</b>	<b>185</b>
---	------------

---

An evaluation of the school-based teaching practice in the training of EFL teachers by the English department of the Faculty of arts in Ljubljana

*Ovrednotenje pedagoške prakse na Oddelku za anglistikoin amerikanistiko Filozofske fakultete v Ljubljani*

<b>Danijela Šegedin</b>	<b>199</b>
-------------------------	------------

---

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

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

# TRANSLATION STUDIES

**Natalija Vid**

**217**

The Challenge of Translating Children's Literature:

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Translated by Vladimir Nabokov

*Prevajanje otroške literature kot izziv: prevod Alice v čudežni deželi Vladimirja Nabokova*

**Elisabetta Zurru**

**229**

Translating postcolonial English: The Italian Translation  
of D. Walcott's The Odyssey: A Stage Version

*Prevajanje postkolonialne angleščine: italijanski*

*prevod dela The Odyssey: A Stage Version Dereka Walcott*





**I.**

**LANGUAGE**



## No Can Do Modal Verbs

### Summary

The paper presents the systems of modal verbs in Slovene and English, and it focuses on comprehension and usage problems that advanced students of English may have when dealing with modal verb constructions. The paper identifies the key factors that give rise to various problems, such as *in-vacuo* vs. in-context treatment of modal verbs and absolute vs. relative temporal relations. It is argued that most students fail to fully understand contextualised modal verb constructions mostly due to the polysemy of modal verbs as well as their relative tense value. This is particularly the case when a (narrative) text containing modal verb constructions has a past time reference, and combines different narrative techniques.

**Key words:** modal verbs, polysemy, time reference, tense, context, narrative techniques, translation

## Križi in težave z naklonskimi glagoli

### Povzetek

Članek obravnava sistem naklonskih glagolov v slovenščini in angleščini s posebnim poudarkom na težavah slovenskih govorcev pri razumevanju in rabi angleških naklonskih glagolov. Prispevek izpostavlja tiste dejavnike, ki v največji meri botrujejo nastanku težav, kot sta, na primer, razlika med naklonskimi glagoli, rabljenimi brez sobesedila ali s sobesedilom, ter razlika med absolutnimi in relativnimi slovničnimi časi. Dodatne težave pri razumevanju in rabi naklonskih glagolov v sobesedilu povzročata slovenskim govorcem tudi večpomenskost angleških naklonskih glagolov in njihova relativna časovna vrednost, še posebno kadar je referenčna točka besedila v pretekliku in besedilo vsebuje različne pripovedne postopke.

**Ključne besede:** naklonski glagoli, večpomenskost, časovna referenčna točka, slovnični čas, sobesedilo, pripovedni postopki, prevajanje

# No Can Do Modal Verbs

## 1. Introduction

The paper deals with the relative difference between the systems of modal verbs (henceforth: modals) in Slovene and English with special attention being paid to comprehension and usage problems of advanced students of English. To identify various factors giving rise to different comprehension / usage problems, a special study has been conducted among 150 Slovene students of English at the Faculty of Arts. Drawing on the findings of the research, the paper identifies and discusses some of the most problematic issues, including: (i) the comparative weak system of modals in Slovene compared to English, (ii) the problem of polysemy and English modals, (iii) the problem of *in-vacuo* vs. in-context treatment and (iv) the absolute vs. relative temporal properties of modals.

The findings also point out that most difficult seem to be those cases in which polysemous modals appear in longer narrative texts where the narrator uses different narrative techniques or perspectives that give rise to a relative temporal interpretation within the established temporal domain.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 compares Slovene and English systems of modals and addresses the question of polysemy as well as *in-vacuo* vs. in-context treatment of English modals. Section 3 discusses the differences between the tense systems of English and Slovene with special focus on non-finite verbal forms and modal verb constructions. Section 4 discusses the problems of interpreting modal verbs in a narrative and presents some of the findings of the research. Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. Modal Verb System – English vs. Slovene

One of the more difficult segments of English grammar for Slovene learners is the system of modals. There are many reasons for this situation, but perhaps the most important one is the relatively weak array of Slovene modals which are frequently replaced by modal adverbials or modal frameworks, as shown below:<sup>1</sup>

Slovene modals	typical substitutes
(z)moči (=can → ability, also possibility)	mogoče biti, lahko (biti)
morati (=must / have (got) to)	potrebno biti
smeti (=can / may → permission)	lahko

Table 1: The list of Slovene modals and their typical substitutes.

By far the commonest is *morati*, denoting obligation, and the least used is *moči*, when denoting possibility. One of the factors contributing to this situation is that both verbs conjugate almost

<sup>1</sup> The list includes proper modal auxiliaries and excludes full lexical verbs with modal meaning, for example, *hoteti*, *želeti* (cf.: want in English). Cf. Toporišič (2000, 353).



(11) *Oil **will** float on water.* → inference (overlap with *the state present*)

(12) *The auditorium **will** seat 500.* → disposition (overlap with *can*)

Frequently, the problem of polysemy is treated in terms of semantic division into (i) epistemic and (ii) root modality. The former denotes different degrees of a speaker's knowledge about the world, for example, deductions, judgements, opinions, while the latter deals with all other modal meanings. A more refined classification divides root modality into deontic modality (marking the speaker's attitude towards social factors such as obligation and permission) and dynamic modality (comprising of the remaining meanings such as ability and volition).<sup>2</sup> According to this classification, example (2) involves epistemic modality, example (3) deontic modality and example (6) dynamic modality.

Now consider example (13). The modal involved may trigger different interpretations. Let's start with the epistemic reading: drawing on the facts already known, it is reasonable for the speaker to expect that in any situation imaginable, boys (will) display typical boyish / male behaviour. This logical conclusion, however, brings in the notion of subject-oriented modality (dynamic reading), implying volition or determination on the part of the subject, in this case *the boys*. In a right context, however, (i.e. a father in a desperate attempt to make his son quit advanced embroidery classes) a deontic reading of a command should not be ruled out.

(13) *Boys **will** be boys.*

One may believe that analysing sentences in context may ameliorate the situation, yet this is only partially the case. Consider these examples (14)-(16), which contain the same modal construction *could have danced* with some co-text.

(14) *Don't ask me what she did yesterday evening. For all I know, she **could have danced** all night long.*

(15) *If you had asked her, she **could have danced** with you. Instead, she went to the ball with George.*

(16) *She was full of energy yesterday at the ball. She **could have danced** all night long.*

Examples (14) and (15) differ in the type of possibility: while the first example denotes an open possibility, i.e. the speaker does not know whether the event in question did or did not take place in reality, the second example refers only the theoretical / hypothetical possibility excluding the open interpretation of possibility due to the conditional context. Sentence (16) is intriguing since it enriches the epistemic reading by introducing the dynamic dimension of ability which must be understood as potential ability at a specific circumstance / time. In other words, if the subject in (16) had the ability to dance, hence making the event of dancing possible at a specific circumstance / time, this ability was not used. Along these lines, sentence (16) should be analysed as a mixed epistemic / dynamic type, marking the boundary between

---

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of the classification, see Palmer (1987) and Quirk et al. (1999) a.o.



the pure epistemic *can* (such as (14)), and the pure dynamic *can* (such as (17)), if we allow ourselves the luxury of calling them pure modal meanings.

- (17) a) *When she was a young girl, she **could dance** all night long.*  
 b) *She **was able to** dance all night long.*

Examples (17) appear to be a perpetual problem. They may all belong to the same category of the dynamic meaning of ability, but they both introduce a different notion, or even better, a different perception of ability. (17a) denotes a permanent possession of ability in the past with no explicit reference to the actual performance itself, which links it, to some extent, to example (16). The crucial difference between (16) and (17a), though, lies in the fact that while (16) excludes the possibility of the ability being used, (17a) simply makes no direct reference to the actual performance. (17b), on the other hand, describes a past ability with special reference to the actual performance.

- (18) *In those days, one **could dance** all night long.*

Even though sentence (18) shares the same modal construction with (17a), it should not be analysed in the same fashion. It carries the meaning of a possibility – similar to examples (14) and (15) – but it is no longer a present evaluation of a past situation, it is a description of a past possibility. Thus, strictly speaking, it can no longer be analysed as an epistemic evaluation.<sup>3</sup>

To wind up, the explanation for the complexity of modals is, perhaps, best captured by Leech (1987, 72), who points out that “[o]ne thing that can make it difficult to account for [modals] is that their meaning has both a logical (semantic) and a practical (pragmatic) element. We can talk about them in terms of such logical notions as ‘permission’ and ‘necessity’ but, this done, we still have to consider ways in which these notions become remoulded by the social and psychological influences of everyday communication between human being: factors such as motivation, condescension, politeness, tact and irony.”

As a practical piece of advice to advanced learners of English we can only transmit Leech’s (op. cit., 73) proposal that “the distinctions between the meanings are not so clear-cut as their separation in the lists [like (2) - (12)] suggests. It is often better to think of contrasts of meaning as scales of similarity and difference.” Therefore, any learner should move from matching instances of modals with the isolated descriptors containing examples *in-vacuo* (cf.: (2) - (12)) to a more productive analysis of comparing and contrasting (as in (16) - (18)). This should be even more the case with students whose mother tongue differs greatly from English with regard to their modal verb systems.

To illustrate how this goal can be achieved, section 4 presents an exercise that can be used to stimulate students to discuss modals in terms of comparing and contrasting.

<sup>3</sup> “The modality [...] cannot normally be marked as past and there is a simple reason for this: by using an epistemic modal the speaker makes a (performative and so present time) judgement.” Palmer (1987, 99)

### 3. Modal Verbs and Tense

Another typical (over)simplification of many reference books is that an epistemic modal verb, when followed by the present infinitive, refers to the present or the future (19a), and an epistemic modal followed by the perfect infinitive denotes the past (19b).<sup>4</sup>

- (19) a) *An accident **can / could happen**.*  
b) *An accident **can / could have happened**.*

Even though some authors warn users against such oversimplifications, and point out that any perfect construction should be interpreted as carrying relative not absolute tense value<sup>5</sup> (for details see section 3.1 below), it is the case that direct present / past distinction is (too) strongly rooted in the minds of Slovene learners of English, and it leads to many comprehension and usage problems. In what follows, we will shed some light on the difficulties Slovene learner face when evaluating the tense dimension of the English modals.

#### 3.1 Temporal Domains in English and Slovene

Tense is understood as a verbal grammatical category that indicates the time of an event in relation to the time of the utterance (i.e. the temporal zero-point). The described relation may be absolute or relative. In the case of the former a tense directly relates the event to the temporal zero-point, thus establishing the past, the present and the future domain. In the case of the latter, a tense relates an event not to the temporal zero-point but to another event.

To illustrate, consider example (20). The past tense *knew* is analysed as absolute since it directly relates the event to the temporal zero-point. *Had been tricked* and *would break up*, on the other hand, are relative tenses, relating the events to the absolute tense *knew* and not to the temporal zero-point.

- (20) *Deep down, Peter **knew** that he **had been tricked** into marrying Milly and that the marriage **would inevitably break up**.*

According to Declerck (1991), a temporal domain is a set of events that share the same central time of orientation. The role of the central time of orientation is twofold. First, it directly relates the event to the temporal zero-point, and second, it binds all other (relative) events within the same domain. Relative events can, in theory, denote three intra-domain relations: (i) anteriority, (ii) simultaneity and (iii) posteriority. Re-analysing (20), we can state then that *knew* establishes the central time of orientation to which the two events *had been tricked* (anteriority) and *would break up* (posteriority) are bound.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Swan (2005, 339) states that "[t]o say that it is possible that something happened or was true in the past, we can use **may/might have + past participle**." Similar explanations can be found for the epistemic *can* (op. cit., 99) and *must* (op. cit., 334).

<sup>5</sup> Quirk et al. (1999, 190), for instance, claim that "the perfective indicates anterior time; ie time preceding whatever time orientation is signalled by the tense or by other elements of the sentence or its context."





### Non-finite:

- b) *She seems **to have been offended** and she seems **to be crying**.*  
→ *seems*: Present Indefinite – absolute  
→ *to have been offended*: Perfect Infinitive – relative (anteriority)  
→ *to be crying*: Present Infinitive – relative (simultaneity)
- c) *She seemed **to have been offended** and she seemed **to be crying**.*  
→ *seemed*: Present Indefinite – absolute  
→ *to have been offended*: Perfect Infinitive – relative (anteriority)  
→ *to be crying*: Present Infinitive – relative (simultaneity)

The two non-finite forms in (23b,c) perform exactly the same function within the established temporal domain: the perfect infinitive denotes anteriority, and the present infinitive simultaneity. Their final temporal interpretation now depends on the interpretation of the absolute tense, the central time of orientation. In (23b), this is the absolute present tense, establishing the present temporal domain. Consequently, the perfect infinitive is interpreted as denoting the *past-in-the-present* and the present infinitive denoting the *present*. Corresponding finite forms of the two infinitives are the present perfect for the perfect infinitive and the present tense for the present infinitive:

(24) *It seems that she **has been offended** and that she **is crying**.*

The Past Tense *seems* (21c) establishes the past temporal domain, and therefore the perfect infinitive is interpreted as the *past-in-the-past* and the present infinitive as the *past*. Again, in terms of finite forms, the perfect infinitive corresponds to the past perfect tense and the present infinitive to the past tense:

(25) *It seemed that she **had been offended** and that she **was crying**.*

Since the notion of a pure relative relation cannot be found in Slovene, some learners may find it difficult to understand the relative value of the non-finite. Quite frequently, this notion of relative tense is interpreted as absolute, and this neatly takes us back to examples (19) – repeated here as (26) – and the problem mentioned therein.

- (26) a) *An accident **can / could happen**.* → present  
b) *An accident **can / could have happened**.* → past

When used in isolation, (26a) refers to the present and (26b) to the past. At this point a question arises as to what enables this interpretation. The verbal form following the epistemic modal is the infinitive, so its temporal value should be relative. If relative, then it should require a temporal anchor, the central time of orientation. The answer lies in the nature of (epistemic) modals. It is the case that the speaker can only make a judgment or pass an evaluation in the present, at the temporal zero-point, which makes sentences with epistemic modals verbs similar to performatives, where the event and the act of speech are simultaneous simply because they are the one and the same thing.



- (iii) free indirect speech / thought (FIS / FIT),
- (iv) direct speech / thought (DS / DT),
- (v) free direct speech / thought (FDS / FDT).

(29)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a) <i>He promised to return.</i> NRSA      | f) <i>He wondered about her love for him.</i> NRTA  |
| b) <i>He said that he would return.</i> IS | g) <i>He wondered if she still loved him.</i> IT    |
| c) <i>He would return.</i> FIS             | h) <i>Did she still love him?</i> FIT               |
| d) <i>He said, 'I will return.'</i> DS     | i) <i>He wondered, 'Does she still love me?'</i> DT |
| e) <i>I will return.</i> FDS               | j) <i>Does she still love me?</i> FT                |

Free indirect speech / thought is a freer version of the relatively strict form of the indirect speech / thought. In most cases, it lacks a reporting clause, whereas the deictic changes, i.e. tense, place and person, apply. It is noteworthy that the tense and person selection has to be appropriate to the form of narration in which FIS / FIT occurs: if the narrative is in the past, then we get the past time sphere selection, if the narrative is in the present, then the present time sphere selection occurs.

From the perspective of a Slovene student the most problematic area is (F)IS / (F)IT and DS / DT. The reason is obvious: since Slovene does not have special relative tenses within any possible temporal domain (i.e. absolute and relative tenses always coincide regardless of the established temporal domain, see section 3 and examples therein), there is no difference between (F)IS / (F)IT and DS / DT tensewise. As a consequence, it is commonly believed that any verbal form like (26a) must be interpreted as the present / future, and any verbal form like (26b) must be interpreted as the past regardless of the context. In particular, in the case of (F)IS / (F)IT with the past time reference the notion of the past vs. present is understood too absolutely, mostly by learners' ignoring the relative tense value of the infinitive.

## 4.2 Text Analysis

To highlight the problematic comprehension / usage areas, I will use text (30), which has been analysed by approximately 150 students of English during my seminar classes for three consecutive years. The text is interesting since it combines two perspectives, that of the narrator and that of the character. The latter is presented in extract (30) in a form of FIT and has been underlined for the purposes of the analysis. The boldfaced elements are those modals that have given rise to major analysis / usage problems.

(30)

*Sussex Street formed one side of Gloucester Square. It was far from brightly lit. No doubt the elite residents objected to chemical lighting on tall concrete stilts. That was for the poor, that was for council estates. Jeremy walked alongside the railings in the centre of the square until he came to a gate. Of course it was locked, it **would be**, and all the residents had keys. Choosing a corner the least overlooked by the windows in the tall terraces, he laid his raincoat over the spikes on top of the railings and climbed over.*

*Bushes and trees inside, a path going round a grassy area. These squares were all the same. Probably there was a seat. His eyes growing accustomed to the darkness, he walked along the path, found a seat and sat down. An icy chill from stone crept up through his buttocks and his back, making him shiver. It was almost pain. The pleasure of being there overcame it. It was extremely unlikely that anyone would come into this garden now. Only in these quiet squares, under the trees in the scentless soundless dark, could he ever feel truly alone and at peace.*

*His thoughts turned to the keyring and the lighter. He could just send them to the Police. That was what a lesser man would do. Wearing fine latex gloves, he could wipe them clean, [could] drop them into a new hitherto untouched padded bag, [could] do the label on the computer, and [could] send them to Paddington Green Police Station. Once it would have been easy. Not now, with all these methods of detection. These days they could probably tell where the padded bag had been bought, what sort of gloves had been worn and certainly through which post office it had been dispatched. Not the computer yet, though. As a computer consultant, Jeremy spent a good part of his time working towards the discovery of a method whereby forensics could isolate individual IT systems and thence the individual hand that had used them. A fortune awaited the inventor, if invented it could be. It would hardly do for him now to discover it. Still, he wouldn't send the objects to the Police, he wouldn't put them in other antique shops. Of course, he could drop them down a drain or even, without fear of detection into a rubbish can. But this failed to satisfy something artistic in him – or was obviously less risky.*

Ruth Rendell (2004, 129-31)

The temporal domain of (30) is the past, established by the two absolute past tense forms, *formed* and *was* (line 1). Consequently, all relative tense forms are (in)directly bound to the absolute past tense, valuing them as the past. For example, *would be* (line 4) and *could feel* (line 13) are thus interpreted as Past – simultaneity and *would have been* (line 18) as Past – anteriority. The problem students face at this point is that they expect only latter occurrences of modals in the past temporal domain and not the former (in accordance with the overgeneralisation in (26)). There are some that notice that the text has the past time reference, so they analyse all modals as pertaining to the past sphere, yet for those, overgeneralisation (26) sets another trap: the semantic interpretation of the modals. (26) exemplifies a common belief that an epistemic modal followed by the present infinitive refers to the present temporal domain, and when followed by the perfect infinitive, it refers to the past temporal domain (see section 3.1). As a result, many epistemic modals are interpreted as something else, mostly as dynamic meanings of volition and determination. This is even the case with modals, where the epistemic meaning is strengthened by an epistemic adverbial as in *of course it would be* (line 4) or an epistemic frame as in *it was [...] unlikely that anyone would come* (line 11). In table 2, we present some of the problematic modals from text (30), focussing on typical students' interpretations and contextually possible but unobserved interpretations.

modal	line	common interpretations	unobserved interpretations
would be	4	dynamic: typical situation	epistemic: logical conclusion
would come	11	dynamic: refusal	epistemic: improbability
could feel	13	dynamic: ability	FIT dynamic: ability (cf.: (17)), slightly demodalised because followed by the verb of perception <i>feel</i> ; also combined with epistemic: possibility
could send	14	dynamic: ability	FIT epistemic: possibility / speculation
would do	15	dynamic: volition, determination	epistemic: logical conclusion / expectation
could wipe, drop, send	15 - 17	dynamic: ability	same as <i>could send</i>
could tell	19	dynamic: ability	same as <i>could send</i> epistemic meaning strengthened by <i>probably</i>

Table 2: The text analysis.

As a comprehension / usage check question, students were asked to paraphrase the sentence *probably there was a seat* using a modal instead of the adverbial. The vast majority of students provided the answer *there may have been a seat* (line 8) which is in accordance with generalisation (26). What they failed to notice is that the sentence in question is a free version of the direct thought of the character rather than a present evaluation of a past situation by the narrator. Therefore, the correct paraphrase is *there might be a seat*, the derivation of which is presented in (31).

(31)

FT	IT	FIT
“Probably there is a seat.”	Jeremy thought that probably there was a seat.	Probably there was a seat.
“There may be a seat.”	Jeremy thought that there might be a seat.	There might be a seat.

To check their comprehension / usage from a reverse perspective, students were asked to paraphrase the sentence *once it would have been easy* (lines 17-18), using a modal adverbial, and thus replacing the non-finite lexical verb by a finite tense form. Again the typical answer was *once it probably was easy*, which would be correct if it were written from the narrator’s perspective. However, since the sentence belongs to FIT, the correct paraphrase should be *once it had probably been easy*. Its derivation can, thus, be explained in the same fashion as (31):

(32)

FT	IT	FIT
“Once it would have been easy.”	Jeremy thought that once it would have been easy.	Once it would have been easy.
“Once it was probably easy.”	Jeremy thought that once it had probably been easy.	Once it had probably been easy.

5. Conclusion.

The paper has addressed some typical comprehension and usage problems of English modals by advanced Slovene students of English. The conclusions are drawn from an empirical study conducted among university students of English. It seems that the problems stem from four different, yet closely interrelated, areas: (i) the (in)compatibility of Slovene and English modal verb systems, (ii) the problem of polysemy and the influence of context, (iii) absolute vs. relative temporal properties of modals and (iv) the narrative structure of a text. The findings of the research suggest that students at the advanced level should be encouraged to make a move from analysing modal *in-vacuo* to analysing them in context by contrasting and comparing. In particular, special emphasis should be laid to the structure of a (narrative) text containing modals, such as the use of different narrative techniques and perspectives.

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## From Slovene into English: Identifying Definiteness

### Summary

The paper addresses some typical instances of the translator's failure to recognize definite reference in Slovene, which, in turn, results in an inappropriate determiner selection in English. It is argued that errors of this kind are ascribable not solely to the fact that the Slovene determiner system lacks an overt non-selective determiner parallel to the definite article, but to the relatively scarce use of overt determiners in general. Since definiteness is typically signalled by an anaphoric relation, some factors are explored that may help identify textual co-reference despite the absence of explicit anaphoric markers. Besides the translator's inability to recognize the given phrase as anaphoric, two other major causes of inappropriate determiner selection are discussed: the misconception that the absence of an anaphoric relation entails indefiniteness and the translator's misinterpreting an anaphoric expression as an ascriptive, non-referential entity. The second part of the paper focuses on the difference in use between the selective demonstrative pronoun and the non-selective definite article.

**Key words:** definiteness, reference, anaphora, anaphoric markers/signals, determiner selection, definite article, demonstratives

## Iz slovenščine v angleščino: kako prepoznati določnost

### Povzetek

Članek obravnava nekaj tipičnih primerov, ko prevajalec v slovenskem besedilu ne prepozna določne reference, kar se odraža v neustrezni rabi člena v angleškem prevodu. Tovrstnih napak ni pripisati le dejstvu, da slovenščina nima neselektivnega označevalca določnosti, ki bi bil nekakšna vzporednica določnega člena, temveč razmeroma redki rabi označevalcev (ne)določnosti na splošno. Zanesljiv znak za določno referenco je anafora, vendar je potrebno ob pomanjkanju eksplisitnih anaforičnih signalov upoštevati še nekatere druge dejavnike, ki pomagajo prepoznati anaforično razmerje. Poleg prevajalčeve nezmožnosti prepoznati anaforično rabo in s tem določnost dane besedne zveze sta v članku predstavljena še dva poglobljena vzroka za napačno izbiro člena v prevodu: zmotno prepričanje, da je odsotnost anafore znak nedoločne reference, in napačna interpretacija besedne zveze v anaforični rabi kot nekakšnega deskriptivnega elementa brez reference, katerega vloga spominja na predikativno rabo. Zadnji del članka se osredinja na razliko v rabi med selektivnim kazalnim zaimkom in neselektivnim določnim členom.

**Ključne besede:** določnost, referenca, anafora, anaforični signali, izbira označevalca določnosti, določni člen, kazalni zaimki

# From Slovene into English: Identifying Definiteness

## 1. Introduction

Identifying the type of reference is of crucial importance for a translator faced with the task of determiner selection in the target language. Owing to the absence of articles in Slovene and in view of the fact that the structure of the Slovene noun phrase does not require an overt marker of (in)definiteness, a translator working from Slovene into English can be confronted with considerable indeterminacy in this regard. What is meant by ‘indeterminacy’ is not that a determinerless phrase has no definiteness value – a noun phrase, when used in a certain context, must be either definite or indefinite because the speaker (writer) chooses to use it as such – but rather that the translator is unable to identify it. This may result in an inappropriate choice of determiner in the target language.

The first part of the paper is practically orientated and examines some typical errors in this regard. The examples are taken from the translation work of Slovene students of English and are discussed primarily in the light of textual reference, i.e. the possibility of establishing an anaphoric relation between the given noun phrase and an item in the preceding text. As pointed out by Halliday and Hasan (1976), the basic difference between definite and indefinite expressions is that the former are context-bound, signalling that the means of their interpretation is available somewhere in the environment, while the latter convey no implication that any further specification is available from elsewhere. This means that anaphoric expressions are necessarily definite. In fact, definiteness is typically signalled by an anaphoric relation, with the definite article, demonstratives, personal and possessive pronouns functioning as explicit anaphoric markers. Since Slovene noun phrases are often used without any overt determiners, some factors are explored that may help identify textual co-reference despite the absence of anaphoric signals.

The second part of the paper focuses on the function of a demonstrative determiner as an anaphoric marker. Although the possibility of supplying a demonstrative determiner is one of the most advocated tests for definiteness, its function differs significantly from that of the definite article. It is shown in the paper that its use as a marker of definiteness is much more restricted. The difference between the two types of determiner is explicable in terms of the selective nature of demonstratives, which reflects their primary, deictic function.

## 2. Identifying Definiteness: Typical Problems

To illustrate the point made in the Introduction, let us consider the underlined phrase below from the point of view of determiner selection.

(T1) Več kot četrto stoletje je minilo, odkar je bila 1978 v Narodni galeriji v Ljubljani postavljena razstava risb in oljnih slik Franca Kavčiča. Vzrokov za raziskavo njegovega življenja in dela je bilo več. Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi.

Translation:

>> More than a quarter of a century has passed since an exhibition of drawings and oil paintings by the painter Franc Kavčič was mounted in 1978 in the National Gallery of Ljubljana. Several reasons had prompted research into his life and work; one of the foremost was the desire to extend the knowledge about the painter of Slovene origin and to present him at a major exhibition.

The definite article in *the painter of Slovene origin* is an explicit signal that the information about the referent is to be retrieved from elsewhere – a characteristic it shares with the demonstratives, personal and possessive pronouns (cf. Halliday/Hasan 1976). As a typical anaphoric marker, the definite article signals co-reference of the given phrase with an item in the preceding text. In our case *the painter of Slovene origin* is anaphorically linked to the possessive determiner *his* (in *his life and work*), which is in turn anaphoric to *the painter Franc Kavčič*. The reference of the latter is clear owing to the use of a name in apposition. The information about the referent thus ‘climbs’ up the anaphoric chain the painter Franc Kavčič<sub>i</sub> > his<sub>i</sub> > the painter of Slovene origin<sub>i</sub> > him<sub>i</sub>.

Whereas *the painter of Slovene origin* is explicitly (ana)phoric, its Slovenian counterpart contains no overt marker of definiteness:

(1) Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi.  
 painter<sub>LOC</sub> Slovene<sub>adj-GEN</sub> origin<sub>GEN</sub>

The translator must have inferred its definite reference from the context. The definite interpretation is further supported by the acceptability of a demonstrative determiner. The Slovene *ta* (‘this’) appears in (2a) in its locative form *tem*:

(2)  
 a. Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o tem slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi.

b. One of the foremost was the desire to extend the knowledge about the/this painter of Slovene origin and to present him at a major exhibition.

If, on the other hand, sentence (1) is considered in isolation, the noun phrase in question is likely to be understood as indefinite and non-specific, which yields the following translation:

(3) One of the foremost was the desire to extend the knowledge about a painter of Slovene origin and to present him at a major exhibition.

The referent of *a painter of Slovene origin* can be anyone who fits the description ‘a Slovene painter’. The possibility of (3) results from the ambiguity of reference of determinerless noun phrases in Slovene. The crucial factor in resolving such ambiguities is the context. If (1) is regarded as an integral part of T1, the indefinite interpretation is much less plausible. The hearer (reader, translator) adopts the following strategy. He/She assumes that the phrase in question is definite

because he/she can find the means of its interpretation in the preceding text: *Franc Kavčič*, which is a name and as such self-identifying (cf. Anderson 2004). This, nevertheless, does not suffice for establishing co-reference between *slikar slovenskega rodu* and *Franc Kavčič*, for it is theoretically still possible to understand the former as ‘a painter of Slovene origin’. But the indefinite, non-specific interpretation would imply contrast, for example that too much attention was being paid to foreign painters and that people wanted to learn more about painters of home origin, and such implications do not really fit into the context of T1. The conclusion is that *slikar slovenskega rodu* is a definite, anaphoric expression, co-referential with *Franc Kavčič*.

It should be pointed out that sentence (3) is ambiguous too. From the speaker’s point of view, *a painter of Slovene origin* can be presented either in the non-specific sense (i.e. ‘anyone who fits the description’) or in the sense that the speaker has a specific referent in mind but would not, or cannot, identify it for the hearer. This means that the ambiguity of (1), repeated below as (4), is in fact threefold (5a–c).

(4) Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi. (=1)

- (5)
- a. One of the foremost was the desire to extend the knowledge about **the/this** painter of Slovene origin and to present him at a major exhibition.
  - b. One of the foremost was the desire to extend the knowledge about **a/some** (‘no matter who’) painter of Slovene origin, and to present him at a major exhibition.
  - c. One of the foremost was the desire to extend the knowledge about **a/some** (‘one specific’) painter of Slovene origin and to present him at a major exhibition.

Compare the Slovene equivalents with overt determiners:

- (6)
- a. Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o **tem** slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi. <> (5a)
  - b. Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o **kakem** slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi. <> (5b)
  - c. Med prvimi je bila želja povečati vednost o **nekem** slikarju slovenskega rodu in ga predstaviti na večji razstavi. <> (5c)

Supplying an overt determiner can be a reliable test for reference, as the acceptability of one form or another depends largely on the context. If, for example, sentence (4) is taken in isolation, it will probably be understood in the sense of (6b), whereas in the context of T1 its most plausible interpretation seems to be that of (6a).

It seems that the ambiguity of a determinerless noun phrase is more difficult to resolve if the phrase has in fact definite reference; in other words, it is usually the case that a definite phrase

is misinterpreted as indefinite, rather than the other way round. What follows is an outline of three typical cases of the translator's failure to recognize definite reference in Slovene and the consequent inappropriate determiner selection in English.

## 2.1 Failing to identify the antecedent

Example:

(T2) Zabodel ga je morski bič med snemanjem dokumentarnega filma o strupenih prebivalcih morja okrog avstralskih koralnih grebenov. Napad zanj bržčas ne bi bil usoden, usodno je bilo to, da ga je riba z repom zabodla naravnost v srce.

>> He was stung by a stingray during the filming of a documentary on venomous inhabitants of the sea around the Australian coral reefs. The attack itself wasn't fatal; what was fatal was that the/\*a fish stabbed him with its tail directly in the heart.

Situation:

The NP in question (*riba/the fish*) is anaphorically linked to an item in the preceding text. The following anaphoric chain can be identified: a stingray<sub>i</sub> > its<sub>i</sub> (the non-overt subject of *attack*) > the fish<sub>i</sub> > its<sub>i</sub>.

Error:

The translator perceives the phrase as a new entity introduced into discourse rather than an anaphoric expression. He/she cannot identify its antecedent because he/she fails to recognize the semantic (in our case hyperonymic) relation between the two: some of the students who had used the indefinite article argued that 'a stingray wasn't a type of fish and that there had in fact been two attacks: one by a stingray and one by *some fish*.'

It should be noted though that failing to identify the antecedent was not the only reason for the indefinite article in this case. Some students used *a fish* in another, ascriptive sense: 'The man was stabbed by the aforementioned stingray, which is a fish, so he was stabbed by *a fish*.' A similar problem will be discussed in 2.3.

In either case the students completely overlooked some very obvious clues, especially the word order and the topic-comment structure. *Riba* is used in topic position, which implies identifiability and definite reference unless a new topic is being introduced into discourse. If *riba* appeared in the text as a new topic, its indefinite reference would be signalled overtly: *neka riba* ('some fish'). Without the determiner, it would be shifted into a non-topic position. Similarly, the ascriptive interpretation suggested by some students would be possible only if the phrase had a non-topic function.

A similar problem can arise when the antecedent is not a phrase but a larger portion of text. Sometimes the anaphoric relation is not immediately clear because of the distance between the anaphor and the antecedent. The following example (an excerpt from an original English text) is a combination of both:

(T3) (2nd paragraph) ... But, after easing over the river Inn, across a bridge curved like a taut bow, the train climbs at an angle so steep you'd think you were ascending vertically. (...)

(5th paragraph) ... The train, divided into five neat little compartments, heads through a tunnel to emerge at Loewenhaus station, a carapace of glass built on an irresistible curve. It's a delightful taste of what's to come, the river Inn rippling up ahead, the big ascent still to come.

## 2.2 Indefinite interpretation due to the absence of an antecedent

Example:

(T4) Hladno je velo po dolini, ko sva v zgodnjem majskem jutru pred skoraj dvajsetimi leti s prijateljem stala pri izlivu Gačnika v Trebušico. Cesta se je na tistem mestu končala in naprej je čez leseno brv vodila le steza.

>> The cold drifted along the valley when a friend and I stood at the outfall of the Gačnik into the Trebušica on an early May morning almost twenty years ago. The/\*A road ended there, and only a path led over a wooden footbridge.

Situation:

The noun phrase in question (*cesta/the road*) appears in the text as a first mention.

Error:

The translator perceives the phrase as indefinite because there is no prior mention of the entity; in other words, nothing in the preceding text can be identified as its antecedent.

It is true that an anaphoric relation entails definiteness, but it is not the necessary condition for it. In other words, if a phrase is recognized as an anaphoric expression, its reference is necessarily definite; if no anaphoric relation can be identified, its reference may be definite or indefinite. The necessary condition for definiteness is identifiability. In our case, the existence of some kind of road or path is presupposed by the fact that the two friends had arrived somewhere. Its first mention in the text does not behave like a new entity introduced into discourse but rather as a perfectly identifiable entity, interpretable by virtue of implicit information associated with the travel frame. The term *frame* is used to refer to 'the set of propositions characterizing our conventional knowledge of some more or less autonomous situation' (van Dijk 1980, 99).

Another clue to the definite reference of *cesta* in T4 is its syntactic function of a subject together with its role of sentence topic in the information structure of the sentence. If it represented a completely new entity introduced into discourse, it would occupy a non-topic position after the predicator and would be preceded by an indefinite determiner. Compare:

(7) Na tistem mestu se je končala neka cesta ...  
on that spot            ended            some road

Sentence (7) is understood in the sense that 'there was some road ending on that spot', and the road is by no means interpreted as the road which had brought the two friends into the valley. In

fact, nothing in the changed text states explicitly that they had travelled by road – perhaps they followed a forest path or a cycle trail, or were brought into the valley by a helicopter. The travel frame implies only that they must have got there somehow, without specifying the means.

An interesting observation can be made at this point. Implicit information associated with a certain frame becomes relevant when some phrase depends on it for interpretation. It is not necessary for all the implications to be true in the given context, but the phrase makes it explicit which of them is true. In the case of T4, the travel frame gives rise to different associations as to how the two friends came into the valley. But what actually happened is unknown to the reader until an entity appears in the text that can be interpreted only by association with one of these implications: *the road*.

## 2.3 Ascriptive interpretation due to postmodification

Example:

(T5) *Carju v veselje* je vznemirljiv kolaž plesnih oblik, ki jih je Forsythe ustvaril med svojo genialno umetniško kariero, in eden največjih dosežkov postmodernega plesa. *Balet* v treh dejanjih, ki vsebuje vse od klasičnega dvornega plesa, prek baleta do break-dancea, se vrti okoli zgodovine zahodne civilizacije.

*Forsythe*, ki je v obdobju 1984–2004 vodil Frankfurtski balet, z vsakim delom razburka mednarodno baletno javnost. S premikanjem baletnih mej in nepredvidljivimi tematskimi variacijami je na novo napisal jezik klasičnega baleta. Njegove prepoznavne predstave so postale sinonim za kontroverznost in drznost. *Koreograf*, ki je obrnil hrbet “lažnemu blišču klasičnega baleta”, kot pravi sam, je v začetku lanskega leta ustanovil svojo plesno skupino.

>> *Impressing the Czar* is an exciting collage of dance forms created by Forsythe throughout his brilliant artistic career and one of the finest achievements of postmodern dance. *This ballet in three acts, which / \*A ballet in three acts which* has it all, from classical court dance and ballet to breakdancing, revolves around the history of western civilization.

*Forsythe*, who directed the Frankfurt Ballet from 1984 to 2004, evokes a strong response in the international ballet public every time he puts on a new piece. ... *The choreographer, who has turned / \*A choreographer who has turned* his back on, as he puts it, the ‘superficial glitter of classical ballet’, set up his own dance company at the beginning of 2005.

Situation:

The noun phrase in subject position contains a descriptive postmodifier and is co-referential with a clearly identifiable noun phrase in the preceding text.

Error:

The translator perceives the anaphoric, referential noun phrase as a description of the antecedent and treats it like a non-referential, ascriptive predicative complement. This type of error typically involves misinterpreting a non-restrictive postmodifier as restrictive. The difference between the referential and ascriptive uses is illustrated below.

(8)

- a. [This ballet in three acts, which has it all, from classical court dance and ballet to breakdancing],<sub>R</sub> revolves around the history of western civilization.  
b. [The choreographer, who has turned his back on, as he puts it, the 'superficial glitter of classical ballet'],<sub>R</sub> set up his own dance company at the beginning of 2005.

<> referential (R), specific, definite

(9)

- a. Impressing the Czar<sub>i</sub> is [*a* ballet in three acts which has it all, from classical court dance and ballet to breakdancing]. It<sub>i</sub> revolves around the history of western civilization.  
b. Forsythe<sub>i</sub> is [*a* choreographer who has turned his back on, as he puts it, the superficial glitter of classical ballet]. He<sub>j</sub> set up his own dance company at the beginning of 2005.

<> non-referential, ascriptive

The error does not occur because the translator would have failed to recognize the specific, definite reference of the given phrase. If that were the case, the same type of error would be observed in cases without postmodification. The inappropriate determiner selection is to be ascribed almost exclusively to the presence of a descriptive postmodifier, which lends the whole phrase a descriptive air and gives it the false look of a predicative. Compare:

(10)

- a. [The ballet]<sub>R</sub> revolves around the history of western civilization.  
b. [The choreographer]<sub>R</sub> set up his own dance company at the beginning of 2005.

(11)

- a. \*[A ballet in three acts which has it all, from classical court dance and ballet to breakdancing],<sub>R</sub> revolves around the history of western civilization.  
b. \*[A choreographer who has turned his back on, as he puts it, the 'superficial glitter of classical ballet'],<sub>R</sub> set up his own dance company at the beginning of 2005.

It has to be admitted, though, that the 'clash' between referentiality and ascriptive meaning could be resolved by the following interpretation:

(12)

- a. [a ballet in three acts which has it all, from classical court dance and ballet to breakdancing],<sub>R</sub>  
= [this piece/ballet, which is a ballet in three acts ... ]<sub>R</sub>  
b. [a choreographer who has turned his back on, as he puts it, the 'superficial glitter of classical ballet'],<sub>R</sub> = [this artist/choreographer, who is a choreographer who ... ]<sub>R</sub>

According to (12), the indefinite determiner does not reflect reference but is triggered by the



highlighting function of the modifier, which makes the whole phrase look like new information. The interpretation, however, cannot be applied in (11) because an anaphoric sentence topic is incompatible with 'newness'. This special use of the indefinite article with anaphoric expressions seems to be restricted to non-topical positions. For example (Lipovšek 2007, 110):

(13) The north-eastern region of Karamoja<sub>i</sub> is the only arid region in a country rich in lakes and rivers<sub>i</sub>, and suffers from a cyclical problem of drought and famine.

### 3. Demonstratives as Anaphoric Markers

Traditional grammar (cf. Quirk et al. 1985) views the definite article and the demonstrative as occupants of the same structural position, i.e. the central determiner position in a nominal phrase. If the determiner position in front of *balet* or *koreograf* in T5 is filled by the demonstrative pronoun *ta* ('this'), the phrase is immediately recognized as an anaphoric expression. As pointed out by Vidovič Muha (1996, 118), the anaphoric *ta* is an unambiguous signal of textual co-reference. In either case the English translator has a relatively free choice between the definite article and a demonstrative: (*ta*) *balet* > *the/this ballet*; (*ta*) *koreograf* > *the/this choreographer*. Indeed, a demonstrative determiner and the definite article (or its non-overt counterpart in Slovene) are often interchangeable, and the possibility of applying a demonstrative is a very popular test for definiteness. A note of caution, however, should be added at this point. Definite reference does not automatically entail the acceptability of a demonstrative. In T4, for example, it is not possible to use a demonstrative with *cesta* (the same for its English counterpart) although the phrase has definite reference:

(14)

- a. \*Ta/\*Tista cesta se je na tistem mestu končala in naprej je čez leseno brv vodila le steza.
- b. \*This/\*That road ended there, and only a path led over a wooden footbridge.

We will return to this phenomenon in 3.3.

The definite article and the demonstratives signal that the phrase in question has specific, definite reference and that the means of its interpretation is available somewhere in the environment. If, for example, *riba* in T2 were preceded by a demonstrative, none of the students would have failed to recognize the phrase as anaphoric. The overt anaphoric marker would have encouraged them to search the text for the antecedent and to eventually recognize co-reference between *ta riba* ('this fish') and *morski bič* ('a stingray'), no matter how much their concept of stingray might differ from the concept of fish.

But while both types of determiner signal identifiability (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976; Lyons 1999), only the demonstratives are semantically selective, i.e. 'they contain within themselves some referential element in terms of which the item in question is to be identified' (Halliday and Hasan: 1976, 71). Their anaphoric uses reflect their primary, deictic use, where the item in question is identified in terms of proximity. In this respect they differ significantly from the

definite article, for they ‘mark the anaphoric relationship more clearly and explicitly’ (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 373). This functional difference is also reflected in the generative view (cf. Alexiadou et al. 2007; Bruge and Giusti 1996; Campbell 1993) that the definite article and the demonstrative occupy different structural positions: the former is found in the head of the determiner phrase, the latter in its specifier. Some typical manifestations of the selective nature of the demonstratives are presented in 3.1.–3.3. below.

### 3.1 A demonstrative as a means of disambiguation

The following text provides an example of two phrases which are headed by the same noun (*plovilo*) but are not co-referential. In terms of cohesion (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976), the tie between *plovilo* (‘the spacecraft’) and *to plovilo* (‘this spacecraft’) is lexical only, not anaphoric. The translation makes use of the head nouns *probe* and *rocket* respectively, which are more specific in meaning than *spacecraft* and make reference immediately clear.

(T6) Kitajska namerava v okviru svojega prvega lunarnega raziskovalnega programa popisati vsak centimeter Luninega površja. Pri tem ji bo pomagal orbiter Chang’e One, ki ga bodo v veselje poslali v drugi polovici letošnjega leta. Plovilo, bo posnelo tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja, do leta 2010 pa bodo kitajski znanstveniki izstrelili vesoljsko raketo brez človeške posadke, ki bo na Luni pristala. To plovilo, bo imelo nalogo s površja Meseca prinesiti vzorce kamnin.

>> China is about to examine every inch of the moon’s surface. The project is part of the country’s first lunar exploration programme and will be carried out with the help of the orbiter Chang’e One, which is scheduled to be launched in the second half of the year. The probe, will take 3-D photographs of the moon’s surface, and there are also plans afoot to send an unmanned space rocket, to the moon by 2010. The rocket’s, mission will be to bring back samples of rock from the moon’s surface.

Here it is worth repeating the last two sentences of T6 to consider the reference of *to plovilo* (translated as *this spacecraft* in (15b) in order to maintain the parallel with Slovene) and the possibility of omitting the demonstrative determiner. The reference is clear with or without the demonstrative: if the spacecraft is expected to bring back samples of rock from the moon, it can refer only to the rocket because orbiters do not land on celestial bodies.

(15)

a. Plovilo, bo posnelo tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja, do leta 2010 pa bodo kitajski znanstveniki izstrelili vesoljsko raketo brez človeške posadke, ki bo na Luni pristala. To plovilo, / Plovilo, bo imelo nalogo s površja Meseca prinesiti vzorce kamnin.

b. The probe, will take 3-D photographs of the moon’s surface, and there are also plans afoot to send an unmanned space rocket, to the moon by 2010. The mission of this/the spacecraft, will be to bring back samples of rock from the moon’s surface.

Compare:

(16) The probe<sub>i</sub> will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface, and there are also plans afoot to send an unmanned space rocket<sub>j</sub> to the moon by 2010. The spacecraft<sub>,,,</sub> will be launched from the space centre in Xichang.

In (16), by contrast, the context offers no clue as to whether *the spacecraft* refers to the probe (i.e. the orbiter) or to the rocket. The definite article has no semantic content and merely states that the item in question is specific and identifiable. A demonstrative, on the other hand, 'selects' the closest potential target as the intended antecedent and is as such a reliable means of disambiguation:

(17) **This** spacecraft<sub>j</sub> will be launched from the space centre in Xichang.

Ambiguity is, of course, best avoided by choosing a noun whose lexical meaning does not include the meanings of both potential antecedents:

(18) The rocket<sub>j</sub> / The probe<sub>i</sub> will be launched from the space centre in Xichang.

As to (17), it must be pointed out that the selection of the target that is nearer the anaphor has nothing to do with the fact that proximal *this* is used rather than distal *that*. The distinction between 'near' and 'not near' is often observed when proximity is interpreted in terms of time or association with the speaker, but '*this* and *that* cannot be used contrastively in the anaphoric use as they can in the deictic use' (Huddleston/Pullum 2002, 1506). Example (ibid.):

(19) \*I went Christmas shopping and bought a t-shirt<sub>i</sub> and a CD<sub>j</sub>; that<sub>i</sub> is for Kim and this<sub>j</sub> is for Pat.

The Slovene system, too, provides both forms: proximal *ta* ('this') and distal *tisti* ('that'), but in the purely anaphoric, non-deictic use only the proximal form is used. The difference in use between proximal and distal forms as anaphoric markers is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 3.2 The semantic relation between the anaphor and the antecedent

The selective nature of the demonstratives manifests itself also in the dependence of their acceptability on the semantic relation between the anaphor and the antecedent. Lexical superordination is a case in point. Let us consider the following example:

(20)

a. Pri tem ji bo pomagal orbiter Chang'e One<sub>i</sub>, ki ga bodo v veselje poslali v drugi polovici letošnjega leta. ?<sub>j</sub> bo posnel tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja.

b. ... with the help the orbiter Chang'e One<sub>i</sub>, which is scheduled to be launched in the second half of the year. ?<sub>j</sub> will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface.

There are several ways of supplying the anaphor:

(21)

- a. Ta bo posnel / Posnel bo tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja.
- b. Orbiter / ~~This~~ orbiter bo posnel tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja.
- c. Sonda / ?Ta sonda bo posnela tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja.
- d. Plovilo / To plovilo bo posnelo tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja.

(22)

- a. It will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface.
- b. The orbiter / ~~This~~ orbiter will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface.
- c. The probe / ?This probe will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface.
- d. The spacecraft / This spacecraft will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface.

Of interest here is the determiner selection in examples (21b–d, 22b–d). It seems that the acceptability of a demonstrative increases with generalization in meaning. If the anaphor is synonymous with the antecedent, the demonstrative is redundant because there is no need for any additional means of identifying the anaphoric relation. If, on the other hand, the anaphor is lexically superordinate to the antecedent, the link between the two may be less evident (cf. *the fish* and *a stingray* in T4); in fact, the more general the meaning, the less evident the relation. By using a demonstrative, the writer 'points' to the closest potential target, assuring the reader that the 'selected' phrase is the item targeted by the anaphor.

This also explains why in cases where the anaphor is a description with a more general meaning rather than an item in the hyperonymic relationship with the antecedent, a demonstrative is normally used:

(23)

- a. **To** čudo tehnologije bo posnelo tridimenzionalne fotografije Luninega površja.
- b. **This** technological miracle will take 3-D photographs of the moon's surface.

Compare:

(24)

- a. Pa pojdite na Jezersko. Kraj / Ta kraj je res vredno obiskati.
- b. Why not visit Jezersko? The place / This place is really worth seeing.

(25)

- a. Pa pojdite na Jezersko. \*Biser narave / **Ta** biser narave je res vredno obiskati.
- b. Why not visit Jezersko? \*The jewel / **This** jewel of nature is really worth seeing.

### 3.3. The absence of an antecedent

(T7=T4) Hladno je velo po dolini, ko sva v zgodnjem majskem jutru pred skoraj dvajsetimi leti s prijateljem stala pri izlivu Gačnika v Trebušico. Cesta se je na tistem mestu končala in naprej je čez leseno brv vodila le steza.

>> The cold drifted along the valley when a friend and I stood at the outfall of the Gačnik into the Trebušica on an early May morning almost twenty years ago. The road ended there, and only a path led over a wooden footbridge.

The above example was discussed in 2.2 as an instance of failing to recognize definite reference because the phrase in question appears in the text as a first mention. What is sometimes mistakenly put forward as an additional argument in favour of indefiniteness is the unacceptability of a demonstrative determiner:

(26)

- a. \*Ta/\*Tista cesta se je na tistem mestu končala in naprej je čez leseno brv vodila le steza.
- b. \*This/\*That ended there, and only a path led over a wooden footbridge.

The argument should be dismissed because, as shown in 3.1–3.2, a demonstrative and the definite article (or its non-overt counterpart in Slovene) are not necessarily interchangeable. The use of a demonstrative determiner in (26) is precluded by the fact that the noun phrase in question has no antecedent in the preceding text (in which case only the proximal form could be used), nor does it point to an item directly accessible for the hearer in the extratextual context of situation (in which case either form could be used). The need for an antecedent supports the view that demonstratives in anaphoric use can be seen as markers of topic (Alexiadou et al. 2007, 105). The phenomenon is perfectly explicable in terms of the primary, deictic function of demonstratives: a demonstrative signals that the referent is not only identifiable, but also directly accessible to the hearer. In (26), by contrast, the reader cannot identify the referent without activating his/her non-linguistic knowledge associated with the travel frame (cf. 2.2.).

The following text provides two additional examples of the kind:

(T8) Ko smo ob pomolu čakali na ladjico, sem se šele začel zavedati, da gremo v neznano, čeprav mi Južna Avstralija že nekaj časa ni bila več tuja. Pust dan se je počasi bližal večeru, naša pot pa je bila negotova, saj so valovi neusmiljeno butali v obrežje.

>> Not before waiting for a boat at the pier did I begin to realize that we were going into the unknown, although South Australia had not been foreign to me for quite some time. A dreary day was slowly turning into dusk, and our voyage was uncertain with the waves beating mercilessly against the shore.

Although the pier has not been mentioned before, the reference of *pomol* (*the pier*) is specific and definite because waiting for a boat presupposes a kind of structure used for getting on and off boats (cf. 2.2). But the fact that the phrase appears as a first mention precludes the use of a demonstrative determiner:

(27)

- a. Ko smo ob \*tem/\*tistem pomolu čakali na ladjico, ...
- b. Not before waiting for a boat at the/\*this/\*that pier ...

The demonstratives in (27) would, of course, be perfectly acceptable if the phrase in question referred exophorically to a specific pier present in the context of situation. They would also be possible in very informal conversation, where so-called ‘false definites’ are used as a means of introducing a new entity into discourse which is present neither in the text nor in the context of situation but only in the speaker’s mind (cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976, Huddleston and Pullum 2002).

Similarly, *pust dan (a dreary day)* refers to a specific, definite day. It should be pointed out that the indefinite form of the adjective in (28a) and the indefinite determiner in (28b) do not reflect reference. Their use is triggered by the highlighting function of the adjective, which presents the whole phrase as new information: *It was a dreary day*. This explains why (28a,b) are strongly preferred to (28c,d).

(28)

- a. Pust<sub>INDEF</sub> dan se je počasi bližal večeru.
- b. A dreary day was slowly turning into dusk.
- c. ?Pusti<sub>DEF</sub> dan se je počasi bližal večeru.
- d. ?The dreary day was slowly turning into dusk.

The definite reference becomes obvious if the adjective is omitted:

(29)

- a. Dan se je počasi bližal večeru.
- b. The day was slowly turning into dusk.
- c. \*A day was slowly turning into dusk.

The use of a demonstrative is precluded in either case (i.e. with or without the adjective):

(30)

- a. \*Ta/\*Tisti pusti dan se je počasi bližal večeru.
- b. \*This/\*That dreary day was slowly turning into dusk.
- c. \*Ta/\*Tisti dan se je počasi bližal večeru.
- d. \*This/\*That day was slowly turning into dusk.

Let us consider the following example for comparison:

(T9) Barry the dinosaur was being put through his paces last week. Over and over, he would rear up on his massive hind legs, bare rows of needle-sharp teeth, and then pounce at the robot fish slithering across his plywood plinth. Then the huge creature – baryonyx, or Barry, to staff at the Natural History Museum – would return to his starting position and begin his hunt again.

(31)

- a. Then the/this huge creature would begin his hunt again.
- b. Potem se je (ta) ogromni<sub>DEF</sub> stvor ponovno lotil lova.
- c. \*Then a huge creature would begin his hunt again. (\* in T9)
- d. \*Potem se je ogromen<sub>INDEF</sub> stvor ponovno lotil lova. (\* in T9)

As illustrated by (31a), the definite article in *the huge creature* is completely interchangeable with a demonstrative determiner. The necessary condition for the use of a demonstrative is fulfilled: the phrase is anaphoric to an item in the preceding text, the anaphoric chain beginning with *Barry the dinosaur*. The same acceptability of a demonstrative can be observed in the Slovene translation (31b).

It should be noted that the indefinite article in (31c) is an indisputable signal of indefinite reference. In contrast to (28b) above, it cannot be triggered by the adjective because an anaphoric expression in topic function is incompatible with a reading that would present it as new information. This explains why (31c) and (31d) are unacceptable in the context of T9.

In colloquial Slovene, the meaning combining topichood and newness ('this creature, which is a huge creature') can be conveyed by using a demonstrative together with the indefinite form of the adjective:

(32) \$ Potem se je ta ogromen<sub>INDEF</sub> stvor ponovno lotil dela.

The use is rather restricted though, for the indefinite form of a Slovene adjective is distinguishable from its definite counterpart only in Nom-Masc-Sg (with all nouns) and Acc-Masc-Sg (with inanimate nouns).

## 4. Conclusion

A Slovene noun phrase without an overt marker of (in)definiteness can pose a problem for translation into English from the point of view of determiner selection in the target language. Errors in this regard typically involve the translator's failure to recognize definite reference, which is ascribable to three main reasons: (i) the translator's inability to identify an anaphoric relation, i.e. recognize coreference between the noun phrase in question and an item in the preceding text; (ii) the misconception that the absence of an antecedent entails indefiniteness; (iii) misinterpreting an anaphoric expression as an ascriptive, non-referential entity.

A popular test for definiteness is the acceptability of a demonstrative determiner. Due to its selective nature, nevertheless, the use of a demonstrative is often precluded by other factors. With no overt determiners to rely on, the translator has to search the text for other clues that will help him/her identify reference: anaphoric chains, lexical cohesion, the word order and the topic-comment structure, the topic of discourse and the implications of the previous discourse. It should be kept in mind that although an anaphoric relation entails definiteness, it is not the necessary condition for it. The main criterion for definiteness is identifiability, which can derive also from non-linguistic, conventional knowledge shared by the speaker and the hearer.

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## A Seemingly Insignificant Romanian Word and its English Equivalents

### Summary

The paper analyses the various semantic and syntactic roles of the word **de** and the way in which this seemingly insignificant Romanian word is translated into English. **De** lacks syntactic and semantic autonomy and has developed both connective and non-connective values, which are usually revealed by the lexico-syntactic information offered by the context in which it appears. It is used as a preposition and, by conversion, as a conjunction, and in both cases, it has acquired multiple (sometimes blurred) values, which make its translation into English difficult sometimes. As a preposition, it marks only relations of subordination within a sentence, as a conjunction, it marks mainly relations of subordination between clauses.

**Key words:** translation, equivalence, (non)-connective values, meaning, syntactic role

## Navidezno nepomembna romunska beseda in njeno prevajanje v angleščino

### Povzetek

Članek analizira različne semantične in skladenjske vloge besede *de* in načine, s katerimi se ta navidez nepomembna romunska beseda prevaja v angleščino. Beseda *de* nima skladenjske ali semantične avtonomije in je dobila tako vezniške kot nevezniške pomene, ki so običajno razvidni iz besedno-skladenjskega konteksta. Beseda se rabi kot predlog in tudi kot veznik. V obeh primerih ima več (včasih zabrisanih) pomenov, zaradi česar je njeno prevajanje v angleščino včasih težavno. Kot predlog označuje podredniške odnose znotraj povedi, kot veznik pa podredniške odnose med stavki ene povedi.

**Ključne besede:** prevajanje, enakovrednost, (ne)vezniške vrednosti, pomen, skladenjska vloga

# A Seemingly Insignificant Romanian Word and its English Equivalents

## 1. Introduction

The Romanian word **de**, which lacks syntactic and semantic autonomy, was borrowed from Latin (< *de*) and is used as a preposition and, by conversion, as a conjunction; it has also developed other connective as well as non-connective values, some of which are not clearly defined. Both as a preposition and as a conjunction, *de* has multiple (sometimes blurred) values, which makes its translation into English difficult sometimes.

*De* also appears as one of the terms in many prepositional phrases (e.g., *în afară de* – “except for”, “besides”; *față de* – “towards”; *în loc de* “instead of”; *în funcție de* – “depending on”; *în jur de* – “about”) or in conjunction phrases (e.g., *de vreme ce* – “since”; *chiar de* – “even if”; *de parcă* – “as if”; *de cum* – “as soon as”; *de ce* – “the + adj./adv. [+comparative]”).

## 2. The non-connective value of *de*

2.1 The non-connective value of *de* (sometimes preceded by the adverb *numai*, “only” and always followed by the optative mood) is evident in independent, exclamatory sentences expressing a wish with reference to the present or future time. Its English equivalents are the conjunctions *if only* and *that* or the verbs *to hope* or *to wish*:

De-ar tăcea odată! / *If only* / I *wish* she would shut up!

(Numai) de n-ar fi pierdut trenul! / *If only* she hadn't missed her train! / I *wish* she hadn't missed her train! / I *hope* she hasn't missed her train!

De n-ar ajunge prea târziu! / *If only* she didn't get there too late! / I *hope* she doesn't get there too late.

De l-aș mai putea vedea o dată! / (Oh,) *that* I could see him again!

De-aș ajunge o dată acasă! / (Oh,) *that* I could get home sooner!

2.2 The non-connective value of *de* is also obvious in a special construction meant to give special emphasis to a supine, an adjective, an adverb or, more seldomly, to a noun, by placing them at the front of a clause, and then repeating them as a finite form of the same verb (in the case of the supine), as a predicative (in the case of the adjective or the noun) or as an adverbial (in the case of the adverb).

Romanian grammars, including the most recent one (Avram 2005, 2: 524, 525), usually regard this construction as an adverbial of relation, introduced by the conjunction *de*. Pană-Dindelegan (2003, 154, 207), however, underlines the non-connective use of *de* in this case, its role being simply that of marking the thematic fronting of a clause element for emphatic purposes.

This construction is difficult to translate; one solution might be to equate it to a structure introduced by *as for* or *as far as sth. is concerned*; some emphaziser may be added, if necessary:

De mâncat, am mâncat în oraş. / ***As for*** lunch, I had it in town; ***As for*** eating, I ate in town.

De frumoasă, e frumoasă. / ***As for*** beauty, she is beautiful ***indeed***.

De sigură, e sigură / She is ***very*** sure.

De repede, mergea ea repede, dar nu-l ajunsese din urmă. / (***As for*** speed), she ***did*** walk fast, but could not catch up with him.

De măgar, e măgar. / He is *an ass*, ***that's for sure***.

It is also possible that *de* + the *supine* be omitted in the translation:

De scris, n-am scris nimic în acest domeniu. / (***As for*** writing / ***As far as writing is concerned***), I have written nothing in this field.

De fost acolo, am fost, dar n-am întâlnit-o. / I went there (***indeed***) / I ***did*** go there, but I didn't see her.

### 3. Connective values: *de* as a preposition

As a preposition, *de* marks only relations of subordination within a sentence (connecting an attribute to a noun, pronoun or numeral, or an object or adverbial to a verb, adjective or adverb, a predicative to a link verb).

3.1 The Romanian **modifier (attribute)** introduced by *de* occurs in post-position to its head and its meaning often dictates the choice of a certain English structure: its equivalent may be a prepositional noun phrase (the preposition being most frequently *of*), a word in pre-modification to the head noun, or one word only.

#### 3.1.1 English post-modifiers as equivalents

3.1.1.1 The English *ofNP* modifier is quite frequently employed to replace the Romanian *deNP* and it occurs mainly when:

- the Romanian attribute has a partitive meaning:

e.g., o carte *de a ta* / a book *of yours*;

cadouri *de cele mai scumpe* / presents *of the most expensive kind*.

- the Romanian attribute is the modifier of some partitive noun, expressing quantity:

e.g., - *measure partitives*: un metru *de sârmă* / a metre *of wire*; un litru *de*

lapte proaspăt / a litre *of fresh milk*;

- *typical partitives*: o felie *de pâine albă* / a slice *of white bread*; un fir *de*

iarbă / a blade *of grass*; un grăunte *de adevăr* / a grain *of truth*; o tablă *de ciocolată* / a bar *of chocolate*; un bob *de orez* / a grain *of rice*; o duşcă *de votcă* / a shot *of vodka*;

- *general partitives*: un pic *de noroc* / a bit *of luck*; un pic *de efort* / a bit *of effort*; o bucată *de prăjitură* / a piece *of cake*; o bucată *de lemn* / a piece *of wood*; o mulţime *de furnici* / a lot *of ants*.

- the Romanian attribute is the modifier of a collective noun:

e.g., un grup *de studenţi* / a group *of students*; o familie *de medici* / a family *of doctors*; un

roi de albine / a swarm of bees

- the Romanian attribute indicates content:

e.g., o ceașcă de ceai / a cup of tea; un pahar de coniac / a glass of brandy; o carte de povești / a book of fairy-tales; o sticlă de vin / a bottle of wine; o lingură de zahăr / a spoonful of sugar.

- In a more limited number of cases, when the meaning of the attribute is different from those enumerated above, the English preposition corresponding to Romanian *de* is other than *of*:  
e.g., iubirea de țară / the love *for* one's country; setea de cunoaștere / the thirst *for* knowledge; un roman de Dickens / a novel *by* Dickens.

3.1.1.2 The Romanian modifier (*de* + a noun, *de* + an adverb) may indicate place or time, and its equivalent is an adjective or an adverb in post-position to the head-noun:

e.g. persoanele *de față* / the people *present*; prietenii mei *de acolo* / my friends *there*; zgomotul *de sus* / the noise *upstairs*; drumul *de întoarcere* / the road *back*; exemplul *de mai jos* / the example *below*; oamenii *de pretutindeni* / the people *everywhere*; orele *de mâine* / the classes *tomorrow*; discuția *de după aceea* / the discussion *afterwards*; noaptea *de dinainte* / the night *before*.

3.1.1.3 When the Romanian modifier is expressed by an infinitive or by a supine, and their English equivalents are often a gerund in the former case and an infinitive in the latter, these occur, as a rule, in postposition to the head:

a) onoarea *de a vorbi* participanților / the honour *of addressing* the participants; bucuria *de a te fi întâlnit* / the joy *of having met you*; neplăcerea *de a trebui* să mă duc acolo / the unpleasantness *of having to go* there; but also: capacitatea *de a-și imagina* / the ability *to imagine* (where an English infinitive corresponds to the Romanian infinitive);

b) o lecție *de citit* / a lesson *to read*; cuvinte *de ținut minte* / words *to remember*; o problemă *de rezolvat* / a problem *to solve*; o cuvântare *de făcut* / a speech *to make*; but also: o lecție *de condus mașina* / a *driving* lesson (where the Romanian supine corresponds to an English gerund, placed in pre-position to the head-noun).

### 3.1.2 English pre-modifiers as equivalents

3.1.2.1 Very often, in the translation of the *deNP* into English, a structure shift takes place: the word order as well as the modifier structure change, i.e. the Romanian attribute, which describes the head, and is expressed by the *deNP* in postmodification, turns into a non-prepositional noun phrase that precedes the head noun:

e.g. cântec *de iubire* / love song; ședință *de catedră* / department meeting; cremă *de față* / face cream; față *de masă* / table cloth; moară *de vânt* / wind mill; conferință *de presă* / press conference; pată *de ulei* / oil stain; pană *de curent* / power cut; raze *de lună* / moon rays; bătaie *de inimă* / heart beat; jachetă *de piele* / leather jacket; Doamna *de Fier* / the Iron Lady; proprietar *de pământ* / land owner; universitate *de stat* / state university, etc.

Occasionally, modulation is added to these changes: e.g. ceas *de mână* / wrist watch. (*mână* – “hand” becomes *wrist* in English).

The grammatical number of the modifier may also change: thus, in *vânătoare de capete* / *head hunting*, the plural *capete* turns into the singular *head*.

The difference in the structure of the English noun phrase may sometimes result in different meanings: *o ceașcă de ceai* translated as a *tea cup*, with *tea* in pre-modification, denotes the type of cup in which tea is served, while *a cup of tea* refers to the content of the cup; *a gold ring* is a ring made of the precious yellow metal, while *a heart of gold* has an abstract meaning and refers to someone who has a very kind nature.

3.1.2.2 The English premodifier that corresponds to the Romanian *deNP* may be a noun in the Saxon / synthetical genitive; this happens particularly when the attribute denotes time or the author: e.g., *o ședință de trei ore* / a *three hours' meeting*; *vacanță de două săptămâni* / a *two weeks' holiday*; *discuțiile de ieri* / *yesterday's talks*; *lucrare de student* / a *student's paper*; *cuib de pasăre* / a *bird's nest*; *pânză de păianjen* / a *spider's web*.

3.1.2.3 There are instances when the structure shift (the change in word order) is accompanied by a class shift (a change in the morphological class to which the modifier belongs). Thus:

- The Romanian *deNP* modifier denoting the quality of the head may be translated as an adjective into English:

e.g., *un tânăr de nădejde* / a *reliable* young man; *o săptămână de groază* / an *awful* week, a *terrible* week; *o casă de toată frumusețea* / a *splendid* house; *inimă de om* / *human* heart; *măsea de minte* / *wise* tooth; *umeri de bărbat* / *manly* shoulders;

- The Romanian *deNP* (still a descriptive modifier) may have a participle as equivalent: e.g., *organ de conducere* / *governing* body; *ochi de broască* / *bulging* eyes; *limbă de viperă* / *forked* tongue.

3.1.2.4 An interesting case of translation concerns the *deNP* which, from the point of view of its meaning, is only formally a modifier, while its head is only formally a head, because in fact, semantically, the latter modifies the modifier: e.g., *o frumusețe de fată* means *o fată foarte frumoasă*, *o splendoare de inel* means *un inel splendid*. The translation of such noun phrases takes their semantics into account, and the translator must deal with an overlapping of shifts: a double function shift (the modifier – the *deNP* – turns into the head of the phrase in English, and the Romanian head turns into an English modifier); at the same time, a class shift takes place as well, the Romanian head (a noun) becoming an adjective in English:

e.g., *o frumusețe de fată* / a *splendid* girl, a *very beautiful* girl; *o splendoare de inel* / a *wonderful* / *splendid* ring; *un drac, o pramatie de copil* / an *awful* child; *o mizerie de salar* / *very poor* pay; *o spoială de cunoștințe* / *superficial* knowledge; *o grozăvie de vreme* / *terrible* weather; *o porcărie de prăjitură* / a *very bad*, an *awful* cake.

3.1.2.5 There are Romanian noun phrases that contain modifiers expressed by *de + supine*; these are translated into English as noun phrases containing gerunds or, occasionally, participles in pre-position to the head:

e.g., cremă *de ras* / *shaving cream*; mașină *de cusut* / *sewing machine*; apă *de băut* / *drinking water*; vagon *de dormit* / *sleeping car*; (am folosit o) mașină *de închiriat* / (I used a) *rented car*.

### 3.1.3 One word equivalent

Having one referent in reality, the whole Romanian noun phrase (head + *de* modifier) may be rendered into English by one word only. This is mainly a noun:

e.g., articol *de fond* / *editorial*; minister *de finanțe* / *the Treasury*; o lună *de zile* / *a month*; pui *de lup* / *cub*; pui *de găină* / *chicken*; zori *de ziua* / *dawn*; dare *de seamă* / *report*; dangăt *de clopot* / *toll*; concediu *de odihnă* / *holiday, vacation*; fier *de călcat* / *iron*, etc.

3.2 The preposition *de* may introduce a **predicative**. When the link verb is *a fi* (“to be”), the predicative *deNP* is often translated as an *of phrase* (although other prepositions are also possible) or as an infinitive:

e.g., a fi *de aceeași vârstă* / to be *of the same age*; a fi *de părere* / to be *of the opinion*; e *de-ai noștri* / s/he is one *of ours*; casa e *de vânzare* / the house is *for sale*; X e *de vină* / X is *to blame*.

If the predicative is expressed by *de* + *supine*, an infinitive is used in English:

e.g., (casa) este *de închiriat* / (the house) is *to let*; rămâne *de văzut* / it remains *to be seen*; ce e *de făcut?* / what can *be done?*

If the predicative denotes the matter out of which the subject is made, the translator may employ either the passive of the verb *to make* followed by an *of phrase* that refers to the matter, or shifts the subject into the position of the predicative, having the latter pre-modified by the word(s) denoting the matter:

e.g., Inelul e *de aur* / The ring is *made of gold*; This is *a gold ring*; Poarta e *de fier forjat* / The gate is *made of wrought iron*; This is *a wrought iron gate*.

3.3 The preposition *de* also introduces various **adverbials**.

3.3.1 The adverbial of **place** usually indicates the starting point of the action, and the preposition in English that corresponds to *de* is *from*:

e.g., Primesc multe scrisori *de acolo*. / I receive many letters *from there*.

L-am adus *de jos*. / I've brought it *from downstairs*.

M-a condus *de acasă* până la bancă. / He accompanied me *from home* to the bank.

3.3.2 An adverbial of **time** introduced by *de* has translation rules that take three important moments into account: the starting point of the action, the duration of the action and the starting point as well as the end of the action.

- For the exact starting point of the action, the preposition or adverb *since* is used, associated with the present perfect tense:

e.g., Nu l-am văzut *de ieri*. / I haven't seen him *since yesterday*. (preposition)

Nimeni n-a mai sunat *de atunci*. / Nobody has called *since*. (adverb)

If the starting point is a present or a future moment, the adverbial of time may not need any preposition:

*De azi / de mâine încep să fac cură de slăbire. / I shall start a slimming cure today / tomorrow.*

*De acum nu mai vorbesc cu tine. / (From now on) I won't talk to you any longer (starting right now).*

When the adverbial indicating the starting point is expressed by a noun or an adjective which, in the deep structure, are predicatives, the English equivalent of the *de NP* is a time clause introduced by the conjunction *since*:

e.g., *O cunosc de fată (= de când era fată). / I've known her since she was a young girl.*

*Nu l-am văzut de mic (= de când era mic). / I haven't seen him since he was a child.*

- The duration of the action is usually expressed in English by the preposition *for*, associated with the present perfect tense in direct speech:

e.g., *Lucrez la acest proiect de o lună. / I have been working on this project for a month.*

*Nu l-am văzut de mult. / I haven't seen him for a long time.*

- The starting point and the end of an action are present in the following example, where *de* is correlated with *până* and its equivalent, *from*, with *till*:

e.g., *Muncește de dimineața până seara. / She works from morning till evening.*

- Sometimes the preposition *de* connects two identical items, with an iterative meaning (denoting that something is happening repeatedly or continuously):

e.g., *M-am dus acolo zi de zi. / I went there day after day.*

*Era de servici săptămână de săptămână. / He was on duty week after week.*

- The adverbial of time may be expressed by an adverbial numeral or by similar constructions that have an iterative meaning; in English similar multiplicative or frequency adverbials are used; these, however, do not need a preposition:

e.g., *S-a servit de trei ori. / He helped himself three times.*

*Te-am rugat de o mie de ori. / I have asked you a hundred times.*

*De nenumărate ori m-am întrebat ce face. / I have often wondered how you were doing.*

3.3.3 The preposition *de* may often introduce an adverbial of **cause** and an adverbial of **purpose**, being translated by various prepositions:

e.g., *Plângea de bucurie. / She was crying for joy. (cause)*

*Plângea de durere. / She was crying with pain. (cause)*

*Am murit de rușine. / I died of embarrassment. (cause)*

*Ne plângem mereu de prețurile mari. / We are constantly complaining about the high prices. (cause)*



Avem timp *de discuții*? / Do we time time *for discussions*? (purpose)  
L-am primit *de cadou*. / I have received it *as a gift*. (purpose)

### 3.3.4 The adverbial of **manner** is often introduced by *de*.

- When the adverbial is of manner proper, it is mainly expressed by a *deNP*, which is translated as an adverb or as some prepositional noun phrase:  
e.g., *De obicei* mă culc târziu. / (As a rule) I (usually) go to bed late.  
*Am luat această decizie de comun acord*. / We have taken this decision *by common consent* / *with one accord*.
- When the adverbial of manner is a quantifier expressing measure, value, or having a superlative meaning, one may distinguish the following patterns that are interesting from a translational point of view:

a) the preposition *de* precedes some noun that is determined and quantified by a cardinal numeral; the English translation will consist of a noun phrase (cardinal number + noun) that precedes an adjective:

e.g., un drum *lat de patru metri* / a road *four meters wide*  
o clădire înaltă *de șapte etaje* / a building *seven storeys high*

b) the preposition *de* is part of a noun phrase that has a superlative or emphatic meaning; this may be translated as a (prepositional) noun phrase, as an adjective or an adverb with similar meaning:

e.g., M-am speriat *de moarte*. / I was scared *to death*.  
M-am distrat *de minune*. / I had a *wonderful* / a *great* time.  
Răcnea *de mama focului*. / He was yelling *awfully* / *like hell*.

Notice the class shift in the last two examples, where the Romanian *deNP* turns into an adjective (*wonderful*, *great*) or an adverb (*awfully*).

c) the preposition *de* introduces an adverb or an adjective preceded by a quantifier, an adverb or adverbial phrase that denotes the force of an action or the quality of a noun. What we have in English is simply an adverb or an intensifying adverb followed by another adverb or by an adjective (the two often representing in fact an absolute superlative):

e.g., Nu știi *cât de urât* s-a purtat. / You don't know how *awfully* he has behaved.  
Vorbește *atât de frumos*. / He speaks *so beautifully*.  
Este *extraordinar de interesant*. / It is *most interesting*.  
Este un gest *cât se poate de frumos*. / It is a *most wonderful* gesture.

d) *de* may connect two identical items to suggest that something is done in the manner or at the rate specified; its equivalent in English is the preposition *by*:  
e.g., Am verificat sumele *cifră de cifră*. / We have checked the sums *figure by figure*.  
A examinat dosarul *foaie de foaie*. / He examined the file *page by page*.  
Am analizat textul *cuvânt de cuvânt*. / I have analysed the text *word by word*.



3.3.5 The preposition *de* may introduce an adverbial of **relation**, which usually modifies an adjective, an adverb or a verb. The Romanian adverbial may be expressed by:

a) a prepositional noun phrase:

e.g., E foarte sigură *de ea*. / She is very sure *of herself*.

E bun *de gură*. / He has *a glib tongue*. (notice the modulation: *gură* "mouth" becomes *tongue* - and the function shift: the predicative *bun* turns into the attribute *glib*)

E încet *de minte*. / He has *a slow mind*. (notice the function shift: the predicative *încet* becomes the attribute *slow*)

b) a supine that modifies an adjective or, sometimes, is in free variation with a prepositional noun phrase. In the former case, the adverbial (*de + supine*) and the modified part of sentence (the adjective) may turn into one English word only or the adverbial (*de + supine*) becomes an infinitive; in the latter case, the supine becomes a gerund, while its alternate (*de + noun*) remains a prepositional noun phrase in English as well:

e.g., Ion este bun *de însurat*. / John is *marriageable/ eligible*.

Prăjitura este bună *de mâncat*. / The cake is *edible/ eatable*.

Comportamentul său este greu *de înțeles*. / His behaviour is difficult *to understand*.

Textul este ușor *de urmărit*. / The text is easy *to follow*.

Este demn *de admirat / de admirație*. / He is worth *admiring*. / He is worthy *of admiration*.

3.4 One of the most frequent uses of the preposition *de* is that of introducing a **prepositional object** after a great number of verbs. Its equivalent in English varies a lot, depending to a high degree on the semantic features of the verb (i.e. the head of the verb phrase).

*De* is the typical preposition for the agent (the doer of the action) in passive sentences, and its equivalent is *by* in English:

e.g., A fost invitat *de mine*. / He was invited *by me*.

Other examples of prepositional objects and their translations are:

Vorbeau *de mine*. / They were talking *about me*.

Și-au apărat țara *de dușmani*. / They defended their country *against enemies*.

Te rog să nu râzi *de mine*. / Please don't laugh *at me*.

A încercat să se prindă *de bară*. / He tried to clutch *at the rail*.

L-au luat *de nebun*. / They took him *for a madman*.

S-a despărțit *de ea* acum cinci ani. / He separated *from her* five years ago.

Am dat *de el* la teatru. / I ran *into him* at the theatre.

Îmi amintește *de sora mea*. / She reminds me *of my sister*.

Ține-te *de brațul meu*. / Lean *on* my arm.

Aluatul mi s-a lipit *de degete*. / The dough stuck *to my fingers*.

Succesul tău mă umple *de bucurie*. / Your success fills me *with joy*, etc.

Particular attention must be paid to the frequent cases when Romanian prepositional verbs have English transitive verbs as equivalents, and the Romanian prepositional object turns into an English direct object:

e.g. *Îmi amintesc de povestea aceea.* / I remember *that story.*  
 M-am folosit *de toate relațiile mele.* / I have used *all my connections.*  
 Am nevoie *de un sfat.* / I need *a piece of advice.*  
 Te rog să-ți vezi *de treabă.* / Please mind *your own business.*  
 Nu se teme *de nimeni.* / She fears *no one.*  
 Cred că se ferește *de mine.* / I think he is avoiding *me.*  
 Am șters mobila *de praf.* / I have dusted *the furniture.*  
 M-am apucat *de brodat / de broderie* / I have taken up *embroidering.*

The Romanian prepositional object may also modify an adjective and in this case it is translated mainly as a gerund or as a (prepositional) noun phrase:

e.g. Este incapabil *de a lua o decizie.* / He is incapable *of taking* a decision.  
 Este demn *de laudă.* / He deserves *being praised*; he is worth *praising*; he deserves *our praise.*  
 Este iubitoare *de pisici.* / She is *a cat-lover.*  
 Este plin *de bani.* / He is loaded *with money.*

3.5 Very often the Romanian verb is transitive and the syntactic function of the word introduced by *de* is that of **direct object**; this is expressed mainly by a supine, but can also be a noun phrase:

e.g., Am *de spus* ceva despre asta. / I have something *to say* about it.  
 Mi-a adus *de băut.* / He brought me something *to drink.*  
 Am *de rezolvat* două probleme. / I have two problems *to solve.*  
 Am terminat *de gătit.* / I have finished *cooking.*  
 Avem *de toate.* / We have *everything*  
 Ne-a dat *de mâncare.* / She gave us *food.*

As one can see, the supine is translated either as an infinitive (part of an accusative + infinitive construction) or as a gerund; the Romanian prepositional noun phrase becomes a non-prepositional noun phrase in English.

3.6 Unusual as it may seem, **subjects** expressed by *de* + *supine* are also possible, and they are translated into English as infinitives:

e.g., Este imposibil *de ajuns* acolo. / It is impossible *to get* there.  
 Este bine *de știut.* / It is good *to know.*

Similarly to the function of direct object (which, however, with many Romanian verbs, is marked in the accusative case by the preposition *pe*, not by *de*, – e.g., *Îl văd pe tata* / *I can see father*), the subject is not normally governed by a preposition. Pană-Dindelegan (2003, 206-7) suggests that, when *de* introduces a direct object or a subject expressed by a supine, it is not a preposition, but a complementizer that marks this Romanian verb form (just like English *to*, which marks the infinitive).

3.7 Two other uses of *de* as a preposition are those of connecting cardinal numbers (except for numbers 1-19 or compounds with them) to *mii* ("thousands"), *milioane* ("millions"), *miliarde* ("billions") to form compound cardinal numerals (e.g., *treizeci de mii* / thirty thousand, *două sute douăzecișisapte de milioane* / two hundred and twenty seven million, *cincizeci de miliarde* / fifty billion), and the adjectival articles *cel, cea* to an ordinal numeral (e.g., *cel de al cincilea copil* / the fifth child, *cea de a șasea carte* / the sixth book).

In a construction typical of the Romanian language (cf. Avram 2005, 1: 296; 2: 87), the cardinal numeral (again, only from 20 upwards) is connected by the preposition *de* to a noun (e.g., *25 de mesaje* / 25 messages); since the numeral is a quantifier, it may be considered to form a unit with the preposition, and together be the determiner of the noun, regarded as the nucleus of the phrase. On the other hand, when the numeral has an indefinite meaning, the syntactic relations within the noun phrase are less clear (e.g., *mii de oameni* / thousands of people, *zeci de cărți* / tens of books).

Except for this last case, when in English the preposition *of* is used, in all the other instances where numerals are present, no preposition is necessary in the translation.

## 4. Connective values: *de* as a conjunction

As a conjunction, *de* may mark relations of coordination between clauses that have the same syntactic function (this happens less and less frequently in the literary language) or, more often, relations of subordination between clauses; in the latter case, *de* is often part of a conjunction phrase.

4.1 *De* serves as a **copulative conjunction** when it introduces alternative concessive-conditional clauses. This value is rendered into English by the correlative sequence *whether (...) or*, which coordinates two subordinate clauses: e.g., *De vorbesc, de tac, tot atâta-i.* / It's all the same **whether** I speak **or** I keep silent. The same meaning is obtained if the conjunction *whether* is followed by *or not*, with ellipsis of the verb in the second clause: **Whether** I speak **or not**, it's all the same.

If the verb of the first Romanian clause is repeated in the second clause, it is obligatorily negated. In this case, *de* of the second clause may alternate with the conjunction *ori*, with the same coordinating value:

*De-ți place, de / ori nu-ți place, mă duc la petrecere.* / **Whether** you like it **or not**, I'll go to the party.

When the repeated Romanian verb is the verb *a fi* ("to be"), but the predicatives differ in the two clauses, the negation is absent; in English both the first and the second coordinated clause may display ellipsis of conjunction, subject and verb:

*De e vară, de e iarnă, aleargă în fiecare dimineață în parc.* /

[**Whether it is**] summer or winter, he will jog in the park every morning.

4.2 As a **subordinating conjunction**, *de* may have both adverbial and non-adverbial values, depending on the type of clause it introduces.

#### 4.2.1 Adverbial values

4.2.1.1 *De* may introduce clauses that are on the **borderline** between coordination and subordination, allowing for different interpretations. The case discussed by various linguists is that of the imperative clause connected by *de* to another imperative clause; the latter is regarded either as a clause coordinated to the former or as a final clause (cf. Avram 2005, 1: 646; Pană-Dindelegan 2003, 202-3; Avram 2001, 410, 441; Avram 1963, 1: 408). The main reason why *de* is regarded by many linguists as a copulative coordinator in this case is that the imperative mood is not typical of subordinate clauses. Such sentences will be best translated into English by employing the copulative conjunction *and*:

Du-te de vezi ce se întâmplă. / Go **and** see what is going on.

Vino de-ți ia o prăjitură. / Come **and** take a cake.

The Romanian verb in the clause introduced by *de* is not necessarily an imperative, but may occur in one of the tenses (usually past) of the indicative mood; this does not make the relation between the two clauses any clearer. A non-finite form (an infinitive) is preferred in English in this case (in free variation with an *and* clause):

Mergea la el săptămânal de-i povestea ce s-a mai întâmplat. / He would visit him every week, (**in order**) **to** tell him / **and** told him the latest news.

Se duse de cumpără niște zarzavat. / He went **to buy** / **and** bought some vegetables

A venit de l-a rugat să-l ajute. – He came **to ask** / **and** asked him for help.

A class shift or transposition may take place, by means of which the Romanian subordinate verb turns into a noun phrase, with no change of meaning:

S-a dus de s-a culcat. – He went **to bed**.

It is interesting to note that, in all these cases, the Romanian verb in the clause introduced by *de* is in the same tense and mood, expressing a real action (indicative or imperative), as the main clause verb (which is mostly a verb of movement).

4.2.1.2 In colloquial Romanian or in poetry, *de* is the equivalent of *dacă* in **conditional** clauses, and its English equivalent is **if** or **unless** (if the clause is negative):

De/dacă vine și el, o să mă bucur foarte mult. / **If** he comes too, I'll be very happy / pleased.

De nu mă invită, nu mă duc. / I won't go **unless** he invites me.

De-oi adormi, te rog să mă trezești. / **If** I should fall asleep, please wake me up.

De-aș ști, ți-aș spune. / **If** I knew, I would tell you.

*De* may introduce elliptic negative conditional clauses, a sentence pattern used to express a warning or threat:

De vine, bine, de nu, voi ruga pe altcineva să mă ajute. / **If** he comes, fine, **if** he doesn't, I'll ask someone else to help me.

Să speli vasele, că de nu, vezi tu! / Do the dishes **or else**!

Notice in the last example that *or else* (“if not”, “otherwise”) also takes over the threat or warning expressed by “vezi tu!”.

4.2.1.3 When introducing **concessive** clauses, *de*, preceded sometimes by *și* (“and”) is translated as *although*, *even if*, *even though*, *in spite of the fact that*:

Și de-i dau bani, tot nu e mulțumit. / ***Even if/ even though*** I give him money, he is not happy.

(Și) de-aș ști că te superi, nu pot să nu-ți spun ce gândesc. / ***Even though/ even if*** I knew you would get angry, I can't help telling you what I think.

The conjunction phrases *de unde*, *chiar de*, *nici de*, *de bine ce* may also introduce a concessive clause.

De unde / de bine ce zicea că nu vine, a apărut pe la ora opt. / ***While / in spite of the fact that / although*** he said he wouldn't come, he showed up around eight.

Chiar de mă invită, tot nu mă duc. / ***Even if*** she invites me, I won't go.

Nu mă mișc de aici nici de mă plătește cu aur. / I won't budge from here, ***even if*** I'm paid in gold.

4.2.1.4 In **causative** clauses, when followed by an adverb or an adjective that is thematized, *de* is often correlated with *ce*:

De mult ce vorbește, mă doare capul. / I have a head ache ***because*** she talks so much.

De răcită ce sunt, de abia vorbesc. / I can hardly speak, ***because*** I have a bad cold.  
/ ***As*** I have a bad cold, I can hardly speak.

Avram (2001, 441) interprets such clauses as clauses of manner proper.

Since the adverb or the adjective preceded by *de* is felt to be slightly emphasized, it is also possible to translate such sentences by performing a double shift: a class shift, as the intensifier *so* or the pronoun *such* take the place of the conjunction, and a syntactic shift, which changes the role of the two clauses: the causative clause becomes the main clause, while the main clause turns into a clause of result:

She talks ***so*** much / ***so*** much does she talk, that I have a headache.

I have ***such*** a bad cold, that I can hardly speak.

Pănă-Dindelegan (2003, 201) claims that the causative use of *de* is limited to clauses that depend on a rhetorical question or an imperative clause:

De ești așa obosită, de ce ai venit? / nu veni! / ***Since / as*** you are so tired, why have you come? / don't come!

The pattern containing the imperative in the Romanian main clause may, however, also be interpreted as containing a condition, in which case, *de* will correspond to English *if*:

***If*** you are so tired, don't come!

4.2.1.5 A special use of *de* occurs in correlative conjunction phrases (*de ce ... de ce, de ce ... de aceea*) introducing adverbial clauses of **manner** that denote a gradual progress of the action in the main clause: the latter increases / decreases in direct proportion to the increase / decrease of the action in the former. One or both of the clauses contain either a comparative of inequality or some verb denoting gradual action:

De ce câştiga *mai mulți* bani, de aceea se făcea *mai zgârcită*. / **The more** money she made, **the more tight-fisted** she became.

De ce îl asculta, de ce își dădea seama că nu are dreptate. / **The more** she listened to him, **the more** she realized he was wrong.

De ce se înnorează, se întunecă. / **The cloudier** it gets, **the darker** it gets.

The two equivalent English clauses are joined asyndetically and each is opened by an adjective or an adverb in the comparative degree, preceded by the definite article.

The conjunction phrase *de parcă* introduces a comparative clause, and its equivalents are the conjunctions *as if, as though*:

Se poartă de parcă ar fi stăpân aici. / He behaves **as if** he were the master here.

4.2.1.6 The **consecutive** use of *de* is quite frequent; the clause of result may sometimes have a superlative meaning or may suggest a superlative evaluation:

A venit mai aproape, de l-a putut vedea toată lumea. / He came closer, **so that** everybody was able to see him.

N-am avut nici o veste câteva zile, de-am crezut că înnnebunesc. / I had no news for several days, **so** I thought I would go insane.

An intensifier may occur in the main clause, while the clause of result further intensifies the sentence meaning:

Era *așa* un praf, de nu mai vedeai nimic. / There was such dust, **that** you couldn't see anything.

Era *extrem* de deșteaptă, de toată lumea o admira. / She was so very intelligent, **that** everybody admired her.

*Așa* frumos a cântat, de am început să plâng. / So beautifully did she sing, **that** I started to cry.

4.2.1.7 Conjunction phrases like *de când, de pe când, de cum, de îndată ce*, which mark the beginning of a period of time, or (*ori*) *de câte ori*, which indicates the repetition of an action, introduce **time clauses**:

A crescut iarba de când am fost aici. / The grass has grown **since** I was here.

Se pricepea la toate de pe când era tânăr. / He had been good at everything **ever since** he was a young man.

Am intrat în casă de cum / de îndată ce s-a înserat. / I went in **as soon as** it got dark.

(*Ori*) de câte ori îmi pune întrebări, îi răspund. / **Whenever** he asks me questions, I answer.

#### 4.2.2 Non-adverbial values

*De* may also introduce subject, object and predicative clauses, having the English *if*, *whether* and *that* as equivalents; it also introduces relative clauses, and then it corresponds to the English relative pronouns *that* and *which*.

4.2.2.1 As a connector in **subject clauses**, *de* blurs the difference between an assertion, typically introduced by the conjunction *că*, and a statement or a claim that something is or was possible, typically introduced by *să*; in both cases, *de* is translated as *that*:

S-a întâmplat odată de- / *că* a venit mai târziu. / It once happened **that** he came later.

S-a întâmplat de a pus / *să* pună și întrebări prostești. / It happened **that** he also asked stupid questions.

The English sentences may allow the application of the transformational rule known as subject-subject raising, in which case *that* is deleted:

He happened to also ask stupid questions.

When *de* is a synonym of *dacă*, it introduces subject clauses that occur after verbs typical of reported speech; sometimes these clauses are wrongly taken for conditional clauses in Romanian, but are often best translated into English as conditional clauses; however, in English they may also be subject clauses or object clauses:

De-ar fi plecat pentru totdeauna ar fi fost nemaipomenit. / **If**he had left for good, it would have been great.

Ar fi mai bine de-ar pleca acum. / It would be better **if**he left now.

Nu se știe de va ajunge la timp. / One doesn't know **whether** / **if**he'll get there in time.

De a cumpărat casa ori nu e absolut neimportant. / **Whether** he has bought the house *or* not is absolutely unimportant.

4.2.2.2 *De* may introduce **predicative clauses**, normally associated with [+ abstract] main clause subjects:

Întrebarea este de poți să te duci acolo singur. / The question is **if** / **whether** you can go there by yourself.

Certain sentences undergo syntactic shifts in the process of translation; thus in the following example, the predicative clause may turn into a noun phrase which functions as a predicative or into an infinitive which is part of an aspective predicate; also in the latter case, the subject of the main clause in the source language becomes an object of the infinitive in the target language:

A ajuns de ți-e milă de dânsul. / He has turned into *a pitiful person*. / One has come *to pity him*.

4.2.2.3 In colloquial speech, **object clauses** (direct and prepositional) may be introduced by *de*. If the object clause is a reported one, it occurs after words belonging to the sphere of information



in the main clause:

A încercat să afle de-or ajunge și acolo. / He tried to find out *if / whether* they'd get there.

Sunt curioasă de va zice ceva. / I am curious *whether* she'll say something.

The connector is often a phrase (*de unde, de când, cum de*), introducing an indirect question or an indirect exclamatory sentence:

M-a întrebat cum de-am terminat așa repede. / He asked me *how come* I had finished so quickly.

Se mira de unde am atâția bani. / He wondered *where* I had so much money *from*.

A vrut să știe de când sunt acolo. / He wanted to know *how long* I had been there.

4.2.2.4 *De* may have the value of a **relative pronoun**, introducing relative clauses; its English equivalents will be relative pronouns:

Cartea de-am cumpărat-o ieri este scrisă de un celebru autor. / The book *that* I bought yesterday is written by a famous author.

Rochia e aia de-ai văzut-o în vitrină. / The dress is the one *which / that* you saw in the shop-window.

The relative clause may have a consecutive meaning:

Am să fac o prăjitură de o s-o țină minte toți. / I shall make a cake *that* everybody will remember.

## 5. Conclusion

I am aware that, in spite of its length, my paper does not exhaust the topic and that there may be more uses of *de* that may not have been taken into account.

Both as a preposition and as a conjunction, as well as when it has other uses, *de* has a great number of equivalents in English (*about, after, against, as, at, by, for, from, into, of, on, since, to, with*, when *de* is a preposition, and *and, although, as, as if, as though, as soon as, because, even if, even though, if, since, so that, that, unless, whether, while*, when *de* is a conjunction). Of the 54 uses identified in the paper, *de* was not translated in fourteen cases only, while seven of the structures in which it occurs allowed, depending on their meaning, either a translation where *de* had an equivalent or one in which it was omitted.

One can easily notice that, in the translation process, *de* cannot be viewed as a separate, independent item; the translator must take into consideration the whole structure in which the word is used, the meaning and the syntactic role of this structure. As a result, in the translation of such structures into English, besides instances when word for word translation is possible, various shifts may take place – changes in the morphological class of the words introduced by *de*, changes of word order, of grammatical case or number, changes of syntactic function or of point of view.



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## Discourse intonation - Making it work

### Summary

Discourse Intonation (DI) (Brazil 1997; Chun 2002) seems to be particularly well suited for use in the EFL classroom, much more so than the rather complex traditional models (e.g. O'Connor and Arnold 1973) or some recent phonological theories. Yet if L2 teachers are to be provided with clear guidelines on how to incorporate DI into communicative language teaching, much more empirical research is needed with L2 students of different L1 backgrounds to uncover the specific problems they face. The small-scale study presented here examines how 15 second-year students of the English Department in Niš manage intonation in a reading task. The analysis focuses on the components singled out by Chun (2002) as crucial for language learners: sentence stress (nuclear tone placement), terminal contour (direction of pitch change) and key (pitch range at transition points).

**Key words:** discourse functions of intonation, Serbian EFL students, teaching intonation

## Besedilna intonacija

### Povzetek

Model besedilne intonacije (BI) (Brazil 1997; Chun 2002) se je pri pouku angleščine kot tujega jezika izkazal primernejši od nekaterih tradicionalnih in kompleksnejših modelov (npr. O'Connor and Arnold 1973) oziroma najnovejših fonoloških teorij. Vendar pa je za to, da bi učiteljem angleščine lahko ponudili smernice, kako uporabiti BI v razredu, treba izvesti več empiričnih raziskav med študenti angleščine, ki govorijo različne materne jezike. Tako bi ugotovili, katere so njihove specifične težave. Članek predstavlja rezultate študije, v kateri je sodelovalo 15 študentov angleščine z Univerze v Nišu. Analiza njihove bralne intonacije se je osredinila na tiste komponente, ki jih Chunova (2000) navaja kot najbolj pomembne za učence angleščine: stavčni naglas (mesto intonacijskega jedra), končni potek intonacije in glasovna višina.

**Ključne besede:** besedilne funkcije intonacije, srbski študenti angleščine kot tujega jezika, pouk intonacije

# Discourse intonation - Making it work

## 1. Introduction

Although intonation has been gaining more and more recognition in L2 teaching for several decades, “as an integral part of language fluency, competence and proficiency” (Chun 2002, xiii), it still represents the most persistent challenge for language students and teachers alike. Students often do not have a clear idea of why exactly ‘the melody of speech’ should be important for communication, and therefore seem to lack the motivation to master it, while teachers do not seem to be theoretically or practically well-equipped to explain and illustrate its significance.

While traditional models, such as the British ‘intonation pattern’ approach, the traditional American ‘levels’ approach, or the more recent generative approaches have turned out to be too complex and difficult to ‘translate’ into everyday teaching practices, Discourse Intonation (DI) (Brazil 1997; Chun 2002) seems to be both more readily applicable in EFL pronunciation practice and more learner-friendly (Goh 2001) as it “helps to organize and demystify the teaching of intonation” (Chapman 2007, 6). The main reason may be the fact that it focuses directly on the relevance of intonation in communication, in line with the general shift of perspective towards setting communicative competence as the goal in ELT. With a “growing recognition that traditional sentence-level approaches may not be able to meet the needs of language teachers and learners, who need to develop awarenesses of explicit connections between intonational choices and the meanings communicated by those choices” (Levis and Pickering 2004), the pragmatic and discourse “interactional functions of intonation” (Chun 2002, 42) have come into focus, too.

Moreover, the pedagogical ‘bias’ is a central component of the model proposed by Chun (2002), based on the earlier DI model by Brazil (1997). Chun’s explicitly stated aim is to move on “from theory and research to practice”, by proposing a model for *teaching* intonation (Chun 2002, 42), so she shifts the spotlight from intonation *form* to intonation *functions*. Relying heavily on descriptions by earlier authors, Chun’s systematization also moves the focus from the traditionally recognized grammatical and attitudinal/emotional functions to the ones she groups as sociolinguistic and discourse functions, the latter encompassing “a range of functions beyond the sentence level for the purpose of achieving continuity and coherence within a discourse” (Chun 2002, 56). These include intonation signals used to *mark information structure* (signalling sentence-level focus, emphasis and contrasts, distinguishing between new and given information), *illocutionary/speech-act functions* (signalling the speaker’s intentional force), *textual/discourse functions* (signalling coherence, shared knowledge, discourse-level prominence and boundaries in discourse, as well as the speaker’s expectations about the hearer’s reply), and *interactive/discourse functions* (signalling continuation/changing of topic, discouraging the hearer from replying, showing cooperation, facilitating repair).

Both research findings and classroom experience justify the recognition of the vital importance of the discourse functions of intonation for EFL students’ communicative competence. However,

there is a growing need for empirical research findings that would specify more narrowly the difficulties that learners of different L1 backgrounds encounter in mastering English intonation. The next section provides an overview of the research studies that examined how native and non-native speakers of English manage certain discourse functions of intonation.

## 2. Previous research

A detailed overview of the relatively few earlier studies of intonation as used by native speakers of English is offered by Chun (2002); here, we focus on those immediately relevant for the components of intonation investigated in our study.

Concerning the phonetic cues used by native English speakers to mark information structure in terms of sentence-level focus, the major ones are pitch movement and pitch range (Johns-Lewis 1986), i.e. the pitch height of the syllable focused by the speaker (Chun 2002, 37). Pitch movement is the most relevant cue for signalling information structure in terms of finality or continuity, as well. Finality (at tone unit/sentence boundaries) is signalled primarily by a falling tone, usually to a rather low pitch at the end of a tone unit (Du Bois et al. 1993), while the intonational signals for continuity (at least in American English) include: a slight rise from its beginning at low or mid level; a level tone; or a slight fall (but not low enough to be considered final) (Chun 2002, 44). Pitch movement is also a significant phonetic cue signalling the speaker's expectations about the hearer's reply. For instance, research has shown that a high-rise at the end of the tone unit signals that the speaker is seeking confirmation from the hearer (DuBois et al. 1993).

It has also been suggested that pitch level and pitch movement play a significant role in marking boundaries at the sentence level and the discourse level (Johns-Lewis 1986). Sentence boundaries are signalled by the lowering of the pitch across an utterance (declination), while paragraph structure, as well as topic development, is indicated by using a downstepped contour, i.e. paragraph-initial sentences with comparatively higher F0 peaks (Lehiste 1979) followed by consecutively lower pitch peaks (Chun 2002, 37).

The phonetic signals used to conclude a topic and/or introduce a new one, whether related to textual or interactive/discourse functions of intonation, have been investigated rather extensively. Studies have shown that the following phonetic cues are related to topic termination, as well as sentence, paragraph and conversation turn finality: segmental lengthening, creak (laryngealization) before a boundary, and pause length (Johns-Lewis 1986); downstepped contour (*ibid.*); dropping low in pitch range, "fading away in amplitude, and leaving a long pause at the end of the turn" (Brown et al. 1980 in Chun 2002, 64). On the other hand, initiality, or starting a new topic, is marked by relatively high pitch peaks (Johns-Lewis 1986; Yang 1995), high key (Brazil 1975), or relatively high pitch range (Brown et al. 1980).

Finally, regarding the phonetic cue described as 'pitch range' by most researchers, it has been found that a wider frequency range is used in reading aloud or acting than in normal conversation and that reading a dialogue is characterised by a wider range than reading a narrative (Chun 2002, 37).

In the studies of intonation conducted with non-native speakers, the most frequently investigated L2 has been English; still, the studies examining the problems that learners of different L1 backgrounds face in the process of acquiring English intonation are quite limited in number and not very recent. In addition, not many of the researchers explicitly refer to discourse functions of intonation. Nevertheless, we will include here the empirical findings that are in one way or another relevant for the components of intonation we have focused on in our study.

A list of the most commonly identified errors in the production of English intonation that have been detected across studies is provided by Mennen (2006). Some of the problems she points out include: a narrower pitch range used by non-native speakers (Backman 1979; Jenner 1976; Willems 1982), incorrect prominence placement (Backman 1979; Jenner 1976), inappropriate use of rises and falls (Backman 1979; McGory 1997; Willems 1982), a smaller declination rate (Willems 1982) and a number of pitch-related problems (Mennen 2006).

While some of the problems have been identified with speakers of different L1 backgrounds and might therefore be attributed to the specific features of English intonation, other problems are typical of learners sharing a common native language and could be accounted for by negative transfer (Mennen 2006).

The most commonly researched learner groups seem to have been native speakers of Japanese and Spanish. Conducted within Pierrehumbert and Hirshberg's model, a study by Wennerstrom (1994) investigated how native speakers of Spanish, Japanese and Thai used intonation to structure their discourse. She concludes that these EFL speakers consistently fail to increase their pitch sufficiently on new information, giving almost equal prominence to items of different informational status, although she notes differences among native speakers of Spanish on the one hand and native speakers of Japanese and Thai on the other. A further problem identified with Thai and Japanese speakers is failure to mark boundaries appropriately. The features of intonation produced by Japanese speakers acquiring English were also investigated by Yamato (2004), who focused on the learners' ability to express illocutionary force through intonation. The results show that the majority of Japanese learners use a falling tone regardless of intention, which is interpreted as a direct influence of the participants' mother tongue. The author therefore suggests paying special attention to pragmatic aspects of pronunciation with Japanese learners.

A falling contour has also turned out to be the dominant one in a study of the intonation of Spanish learners of English conducted by Verdugo (2005), who investigated the use of intonation to express certainty and uncertainty. Here too the learners opted for a narrow falling pitch range or mid-level tones instead of the complex fall-rise tone to express uncertainty, thus reducing the number of pragmatic meanings expressed compared to native English speakers. Some elements of the intonation of Finnish speakers of English have been examined by Toivanen (2003). An interesting finding of this study is that Finns fail to clearly signal 'open' pragmatic meanings, such as continuation, uncertainty or reservation, and indiscriminately opt for falling tones (in contrast to the fall-rise chosen by native speakers) in statements, regardless of their communicative function. The author concludes that in such cases pragmatic rather than phonetic interference is

at work, adding that even more proficient learners of English seem to be virtually unaware of the pragmatic functions of intonation. Komar (2005) studied pitch level, pitch range and pre-tonic segments in Slovene learners of English; her results show that they use a much narrower pitch range when producing falling tones and a considerably smaller “step up in pitch from the end of the falling pre-tonic segment” to the beginning of the fall. Finally, when Serbian EFL learners are concerned, we are not aware of any similar researches.

Due to considerable differences in the number and backgrounds of the participants (L1-L2 combinations, levels of proficiency in L2) and the theoretical frameworks adopted, research results from different studies mentioned in this section are difficult to compare. Yet, they evidently investigate uses of intonation that are referred to as discourse functions in Chun’s framework, and they clearly point to specific problems of the learner groups investigated. Therefore, they can provide guidelines on the elements of English intonation to start from in investigating other L1 groups of learners. The aim of the study described in the next section is to examine how Serbian EFL learners manage certain discourse functions of intonation, especially the ones highlighted as problematic in previous research, and to explore the practical application of the findings in pronunciation practice with Serbian students.

### 3. Present study

The research aimed to examine how rather proficient Serbian EFL students manage intonation in a reading task, especially those aspects relevant for discourse functions. The investigation focused on the components of intonation singled out by Chun (2002, 201-2) as “crucial for language learners to be able to identify and practice”: *sentence stress* (or *accent*) i.e. “syllables or words that are most prominent because they represent the information focus or point of contrast or emphasis in a sentence”; *terminal contour* i.e. the direction of pitch change, “particularly at sentence end or at so-called transition points”; and *key* i.e. “range of pitch used at points of transition (at both the beginning and end of an utterance) relative to preceding and succeeding utterances or parts of utterances”. Our aim, therefore, was to investigate how Serbian EFL students use intonation to signal information structure and pragmatic meanings at sentence and discourse levels.

The population comprised 15 second-year students of the English Department, Faculty of Philosophy in Niš (10 female and 5 male, aged 20-21). Their overall language proficiency level was approximately B2+ (CEF). The participants, therefore, were experienced EFL learners (8-12 years of studying English in a formal educational setting), but had had no explicit phonetics and phonology training.

The research was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Which discourse functions of intonation do EFL students signal in a reading task?
2. What phonetic cues do they use to signal discourse functions?

## 5. Methodology

The **data-gathering** procedure consisted of a single reading task. The text was 230 words long and comprised 42 to 54 possible tone groups (optimal 48). Each participant had enough time to prepare for the recording (silent reading); when ready, they read the text aloud and were recorded. The digital recording was stored directly into the Speech Filing System 4.6/Windows for subsequent analyses.

Although spontaneous conversations would yield results more directly relevant for spoken communication, a reading task was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it was more economical: the text was adapted for this specific research and structured to contain specific discourse-structure signals so that a relatively short text would contain enough examples of the intonation components we wanted to investigate, which would be very difficult to achieve in a relatively short spontaneous conversation.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, though especially designed for this research, the text resembled the kind of texts students had a lot of experience with in their *English language* courses; therefore, they felt more comfortable and at ease reading a familiar kind of text than they would if asked to ‘talk’ in English into a microphone. Thirdly, a reading task provided a situation in which students did not have to *make* choices about using intonation signals, but rather, to recognize and interpret the intended signals already given in the text. They had the benefit of the context for interpreting the speaker’s intentions with respect to topic development, yielding the floor and turn taking, expecting a reply from the interlocutor, as well as discourse structure and information structure in general. All the signals could be inferred from either the syntactic and lexical context or from the punctuation of the text, which was supposed to make the task easier. Finally, Wennerstrom (1994, 419) points out that “[t]here is a trade-off between oral reading, which allows the researcher to control the content of the text but does not involve the creative function of language, and free speech, which is spontaneous, but does not necessarily yield the desired contrasts in meaning”; in her study “the results between the two tasks [were] mostly compatible.”

**Data analysis.** The acoustic analysis of the recordings was performed using the Speech filing System 4.6/Windows (© M. Huckvalle, UCL). Data analyses was based on F0 measurements obtained through three program procedures (F0 track, F0 estimate and F0 autocorrelation) for each individual participant. The analysis focused on the following intonational cues: pitch movement across the tone unit, pitch level at tone unit boundaries (initial and final) and pitch range (the span between maximum and minimum F0 measurement). Pitch movement was transcribed in the traditional 5-tone system (fall-rise ∨, fall \, rise /, rise-fall ∧, level tone —). With respect to the key (H high, M mid, L low), F0 measurements for specific intonational signals were related to each individual participant’s pitch range, measured separately for two parts of the text (narrative/dialogue). Pitch level at tone unit boundaries was taken to signal transitional continuity (final, continuing, appealing, Chun 2002). Pause length at tone unit boundaries was measured where relevant for the intonation signal investigated.

Although researchers’ perceptual judgments of inonational components used by the participants were not part of study design, for two items in our investigation the researchers’ judgments about



whether the phonetic cues used by the participants could be interpreted as discourse signals were also included. It should be noted that these evaluations were not considered as empirical findings, but rather as an additional exploratory technique that could point to the relevance of some factors not in the immediate focus of analysis. These will be duly noted in the discussion of the research findings in the next section.

## 6. Results and discussion

**Pitch range.** To investigate students' usage of the overall pitch range as a discourse-structure signal, the span of frequencies used was measured separately for the introductory narrative part and the dialogue part of the text for each participant. Table 1 summarizes the measurements for both parts of the text, for female and male students separately.

Bearing in mind that "for the study of intonation, pitch distances are more relevant than absolute pitch" (Nooteboom 1997, 645), in addition to traditional measurements in Hertz we used the algorithm for calculating pitch distance (D) between the highest and the lowest frequencies in semitones ( $D = 12 \cdot \log_2(f_1/f_2) = 12 / \log_{10} 2 \cdot \log_{10}(f_1/f_2)$ ; cf. Nooteboom 1997, 645)<sup>2</sup>. In the table, the measurements in Hertz (Hz), the span of frequencies (Hz D) and the differences in semitones (ST D) are presented for both parts of the text, as well as the differences in semitones between the dialogue-part pitch range and the narrative-part pitch range (SD diff.).

As can be seen from Table 1, in the dialogue part of the text ten participants used a pitch range either wider or higher, while five participants produced no difference or a narrower and/or lower pitch range. However, taking into account that "[i]t has been estimated that only pitch differences of more than 3 semitones can be discriminated reliably" ('t Hart, 1981; 't Hart, Collier and Cohen, 1990, 29)", although some research findings show that "pitch differences of 1.5 semitones create reliable differences in the perception of prominence" (Rietveld and Gussenhoven 1985), we followed Nooteboom's (1997, 645) suggestion that "pitch differences smaller than three semitones cannot play a role in speech communication" and considered them inadequate here.<sup>3</sup> Thus, 8 participants produced wider enough pitch ranges for the dialogue part of the text, whereas one more approximated the necessary difference (with 2.8 semitones difference). The other 6 subjects did not produce nearly adequate pitch range differences, or even used a narrower or lower pitch range.

**Textual discourse function: marking discourse boundaries.** Sentence declination (lowering of F0 across an utterance to mark sentence end) and the downstepped contour (successively lower pitch peaks towards the end of the paragraph) are important signals not only for turn- and topic finality (Chun 2002, 37), but also for discourse structure. Therefore, we investigated whether our participants used declination and downstepping to mark sentences and paragraph endings.

//When I ENTered my Office this MORning/ the FIRST thing I SAW/ were THREE MEN/ all DRESSED in WHITE/ and WEARing FUNny HATS/ COMfortably SEATed on my WINdow LEDGE.// The Office was CLUtered /with POTS and BOXes/ and the DESK was COVered in DUST.// "*What on Earth...*" / I BURST out FIRST/ but then I PULLED myself toGEther/ and ASKED MORE CALMly://

Student		NARRATIVE PART			DIALOGUE PART			SD diff.	observations
		Hz	Hz D	ST D	Hz	Hz D	ST D		
Female	1	339 –102	237	20.8	373 – 130	243	18.5	- 2.3	narrower but higher
	2	366 – 89	277	24.5	363 – 75	288	27.3	+ 2.8	wider not higher
	4	366 – 83	283	25.7	368 – 88	280	24.8	- 0.9	narrower not higher
	6	384 –136	248	17.96	360 – 100	260	22.2	+ 4.2	wider a bit lower
	8	315 – 84	231	22.9	399 – 87	312	26.4	+ 3.5	wider higher
	9	363 – 70	293	38.2	347 – 73	274	26.99	- 11.21	narrower lower
	10	333 –154	179	13.4	402 – 144	258	17.8	+ 4.4	wider higher
	11	284 –162	122	9.7	304 – 144	160	12.9	+ 3.2	wider higher
	13	317 –157	160	12.2	342 - 112	230	19.3	+ 7.1	wider higher
	14	393 –152	241	16.4	354 – 169	185	12.8	- 3.6	narrower lower
Male	3	163 – 68	125	15.1	202 – 77	125	16.7	+ 1.6	barely wider higher
	5	192 – 74	118	16.5	358 – 52	306	33.4	+ 16.9	much wider much higher
	7	220 – 56	164	23.7	302 – 52	250	30.5	+ 6.8	much wider higher
	12	189 – 52	137	22.3	178 – 53	125	20.97	- 1.3	narrower a bit lower
	15	216 –129	90	8.9	278 – 73	205	23.7	+14.8	much wider higher & lower

*Table 1. Pitch range measurements for individual participants for the narrative part of the text (introduction) and the dialogue part*

The narrative paragraph consisted of 3 sentences, each containing 3 to 6 tone units (TU). The quote in the last sentence was disregarded in this analysis. The F0 was measured at TU boundaries, i.e. for the first pitch peak and the last vowel in each TU, and initial pitch peaks were compared in successive TUs and across the whole paragraph. The measurements are summarized in Table 2 (Appendix 1), which, for ease of comparison, repeats the measurements of each participant's pitch range in this part of the reading task.

Our participants produced three different kinds of results here. Six participants (No 2, 4, 6, 8, 3, and 5, cf. Table 2) showed a clear downstepped contour across the paragraph and a clear declination within sentences. These students also used other relevant phonetic cues to signal finality, e.g. the laryngeal creak and pause length. Four participants (No 1, 14, 7, and 15, cf. Table 2) showed a peculiar pattern in this part of the task; specifically, they produced a 'shy beginning', which can probably be attributed to their nervousness – their pitch range was

remarkably narrower in the first sentence, so the first pitch peak was not the highest one in the paragraph. As they relaxed, however, the range became wider and remained so throughout the paragraph, so the downstepped contour could be observed, as well as sentence declination patterns. Five participants (No 9, 10, 11, 13, and 12) used no clear signals for either sentence or paragraph structure - the successive TU initial peaks were not increasingly lower either within sentences or across the paragraph.

The next item investigated were the phonetic cues used by the participants to signal discourse structure in terms of **paragraph-initiality** – the beginning of the dialogue part of the text. What we expected to find was a comparatively low pitch level at the end of the previous TU, the last one in the narrative introduction, against which the initial pitch peak of the first TU in the dialogue part of the text should stand out as rather high:

//...but then I PULLED myself together/ and ASKED MORE CALMly://  
**“ExCUSE me,/ WHO** are you /and **WHAT** are you DOing in my office?”//

The F0 was measured at the TU boundary - the pitch level at the end of TU 1 (*‘...and asked more calmly:’*) was compared to the F0 of the initial pitch peak in TU 2 (*‘Excuse me,’*). Table 3 sums up these frequency measurements: the difference between the two observed frequencies in Hertz and semitones.

Student		Hertz			semitones	researchers' judgement
		calmly	excuse me	diff		
Female	1	146	373	<b>227</b>	16.2	a clear signal of initiality
	2	89	326	<b>237</b>	22.5	a clear signal of initiality
	4	83	309	<b>226</b>	22.3	a clear signal of initiality
	6	147	338	<b>191</b>	14.4	a clear signal of initiality
	8	86	351	<b>265</b>	24.3	a clear signal of initiality
	9	207	304	<b>97</b>	<b>6.7</b>	could be interpreted as a signal, but not clear
	10	154	351	<b>197</b>	14.3	a clear signal of initiality
	11	179	286	<b>107</b>	<b>8.1</b>	an ambiguous signal, not clear
	13	157	284	<b>127</b>	10.2	a clear signal of initiality
	14	168	240	<b>72</b>	<b>6.8</b>	no signal of initiality
Male	3	68	145	<b>77</b>	13.1	although the difference is perceptible, not a very clear signal, a bit ambiguous
	5	71	210	<b>139</b>	18.8	a clear signal of initiality
	7	56	302	<b>246</b>	29.1	a very clear signal of initiality, maximal pitch difference
	12	120	147	<b>27</b>	<b>3.5</b>	no signal of initiality
	15	129	218	<b>89</b>	<b>9</b>	functions as a signal of initiality, though not very clear

Table 3. The difference between the low pitch at the end of the paragraph-final TU (of the narrative part of the text) and the initial pitch peak of the TU at the beginning of the next paragraph/ part of the discourse (the dialogue part)

Clear cues for the beginning of a new paragraph/ different part of the text were provided by ten participants, who produced differences ranging from 10 to almost 30 semitones. Another participant produced the difference of 9 semitones, which provided a less clear discourse signal, while the remaining 4 participants produced significantly smaller differences.

What should be noted here is that the researchers' perceptual judgements were not in complete accordance with the acoustic measurements. As can be seen from Table 3, although participants No 9 and 14 produced almost the same difference in semitones (6.7 and 6.8 semitones), the researchers' judgements of the signals were not the same, which suggests that absolute F0 values are not the only relevant factor in interpreting intonational cues. A closer observation of the acoustic data shows that a clear signal of initiality was provided only if the final pitch level in TU 1 was very low. No matter how high the initial pitch peak in TU 2, if the preceding pitch level was not low enough the signal was not perceived as unambiguous. On the contrary, the initial peak in TU 2 functioned as an unambiguous signal even if it was not very high in terms of the absolute F0 value if it was prominent enough and stood out locally, i.e. was different enough from the final pitch in TU 1. Figure 1 shows the F0 tracks of this TU boundary as produced by participants No 5 (left) and No 3 (right). While the former is a clear signal of initiality, the peak in the latter case, although higher than the final pitch of TU 1 (by 13 semitones), does not function as an unambiguous signal, since it is immediately followed by an even higher peak. These observations suggest that listeners' interpretation of phonetic cues relevant for discourse functions of intonation depends on both the local and the broader context.

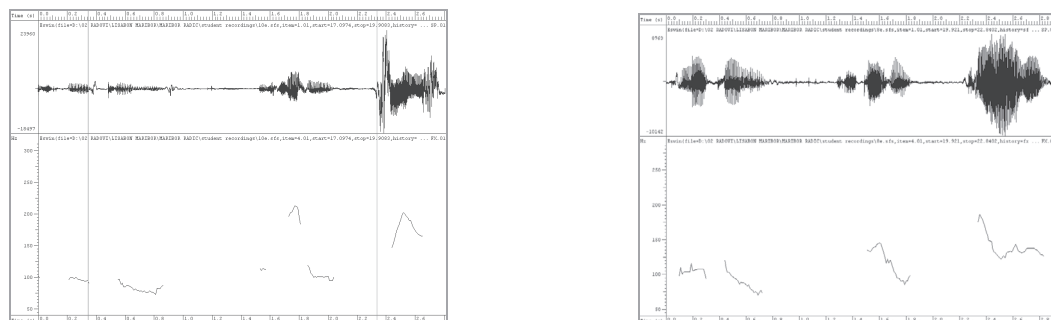


Figure 1: Two F0 tracks of the TU boundary at ‘... more calmly: “Excuse me, who are you...”’ (student No 5 and student No 3)

The next item investigated was signalling **the introduction of a new topic** of conversation, one of the **interactive**/discourse functions. We expected the phonetic cues to include using a rather high pitch at the beginning of the TU, a high key or a wider/higher pitch range. The lexical context of the dialogue was designed to help the participants recognize this discourse function – the TU introducing a new topic was a typical interjection:

// ...DON'T let us KEEP you from your WORK// ...AH/ and someone called JANE / has BROUGHT the Papers you ASKED for.//

Student		pitch movement			key + tone		range	researchers' judgement
		F0 Hertz		semitones				
Female	1	218	---	0	M	—	373 – 130	not a signal
	2	262	224	2.7	M-H	\	363 – 75	a signal, but not very clear
	4	226	203	1.9	M	\	368 – 88	not a signal
	6	280	190	6.7	H	\	360 – 100	a clear signal
	8	285	230	3.7	M-H	—	399 – 87	a signal, but not very clear
	9	249	---	0	M	—	347 – 73	not a signal
	10	<b>252</b>	173	6.5	M	\	402 – 144	not a signal
	11	220	---	0	M	—	304 – 144	not a signal
	13	228	220	0.7	M	—	342 - 112	not a signal
	14	<b>233</b>	167	5.8	M	\	354 – 169	not a signal
Male	3	184	69	17	H	\	202 – 77	a very clear signal
	5	153	121	4.1	L-M	\	358 – 52	not a signal
	7	142	114	3.8	M	\	302 – 52	not a signal
	12	145	---	0	H	—	178 – 53	a signal but ambiguous
	15	151	---	0	M	—	278 – 73	not a signal

Table 4. F0 measurements of the pitch movement on the interjection 'Ah' as an interactive/discourse function signal – introducing a new topic of conversation

Table 4 summarizes the relevant data for this item and Figure 2 shows the F0 tracks of a high peak (left) and a high level tone (right).

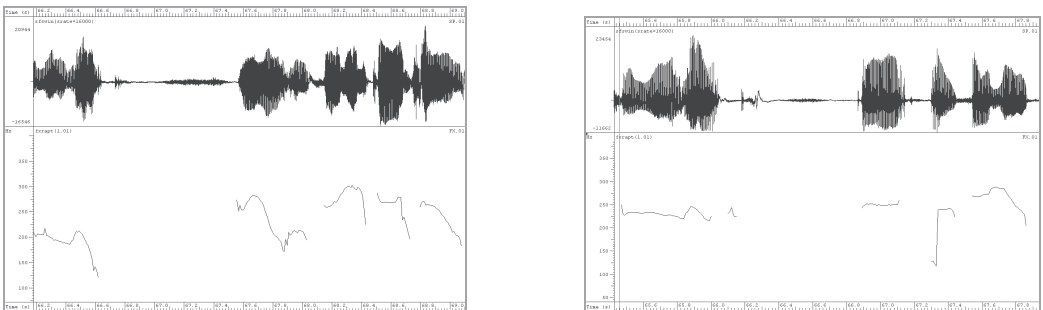


Figure 2: F0 tracks of a high pitch peak (student No 6) and a mid level tone (student No 9) produced on 'Ah!' to signal the introduction of a new topic of conversation

The frequency change over the interjection 'Ah!' was measured in Hertz and semitones, the key was defined relating the highest peak to the pitch range used by the particular participant in the dialogue part of the text, and the tone movement was transcribed (Chun 2002). As with the previous item, we recorded the researchers' perceptual judgements, too. The interjection was

used with a discourse intonation signal by 5 participants, but only two of these were judged by the researchers to be completely clear. The measurements show that the phonetic cue interpreted as the best signal was a high falling tone, while pitch peaks which were not high enough (mid-to-high, e.g. student No 2) or high-pitched level tones that did not peak or fall (e.g. student No 12) were somewhat ambiguous. Mid-key tones, even if falling (cf. students No 10 and 14), and especially if level, were not interpreted as intonation signals for this discourse function. These observations indicate that for this discourse function the most important cues may be pitch peak and high key, and that level tones, even when rather high, do not seem to provide clear signals.

Probably due to a lack of awareness of the discourse functions performed by interjections, five participants just skipped the interjection but produced a clear intonational signal on the initial peak of the following TU, /...and **SOME**one CALLED JANE.../. Figure 3 shows the F0 track of one such case:

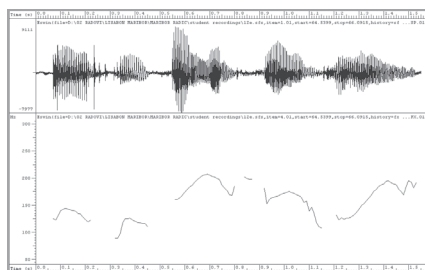


Figure 3: F0 track of 'Ah! And someone called Jane...' (student No 7) where the intonational signal has been shifted from the interjection to the initial peak of the next TU

The next item investigated was signalling textual/discourse and interactive/discourse functions in terms of **contextualizing** (Chun 2002). Discourse functions considerably overlap when indicating expectations about the hearer's reply is concerned (e.g. encouraging /discouraging a response) because different terminal pitch contours at TU boundaries (transitional continuity) can signal different kinds of interactive expectations. Of the three different terminal pitch contours – final, continuing and appealing – the last one is directly related to this interactive function and, as previous research indicates, is commonly signalled by a “non-descending high rise in pitch” at the end of the TU (DuBois et al. 1992). In our reading task, the appealing function of a rising pitch was expected to be used twice, as clearly indicated by both the semantic context and punctuation:

/Well,/ Mrs. ASHton CALLED us...// the MAN TOOK his TIME,/ SCRATCHING the BACK of his HEAD.// YES?...//...we should PAINT the WINDow-frames.../ YES?...//

Since the same TU with the same function is repeated twice, we expected better results for the repeated TU. However, the results were almost the same for both occurrences of 'Yes' in the dialogue: in the first case, 7 participants used an adequate discourse signal: 5 used rising tones in either the H or M key, and two used a fall-rise contour in the M key. Seven participants, though, used inappropriate falling contours and one used a level tone in the M key. The results were almost the same for the second occurrence of the TU 'Yes?...': 7 students used a rising pitch movement in either a H or M key, one used a complex fall-rise tone and 7 students used a fall.

Table 5 sums up the measurements for the first occurrence ‘Yes?...’. Figure 4 shows the F0 tracks of a rise (left, student No15) and a high but falling pitch (right, student No 12).

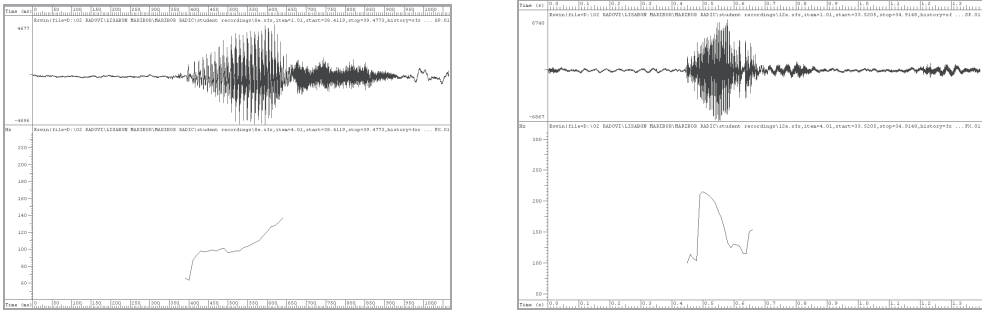


Figure 4: F0 tracks of a rise (student No 15) and a high fall (student No 12) on the second TU ‘Yes?...’

Student		pitch movement			key + tone	range
		F0 Hertz		semitones		
Female	1	334	148	14.1	H \	373 – 130
	2	203	296	- 6.5	H /	363 – 75
	4	253	187	5.2	M \	368 – 88
	6	251	174	6.3	M-L \	360 – 100
	8	135	247	- 10.5	M /	399 – 87
	9	220	221	-	M —	347 – 73
	10	270	179	7.1	M \	402 – 144
	11	246	161	7.3	M \	304 – 144
	13	178	145-228	- 7.8	L-M \	342 - 112
	14	202	174-230	- 4.8	L-M \	354 – 169
Male	3	92	132	- 6.3	M /	202 – 77
	5	112	99	2.1	L \	358 – 52
	7	212	125	9.1	M \	302 – 52
	12	118	147	- 3.8	H /	178 – 53
	15	126	184	- 6.6	M /	278 – 73

Table 5. F0 measurements of the pitch movement on the first TU ‘Yes?...’ as an interactive/ discourse function signal – appealing transitional continuity

With respect to the **illocutionary function**, we investigated signalling speaker’s expectations about the hearer’s reply in one more item, the TU that contained a tag-question: ‘...couldn’t she?’. The interpretation clearly supported by the context was that the tag question was meant

only to seek confirmation from the hearer so the appropriate phonetic signal would be a falling tone. It is commonly agreed that “a rising contour is used when the questioner really does not know the answer to the question, whereas with a rising-falling pattern the questioner presumes to know the answer and is merely trying to confirm the presumption” (Chun 2002, 218). Such tag-questions often require no reply from the hearer or just invite agreement.

//Mrs. AShton/could have TOLD me/about her PLANS/ COULDN'T she?...//

Only three participants used the inappropriate rising pitch contour here, while as many as 12 of them used either falling tones or complex rise-fall tones, showing that they were familiar with this distinction in tag-question meanings. This was quite expected, since this distinction is usually explicitly taught in English language classes. The rising tones used by students can probably be accounted for by insufficient attention paid to the overall meaning of the text and the cues to meaning provided by the context, and probably not by their being unfamiliar with this particular intonation signal. Table 6 sums up the measurements for this item and Figure 5 shows F0 tracks of ‘... couldn’t she?’ produced with a falling tone (left) and a rising tone (right).

Student		pitch movement			key + tone	range
		F0 Hertz		semitones		
Female	1	231	308 - 161	-5 / 11	M-H / \	373 – 130
	2	289	229 [creak]	4	M \	363 – 75
	4	288	310-258	-1 / 3	M \ /	368 – 88
	6	277	165	9	M-L \	360 – 100
	8	305	91	21	H-L \	399 – 87
	9	192	330	-9	M /	347 – 73
	10	267	158	9	M \	402 – 144
	11	304	149	12	H \	304 – 144
	13	217	260 237	-3	M /	342 - 112
	14	280	176 - 190	8/-1.3	M \	354 – 169
Male	3	123	77	8	L \	202 – 77
	5	168-	218 -103	-4.5/13	M /\	358 – 52
	7	209	52 [creak]	24	M \	302 – 52
	12	124	114	1.5	M /\	178 – 53
	15	205	94	13.5	M \	278 – 73

Table 6. F0 measurements of the pitch movement on the TU ‘... couldn’t she?’

The final part of our investigation included the way participants managed **information structure** in terms of **sentence-level focus** and **final transitional continuity**. The most important phonetic cues for focus placement were expected to be pitch movement (contour) and pitch range (Johns-Lewis 1986). In our reading task there were not many TU that allowed



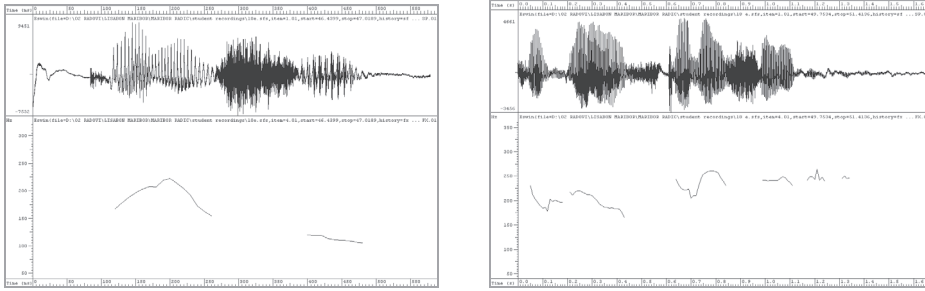


Figure 5: F0 tracks of the TU ‘...couldn’t she’ produced with a falling (student No 11) and an unusual rising-level contour (student No 13)

for multiple interpretations (contrastive or emphatic). For instance, in the sentence *As you might have noticed/I’m supposed to **work** here.//* the context suggested that ‘work’ should be interpreted as the intended focus, and indeed only two participants focused ‘here’ instead. But in both such unambiguous examples, and in those that did allow for multiple focusing possibilities, the F0 measurements of the focused syllables showed that the phonetic cue used to signal sentence focus most commonly was a falling pitch movement. A rather high pitch was used by 3 participants, while the others used the M key. The most important focusing cue proved to be pitch movement, i.e. simple or complex falling contours.

The last item investigated was marking sentence boundaries and transitional contours, i.e. final or continuing transitional continuity (Chun 2002). As pointed out in the review of previous research, finality at TU boundaries (final transitional continuity) is signalled by a falling tone, usually to a rather low pitch. Our F0 measurements (which due to space limitations will not be presented here) showed that both in the narrative and the dialogue parts of the text a falling pitch contour was used almost exclusively to mark sentence finality. For instance, in the example “... and maybe the doors, too, if there’s enough paint.” all the participants signalled finality using a falling contour, though not always to a very low pitch. Some examples suggested that a low level tone at the terminal TU boundary, if the key for the whole TU was L, could also function as a finality signal.

On the other hand, the intonational signals used to mark continuing transitional continuity (the speaker’s intention to keep the floor and continue speaking) included rising contours, not always to a very high level, or M level tones. Five tone units from the text were measured, two in the narrative and three in the dialogue part. While these signals did not present a problem for our participants in the narrative part of the text, in the dialogue part they used ambiguous signals at TU boundaries where the context supported the interpretation with a continuing transition. For example, in the TU “Well,/ Mrs. Ashton called us...”, there was a clear indication in the context and punctuation that the speaker intended to go on speaking after the pause. Still, only five participants used a rising tone to signal continuing transition, one used a level tone (in M key), while nine participants used falling tones, and even a rather L key. These findings highlight an important difference in the participants’ usage of intonational signals in narrative texts as compared to dialogues.

## 7. Conclusion

The research presented here aimed to investigate some aspects of intonation management in a reading task, namely, how Serbian EFL students used phonetic cues, singled out by previous research, to signal discourse functions of intonation. The findings indeed point to some problematic areas that should be focused on in Serbian EFL students' pronunciation practice. One conclusion that our findings suggest is that there is a significant difference between the ways students use intonation cues at the sentence level and a significantly less appropriate usage of intonation signals at the discourse level. A similar observation can be made about the intonation cues used in narrative passages on the one hand and in dramatic dialogues on the other, with narrative text intonation cues used much more appropriately.

More specifically, the discourse functions of intonation which did not prove to be a problem for our participants were, firstly, marking information structure in terms of sentence-level focus and marking sentence boundaries. The textual/discourse functions did not present significant problems either, especially in the narrative part of the text, where paragraph boundaries were appropriately marked and both sentence declination and downstepping were observed with most participants. Similarly, final transitional continuity was signalled appropriately at all levels.

On the other hand, the findings clearly point to a number of discourse intonation functions our participants could not signal effectively. The most problematic ones have turned out to be the textual and interactive/discourse functions related to contextualising, primarily in the dialogue part of the text: starting a new topic (especially with interjections), marking discourse-level focus, signalling the speaker's expectations about the hearer's reply, together with the speaker's intentions in conversation-turn taking and conversation management. And finally, the use of the overall pitch range as a prosodic feature of speech, for instance to signal different kinds of discourse (narrative/dialogue) and to introduce a new part of the text, proved to be a problem for almost half of our participants. Therefore, these intonation components should receive special attention in intonation practice with Serbian EFL students. In addition, students' attention should be drawn to the important role of the context, local and broader, for the production and interpretation of intonational signals.

The research presented here was limited in scope with respect to the number of participants, the data gathering techniques, and the intonational components investigated, but we hope it has highlighted some important directions for further research. The findings of this study suggest that, in order to make intonation practice work, we need to investigate not only the use of intonational cues, but also, and even more importantly, the way intonational signals are perceived and interpreted. Therefore, further research should focus on both the acoustic analyses and the perception of intonational signals used by English speakers of different backgrounds.

To conclude, the findings of our research may best be summed up by one final observation: our participants produced the best results with respect to one intonational signal that is explicitly taught even in traditionally designed ELT courses – the different meanings given to tag questions

by different pitch contours. This supports Chun's conclusion that "[i]n order for language learners to become more proficient communicators and comprehenders, they must be *taught* how to use and perceive discourse intonation" (Chun 2002, 100; emphasis added). Therefore, focusing on the areas singled out by empirical research and raising students' awareness of the way intonational components of discourse function in different contexts could help us make Discourse Intonation work in the EFL classroom.

## Notes

1. For instance, the reading task text consisted of two clearly identifiable parts, a narrative introduction followed by a dialogue part; in the dialogue part, one of the participants clearly introduced a new topic of conversation at a certain point; there were several places where contrastive focus was required, certain points for emphasis, and several points at which participants expressed different expectations about the hearer's reply.
2. An automatic semitone converter (written and provided by J.R. de Pijper, IPO, Eindhoven) based on the scale of perceived musical pitch of complex tones as proportional to the logarithm of frequency, can be found at <http://web.abo.fi/~jtuomain/speech/semitone.html>
3. Researches have shown that people can "detect a change of 0.3 Hz in a constant  $F_0$  contour when  $F_0 = 120$  Hz, but the JND [just noticeable difference] is an order of magnitude larger (2.0 Hz) when the  $F_0$  contour is a linear descending ramp (32 Hz/sec)." (Klatt 1973). Therefore, we did not rely on such small differences in judging pitch range differences, which may be appropriate in judging pitch movement.

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## Appendix 1

Student No.		pitch range	ST D	F0 at TU boundaries – initial peak and final pitch level in Hz
Female participants	2	366 – 89	24.5	1 <u>366</u> – 88 / 310-224 / 292-194 / 278-83 / 251-194 / 255-198 2 <u>354</u> -270 / 255 -215 [creak] 3 ... / 308 - 98 / 260 – 89 [creak below 75Hz]
	4	366 – 83	25.7	1 <u>366</u> – 258 / 270 242 / 257 – 238 / 249 - 177 / 299 – 153 2 <u>303</u> – 288 / 282 – 79 3 ... / 281 – 250 / 204 – 83
	6	384 –136	17.96	1 <u>384</u> – 254 / 316 – 227 / 281 – 263 / 259 – 136 / 286 – 148 2 <u>338</u> – 179 / 263 – 155 3 ... / 268 – 194 / 255 – 147
	8	315 – 84	22.9	1 <u>315</u> – 240 / 245 – 215 / 230 – 198 / 213 – 161 / 256 - 87 [creak] 2 <u>314</u> – 254 / 250 – 164 [creak] 3 ... / 260 – 210 / 155 – 86 [creak]
	1	339 –102	20.8	1 <u>318</u> – 174 / 289 – 204 / 272 – 175 / 237-180 / 275 -107 2 <u>339</u> – 190 / 236 - 102 3 ... / <u>334</u> – 188 / 212 – 146
	14	393 –152	16.4	1 <u>357</u> – 190 / 324-202 / 254 -204 / 239- 196-172 / 284 - 152 2 <u>393</u> – 214 / 221 - 161 3 ... / 244 – 179 / 191 – 168
	9	363 – 70	38.2	1 <u>363</u> – 100 / 262 - 214 / 240 – 208 / 257 – 77 [creak ] / 212 - 73 [creak] 2 <u>245</u> – 105 / 212 3 ... / 257 – 194 / 241 – 207 [creak]
	10	333 –154	13.4	1 <u>331</u> – 163 / 261 – 159 / 291 – 151 / 261 – 1 63 / 224 - 165 [creak] 2 <u>333</u> – 170 / 262 – 164 3 ... / 262 – 247 / 310 – 154
	11	284 –162	9.7	1 <u>284</u> –235 / 281 –207 / 230 -230 / 257– 274 / 249 – 237 / 279 - 85 [creak] 2 <u>247</u> – 272 / 260 – 162 3 ... / 256 – 225 / 264 – 179
	13	317 –157	12.2	1 <u>317</u> – 162 / 252 - 230 / 245 - 150 / 210 - 157 2 222 - 183 / 253 - 157 3 ... / 260 - 245 / 264 - 157
Male	3	163 – 68	15.1	1 <u>163</u> 93 / 153 – 114 / 124 – 112 / 119 – 84 [creak] / 142 – 68 2 <u>152</u> – 112 / 122 – 87 3 ... / 134 – 114 / 112 – ,68 [creak]
	5	192 – 74	16.5	1 <u>192</u> – 84 / 145 –111 / 119 – 118 / 1 22 – 95 / 107 – 80 / 142 – 74 2 <u>135</u> – 82 / 119 – 80 3 ... / 124 – 141 / 128 – 71
	7	220 – 56	23.7	1 <u>184</u> – 140 / 172 – 140 / 155 –147 / 168 – 134 132 – 56 / 206 – 52 [creak] 2 <u>219</u> – 117 / 162 – 148 / 152 – 100 3 ... / 190 – 125 / 144 – 56
	15	216 –129	8.9	1 <u>205</u> – 153 / 179 – 146 / 177 – 135 / 157 – 138 / 166 – 132 2 <u>213</u> – 142 / 162 – 181 / 166 – 133 3 ... / 166 – 145 / 149 - 129 [creak]
	12	189 – 52	22.3	1 <u>189</u> – 118 / 124 – 57 / 134 – 120 / 120 – 55 cr / 125 – 93 [creak] 2 <u>149</u> – 55 [creak] / 121 – 52 [creak] 3 ... / 143 – 120 / 136 – 120

Table 2. Frequency measurements for tone units (TU) in the three sentences of the narrative paragraph in the reading task: the initial peak – the final pitch level in each TU



**Maja Stergar**

## A Taste of Slovene Culinary Masterpieces with a Pinch of Contrastive Analysis

### Summary

This paper examines what can be done in the field of food-related terminology (from ingredients to culture-specific dishes) by using contrastive functional analysis as the research methodology. Each language offers different semantic contents to refer to the same referents. The background for the lexico-semantic analysis is investigated and meanings are brought together by studying examples in detail and establishing their functional equivalence.

**Key words:** contrastive lexicology

## Slovenske kuharske mojstrovine s ščepcem protistavne analize

### Povzetek

V članku so predstavljene možnosti za raziskovanje terminologije s področja gastronomije (od sestavin do značilnih slovenskih jedi), in sicer z uporabo funkcijskega modela protistavne analize kot raziskovalne metodologije. V vsakem jeziku se uporabljajo različne semantične vsebine za poimenovanje istih nosilcev. Predmet preučevanja je ozadje leksikalno-semantične analize, pomeni pa so zbrani na podlagi podrobne analize primerov, pri čemer je cilj vzpostavitev funkcijske ustreznosti.

**Ključne besede:** kontrastivna leksikologija

# A Taste of Slovene Culinary Masterpieces with a Pinch of Contrastive Analysis

## 1. Introduction

Contrastive linguistics is the systematic comparison of two or more languages. Its aim is to describe similarities and differences between languages. The objective of the comparison may vary, as language comparison is of great interest from a theoretical as well as an applied perspective. It helps us to uncover what is general and what is language-specific, what is important for the understanding of language in general, and what for the study of the individual languages in question.

Contrastive functional analysis represents one general approach to contrastive analysis. For its starting point it takes “perceived similarities of meaning across two or more languages, and seeks to determine the various ways in which these similar or shared meanings are expressed in different languages” (Chesterman 1998, 1). It is based on the model of language and grammar developed by M. A. K. Halliday (2004) and his followers within the functional paradigm.

Contrastive lexicology is the contrastive study of two or more languages. By adopting a contrastive approach one looks for similarities and differences. “Between the lexical items of two languages, specifically Slovenian and English, the basis for interlingual comparison (the so-called *tertium comparationis*) being for the most part meaning, and very occasionally form. The very notion of false friends, interlingual lexical and referential gaps, divergent polysemy, to mention a few notables only, go some way toward suggesting the range of contrastive lexical problems – moreover these topics do not even exist without the presence of at least two different languages” (Gabrovšek 2005, 64).

## 2. The Translation Process

For a Slovene translator who has to deal with culinary terms, especially those that are culture-bound or language-specific, contrastive orientation means the focus on two specific languages (in this case Slovene and English). The translation process itself is extremely complex; the situation is intercultural and interlingual, the purpose of the translation has to be kept in mind at all times, as well as the function of both texts (the source language text and the target language text).

Translation is the interpretation of the meaning of a text and the subsequent production of an equivalent text. Its goal is to communicate the same message in another language. Translation equivalence, “the relationship between words and phrases (from two or more languages) which share the same meaning,” (Stergar 2007, 10) may be simple, complex, or nonexistent. Simple or clear (some authors call it “full”) translational equivalence, very common when dealing with culinary terms, is easiest to establish (e.g. apple – *jabolko*, bay leaf – *lovorov list*, butter – *maslo*). Quite often we face only partial equivalence, which is lexically complex – the type



of correspondence in terms of structural/lexical non-congruence (e.g. cottage cheese – *skuta*, (pickled) gherkin – *kisla kumarica*, Parma ham – *pršut*), or zero (nonexistent) equivalence. When faced with zero equivalence we have to provide a descriptive translation (e.g. coleslaw – *zeljna solata s korenjem in majonezo, štruklji* – a rolled-up and filled dough usually boiled, *ocvirki* – fragments of streaky bacon fried until very crisp).

Lack of word-for-word translation equivalence is one of the most common challenges when translating a culinary text (e.g. cook gently – *kuhati na zmernem ognju*, work top – *delovna površina*, spare rib – *hrustančno rebro*, extractor fan – *kuhinjska napa*, chopping board – *kuhinjska deska*). Some general meanings are also expressed differently in different languages. When it comes to idioms and proverbs, translators often struggle to find corresponding figurative combinations (e.g. eat like a horse – *jesti kot volk*, hunger is the best sauce – *lakota je najboljši kuhar*, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach – *ljubezen gre skozi želodec*).

The concept of equivalence has been understood and analysed in the two related disciplines of translation theory and contrastive analysis. The contrastive functional approach advocated in Chesterman's *Contrastive Functional Analysis* (1998) is closely related to issues of translation. The term "translation equivalence" or the concept behind it has somewhat independently evolved in the field of translation theory. In its beginnings translation has been thought of in much the same way as metaphor is thought of, i.e. a target text is a metaphor of its source text. Both a metaphor and a translation build upon a perceived similarity between two entities (cf. Chesterman 1998).

### 3. Contrastive Functional Analysis

"Language is as it is because of what it is used for. To subscribe to this statement is to take a functional view of language" (Chesterman 1998, 63).

Chesterman's work discusses and illustrates one general approach to Contrastive Analysis – "an approach designated as 'functional', in the sense that it is based on meaning and mirrors the process of semiosis: it looks at the ways meanings are expressed. The focus is therefore from meaning to form. More particularly, it starts from perceived similarities of meaning across two or more languages, and seeks to determine the various means by which these similar or shared meanings are expressed in different languages. Additionally, it aims to specify the conditions (syntactic, semantic, pragmatic etc.) which govern the use of the different variants, and ultimately to state which variant is preferred under which conditions. The approach is thus a paradigmatic one, with a Hallidayan-type focus on the options that speakers have in expressing meanings. It is in fact a kind of cross-linguistic variation analysis" <http://www.helsinki.fi/~chesterml/1998bCFA.html>).

Under what kind of circumstances is something considered functional? A tool (e.g. a pizza cutting wheel) is functional if it can do what it is supposed to do. Fillmore (1984, 122–3) goes so far as to refer to grammar as a "tool factory" and further describes pragmatics as how workmen use these tools; semantics is seen as "the knowledge of the purposes for which the individual tools were

constructed,” text as “a record of the tools used in carrying out an activity,” and understanding as “figuring out, from the list of tools, just what that activity was.”

Halliday argues that the form of language is determined by three functional components which reflect certain general uses of language. These are “the ideational function (to express content, to talk/write about something), the interpersonal function (to establish social relations, to talk/write to someone), and the textual function (to organize the form of the talk or text itself). The textual function is subservient to the other two, in that the form of a message needs to be organized in such a way as to be optimally appropriate to what is being talked/written about, and also to the overall communicative situation centred around the participants themselves” (Chesterman 1998, 64).

Language, in any linguistic form (whether it be written marks, sounds, gestures, etc.), has meaning potential, and to use language is to mean; the means of language is its form, and the end of language is to express or communicate the meaning.

According to Chesterman (1998), contrastive functional analysis seeks ultimately to do three things: provide a theoretical model of semantic structure in general; provide a description of the primarily syntactic forms of expression of particular semantic structures in two or more languages; and provide a description of the conditions of use determining the differential distribution of the various forms of expression of a given semantic structure, in the languages concerned. The general aim is to construct a single, coherent theoretical framework for a wide range of different types of contrastive studies. The following model of semantic structure is taken from Chesterman (1998, 72–3). Suggested stages for a contrastive methodology are:

1. Primary data: instances of language behaviour in different languages.
2. Comparability criterion: a perceived similarity (of any kind), between a phenomenon X in language A and a phenomenon Y in language B.
3. Problem: what is the nature of this similarity?
4. Initial hypothesis: that X and Y are identical.
5. Test: on what grounds can the initial hypothesis be supported or rejected? On what conditions (if ever) does it hold?
6. Revisited hypothesis (in case the identity hypothesis fails): the relation between X and Y is such-and-such; or, the use of X and Y depends on such-and-such conditions.
7. Testing the revisited hypothesis.

This kind of model serves as a conceptual toolbox that is of use particularly in the testing stages, it can also provide ways of formulating hypotheses and specifying conditions, and it provides an interpretation of the similarity constraint. This serves to define the range of phenomena whose similarity is such that a contrastive analysis is warranted.

Note: The first stage – primary data: instances of language behaviour in different languages – suggests a multilingual comparison; but the second stage – comparability criterion: a perceived similarity (of any kind), between a phenomenon X in language A and a phenomenon Y in language B – reverts to a bilingual scenario.

## 4. Empirical Part

The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia works hard to preserve the culinary heritage of the Slovene countryside. Through various projects they present characteristic, sometimes almost forgotten, Slovene dishes which help us understand the eating habits of people and dishes typical of individual regions. They reflect the times, the living conditions, and are an important part of Slovene cultural heritage. As a main course I offer an analysis of examples taken from an article about Slovene culinary masterpieces (*Tako dobro, tako slovensko*) and its translation into English (So Good, so Slovene). Stages for a contrastive methodology suggested by Chesterman are used to explore examples from both texts on the lexical level.

## 5. Translation of Culinary Terms

The translation process itself, when dealing with culinary terms, is extremely complex; the situation is intercultural and interlingual, and the purpose of the translation has to be kept in mind at all times as well as the function of both texts.

Cookery books can be found in almost every household. They include information on cooking, and a list of recipes. When translating a recipe one faces various challenges such as food substitutions, food equivalents, conversions of weights and measures, and of course finding the right translation equivalents.

The following example shows how traditional Slovene recipes are translated into English.

The metric system does not cause any problems (as we do not need to convert decilitres into pints, cups or gallons) because the intended target group for the English translation of culinary terms is not necessarily native speakers of English but cooking enthusiasts (linguists and contrastivists included) from all over the world. In international cookery books, grams are used predominantly, but in Slovene cookery books, decagrams are still very popular. From the lexical point of view, a translation equivalent has to be found for each translation unit separately (e.g. *ostra moka* – strong flour, *kvas* – yeast, *lopar* – baking peel). All the ingredients for Cottage Cheese and Sour Cream Topped Bread (*Kvasenica*) are widely known, so no food substitutions are necessary.

## Kvasenica

### Sestavine:

#### Testo:

50 dag ostre moke,  
3 dag kvasa,  
1 žlička sladkorja,  
¼ l mleka,  
malo masti ali nekaj žlic kisle smetane,  
sol.

#### Nadev:

50 dag skute,  
3 dl kisle smetane,  
1 jajce,  
sol,  
sladkor po želji.

### Postopek priprave:

Iz sestavin za testo pripravimo kvašeno testo; ko je vzhajano, ga razvaljamo na loparju in namažemo z nadevom 2 cm od roba testa, da sestavine ne odtekajo na rob. Po vrhu premažemo s kislom smetano, ki ji dodamo žličko moke. Kvasenico pečemo v krušni peči ali električni pečici. Ponudimo še vročo.

e.g. *bujta repa* – turnip kasha with pork  
*bograč* – beef, pork, and venison stew  
*gorenjska prata* – pork roasted in a caul

In English translations, Slovene names of the dishes should be written in brackets to make it easier for the reader to find more information about the dish if ever required, as English translations may vary from translator to translator.

e.g. Cottage Cheese and Sour Cream Topped Bread (*Kvasenica*)  
Cottage Cheese and Sour Cream *Potica* (*Ognjiščna potica*)  
*Potica* with *Mlinci* (*Mlinčeva potica* or *Mlinčevka*)  
Dough Pockets with Pear Filling (*Kvočevi/Kločevi nudlni*)

## Cottage Cheese and Sour Cream Pastry (*Kvasenica*)

### Ingredients:

#### For the yeast dough:

500 g strong flour,  
30 g fresh yeast,  
1 tsp sugar,  
250 ml milk,  
a little fat or a few tbsp of sour cream  
salt.

#### For the filling:

500 g cottage cheese,  
300 ml sour cream,  
1 egg,  
salt,  
sugar (optional).

### Preparation method:

Knead yeast dough and let it rest. When the dough rises, roll it on a baking peel. Spread the filling over the dough, leaving a 2 cm border on all sides. Top with the cream (mix a teaspoon of flour in it). If possible, bake in a stone oven. Serve warm.

Most traditional Slovene dishes have very old names (often in dialect) that tell us very little about the dish itself. Even native speakers of Slovene often need an explanation when looking at a menu because some words are written in dialect (e.g. *makov retuš* (dialect) – *makov zavitek* (standard Slovene) – poppy seed strudel). Zero translation equivalence is very common, thus descriptive translations are needed.

It is recommended that every English translation of Slovene dishes, whether in the form of a cookery book or a recipe collection, also include a glossary in which the dishes/ingredients that remain in the source language be explained. Bilingual menus are often a problem as items remain untranslated and unexplained. A glossary would take up too much space and the reader would waste time looking for explanations. One possible solution is a short explanation in brackets that follows the untranslated italicized term (e.g. *štruklji* (a rolled-up and filled dough, usually boiled), *žlikrofi* (a type of filled pasta)).

- e.g. *Mlinci* – unleavened dough made of wheat, buckwheat, or corn flour; rolled thinly and cooked directly on a hot plate  
*Ocvirki* – fragments of streaky bacon fried until very crisp  
*Potica* – traditional Slovene cake or enriched bread, mostly enjoyed during festivities; made in a number of different ways, all of which include leavened dough and a filling  
*Štruklji* – a rolled-up and filled dough, usually boiled  
*Zaseka* – dripping made from fat bacon; minced or finely chopped and then seasoned  
*Žganci* – crumbled mush, obtained by cooking buckwheat, wheat, barley, or corn flour in water  
*Žlikrofi* – a type of filled pasta

For such terms the use of italics is recommended to show the foreign origin of the word. When a word or phrase has become so widely used and understood that it has become part of the English language – such as the Italian “pasta” or “pizza” – we would not italicize it. Italicization is often a matter of individual judgment and of context (it depends largely on the audience and the subject matter).

- e.g. Serve the dish with *mlinci*.  
 We season the dish with *ocvirki* and fat.  
 There should be eight layers in a *gibanica*.

Culinary terms are not represented well enough in general Slovene-English dictionaries for a translator to use them when working with a text about contemporary gastronomy. Ingredients can be found as long as they are not too “new”, but names of dishes, sauces, exotic herbs, etc. and more complex cooking techniques are almost nonexistent. I do not consider that a defect, as general dictionaries are meant to provide a description of language in general use. On the other hand “specialised dictionaries (also referred to as technical dictionaries) focus on linguistic and factual matters relating to specific subject fields. A specialised dictionary may have a relatively broad coverage, e.g. a picture dictionary, in that it covers several subject fields such as science and technology (a multi-field dictionary), or their coverage may be narrower, in that they cover one particular subject field such as law (a single-field dictionary) or even a specific sub-field such as contract law (a sub-field dictionary)” (Stergar 2007, 9). Unfortunately there are no specialised culinary bilingual dictionaries (Slovene-English, English-Slovene) available. Translators of culinary texts have to use general Slovene-English dictionaries (which can, especially the older editions, prove very useful), existing cookery books, surf the Internet, etc. A recently published

booklet *1000 najpomembnejših besed: Angleščina – Hrana in pijača* (*Die 1000 wichtigsten Wörter Englisch Essen & Trinken*) has many useful entries, but unfortunately the adaptation for the Slovene market was not done adequately, and most of the terminology specific to the Slovene culture is missing. Entries such as *zavitek*, *gibanica*, *potica*, etc are not to be found.

## Using Suggested Stages for a Contrastive Methodology on a Lexical Level

This part of the paper provides a few samples of contrastive analyses which illustrate the basic methodology (Chesterman's model) of contrastive functional analyses on a lexical level. In each of the contrastive analyses I attempt to show differences and similarities between Slovene and English found within a particular paradigm.

The first example deals with a simple object which we use on a daily basis. What is the background for the lexico-semantic difference? How can the meanings of the two terms be brought together?

e.g. cutting/chopping board – *kuhinjska deska*

1. Primary data: instances of language behaviour in different languages.

Primary data are utterances, instances of language use. What is to be observed here is that users of Slovene use certain expressions, and speakers of English use other expressions.

English: cutting/chopping board      Slovene: *kuhinjska deska*

2. Comparability criterion: a perceived similarity (of any kind), between a phenomenon X in language A and a phenomenon Y in language B

“This is a perception of similarity of some kind, in the first instance of form and sound, between language-A-speakers’ use of their language and language-B-speakers’ use of theirs” (Chesterman 1998, 55). These similarities reflect similarities on the level of language. And as Chesterman further claims “it is this perception, not some assumed equivalence, that provides the initial comparability criterion.” This initial perception can be a trigger for interference in language learners.

Negative interference could lead to an error: *\*rezalna deska* or *\*kitchen board*.

Initial perception is often vague and one task of contrastive research is to clarify and specify it.

3. Problem: what is the nature of this similarity?

First we have to define the criteria by which phenomena are judged to be similar. In this case the lexical level is our only criterion for the similarity constraint.

The terms cutting/chopping board and *kuhinjska deska* have to be similar as translation equivalence is automatically assumed to incorporate sameness of meaning.

2. Initial hypothesis: that X and Y are identical.

How can one bring the meanings of the two terms together?

Compare the dictionary definitions to establish equivalence of the two meanings expressed in different ways (i.e. distinguish between the referent and the semantic content):

- Noun 1. chopping board – a wooden board where meats or vegetables can be cut; Synonyms: cutting board (<http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/chopping%20board>)
- kúhinjski -a -o prid. (ú) nanašajoč se na kuhinjo: ima veliko kuhinjskega dela / kuhinjski

odpadki; kuhinjsko okno gleda na dvorišče / kuhinjski element kos kuhinjskega pohištva, ki se lahko uporablja sam ali se kombinira z drugimi kosi; rezati s kuhinjskim nožem; **kuhinjska deska za rezanje, sekljanje hrane**; kuhinjska kredenca, miza; kuhinjska krpa; pomivati (kuhinjsko) posodo; (kuhinjska) sol; kuhinjska tehtnica / slabš. kuhinjska filozofija · ekspr. kuhinjski muc kdor (rad) pomaga v kuhinji in ima od tega koristi

• sekálnica -e ž (a) 1. prostor, obrat za sekanje: delati v sekalnici 2. stroj za sekanje: električna sekalnica za meso 3. **knjiž. kuhinjska deska: pospravila je z mize kruh in sekalnico** ([http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj\\_testa&expression=kuhinjska+deska&hs=1](http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj_testa&expression=kuhinjska+deska&hs=1))

The English semantic content is based on the action of cutting/chopping of the vegetables or meat, while the Slovene counterpart focuses on the kitchen (i.e. the area of the house in which this particular type of board is primarily used). The Slovene formal term *sekalnica* is functionally very close to cutting/chopping board as it stresses the chopping function performed on the board, but it is not used among native speakers of Slovene (0 hits in the FidaPlus corpus).

Cutting/chopping board and *kuhinjska deska* are identical.

5. Test: on what grounds can the initial hypothesis be supported or rejected? On what conditions (if ever) does it hold?

This stage may include many stages: “selection of a theoretical framework, selection or elicitation of primary and additional data, use of corpora (translated or otherwise relevantly matched), appeal to one’s own intuition (one’s own native-speaker, bilingual or translational competence), use of bilingual informants, and so on” (Chesterman 1998, 58).

The testing hypothesis is not a complex one in our case. Consulting a dictionary or relying on our own translation competence gives us evidence in favour of the initial hypothesis.

The second example explores a verb ‘to fillet’ (Slovene *filirati*).

e.g. to fillet – *filirati* (*ločiti meso od kosti*)

1. Primary data: instances of language behaviour in different languages.

What is to be observed in this case is that users of Slovene use certain forms, and speakers of English use other forms.

English: to fillet Slovene: *filirati*

2. Comparability criterion: a perceived similarity (of any kind), between a phenomenon X in language A and a phenomenon Y in language B

As words are very similar in both languages interference can only be seen as positive in this case.

3. Problem: what is the nature of this similarity?

The lexical level is our only criterion for the similarity constraint.

The terms to fillet and *filirati* have to be similar as translation equivalence is automatically assumed to incorporate sameness of meaning. They both mean “to separate the flesh from the bone”.

3. Initial hypothesis: that X and Y are identical.

• to fillet verb (used with object) Cookery.

a to cut or prepare (meat or fish) as a fillet.

b to cut fillets from. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fillet>)



- *filirati* -am nedov. in dov. (i) gastr. po dolgem razpolavlјati ribe in odstranjevati hrbtnico: *filirati* ribe za konzerviranje ♪ ([http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj\\_testa&expression=filirati&hs=1](http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj_testa&expression=filirati&hs=1))

The terms to fillet and *filirati* are identical. Reliable linguistic sources, such as *SSKJ* (Slovene monolingual dictionary), *Slovenski pravopis* (manual of style), and *Veliki slovar tujk* (dictionary of foreign words) only mentions the verb in connection with fish (i.e. cutting in half and deboning of fish), but Slovene culinary articles, cookery books, and corpora (e.g. FidaPlus) show that the use of verb *filirati* is used for both meat and fish. The meanings of the two terms can be brought together without difficulty.

5. Test: on what grounds can the initial hypothesis be supported or rejected? On what conditions (if ever) does it hold?

The hypothesis testing is again not complex. Consulting a dictionary or relying on our own translation competence, gives us evidence in favour of the initial hypothesis.

The following is an example that also deals with a simple culinary concept we use on a daily basis. It is widely understood but very often translated incorrectly. Yet again, each language offers different ways (i.e. different semantic content) to refer to the same referent. What is the background for the lexico-semantic difference? How can the meanings of the two terms be brought together?

e.g. to cook gently – *kuhati na zmernem ognju*

1. Primary data: instances of language behaviour in different languages.

What is to be observed in this case is that users of Slovene use certain forms, and speakers of English use other forms.

English: to cook gently Slovene: *kuhati na zmernem ognju*

2. Comparability criterion: a perceived similarity (of any kind), between a phenomenon X in language A and a phenomenon Y in language B

Negative interference could lead to an error: \**kuhati nežno* or \*cook on moderate fire.

3. Problem: what is the nature of this similarity?

The lexical level is our only criterion for similarity constraint.

The terms to cook gently and *kuhati na zmernem ognju* have to be similar as translation equivalence is automatically assumed to incorporate sameness of meaning.

4. Initial hypothesis: that X and Y are identical.

The terms to cook gently and *kuhati na zmernem ognju* are indeed identical. The meanings of the two terms can be brought together without difficulty. They both mean “to cook something carefully, on a low heat”.

5. Test: on what grounds can the initial hypothesis be supported or rejected? On what conditions (if ever) does it hold?

The hypothesis testing is again not complex. Consulting a dictionary, browsing through some cookery books, or relying on one's own translation competence, gives us evidence in favour of the initial hypothesis.

When faced with only partial equivalence, which is lexically complex – the type of correspondence in terms of structural/lexical non-congruence (e.g. cottage cheese – *skuta*, gherkin – *kisla kumarica*, Parma ham – *pršut*) – the analysis becomes more challenging.



e.g. cottage cheese – *skuta*

1. Primary data: instances of language behaviour in different languages.

What is to be observed in this case is that users of Slovene use certain forms, and speakers of English use other forms.

English: cottage cheese Slovene: *skuta*

2. Comparability criterion: a perceived similarity (of any kind), between a phenomenon X in language A and a phenomenon Y in language B

Negative interference could lead to an error: *\*kočarski/bajterski sir* (cf. *sirček*, *SSKJ*, sense 1) but not to a descriptive translation of *skuta* in English (e.g. a dairy product resembling cottage cheese). As cottage cheese and *skuta* are so similar (from form, taste, colour, nutrition value, etc.) they can be considered translation equivalents.

3. Problem: what is the nature of this similarity?

The lexical level is our only criterion for similarity constraint.

The terms cottage cheese and *skuta* have to be similar as translation equivalence is automatically assumed to incorporate sameness of meaning. Even though they are not exactly the same (cottage cheese is slightly milder in taste) they perform exactly the same function in Slovene and English cuisine and can be easily substituted with one another.

5. Initial hypothesis: that X and Y are identical.

- skúta 1 -e ž (ú) 1. mehka snov, ki ostane po odstranitvi sirotke iz posnetega mleka: delati skuto; namazati palačinke s skuto / kislá skuta; sladka skuta dobljena iz sirotke 2. nar. kravje mleko prve dni po porodu; mlezivo: skuto je posesal teliček / skuhati, speči skuto ♪ ([http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj\\_testa&expression=skuta&hs=1](http://bos.zrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj_testa&expression=skuta&hs=1))
- cottage cheese – noun an extremely soft, or loose, white, mild-flavoured cheese made from skim-milk curds, usually without rennet.

[Origin: 1840–50, Americanism]

Regional variation note farmer cheese and farmer's cheese are widely used throughout the U.S. as terms for a kind of cottage cheese. This same kind of cheese, with varying curd size and sourness, is also called sour-milk cheese in Eastern New England; curd or curd cheese, chiefly in the North-eastern and Southern U.S.; pot cheese, chiefly in the Hudson Valley; smearcase, chiefly in the North Midland U.S., and sometimes cream cheese in the Gulf States.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/cottage%20cheese>)

The terms cottage cheese and *skuta* are not identical but the meanings of the two terms can be brought together. They both mean a type of soft, loose, white mild-flavoured cheese. As we can see the term cottage cheese covers a wide variety of cottage cheeses, and at the same time acquires regional variety names such as curd cheese, or pot cheese.

5. Test: on what grounds can the initial hypothesis be supported or rejected? On what conditions (if ever) does it hold?

The hypothesis can be supported. This can be done by a dictionary, browsing through some cookery books, or relying on our own translation competence, which give us evidence in favour of the initial hypothesis.

## 6. Conclusion

Most culinary terms are simple objects we use on a daily basis or familiar simple concepts. Yet again, each culture (i.e. language) offers various ways (i.e. semantic contents) to refer to the same referents. “What is the background for the lexico-semantic difference?” and “How can the meanings of the two terms be brought together?” are the two questions I tried to answer in the empirical part of this article. Meanings are brought together by studying examples in detail and establishing the functional equivalence. Through simple day-to-day ingredients and regional dishes the equivalence is proven and the meanings of the two terms given are brought together. Through food (the examples studied in this article) we are given a proof that each culture/language uses various semantic contents to refer to the same referents, but this is not true of culture-specific lexical items and lexical gaps.

This paper provides insight into what can be done in the field of contrastive analysis with food-related terminology. The domain of culinary expressions viewed from a Slovene- English, English-Slovene contrastive perspective has a great potential for further explorations on the lexical level. Taking one or more steps above lexical level, also presents a future challenge for contrastive research. The use of the passive voice in English recipes, and the use of the active voice in Slovene should be further explored. It is also interesting to note that many Slovene authors assume a greater knowledge of cookery skills on the part of their readers than do their English counterparts.

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# Dialogizing Communication through Pragmatic Markers

## Summary

The paper discusses the meta-communicative features of pragmatic markers. Communication is approached from the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism, which is seen as a two-way process between interlocutors in speech.

In this view, the word is seen as a dialogical item that exists and gains meaning only in the context in which it is used. Pragmatic markers are dialogically fecund in their use. They play an important role in the communicative process thanks not only to their dialogical value but also to their meta-status. They are meta-communicative, meta-linguistic and meta-pragmatic linking words that express our divergent viewpoints and positions in communication.

**Key words:** communication, pragmatic markers, Bakhtin

## Dialogiziranje sporazumevanja s pomočjo pragmatičnih označevalcev

### Povzetek

Članek obravnava meta-komunikativne značilnosti pragmatičnih označevalcev. Sporazumevanje razumemo z vidika Bakhtinovega koncepta dialogizma, ki ga razume kot dvosmerni process med udeleženci v sporazumevanju in govorom. Tako je beseda zgolj dialoška enota, ki obstaja in dobi pomen samo v kontekstu, v katerem se pojavi. Pragmatični označevalci so z vidika rabe dialoško plodoviti. V sporazumevalnem procesu igrajo pomembno vlogo tako zaradi svoje dialoške vrednosti kot tudi zaradi svojega meta-statusa. So meta-sporazumevalne, meta-jezikovne in meta-pragmatične vezalne/vezne beside, ki izražajo naše različne poglede in položaje v sporazumevanju.

**Ključne beside:** jezikoslovje, besediloslovje, intonacija

# Dialogizing Communication through Pragmatic Markers

## 1. Theoretical Discussion and Literature Review

### 1.1 Communication and Dialogism

Communication, as one of the most complex and sophisticated means that humanity has invented, helps us to profoundly explore human nature. It is a linguistic performance which enables people's perception of their feelings and attitudes, their interpersonal relations in society and reality in general. It is so vital a process that one cannot conceive of a society in the absence of this.

Certainly there are different ways through which interlocutors are capable of communicating with one another. For instance, they most often use gestures, facial expressions, intonation and other non-linguistic means to accompany the communicative process. Most of the time, however, interlocutors rely on language itself to accomplish their interactions, and other, non-linguistic, means are only complementary to it. Therefore, while studying non-linguistic means is fascinating work, research into language aspects which facilitate communication is of primary importance.

Communicative acts that speakers produce in their linguistic interactions use the linguistic code and its elements as the main "substance". However, these acts or the communicative process as a whole are so dynamic, and at the same time so sensitive to the linguistic environment (context), that they are liable to be affected by some apparently invisible factors such as social, historical, spatial, interpersonal, functional, and discursive ones. From this perspective, in this paper we shall discuss how communication in general and certain linguistic items in particular, commonly known as pragmatic markers, are influenced by and related to the theory of dialogism as developed and elaborated by Mikhail Bakhtin in the 1920s and 1930s.

The majority of Bakhtin's theory is a reaction to, a direct antithesis of, Saussure's language-speech model, according to which dichotomy language is the basic and the only dominant system enabling the individual communicative process. Saussure describes language as an objective abstract system of laws governing all the phonetic, grammatical and lexical forms, and interlocutors should regard this system as a closed circle dominated by fixed and undisputed rules. In addition, speech is so unsystematic that it cannot be studied efficiently. Saussure and other structuralists disregard the social view of language and ignore language as a fundamentally social phenomenon.

Bakhtin, whose dialogical theory considers verbal interaction a dialogue, neither denies the importance of semiotics and linguistic code nor that of systematic language description and the concepts of structuralism. What he champions is the indispensability of the dialogical and social communicative context of language, without which language would be practically empty, a means with little communicative values, simply a monological frozen system. Bakhtin (1986, 118) observes that

The subject of linguistics is only the material, only the means of speech communication, and not speech communication itself, not utterances in their essence, and not the relationships among them (dialogic).... Linguistics studies only the relationships among elements within the language systems, not the relationships among utterances and not the relations of utterances to reality and to the speaker.

Thus, dialogism is a general framework for the perception of language with communicative values based on concrete language use and verbal interactions in *social* discourse, while its counter-theory, monologism as represented in the Saussurean view, deals exclusively with language representation in the *individual*, based on the language system, structure, rules and the linguistic code as part of semiotics as a science.

## 1.2 Pragmatic Markers

Various terms have been used by scholars in the literature to label those linking words or devices (e.g. therefore, so, although, but, etc.) which mark relations of cohesion and coherence in discourse. Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Sweetser (1990) use the term *conjunctions*, Schiffrin (1987) and Fraser (1996) use the term *marker* (the preferred term here) and, Van Dijk (1979) uses the label *connectives*. Although the terms differ and slightly different definitions have been given for them, they refer to the same linking devices, which, broadly speaking, have been divided into two types, according to the relation that they signal in discourse: semantic and pragmatic.

Relations between propositions in discourse are enabled through semantic markers, which only connect two related denoted facts; no speaker's intentions are conveyed through them, as in Example 1. On the other hand, pragmatic markers signal the relation of two related speech acts and are not part of the proposition of the sentence when they "convey the speaker's potential communicative intentions" (Fraser 1996). Thus, while semantic markers are linguistic devices used to fulfill cohesive relations in discourse, pragmatic markers are metalinguistic devices, which operate exactly the same way as do the former, but are "equipped" with pragmatic and communicative values, as in Example 2 and 3.

- (1) He got tired of being turned away from bars and souvenir shops, *so* he left them back at the inn. (1996 News AssocPress) COCA
- (2) Now I think Saddam does have still a loyal army and a very repressive security service, *so* it is not out of the question that he can end this problem. [open opposition to the regime] (1991 SPOK PBS\_Newshour) COCA
- (3) I don't see Gorbachev interest to keep those troops there. *So* it is a question of time before those troops are going to go. (1990 SPOK PBS\_ Newshour) COCA

The classification of pragmatic markers is a very difficult task, for they make up an open class in which various parts of speech and structures may be included. However, among the common markers are: conjunctions, interjections, adverbials, performative expressions, complex expressions and particles

## 2. Purpose and Data Analysis

### 2.1 Specific purposes of our study

The aim of the paper is to discuss the meta features of pragmatic markers as seen in the dialogical sphere. In our empirical and qualitative study, we wish to draw attention to these units that, among other functions such as enabling cohesion or coherence in discourse, dialogise communication because of the meta status they enjoy. We believe that this meta status consists in the fact that they appear not only as linguistic, pragmatic or communicative devices, but they go one step further by representing the existence of other voices in the discourse; by doing so pragmatic markers dialogise implicitly or explicitly by communicating economically with additional and possible world views. The hypothesis is that most pragmatic markers in communication work in the dialogical plan by forwarding the author's thesis, argument, intention, viewpoint and so on, as opposed to those of other present or absent interlocutors. For instance in Example 4,

- (4) Tenet was too good a guy to lie intentionally, but *unfortunately*, his loyalty to the president and his inner circle was greater than his loyalty to his agency's analysis and, *ultimately*, his loyalty to the truth and his responsibility to have that truth heard.  
(FLM S brdcast discussn) BNC

Is the author simply attempting to state that Tenet remained faithful to President Bush Sr.'s line and hid the details of the agency analysis by presenting it simply as a fact? Is this fact subordinate to his making the truth heard? Does the author try to persuade the audience? Or is he implying other divergent viewpoints in the text? Do we have key words that make the author's voice and that of the others heard in the passage? After all, is he communicating with someone? These are some of the questions that need to be answered.

### 2.2 Data Collection

As a basis for our study, we have explored two sources for our qualitative research, the 385-million-word Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the 100-million-word British National Corpus (BNC), both freely available online.<sup>1</sup> There is enough information in the examples included in the paper to provide the appropriate contextual environment for our analysis.

### 2.3 Analysis

Our research is mainly a qualitative study rather than a quantitative one. This means that our purpose has been to highlight the most important pragmatic markers, which are pragmatically and communicatively relevant in people's interactive processes. It was discovered that they have a role to play in the communication between interlocutors. We would like to begin our data discussion with performative verbs.

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<sup>1</sup> COCA is available at: <http://view.byu.edu/> and BNC at: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

- (5) *I don't think* that he would be where he is today without her support and her help and her dedication to him. But also, like I said, *I think* they worked together and they were supportive of each other and that's why they're where they are today. (1990 SPOK ABC\_2020) COCA

The discussion is about Mrs. Barbara Bush's contribution to President Bush Sr.'s performance in his career as a president. The speaker is both linguistically and pragmatically communicating with others by not only expressing his own opinion about her support for her husband him but also demonstrating his linguistic diversity and position in society. Evidence of his diversity is the unstated presence of additional possible voices which characterize the linguistic communicative process. The use of two pragmatic markers *I don't think* and *I think* is clearly indicative of the fact that the author is either recognizing other voices in the discussion or he is attempting to influence or persuade the audience, who may hold a different viewpoint. It should be noted that the first marker is not negating the proposition which follows it, but is simply accepting the fact that there may be other standpoints regarding the proposition. And *I think* is obviously pointing to persuasive reasons; otherwise the proposition alone (they worked together and they were supportive of each other) would merely be a fact, which in our context, is not necessarily so. Similarly, in Example 6,

- (6) Well, I believe that everyone who lives in this world cannot but be impressed by the developments that have taken place in the Soviet bloc, in the eastern European countries. *No doubt that* this development might open a new era in global relations. But, I ask myself in which direction the danger of wars, years of wars, has been reduced, towards the Middle East, or towards NATO countries? To me, *it's clear that* if at all, there is a reduction of danger, is vis-à-vis NATO and European countries. (1990 SPOK ABC\_Nightline) COCA

there would be no need for the speaker (George Bush Sr.) to defend his stance by making a strong assertion, using *no doubt that* and *it's clear that*, were it not for the fact that he expects his standpoint to meet with doubt. Pragmatically speaking, the voice of the author in the passage is dialogizing the communication and, as a result, is admitting that there is no unification as to his position about the opening of a new area in global relation and danger reduction. A longer extract, would have to provide more meta-pragmatic and meta-communicative discussions, which would rely mostly on pragmatic markers and their meta status.

Very similar to the meta pragma-communicative function of performative verbs discussed in Examples 5 and 6 are the adverbs of strong assertions. Common examples in our research, both in written and spoken texts, were *surely*, *certainly* and *definitely*, as in Example 7.

- (7) Some institutions allow student and faculty involvement in social and political causes to excuse them from their educational responsibilities. *Certainly*, students should become interested in the social and political questions facing a free people, but they deserve to be taught that moral fervor is no substitute for diligent and systematic learning. (1990 ACAD AcademicQs) COCA



The presence of communicative voices is also common among conjunctions and connectors, which are frequently used elements in texts. Their typology is rich, from conditions, concessions, results and so on. These pragmatic markers carry many pragmatic and communicative nuances, which we wish to highlight in our discussion.

Pragmatic markers in conditional clauses and sentences convey different dialogizing nuances and not only the condition to be fulfilled for an event to take place. Their frequent use in communication presupposes the unstated alternative possibility of an experience or occurrence affirmed in the proposition of the clause, which the conditional pragmatic markers introduce. In Example 8,

- (8) She was silent for a moment. “Look,” I said. “The best thing for all of us is for me just to go back to London. *If* there is a solution to all this, that’s where I’ll find it. (A0F) W\_fict\_prose BNC

the recognition of two possibilities as a solution, positive or negative, is to be deduced indirectly from the text. The silent interlocutor is being presented with two potential and exclusive alternatives, for which he should arrive at relevance values of the marker *if* in order to perceive the entire dialogically dominated meta-communicative features of the discourse.

Similarly, Example 9,

- (9) By recognising that a number of subjects have a valid and useful contribution to make, some elements may be given less weighty consideration than others and the interrelationships may become lost. *Unless* there is a truly successful arrangement for the coordination of this teaching in schools, the current confusion will persist into the next generation. (APE W\_ac\_politLawEdu) BNC

*unless* does not, of course, negate the propositional content of the sentence; rather it dialogizes the communication by inviting the interlocutor (again absent) to follow the procedural and not the conceptual communicative meaning the message contains. The pragmatic marker *unless* voices the pre-premise for the conclusion in the second clause. It also does not exclude the possibility that truly successful arrangements might not be made because thought of, as irrelevant by other standpoint holders. The author does acknowledge the indirect participation of others in his communicative process.

Concessive pragmatic markers, numerous in our database, concede or contrast situations introduced progressively or retrogressively. *Anyway* in Example 10,

- (10) My own landlord did, in fairness, give me veiled offers of money (bribes) to move elsewhere but in all honesty I simply wasn’t streetwise enough to figure out what exactly he had in mind. Also -- and I’m quite prepared to admit this -- because of all the problems I was having trying to find work, just at that moment I really didn’t want the bother of hunting for a new home. That, if need be, could be sorted out at a later date. *Anyway*, there was hardly an atmosphere of trust between the two of us so the idea of me “dealing” with him was not a comfortable one. (A0F W\_fict\_prose) BNC



is a pragmatically and communicatively powerful marker, which acts in two dimensions. In the first, it coherently structures the communication and in the second, *anyway* conveys elements of doubt about the preceding statements the interlocutor has made. The uncertainty and hesitation implicitly refer to the dialogical communicative situation, which allows for additional voices to be heard once the other interlocutor's perception is taken into account.

Another very frequent pragmatic marker of concession is *however*, which behaves slightly differently from *anyway*, but still contributes to the dialogical process of communication. Example 11 includes two instances of it.

- (11) One of the most powerful forms of non-verbal communication is dress. The usual dress for Japanese businessmen is a dark suit, a white shirt and dark tie. *However*, most Japanese businessmen acquainted with foreigners have come to expect a certain variety within reasonable limits in the dress of foreign businessmen. It is not, therefore, expected that one should imitate the Japanese mode of dress. *However*, one should avoid extremes in dress which may cause uneasiness. For example, loud clothing will create the disturbing feeling among the Japanese businessmen that the foreigner has perhaps failed to take them as seriously as he might have, by failing to observe that the common practice in dress in Japan is some degree of formality. (K94 W\_commerce) BNC

The producer of the text is certainly in the informative realm of a monological process, through which the main purpose is to simply inform the audience about dressing as a powerful form of non-verbal communication. However, the passage is so detailed in its description and informativeness that the other interlocutor, for whom the fact possibly is unknown, is invited to assess the situation and to respond positively with the dominant voice in the discourse. The role of *however* in both cases is to add further information in the sentences they head and to pragmatically contribute to the interpretation of the same sentences as contradicting the previous ones. Here the reader or the interlocutor is involved in the cognitive process, in which he should make his evaluations and silently make his voice matter. Again, once we talk about people perception we are in the dialogical sphere of communication.

The pragmatic marker *so* appeared to be the most important pragmatic marker in the result/consequence category. Example 12:

- (12) It's really with regard to the advertising of tobacco products and I think we all agree that we do have a responsibility to protect children. And what we do from research is that children who smoke are more likely to smoke the brands that are heavily advertised and we also know that advertising reinforces smoking, it makes, makes people think that smoking is okay. *So* I think these are two very, very valid reasons why we ought to ban all forms of tobacco advertising. (FLM S\_brdcast\_discussn) BNC

The pragmatic marker *so* introduces the conclusion of the passage and it is supported by some premises. Here the speaker's intention is to convince the audience through rhetorical

means and to express and forward his standpoint. Once involved in this persuasive process and expression of standpoint, we inevitably expect dialogised feedback from the interlocutor. Willingly, the speaker is dialogising his communicative act with the marker *so*.

Quite interestingly, pragmatic markers as dialogical elements almost always work together and in combination in discourse. They harmonize communication to perfection as in Example 13, in which they intensely dialogize the communicative environment.

- (13) Many experts I've talked to and now, as we've seen, law enforcement officials, say that educating people about the dangers of drugs is maybe the best way to combat the problem and treat it as a medical problem, a health problem, not a criminal problem. Tobacco, according to the Public Health Service, is addictive and legal and kills over 300,000 Americans each year, *but* it's very unlikely to be outlawed *because* that could make things worse. *However*, it is now becoming socially unacceptable. People are being educated away from tobacco, *so* education is doing what prohibition is not able to do. *And* that same approach might well be applied to what is now illegal drug use. (1990 SPOK ABC\_2020) COCA

Example 13 is a typical argumentative passage extracted from a TV programme, in which the interlocutors are discussing the progress made by the Bush administration in the fight against illegal drug use. The speaker highlights the administration's inefficiency in reducing the number of drug users and preventing drug dealing. He is continuously engaged in a dialogue with the other interlocutor, who reports on successful law enforcement and positive results obtained. At the same time, the speaker is attempting to persuade the audience to share his viewpoint. Therefore, the dialogical realm of the discourse acts in a parallel and simultaneous way with two targeted interlocutors.

The conclusion, which is introduced retrogressively, is supported directly by various subconclusions and premises throughout the extract, which would hardly stand in logical and coherent relation, were it not for the pragmatic markers (*but*, *because*, *however*, *so*, and). Fortunately, there are these markers that specifically refer to standpoints and argumentation by making the discourse even more socialized, externalized and functionalized<sup>2</sup> as well. Also, they clarify the three most important properties of the argumentation, the structure, meaning and the speaker's intentions in argumentation. Van Eemeren et al. (1996, 13) notes that "the fewer the number of verbal pointers, the more it will be necessary to make use of verbal and nonverbal contextual clues".

The mere fact that the pragmatic markers discussed above appear as textual devices in the surface structure of the discourse does not mean that they would act the same way in the underlying structure. It is precisely here that they dialogise the argumentation and, in doing so, the different voices (expectations, responses, evaluations etc) become concrete and could be heard. The marker *but*, does not only show contrast between the two utterances it relates

<sup>2</sup> Three concepts introduced by Van Eemeren et al., 2007.

(tobacco being addictive and its unlikelihood to be outlawed), but also “resonates” the speaker’s voice with other ones, although not directly present in the text. The same thing could be said for the *because* that has two purposes: to introduce the premise and to clearly express the speaker’s strong doubt that outlawing tobacco is the right choice. *However* socializes the unacceptability of smoking, and *so* opens a “conflict” between *education* and *prohibition* supporters. Lastly, *and* functionalizes and externalizes the conclusion the speaker wishes the other to reach as well.

### 3. Conclusions

Communication is not simply the use of the language abstract system, nor a process which is fulfilled in isolation. It is most complex and comprises a number of metalinguistic factors in the social dimension, where linguistic interaction is accomplished. By nature, the communicative process is socialized and externalized in a dialogical fashion. A single voice could only be heard if it is combined with a complex choir of divergent voices in communication. It is deeply and fundamentally cooperative in linguistic interactions and in the presence of opposing voices, whether stated or absent in discourse.

It was also noticed that the linguistic message of communication is not the only purpose in the communicative process, which necessarily seeks a parallel referential value for the social and contextual phenomena resting outside the linguistic communicative acts themselves. Pragmatic markers, through their metalinguistic function, bridge the external and internal linguistic world of the interlocutors in the communication. They dialogise communication by expressing our divergent standpoints, evaluations and responses, which emit a high level of resonance in the dialogical sphere and a complex deictic value. The empirical study revealed that communication is dialogised, among other means, through the strategic maneuvering and use of pragmatic markers, which, to different extents, proved to be metalinguistically, meta-pragmatically and meta-communicatively indispensable devices. Dialogised communication through pragmatic markers demonstrate various and rich nuances of discussion, depending greatly on social and functional features.

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**II.**

**LITERATURE**





## Copycat: duplication and creation in *American Psycho* and *Lunar Park* by Bret Easton Ellis

### Summary

As the hypotext of *Lunar Park* (2005), *American Psycho* (1991) provides many interpretative keys to Bret Easton Ellis's pseudo autobiographical work. In harmony with the playful spirit of postmodernism, the diegetic author behaves like the conjurers who disclose the tricks of their trade without destroying the essence of their magic. His universe is greatly identical to that of his fiction and the summaries of his preceding books duplicate the same text, thereby questioning the nature of creation. This paper starts by bringing to light Ellis's conjuring tricks, before considering the relevance of a commodified *persona* in the context of a *fin de siècle* dominated by the emblematic figure of the yuppie as a grotesque dandy. The last part uses the final image of *American Psycho* and its transparent reference to one of Magritte's most famous paintings in order to draw a parallel between Ellis's creative process and the painter's.

**Keywords:** Ellis, Magritte, autobiography, persona, commodification, trick, duplication, dandy, creation.

## Posnemovalec: podvajanje in ustvarjanje v *Ameriškem psihi* in *Luninem parku* Breta Eastona Ellisa

### Povzetek

Kot hipotekst *Luninega parka* (2005) *Ameriški psihi* (1991) ponuja mnoge interpretacijske odgovore na Ellisovo psevdobiografsko delo. Diegetični avtor se v igrivem duhu postmodernizma vede kot čarodej, ki razodene svoje ukane, ne da bi pri tem okrnil bistva njihove skrivnostnosti. Pisateljev svet je domala istoveten s svetom njegove fikcije in povzetki njegovih prejšnjih knjig se podvajajo v istem besedilu, kar postavlja pod vprašaj samo naravo ustvarjanja. Članek uvodoma osvetli Ellisove čarovniške prijeme, nato pa preide k bistvu komodificirane *persone* v kontekstu fin de siècle, ki ga obvladuje figura yuppia v podobi grotesknega dandyja. Sklepni del se pomudi ob poslednji podobi Ameriškega psiha in njeni nedvoumni navezavi na eno izmed Magrittovih najslavnejših slik ter izpostavi vzporednice med Ellisovim in slikarjevim ustvarjalnim procesom.

**Ključne besede:** Ellis, Magritte, avtobiografija, persona, komodifikacija, ukana, podvajanje, dandy, ustvarjanje.

# Copycat: duplication and creation in *American Psycho* and *Lunar Park* by Bret Easton Ellis

## 1. Introduction

*Lunar Park*,<sup>1</sup> Bret Easton Ellis's latest novel, starts as an autobiography coupled with metatextual comments on Ellis's previous works. The first pages include extracts from the *incipits* of four earlier novels; Bret Easton Ellis thus presents himself as the author of his latest creation. He claims he is now aiming at recovering his original formal simplicity, arguing that what is at stake is not only a literary issue. His self-criticism is ruthless; he provides summaries of his novels that prove almost identical and suggest that the failure of his personal life is reflected in that of his creation. *Lunar Park* starts out as a truthful autobiographical work, but veers into obvious fiction as serial killer Patrick Bateman, the hero of Ellis's *American Psycho*,<sup>2</sup> shows up at the author's home.

In *Lunar Park* Patrick Bateman appears as an avatar of Ellis's father, but this Patrick Bateman (who, revealingly, appears one Halloween night [55]) does not really look like the protagonist of *American Psycho*. For the author – himself dressed up as... Bret Easton Ellis and looking very much like his own guest (122) – is led to recognize his hero through his physical likeness with Christian Bale, the actor who plays the lead in the movie adaptation. From then on, the writer progressively turns into a *persona*, and eventually becomes a mere character: "Bret Easton Ellis" may well have committed the horrors that fill *Lunar Park*, duplicating the ones of his psychopathic hero. The world of concrete reality is thus greatly identical to that of the fiction, just as the summaries of the preceding books indefinitely reproduce the same text. *Lunar Park* seems to demolish the body of work of an author who, in every respect, fits the image of the superficial diva conveyed by the hype that has been surrounding him since the very beginning of his career.

It turns out that, in harmony with the playful spirit of postmodernism, the diegetic author of *Lunar Park* behaves like the conjurers who disclose the tricks of their trade without destroying the essence of their magic. Such manipulation partakes both of desecration and of mythical construction. The words actually betray the author-*persona*'s avowed intention, suggesting that the key to the thematic concern of his latest novel lies in *American Psycho*, which makes up its hypotext. That is why this paper will eventually use the final image of *American Psycho* and its transparent reference to one of Magritte's most famous paintings in order to draw a parallel between Ellis's creative process and the painter's, for whom "writing is an invisible description of thought and painting is its visible description" (Noël 1976, 32).<sup>3</sup>

## 2. The *persona*'s conjuring tricks

"You do an awfully good impression of yourself" (*LP*, 3) – the very beginning of *Lunar Park* emphasizes the question of the representation of the self. The autodiegetic narrator

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1 Referred to as LP in the upcoming quotations.

2 Referred to as AP in the upcoming quotations.

3 "L'écriture est une description invisible de la pensée et la peinture en est la description visible" (My translation).



parallels this opening sentence with that of his debut novel (*Less Than Zero*, 1985), to praise its “stripped-down minimalism” (*LP*, 5) and castigate what he claims is the verbose affectation of the *incipits* of his earlier books. In quite a different context, John McGahern defines style as “the expression of personality through technique”<sup>4</sup>; it is in the very same spirit that the narrator states his ambition to make *Lunar Park* a medium whose aesthetic nature encompasses intimate stakes:

As anyone who had closely followed the progression of my career could glimpse—and if fiction inadvertently reveals a writer’s inner life—things were getting out of hand, resembling something that according to the New York Times had become “bizarrely complicated . . . bloated and trivial . . . hyped-up,” and I didn’t necessarily disagree. I wanted a return to that past simplicity. I was overwhelmed by my life, and those first sentences seemed reflections of what had gone wrong. It was time to get back to basics [...]. (*LP*, 5)

*Lunar Park* opens with what reads like pitiless self castigation. After celebrating the qualities of the *incipit* of *Less Than Zero*, he thus summarizes the novel:

It detailed a wealthy, alienated, sexually ambiguous young man’s Christmas break [...] and all the parties he wandered through [...] and all the friends he passively watched drift into addiction, prostitution and vast apathy [...]. It was an indictment not only of a way of life I was familiar with but also [...] of the Reagan eighties [...]. (*LP*, 6)

Here is an extract from the summary of his second novel:

*The Rules of Attraction* [...] detailed the sex lives of a small group of wealthy, alienated, sexually ambiguous students [...] during the height of the Reagan eighties. We followed them as they wandered from orgiastic party to orgiastic party [...]. (*LP*, 14)

A few pages on, *American Psycho* is presented as

a novel about a young, wealthy, alienated Wall Street Yuppie named Patrick Bateman who also happened to be a serial killer filled with vast apathy during the height of the Reagan eighties. (*LP*, 17)

That poorly inspired work is the fruit of the imagination of the *persona*, who happens to be at once the creator and the creature. By asserting its autobiographical quality, *Lunar Park* heralds a break with such artistic emptiness thanks to the dismissal of former recipes and the pursuit of formal purity.

As the plot unfolds, however, *Lunar Park* becomes increasingly fictional. “Bret Easton Ellis” appears just as outrageous as his characters and his book submits to formal conventions that only incidentally

4 Quoted from personal notes taken from a video transmission of a nationwide scholarly debate conducted in 1994 for CNED, the French national distance learning program.

fall within the province of artistic genius: it openly uses the well-known dramatic springs of popular horror and of B movies,<sup>5</sup> and follows the *Zeitgeist*.<sup>6</sup> The author first seems to be telling about himself and then builds his entire narrative around a grotesque *persona*. All things considered he does not reveal much about himself; his disclosing only a few of his secrets leaves the remaining narrative tricks/mysteries even more impenetrable. In accordance with the postmodern perspective, he treats the creative process as diegetic material, seeming to forget all about the original issue. *Lunar Park* sets out to lay bare the essence of creation, and then becomes a new novel, a new item in the corpus, adding to the mystery and maintaining its solution out of the textual context.

Postmodernism has a lot in common with those illusionists whose trick consists in disclosing the ropes of their very conjuring. The manipulation thus revealed is not exposed as deception; it is part and parcel of a performance that aims at creating a pleasure renewed from age-old recipes. The audience is first invited to attend a mysterious trick, performed in a traditional way; they will derive pleasure in taking part in the trick by understanding its technical facets. Since that laying bare is usually executed in playful manner, such pleasure rests on both the successful outcome of an intellectual process and the purely aesthetic appreciation of the artistic performance that made it possible. In other words, an artist who discloses his technical secrets remains a true artist, whose know-how goes beyond the mere accomplishment of a perfectly coded trick. The belief of the audience switches from the superstitious type (*i.e.* the belief in the artist's all powerful creative power) to the educated admiration of the perfect mastery of the codes brought to light. From a creator, the artist becomes a manipulator: one marvels at his ability to appropriate traditional techniques in order to make a truly personal creation. In short, one admires his style.

Let us for instance consider the classic circus clown act which consists of a succession of identical conjuring tricks where bottles seem to disappear in empty cylinders. After a while, simulating clumsiness, the artists let their legerdemains show through, letting the audience understand their clever technique, but thereby ending the magic of the moment. In the course of the number the audience's reaction usually starts with laughter at the comic situation whose workings they do not understand, then at themselves when realizing the trick of which they have been the jubilant butt. Laughter may then focus on the clowns, who keep performing the same sleight of hand as though the audience were still unaware of the artists' handlings. In the end, the clowns slightly modify their legerdemain, which can obviously no longer be explained by the technique they had let the spectators discover. The new technique will be kept mysterious; once more the audience laugh at themselves, for having been fooled anew by characters whose expertise they had underestimated.

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<sup>5</sup> Ellis often cites Stephen King as one of his major literary inspirations:

Q: What are your all time favorite books?

A: [...] If I had to go with when I was younger and the books that really obsessed me when I was a teenager, I'd definitely put down Salem's Lot by Stephen King [...]. It was a book I was obsessed with for a year. When that book came out [...] I was about 11 or 12, and, literally, it may have been the only book I read that year. I read it 12, 13, 14 times.

Jaime Clarke. An Interview with Bret Easton Ellis. Mississippi Review, 1999. [http://home.c2i.net/ajohanne/frames\\_jamieclark.htm/](http://home.c2i.net/ajohanne/frames_jamieclark.htm/) (accessed October 10, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Among many others, the plot resembles that of Mark Z. Danielewski' *House of Leaves* (New York: Pantheon, 2000), in which a psychotic narrator also composes the metatextual account of a house that is haunted too, and with an ever changing appearance.

The iconoclastic revelation of the repetitive technical foundations of an artistic creation seems intended to destroy the *quasi* divine nature that might otherwise be attributed to it.<sup>7</sup> In major artistic modes of expression the impact of that revelation is twofold: it denotes the rejection of the sacralization of the creative process while contributing to building the mythical aura of the latter, which is shown to express the spirit of a unique conscience. True to the spirit of postmodernism, *Lunar Park* unveils some of its compositional conventions so as to question the validity of the choices and of the appropriateness of those conventions. It does away with the sacred aura of the novel in the context of the authorial corpus (and, by the same token, the banality of the whole corpus), while making the latter the cornerstone of the psychology of “Bret Easton Ellis.” The critical process called for by the relation between the two texts and merely initiated by the narrator at the beginning of *Lunar Park* is bound to be continued by the reader. For the shifting status of the implied author from critic to fictitious character calls to mind that, *a contrario*, the ignorant yuppie of *American Psycho* readily used the rhetoric of a music critic (Bateman’s lengthy, empty presentation of the band Genesis covers the whole eponymous chapter pp. 128-131 and concludes with the stereotyped “Genesis is still the best, most exciting band to come out of England in the 1980s.” [p. 131]). The musical culture of “Bret Easton Ellis” is quite reliable and expressed in much more personal fashion; his critical blindness towards his own text, however, still reflects his character’s verbiage:

*Teenage Pussy* [his next novel] would contain endless episodes of girls storming out of rooms in high-rise condos and the transcripts of cell phone conversations fraught with tension [...]. Chapters were titled “The Facial,” “The Silicone Queen” [...] The book was all about the hard sell [...] but it was also going to be poignant and quietly devastating and put every other book written by my generation to shame.” (*LP*, 102, 105)

The author-narrator as critic is unable to realize that the text he is currently working on is nothing but a pornographic production. This denotes the uselessness of the very notion of criticism, as well as that of the *persona*’s own narrative choices, for “Bret Easton Ellis” does not conceive that authorial paternity in no way conveys any control over the reception of his creation. In this case the author even finds himself possessed by his creation, up to the point when he hires a team of exorcists,<sup>8</sup> thereby becoming a character submitted to the perverse logic of the psychopathic hero of *American Psycho*.

### 3. A commodified existence: grotesque dandies

At the diegetic time of *American Psycho* the musical “Les Misérables” was a huge success in Broadway. Bateman and all his Yuppie acquaintances were ecstatic; the posters and the merchandising were omnipresent and the music score was monopolizing the radio stations. Without any qualms, the bombastic show reified poverty into a highly lucrative, kitsch commodity, exploiting Hugo’s revolutionary spirit to consolidate the values of dominant capitalistic conformism.

<sup>7</sup> Isn’t the creator of “Don Giovanni” called “the divine Mozart?”

<sup>8</sup> Three whole chapters are devoted to the “cleansing” of the house and its aftermath (372–405; 420–34).

Belonging to the real world, Manhattan is supposed to compose the nonfictional counterpart of the setting of the musical. However, the streets are swarming with bums and homeless people and look surprisingly like Hugo's famed shady *Cour des Miracles*; this New York microcosm duplicates that of "Les Misérables," thereby making up a play within the play in which the two spectacles prove identical. The society's rejects are part and parcel of that setting and are treated like props by the Yuppies, who keep using them for their amusement. In its absurdist way the New York pageant, costumed by the greatest fashion designers, exemplifies the soundness of the founding Shakespearean concept – "All the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely players" (*As You like It*, act 2, sc. 7).<sup>9</sup> Yet the Shakespearean world picture postulates a divine transcendence which sets the individual within the frame of a natural order. In a perverse evolution, the social Darwinism of the Reagan years substitutes the order of things for the order of objects. The nature of that transformation is utterly narcissistic; an expensive, fashionable object has become the only way for the individual to get not only a sense of identity through the recognition of his peers, but also an ontological sense of his existence. Baudrillard alludes to the perverse consequences of the compulsive acquisition of such commodities:

Its [the object's] absolute singularity [...] arises from the fact of being possessed by me – and this allows me, in turn, to recognize myself in the object as an absolutely singular being. This is a grandiose tautology, but one that gives the relationship to objects all its density – its absurd facility, and the illusory but intense gratification it supplies. [...] What is more, [...] the relationship with objects has one characteristic that can never be found in the intersubjective realm: no object ever opposes the extension of the process of narcissistic projection to an unlimited number of other objects; on the contrary, the object imposes that very tendency, thereby contributing to the creation of a total environment, to that totalization of images of the self that is the basis of the miracle of collecting. For what you really collect is always yourself. (Baudrillard 1996, 90–1)

Purchasing different objects amounts to endlessly reiterating the identical pattern of buying the very same object, in the vain subconscious attempt at building up a unified sense of the self. In the consumerist environment of *American Psycho*, this attitude commodifies the experience of existence to the point of substituting the individual for his status symbols and, ultimately, of transforming the others into expendable objects devoid of any individuality. In this case the tautology alluded to by Baudrillard also lies in the fact that, by duplicating the act of always purchasing the same object (*i.e.* oneself), the individual will duplicate himself to the point of becoming one with the other objects (*i.e.* the others) he so desperately needs to differentiate himself from.

Mammon does not prove to be a structuring deity; its devotees find themselves enslaved by the fickle dictatorship of conspicuous consumption. Unlike the cultured, tasteful dandy, whose wish was "creating oneself afresh each day as a work of art" (Calloway 1997, 51), the Yuppie is a frivolous character defined by his very frivolity. The refinement of the top executives of *American Psycho* is mostly limited to brand awareness. They are grotesque dandies, psychopathic conformists

<sup>9</sup> Defined by its very superficiality, this Manhattan may be viewed as a "new-look" Shakespearean stage, as the expression, said to originate from New York magazine Harper's Bazaar in 1947, was especially designed to refer to Christian Dior's distinctive style.

– human oxymora seeking to assert their distinctive identity by subscribing to commonplaces. Despite appearances, their refinement is mere mimicry, quite a far cry from the dilettantes they call to mind and whose seemingly shallow behavior was often akin to rebellion:

The dandy-aesthetes of the *fin-de-siècle* period above all honed their senses and cultivated the rarest of sensibilities; they made the perfection of the pose of exquisiteness their greatest aim and they directed all their languid energies toward nurturing a cult of aesthetic response that begins beyond ordinary notions of taste, that lies beyond mere considerations of fashion, and operates quite outside the dictates of all conventional canons of morality. (Calloway 1997, 34)

Their obsessive quest for difference being totally conventional, the affluent characters of *American Psycho* end up looking like mirror reflections of each other—so perfect that the Yuppies regularly fail to recognize one another in public places, which have become so many halls of mirrors:

“What in the fuck is Morrison wearing?” Preston asks himself. “Is that really a glen-plaid suit with a checkered shirt?”

“That’s not Morrison,” Price says.

“Who is it then?” Preston asks, taking his glasses off again.

“That’s Paul Owen,” Price says.

“That’s not Paul Owen,” I say. “Paul Owen’s on the other side of the bar. Over there.”

Owen stands at the bar wearing a double-breasted wool suit. (35)

Owen has mistaken me for Marcus Halberstam. (86)

These executives are Dorian Grays of the next *fin de siècle*, concerned only with the present and totally dedicated to the cult of youth,<sup>10</sup> in a state of euphoria that Barthes analyzed in *The Fashion System*. Hedonist though it was, Dorian’s quest was tinged with spirituality, expressed a reaction to the conformism of his times and yearned for sublimity *hic et nunc*: “Fashion, by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal, and Dandyism, which, in its own way, is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty [...]” (106) As for Manhattan’s stylish business people, they are content with sheepishly following the trend. As “a device that foregrounds the discursive foundations upon which meaning depends” (Annesley 1998, 85), intertextuality is part and parcel of all literary creation and constantly enriches our apprehension of any given novel. In many ways, “Ellis’s transtextual focus” (Annesley 1998, 84) in *American Psycho* reflects *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and foretells the problematics of duplication that informs the very nature of *Lunar Park*. Among the manifold echoes, let us note the example of Bateman’s apartment, full of the most expensive, ultra modern equipment, denoting the owner’s total lack of artistic taste and composing a grotesque reproduction of the exquisite home of a highly cultured Dorian. Here is the telltale beginning of Bateman’s description:

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Bateman seems to live in the ideal world wished for by Lord Henry, Dorian Gray’s mentor: “Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!” (Wilde 1890, 19). As he realizes the horrors of his ways Dorian definitely throws himself into the perversity of such superficial ethics: “Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things.” (86)

this is what the living room of my apartment looks like: Over the white marble and granite gas-log fireplace hangs an original David Onica. It's a six-foot-by-four-foot portrait of a naked woman, mostly done in muted grays and olives, sitting on a chaise longue watching MTV, the backdrop a Martian landscape, a gleaming mauve desert scattered with dead, gutted fish, smashed plates rising like a sunburst above the woman's yellow head, and the whole thing is framed in black aluminum steel. The painting overlooks a long white down-filled sofa and a thirty-inch digital TV set from Toshiba; it's a high-contrast highly defined model plus it has a four-corner video stand with a high-tech tube combination from NEC with a picture-in-picture digital effects system (plus freeze-frame) [...]. (23, 24)

In itself, the remarkable length of the description of the apartment (over four pages) is reminiscent of the exhaustive evocation of Dorian's precious fads right at the center of Wilde's novel: intertextuality does not raise only the question of subject matter, but also that of form.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever their topics of conversation, Bateman's colleagues adopt the stereotyped rhetoric of mainstream opinion, conveyed notably by fashion(able) magazines, and naturally endorse their intrinsic values. That *doxa* holds the final victory of an eternal, tyrannical present, for "Fashion experiences itself as a right, the natural right of the present over the past; defined by its very infidelity, Fashion nevertheless lives in a world that it wants and sees ideally stable, totally filled with conformist outlooks."<sup>12</sup> Bateman lives in a purely materialistic universe where each object becomes an image of oneself and where, logically, the individual sees himself everywhere. The characters of *American Psycho* are described minutely and obsessively, but their depiction is exclusively limited to their clothes:

He's wearing a linen suit by Canali Milano, a cotton shirt by Ike Behar, a silk tie by Bill Blass and cap-toed leather lace-ups from Brooks Brothers. I'm wearing a lightweight linen suit with pleated trousers, a cotton shirt, a dotted silk tie, all by Valentino Couture, and perforated cap-toe leather shoes by Allen-Edmonds. Once inside Harry's we spot David Van Patten and Craig McDermott at a table up front. Van Patten is wearing a double-breasted wool and silk sport coat, button-fly wool and silk trousers with inverted pleats by Mario Valentino, a cotton shirt by Gitman Brothers, a polka-dot silk tie by Bill Blass and leather shoes from Brooks Brothers. McDermott is wearing a woven-linen suit with pleated trousers, a button-down cotton and linen shirt by Basile, a silk tie by Joseph Abboud and ostrich loafers from Susan Bennis Warren Edwards. (*AP*, 29)

Annesley labels Ellis's works as "blank fiction," where "the vision offered is a gloomy one. Contemporary culture is dominated by commodification, a process which leads, it seems,

<sup>11</sup> The Picture of Dorian Gray itself quite often echoes *A rebours* by J.-K. Huysmans (1884), particularly in the very passage mentioned. Wilde himself admitted that *A rebours* was the novel he had in mind as the "poisonous book" given to Dorian by Lord Henry (Wilde 1890, 103).

<sup>12</sup> Barthes spells fashion with a capital letter; his "Fashion" does not concern stylish clothes, but the written discourse on the cultural phenomenon they constitute.

"la Mode se vit elle-même comme un Droit, le droit naturel du présent sur le passé ; définie par son infidélité à elle-même, la Mode vit cependant dans un monde qu'elle veut et voit idéalement stable, tout pénétré de regards conformistes." (304, my translation.)



to freezing, objectification and in many cases death.” (1998, 53) As the preceding quotation from *American Psycho* exemplifies, the individual is indeed totally reified in his appearance of the moment.<sup>13</sup> Nineteenth century aesthetes had already been through a similar experience: “Striving to become an art object, the dandy dehumanizes himself in order to make his social spectacle” (Garelick 1998, 66). That alienation is of a deadly essence; in the words of Barthes, “that absolute, dogmatic and vengeful present when fashion prevails” results from “the murder it commits on its own past” (Barthes 1967, 304).<sup>14</sup> That metaphoric murder heralds the ultimate victory of the pleasure instinct, and Bateman ends up killing because of his inability to grasp the metaphorical nature of the discourse that molds him.

#### 4. The betrayal of images and the betrayal of words

Bateman’s confusion makes his narration unreliable; the facts may not always be told from psychotic fantasies, for the character can distinguish neither desire from reality nor physical objects from mental images. That is why his final vision at the end of the novel takes on exemplary value. He finds himself in a bar, delirious, and thus concludes his story:

above one of the doors covered by red velvet drapes in Harry’s is a sign and on the sign in letters that match the drapes’ colors are the words THIS IS NOT AN EXIT. (AP, 384)

Let us note that the sign matches the drapes, which suits Bateman’s aesthetic tastes, and makes it appear totally normal: it is an integral part of the setting. The inscription is a transparent allusion to Magritte’s emblematic painting, displaying “*ceci n’est pas une pipe*” (“this is not a pipe”), but whose title is actually “*La trahison des images*” (“the betrayal of images”).<sup>15</sup> Draguet says that at that moment, “Magritte does not place himself in the vein of painting. He has entered that of the image, which is resolutely mental.” (Draguet 2003, 84)<sup>16</sup>

Bateman prides himself on owning works of art, but to him they are ordinary objects of which he knows only the market value; as for the sign, it is a real ordinary object, but that echoes a work of art. Just as the painting, it suggests that appearances are too subversive to be trusted. Such a sign [“This is not an exit”], placed above a door, may *a priori* indicate only an exit; the final surprise rests on the strict appropriateness of the linguistic sign to a situation whose abnormality seems created only by the message. Which is the very essence of Magritte’s avowed intention: just as the representation of an object is not that object, the sign may not be an exit, since it is a sign. In that

<sup>13</sup> In his analysis of literary minimalism, Rebein stresses the pitfalls of such narrative choices at the level of the reception: Clothing gets a lot of play here, as does hairstyle and the names of specific companies or products [...]. None of this is done in the name of specificity or depth, but on the contrary to underscore the commonness of the situations and the superficiality of the narrative consciousness. [...] there is something deadening and depressing about seeing such trivia take the place of significant action and detail in fiction. At best, the practice strikes the reader as a failed shortcut and a cheapening of literary art. At worst, it seems neurotic and obsessive and [...] vaguely insulting. (2001, 40)

<sup>14</sup> “ce présent absolu, dogmatique, vengeur, o la Mode parle [...] du meurtre qu’elle commet sur son propre passé.” (My translation.)

<sup>15</sup> Magritte produced several versions of that painting but the most famous dates back from 1929, the year when the stock market crash seemed to be tolling the knell of the omnipotence of Wall Street brokers—of whom Bateman and his fellow speculators are the direct heirs.

<sup>16</sup> “Magritte ne se situe plus dans le registre de la peinture. Il est entré dans celui, résolument cérébral, de l’image.” (My translation.)

case, Bateman's deviant vision (it is very hard to imagine such an indication in a bar) becomes the expression of common sense.

Draguet states that, in "the betrayal of images," "what is said not to be a pipe does not find any other alternative formulation ('If it is not a pipe, what is it, then?')" (84).<sup>17</sup> At a strictly literal level "This," as the grammatical subject of "This is not an exit," is definitely not an exit. Likewise, that story, made up of words, and of which "This" constitutes a synecdoche, is nothing but a mental spectacle based on the play on the possible and the real. Eventually this inscription, which composes the literal exit of the book and which displays its nature as a linguistic sign, reminds the reader that the magic of writing is only an illusion – *i.e.*, an image.

Such illusion is inherent to literature, which fosters mental images prompted only by the artist, but whose interpretation is left to the reader alone, who reflects himself in his subjective apprehension.

Besides, on the very diegetic plane, Bateman may well be a young man with a perverted imagination who fantasizes his murders – and who might even not be Patrick Bateman<sup>18</sup> (to rephrase Draguet, "but what is he, then?").

About another Magritte painting, Noël points out:

As soon as the object of "Les Vacances de Hegel" has become ambiguous enough to function no longer in relation to the things that make it up, but to the contradiction in those things that it solves, it has become a mental object, which materializes nothing else than Magritte's thoughts. (22)<sup>19</sup>

"THIS IS NOT AN EXIT" may thus be considered as the reification of Bateman's thought process. It turns out, however, that the (no) exit sign composes the mirror image of the entrance sign that opens the novel (which also appears in capital letters):

ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE is scrawled in blood red lettering on the side of the Chemical bank near the corner of Eleventh and First (*AP*, 3)

Obviously, that message does not belong to the tangible world, and it is very unlikely that it could originate from an ignorant Bateman, living only in the present, probably unable to recollect literary references, and even less able to ever equal Dante's poetic genius.

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<sup>17</sup> "Si ce n'est pas une pipe, qu'est-ce alors ?" (My translation.)

<sup>18</sup> The Bret Easton Ellis of *Lunar Park* himself alludes to that possibility (182). Ironically, he is at that moment becoming a double of his hero, casting doubt on the soundness of his metafictional insight: "I felt like an unreliable narrator, even though I knew I wasn't (182–3)."

<sup>19</sup> "à partir du moment où l'objet des Vacances de Hegel est devenu assez équivoque pour fonctionner, non plus par rapport aux choses qui le composent, mais par rapport à leur contradiction qu'il résout, il est devenu un objet mental, qui ne matérialise rien d'autre que la pensée de Magritte." (My translation.)



## 5. Conclusion

The mirror structure of *AP* is aptly and artificially conveyed by the presence of the two signs studied above, which denotes that of artistic creation in general, as well as its irreducible capacity to express the coherence of the universe. Such coherence is not necessarily reassuring; in this case, the (no) exit of *American Psycho* opens up on *Lunar Park*, whose near-homonymy with Luna Park puts it under the influence of the moon, between festival and madness, and which duplicates Bateman's psychotic universe.

At the same time, the shallow yet painstaking descriptions of characters and settings in *American Psycho* underline the fundamental sameness of individuals and of their environments, showing obvious similarities with Warhol's series of (quasi) identical icons of lowbrow, popular culture. Ellis's style, especially in *American Psycho*, partakes of minimalism, which sets him in tune with some of the characteristic aspects of pop art. Rebein notes that in

literary minimalism [...] there was the feeling that what the old-fashioned realists had called "milieu" had been replaced by brand names and other "surface details" that clearly came not from the individual artist but from a "nonartistic source"—the world of the television sitcom and the shopping mall, for example. (33)

More importantly, Ellis's open use of reproduction calls to mind the tricks of Warhol the egocentric, which often liken his talent to that of a photocopying machine, blurring the distinction between person and *persona*: "Warhol imagined that he was a machine, suggesting that he felt his life as well as his art was manufactured" (Kuspit 2004, 151).

As appears in the two novels under scrutiny, Ellis's aesthetic universe is the one of repetition of the identical, in an ambiguous relation between introspection and narcissistic reflection, between acknowledged artistic influence [debt?] and plagiarism. Just like Warhol, the author of *Lunar Park* has become "a social illusion – a shallow image, a more or less theatrical surface." (Kuspit 2004, 152) The other side of that image is Bret Easton Ellis, who builds up in an epitext written by others and which reads like his novels. His pathetic image might well become emblematic of what Kuspit calls the end of art.

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## Metaphors of Diaspora: English Literature at the Turn of the Century

### Summary

The purpose of this essay is to make a literary reading of the postcolonial diasporas in Britain, especially in connection with the metaphors used by diasporic writers in the UK in their search for their own identity and belonging. As diaspora is a metaphorical term in the sense we are using it now, three different metaphorical constructions of diaspora will be explored: a) the metaphor of the imaginary homelands created by immigrant writers; b) the metaphor of the Black Atlantic as a sort of space shared by those who are part of the diaspora and what this entails in history and literature; and c) the metaphor of the journey as an intrinsic element of diaspora itself.

**Key words:** diaspora, metaphor, imaginary homeland, Black Atlantic, journey

## Metafore diaspore: angleška književnost na prelomu stoletja

### Povzetek

Namen pričujočega prispevka je literarna predstavitev poskolonialnih diaspor v Veliki Britaniji, posebej v povezavi z metaforami, ki jih uporabljajo avtorji v Združenem kraljestvu v iskanju svoje identitete in pripadnosti. Glede na to da na tem mestu uporabljamo izraz *diaspora* v metaforičnem smislu, bomo raziskali tri različne metaforične zgradbe diaspore: a) metaforo izmišljene domovine, kakor jo ustvarjajo priseljeni pisatelji; b) metaforo Črnega Atlantika kot neke vrste prostora, ki si ga delijo pripadniki diaspore, ter njen pomen za zgodovino in književnost; in c) metaforo potovanja kot neločljive prvine same diaspore

**Ključne besede:** diaspora, metafora, namišljena domovina, Črni Atlantic, potovanje

# Metaphors of Diaspora: English Literature at the Turn of the Century<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction: Diaspora and Postcolonialism

*Diaspora* and *hybridity* are both metaphorical terms in the usual terminology we employ in literary criticism today. The first is an agricultural metaphor associated with the idea of dispersion, of sowing or scattering seeds (from the Greek *diá* ‘through’, and the verb *speírein* ‘to sow’, ‘to scatter’). Moreover, its initial metaphorical ascription to the dispersion of a particular people, the Jews, after the Babylonian captivity, and then later, with the Jewish people being forced to leave Palestine, has been extended to other peoples and communities. Thus the classical, Jewish *diaspora* has carried over its meaning, extending it to other similar dispersions: we now view the African diaspora, the Asian diaspora, the Indian diaspora, and others, as equivalent to (similar to or like) the Jewish diaspora. Analogously, hybridity, originally connected to the horticultural – if not agricultural – and zoological worlds, has also acquired metaphorical values related to diaspora and postcolonialism. Its original meaning of combination or union of different species, races or varieties has been extended in association with diaspora to the coming together of different peoples, cultures, religions and worldviews. Thus we have come to talk about the hyphenated identities so characteristic of the United States (*African-American*, *Cuban-American*, *Italian-American*, etc.), and gradually becoming also common in the UK (*Black-British*, *Brit-Asians*, *Indian-British*, etc.). We could even picture the usual scene of a peasant or farmer sowing the land, dispersing seeds at random, these seeds falling in different places and producing hybrid fruits. In this way, and now referring of course to people and not to seeds, we may talk about current British society as a hybrid society, the product of diverse diasporas.

But my concern now is exclusively with the literary readings of the postcolonial diaspora (or rather, diasporas) made in Britain in recent years. The phenomenon of postcoloniality is not strictly a recent one because the independence of many British colonies started immediately after the Second World War. That sparked off the dispersion of populations from different areas of the world, and many colonised subjects – mainly (but not only) those who had collaborated with the colonial administration – left their countries for the metropolis in a process which, in the British case, took place between the late 1940s and the 1970s. However, reflection and theorising over this issue was not widespread until the last two decades of the twentieth century, when the movement for “reshaping British identity” coincided with an ideological, political and social debate on this question. Commenting on this at the end of the 1990s, Jürgen Schläeger mentioned the September 1997 Labour campaign issue “Reshaping British National Identity – Rebranding Britain” and the project headed by Homi Bhabha and the British Council Cultural Studies Department called the “Re-inventing Britain Project”. For Schläeger, all these governmental efforts had “all the elements of a great theatrical

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spectacle – of a dramatised pageantry on a grand scale and Britain is, after all, the country and culture which produced the greatest dramatist of all times” (Schlaeger 1999, 57–8). But certainly, apart from any political motivation and/or manipulation of the issue (something that Schlaeger is keen on emphasizing), it is undeniable that the presence of immigrants in Britain has drastically changed the identity of its society and has produced a distinctly new style in its literature. My purpose in this paper is to delve into some of the manifestations of that situation, by focusing on the effects of postcolonial diaspora in the process of current writing in the UK.

The journal *Wasafiri* (Spring 1999, issue no. 29) echoed the British Council Project with the publication of Bhabha’s “Manifesto” and the transcription of a dialogue with Bhabha himself, Susheila Nasta and Rasheed Araeen in the BBC Radio 3 programme ‘Night Waves’. Bhabha referred there to the topic of hybridity by addressing the fact that today there are about 100 million people in the world that live as migrants in countries and cultures other than their own. As he says, these people are living in a sort of “in-between state, where they are not fully accepted as nationals” (Bhabha 1999, 40). He explains that even if they are accepted in legal terms, as they are indeed in some places, what really happens is that they are regarded by others as “a group apart”, “not fully integrated”. What is most interesting, however, is what he says after that description:

these people are not always talking about their own victimage or their own declaration, they are also producing very positive images. They are actually producing creatively a whole range of cultural and social acts, meaningful acts. (40)

This means that the main interest of studying the diverse diasporas in contemporary Britain is not restricted to their expressions of victimage, but rather to their capacity to be creative and productive. Susheila Nasta, also participating in that dialogue, emphasized this feature in particular relation to the “in-betweenness” that characterizes diaspora – the fact that immigrants are living in two worlds, sharing two cultures, even if they are in conflict one with another. These are some of her words:

The position of the migrant and immigrant I would add is enabling in this way for it allows a doubling of perspective, a view of the inside from the outside –though in reality the two perspectives are always linked. But this vantage point has both the precision of distance and intimacy and is essentially an ambidextrous one. (42)

My purpose in this paper is to explore just three aspects of the metaphorical constructions inspired by the postcolonial diaspora in contemporary Britain. I will specifically discuss: a) the metaphor of the imaginary homelands created by the diasporic or hybrid writers; b) the metaphor of the Black Atlantic as a sort of space shared by those who are part of a diaspora; and c) the metaphor of the journey as an intrinsic element of diaspora itself. I am fully aware that other metaphorical constructions have developed, and need further exploration (metaphors of blood, of colour, of the island, etc.). But I cannot deal with all of them in this paper, and so I will concentrate on the three mentioned aspects.

## 2. The metaphor of the imaginary homelands

It was Salman Rushdie who in 1982 wrote a beautiful essay entitled “Imaginary Homelands”. This piece starts with the contemplation of an old photograph of the house in Bombay where he was born. It evokes the past as something lost. Recalling the famous opening of L.P. Hartley’s novel *The Go-Between*, that reads “The past is a foreign country – they do things differently there”, he inverts the idea when he looks at that old photograph: “it reminds me that it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time” (Rushdie 1991, 9). That repeated word, *lost*, evokes Proust and his lost time, but our writer does not have the same experience as the French novelist. Rushdie explains how he wrote *Midnight’s Children* in an effort to reclaim and to rebuild the city where he was born, a city that had disappeared from his factual reality, the reality he was living in North London, where he was writing his book. The experience of leaving Bombay for Pakistan (a country he never names but refers to simply as “the unmentionable country across the border”, 9) and his later trip to the former metropolis are obviously references to that diaspora or dispersion undergone by immigrants who feel compelled to leave their countries. The main problem of that diaspora, he says, in relation to the search for that lost time, is the impossibility of retrieving it as it actually was. He tells us that when he wrote *Midnight’s Children* he could not grasp the actual city and the past, so that he was fighting with his memory in order to recover that reality, but to no avail: “what I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: ‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions” (10).

He sees himself, in this respect, as one who writes from outside India trying to reflect that lost world and in doing so he is dealing with “broken mirrors” (11), never with the complete and actual reality. This image of the “broken mirrors” is very interesting not only for its suggestion of a substitution (a mirror only projects images, which work as a replacement for the real thing) but also because of its fragmentary condition. Diasporic migrants are necessarily fragmented, as they have been dispersed and torn away from their country and fellow citizens. So, like memory, which is faulty and partial and may thus lead into distortions and falsifications of history, the diasporic writer is faced with the challenge of remembering and rewriting the past left behind. Yes, rewriting the past, although it may sound a bit awkward, as if we were talking of politicians who pretend to make the world in their own image (such as in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). But writers also do that, need to do that, in order to counterbalance the lies told by politicians. Rushdie writes: “Writers and politicians are natural rivals. Both groups try to make the world in their own images; they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians’ version of truth” (14). What the Indian writer in the diaspora to Britain does, then, is to “create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10). Fragmentation, which initially might be seen as a weakness, thus turns into strength, allowing the writer to imagine his past, giving him more freedom to create and to recover the lost time, the lost home. It could even be said that writers like Rushdie, experiencing this sort of diaspora in Britain, feel empowered by precisely the tradition of immigration and diasporas of the past. He puts it very clearly when he reclaims for his own art and writing the traditions that Britain has incorporated throughout its history:

Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the culture and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement, life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history of immigrant Britain. Swift, Conrad, Marx are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy. (20)

The reference to the Jews cannot escape our attention in this context. Rushdie is also alluding to the classical diaspora, and clearly claiming that the Indian, or South Asian, diaspora in Britain bears a strong similarity to that of the Jews.

Other diasporic or immigrant writers have followed suit. We cannot forget, in connection with the subcontinent, writers like Hanif Kureishi, Vikram Seth, Amit Chaudhuri, Romesh Gunsekera, just to mention some of those who live or have lived in Britain and who have already made a name for themselves in the United Kingdom and abroad (see Nasta 2002). But of course the Asian diaspora goes beyond Britain, and others like Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Tharoor, and Michael Ondaatje are part of the South Asian diaspora in the United States and Canada.

It is interesting, however, to note that Rushdie's allusion to his literary forebears in the Indian and British traditions alike is echoed by another contemporary writer belonging to a different diaspora, the Caribbean one. It is Caryl Phillips, born on the island of St Kitts, who in 1997 published an anthology entitled *Extravagant Strangers. A Literature of Belonging*. This is a collection of texts and fragments ranging from 18<sup>th</sup>-century African writers like Olaudah Equiano to contemporary poets and novelists from diverse parts of the world like Linton Kwesi Johnson, Romesh Gunsekera, Kazuo Ishiguro, David Dabydeen or Ben Okri, but also including such well-known white authors as William Thackeray, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Wyndham Lewis, or George Orwell, all of them born outside Britain and all of whom contributed their imagination, their "imaginary homelands", to English or British literature. Phillips's idea in compiling this anthology was simply to prove that Britain has always been a country of immigrants, where different diasporas have coalesced in shaping its peculiar identity, an identity that cannot be considered homogeneous at all. Reading these texts we certainly become aware of the diversity implicated in the definition of *British*. In Phillips's words,

readers will come to accept that as soon as one defines oneself as "British" one is participating in a centuries-old tradition or cultural exchange, of ethnic and linguistic plurality, as one might expect from a proud nation that could once boast she ruled most of the known world. The evidence collected here confirms that one of the fortuitous by-products of this heterogeneous history has been a vigorous and dynamic literature. (Phillips 1997, xii)

So, this is the power that writers belonging to the diaspora wield. Their creations of "imaginary homelands" are multiple: Rushdie's singular *Midnight's Children* (1981) comes immediately to mind, but so too do Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef* (1994) in connection with Sri Lanka, Abdulrazak



Gurnah's *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Paradise* (1994), *Admiring Silence* (1996), *By the Sea* (2001) or *Desertion* (2005) about Zanzibar, as well as recreations of their parents' homelands by younger novelists such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) or Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist* (2002), or other constructions of "lost time", like the recreation of the "Windrush Generation" of Caribbean immigrants in the late 1940s and 1950s, as presented in Andrea Levy's popular novel *Small Island* (2004).

### 3. The metaphor of the "Black Atlantic"

The second metaphorical issue I wish to explore is that of the Atlantic as "black". The great ocean that separates, and connects, three continents: Africa, Europe and America, was thus regarded by critic Paul Gilroy in his 1993 book *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Gilroy's aim is perhaps best understood through the subtitle with its key terms "double consciousness", another name for what Bhabha and others have termed "in-betweenness". The first sentence of the book is very clear in this respect: "Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness", and a bit later he declares with further precision:

The contemporary black English, like the Anglo-Africans of earlier generations and perhaps, like all blacks in the West, stand between (at least) two great cultural assemblages, both of which have mutated through the course of the modern world that formed them and assumed new configurations. (Gilroy 1993, 1)

The physical Atlantic Ocean is seen then as a metaphorical channel or space where the process of exchanges or mutations between Africa and the West take place. The slave trade is indeed the origin of this concept of *Black Atlantic*, but the concept itself is not merely equivalent or synonymous to the slave population and the slave trade in their passage from Africa to Europe and America. Gilroy talks about these movements of black people through the Atlantic, which, he says, cannot be seen exclusively as commodities, but also as "engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship", which is a way to re-examine "the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (16). This is not a minor subject, but perhaps more relevant to my point here is the emphasis put on the interaction between the black population and the white culture in the metropolis. In this sense *Black Atlantic* is a conceptual tool that permits us to study, as Ania Loomba has written, "the extent to which African-American, British and Caribbean diasporic cultures mould each other *as well as the metropolitan cultures with which they interacted*" (Loomba 1998, 175). This is precisely the centre of our interest: the effect that the slave trade and its subsequent diaspora had on the metropolitan culture, on British identity. Stuart Hall has taken this notion of the *Black Atlantic* as an instrument of analysis a step further and talked about "cultural *diaspora-ization*" (Hall 1996, 446–7; quoted by Loomba 1998, 176). As can be seen, diaspora is now presented as a cultural process affecting not only the direct subjects of diaspora (Africans in this particular reference to the slave trade), but also the metropolitan subjects that interact with them. Its dispersing quality makes diaspora a sort of metaphorical "infectious disease", which extends across the wide social texture of the UK.



It is very interesting to reflect on what a Caribbean-born British writer like Caryl Phillips has written on this respect. In his book of essays *A New World Order* (2001) he comments on his experience of alienation when visiting Africa. As a black, wishing to get back to his origins, he visits the Dark continent and encounters a reality that is not his own:

Africa faces a unique set of problems as it tries to orientate itself through the postcolonial nightmare of corrupt leaders, and beyond the resounding clash of the new world entering as its people are still trying to pick over the remnants of the old world which was destroyed by European incursion. [...] What Africa needs is critical self-analysis, and intellectually rigorous minds and impassioned voices to dissect the past and suggest a future. And it possesses such minds and voices. What Africa does not need is a continual flow of disaffected African-Americans, wounded by race, acting out their fantasies of belonging and alienation with a presumed authenticity which is understood by the figment of the pigment. (Phillips 2001, 93)

A similar experience is had when he visits the Caribbean and particularly the island where he was born before his parents immigrated to Britain in the 1950s. He does not feel part of it at all. What is happening, as I have written elsewhere (Galván 2004), is that a cultural transformation is now taking place in Britain, and thus an emerging hybrid culture is occupying the space of what used to be different categories of people, each in their own neat pigeon-hole: white Europeans, black Africans, Indians, Caribbeans, etc. This new culture is the result of that dispersion of diverse diasporas, or *diaspora-ization*, as Stuart Hall has called it, in another development of the original agricultural metaphor. In Phillips's words,

After thirteen years of compulsive itinerancy, I know my Atlantic 'home' to be triangular in shape with Britain at one apex, the west coast of Africa at another, and the new world of North America (including the Caribbean) forming the third point of the triangle. (Phillips 2001, 305)

Of course that "Atlantic 'home'" he mentions is not a real place; it is not precisely located here or there; it is the "Black Atlantic", another imaginary homeland constituted by many other things apart from a lot of salty water ("I have chosen to create for myself an imaginary 'home' to live alongside the one that I am incapable of fully trusting. My increasingly precious, imaginary, Atlantic world", says Phillips 2001, 308). He has been writing for many years about this condition of feeling diasporic, and parallel to the experience of the Jewish diaspora, he has dealt extensively with one of the most traumatic aspects of it: the Holocaust. From documentary books like *The European Tribe* (1987; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1992) or *The Atlantic Sound* (2000) to novels such as *Higher Ground* (1989), *Cambridge* (1991), *Crossing the River* (1993) or *The Nature of Blood* (1997), Phillips has been retelling over and over again the "other" Holocaust suffered by the black diaspora and fictionalising the common identity shared by Jews and Black Africans in their respective diasporas: Othello is thus one of the best epitomes of that experience, as Phillips has narrated it in *The European Tribe* and *The Nature of Blood*. This feeling is conveyed in strong terms in the pages of that first travel book:

I was brought up in a Europe that still shudders with guilt at mention of the Holocaust. Hundreds of books have been published, many films made, television programmes produced, thousands of articles written. The Nazi persecution of the Jews is taught at school, debated in colleges, and is a part of a European education. As a child, in what seemed to me a hostile country, the Jews were the only minority group discussed with reference to exploitation and racialism, and for that reason, I naturally identified with them. At that time, I was staunchly indignant about everything from the Holocaust to the Soviet persecution of Jewry. The bloody excesses of colonialism, the pillage and rape of modern Africa, the transportation of 11 million black people to the Americas, and their subsequent bondage were not on the curriculum, and certainly not on the television screen. As a result I vicariously channelled a part of my hurt and frustration through the Jewish experience. (Phillips 1992, 53–4)

So diaspora also means, in literary terms, and thus metaphorically, the reshuffling and reshaping of metropolitan language and literary and cultural myths: Othello, a black man, is like a Jew, and as such he is treated in *The Nature of Blood*, next to the Nazi concentration camps and the worst and cruellest manifestations of human beings. Curiously enough perhaps, the association between Jewish and black characters seems to be relatively common in postcolonial literature (which is possibly another effect or consequence of the colonial experience and the teaching of the Bible to natives). I will simply recall now the name of “Moses” in two very different novels: Doris Lessing’s *The Grass Is Singing*, back in 1950, where the African servant who kills Mary Turner has this name; and Sam Selvon’s sequence about Moses Aloetta, starting with *The Lonely Londoners* (1956).

I have been quoting from Caryl Phillips, but there are others who, living and writing in Britain, are now, at the turn of the twenty-first century, principally concerned with the diasporic experience of the *Black Atlantic* particularly in relation to metropolitan hybridisation or “diaspora-ization”. One of the most fruitful, inspiring and recent studies on this is John McLeod’s book *Postcolonial London. Rewriting the Metropolis* (2004), which focuses on the literary and imaginary constructions of London by writers belonging to different diasporas from the 1950s to our days. Contemporary authors such as Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie, Linton Kwesi Johnson, David Dabydeen, Fred D’Aguiar and Bernardine Evaristo feature prominently in this volume, but other recent publications also bear witness to the fertility of these British constructions of postcolonial diaspora, such as books published by Sukhdev Sandhu (2004) or James Procter (2003), whose span extends beyond London and addresses the issue of the construction of space (physical, mental, metaphorical) by members of diasporas. Procter focuses not only on those immigrants that arrived in Britain and tried to find their place there, but also on the new generation, those “born-and-bred” Black Britons who prefer to tackle their everyday reality rather than the past or lost worlds left behind by their parents. All this, in short, is evidence of the influential role played by this metaphorical view of diaspora.

## 4. The metaphor of the journey

Finally, let me address the third metaphorical issue connected with diaspora: the journey. This is of course an issue closely related to physical diaspora itself, but I wish to tackle it from the point of

view of writing and writers. In short, what is the role of travelling for diasporic writers? Firstly the connection with the African diasporic writers is self-evident: Caryl Phillips has drawn our attention to writers who have had to travel to other places in order to make sense of their own lives. These are individuals who are associated with foreign places, where they could settle and escape from the oppressive atmosphere of their original lands, people such as Langston Hughes in Moscow, W.E.B. Du Bois in Berlin, Ida B. Wells or Phillis Wheatley in London, Claude McKay in Marseilles, or James Baldwin in Paris. According to Phillips, “the ability to leave and see oneself through another prism – hopefully one that is less racially clouded – has long been a part of the legacy of being a writer of African origin in the West” (Phillips 2006, 4). This is also linked to Paul Gilroy’s description of his metaphorical *Black Atlantic*, as he sets out to discuss “the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering” (Gilroy 1993, 3).

Naturally, journey is not an exclusive property of the African diaspora; many contemporary Caribbean writers in Britain have also produced travel books or novels imbued with journeys. Apart from those written by Caryl Phillips which I have already mentioned, let us recall some of the classics: C.L.R. James, Jean Rhys, George Lamming, V.S. Naipaul, or Samuel Selvon. Members of the British literary tradition itself, on the other hand, have not been alien to these “necessary journeys”, as Phillips calls them, in order to “affirm their sense of their own place in the global scheme of things” (Phillips 2006, 3). Writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson or George Orwell, among many others, have felt that need to change countries and try to find themselves. In “Necessary Journeys”, Phillips develops his own justification for travelling, which he links to his diasporic condition. He explains that the only way for him to become a true writer was to escape from Britain and travel first across Europe, and then throughout the world. Otherwise he feels he would have become a prisoner of the image that Britain had of him, that is, a cliché of what it meant to be a black writer in the UK. Phillips does not want to be considered “a black writer” as a category or type; he does not want to be called by the media to give his opinion about racial issues, “a predicament that can quickly reduce a writer to the position of being little more than a social commentator” (Phillips 2006, 4). If he had not gone abroad, if he had not escaped that social and media pressure, he would not have developed his own self, as this was reduced in Britain to images (again the recourse to mirrors that project only “images”, fragmented pieces, of reality) which, he adds, “were laughably restrictive, generally insulting, and palpably false” (5).

The “necessary journeys” are also grounded on his own interior journey of development. Let me quote a descriptive paragraph about himself, because what he says here is generally applicable to many other writers of his generation and origin, in their fighting for an adequate definition of their identity:

I was born in the Caribbean and journeyed to Britain in the late fifties as an infant. This migration has had an incalculable effect upon who I am. That I grew up in Yorkshire, in the north of England as a working-class boy, has also had a deep-seated effect upon me. That I went first to grammar school, then to a comprehensive school, and from there to a prestigious older university, this has all fed who I am. The evidence of these

migrations over water and across land, through nations, class and geography had, twenty years ago, already bequeathed to me an exceedingly multifarious sense of self. Add to this the ingredient of race, in an institutionally racist society, and it becomes clear that I was dealing with a personal identity that resisted easy classification. (5)

As can easily be appreciated, the writer is not talking merely about the physical journey of moving with his parents from the island of St Kitts to Leeds, where he was brought up, but he includes as part of his journeys his metaphorical migration from working-class Yorkshire through grammar and comprehensive schools to the prestige of Oxford University. These are migrations in space of course, as they entail different geographies in the UK, but they are also, and perhaps more importantly, journeys across class and nation. In this sense, and in coincidence with Phillips, other diasporic writers have explored the metaphor of the journey (physical and interior journeys) in their novels. Not surprisingly, of course, some of these writers (Abdulrazak Gurnah, Zadie Smith, Hari Kunzru, Fred D'Aguiar, David Dabydeen, etc.) I have already mentioned in connection with the metaphor of the imaginary homelands and the *Black Atlantic*, and I say not surprisingly because the metaphor of journey is closely linked to the imaginary homelands and the lost spaces and times, as well as to the middle passage and the “in-betweenness”, hybridity or double consciousness implied by Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*.

## 5. Conclusion

As a way to draw this argument to a close, I will quote a few words from a paper published by Abdulrazak Gurnah in 2004 that reveal this utter identification with other postcolonial writers of the diaspora. He explains that he came to writing as a necessity to recover his past, his “lost life” in Zanzibar, as he is living in Britain and feels estranged in a foreign country, with “the sense of a life left behind, of people casually and thoughtlessly abandoned”. It is that separation which makes him write and empowers his imagination. The words he uses are particularly interesting as they combine the metaphor of the journey with that of recollection and imagination:

Travelling away from home provides distance and perspective, and a degree of amplitude and liberation. It intensifies recollection, which is the writer's hinterland. Distance allows the writer uncluttered communion with this inner self, and the result is a freer play of the imagination. (Gurnah 2004, 59)

Gurnah's experience is not far from Rushdie's or from Phillips's in this respect. All these writers are living and enacting the metaphors of the diaspora and, by so doing, they certainly extend and empower the cultural and aesthetic values of immigration, hybridity and diaspora-ization.

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## Deconstructing the Text and (Re)Constructing the Past: History and Identity in Geraldine Brooks' *People of the Book*

### Summary

This paper examines Geraldine Brooks' latest novel *People of the Book* (2008) in light of postmodern critiques of history and the desire to explore and signify the past through processes of deconstructing male-centered dominance and (re)constructing histories. The paper highlights ethno-spatial representation that involves intercultural dynamics behind the fate and importance of the manuscript. Drawing on discussions of postmodern views of history and identity construction, I engage the novel against the background of these and other postmodern and postcolonial concerns, also considering intertextual effects stemming from the mixing of genres and sub-genres. Lastly, I offer a reflection about the potential of this fictional account, based on the real-life fate of a prayer book that has testified to the spirit of interfaith tolerance and mutual enrichment of diverse cultures, to provide a context for understanding contemporary preoccupations with heritage, history, memory and identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Key words:** Geraldine Brooks, *People of the Book*, history, identity, narrative, intertextuality, postmodernism, postcolonialism, gender, memoir

## Dekonstrukcija teksta in (ponovna) konstrukcija preteklosti: zgodovina in identiteta v romanu *People of the Book* Geraldine Brooks

### Povzetek

Članek preučuje najnovejši roman Geraldine Brooks z naslovom *People of the Book* (2008) v luči postmoderne kritike zgodovine in poskusa, da se razišče in označi preteklost skozi procese dekonstrukcije moške dominantnosti ter (ponovne) konstrukcije zgodovin. Prispevek izpostavi etnoprostorsko reprezentacijo, ki vključuje medkulturno dinamiko za hrbtnom usode in pomembnosti rokopisa. Razprava se opira na različna postmoderna dojetanja konstrukcije zgodovine in identitete ter druga postkolonialna vprašanja, poleg tega pa upošteva tudi medbesedilne učinke, ki izvirajo iz mešanja zvrsti in podzvrsti. Nazadnje avtorica ponudi v premislek možnosti dometa te fikcijske pripovedi, ki temelji na stvarni usodi molitvenika in priča o duhu medverske strpnosti in vzajemnega oplajanja različnih kultur. To naj bi ustvarilo podlago za razumevanje sodobnega ukvarjanja z dediščino, zgodovino, identiteto in s spominom v Bosni in Hercegovini.

**Ključne besede:** Geraldine Brooks, *People of the Book*, zgodovina, identiteta, pripoved, medbesedilnost, postmodernizem, postkolonializem, spol, spomin

# Deconstructing the Text and (Re)Constructing the Past: History and Identity in Geraldine Brooks' *People of the Book*

## 1. Introduction

Informed by postmodern notions of history, deconstructionist and discourse analytical methods, this paper discusses the novel *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks as a narrative that seeks to recast the presentation of the past through examination of a Hebrew codex known as the Sarajevo Haggadah. The novel's plot is inspired by and centered around this rare book, which has drawn attention and interest for centuries due to its wondrous beauty, controversial design and mystifying fate. As Brooks describes it,

The Sarajevo Haggadah, created in medieval Spain, was a famous rarity, a lavishly illuminated Hebrew manuscript made at a time when Jewish belief was firmly against illustrations of any kind. It was thought that the commandment in Exodus "Thou shalt not make unto thee any grave image or likeness of any thing" had suppressed figurative art by medieval Jews. When the book came to light in Sarajevo in 1894, its pages of painted miniatures had turned this idea on its head and caused art history texts to be rewritten (8).

In Brooks' story this magnificent book is to be examined by an expert of the name Hanna Heath, a manuscript conservator from Australia who, in the aftermath of the Bosnian war, in 1996, is deemed by the United Nations, the sponsor of the book conservation, to be the best choice both for her nationality and her expertise. This spirited and resolute heroine functions as the unifying element of the different narrative strands, including a romance as she crosses paths with Ozren Karaman, chief librarian of the National Museum and the Muslim hero who saved the book during the recent Bosnian war. The outlined plot serves only as a hint at the panoramic and rich canvas of the book's pages among which Hanna finds clues to its past. Each of them serve as narrative threads of a sweeping story, alternating between Sarajevo at different periods, *fin de siècle* Vienna, fifteenth-century Venice, and Spain during the Inquisition and in 1480, as well as locations which Hanna visits, ranging from Harvard to the Australian outback. These seemingly disparate places are brought together through diverse narrative solutions such as sensory prompts, illustrated by the following example when Hanna, preparing to inspect the Haggadah, runs a metal ruler over the sheets of her papers: "The sound of the metal edge traveling across the large sheet was like the sound of the surf I can hear from my flat at home in Sydney" (4).

I contend that against the background of this dynamic and exciting story lies an imbedded concern with how the narratives within the novel are created to present the problems of reality and history with multivalent effects. Hanna's job of inspecting a book is in itself a reflection of the act of book analysis, one that will lead her to open more than just pages of a book. As she scrutinizes the manuscript, she ends up writing out a new chapter of her life, filled with excitement, mystery and self-exploration, reflected in an alternative history of the book. The character of Hanna thus acts both as a writer and a reader, who, in the act of research, writing and interpreting, develops



into a symbolic author with a constructive and productive potential, an author who is “capable of re-creating strong emotional, social, and cultural bonds” (Durante 2001, 8). The examination of the manuscript, a “close reading,” as it were, therefore marks the start of a drama that confronts Hanna with her own past and her hidden vulnerability, but simultaneously hints at the process of reading history and leads to our heightened awareness about the fictionality of history. But the stories of the different stages in the book’s history are told from different perspectives and also through exchanges between the characters. And there is a host of them, including Lola, a Jewish laundress turned Communist partisan who finds shelter with the family of an Albanian Muslim rescuing the Haggadah during WWII; a Spanish Jew by the name of Ruti who secretly studies the Kabbalah and whose father copies the manuscript’s text; and Zahra, a Muslim girl enslaved in North Africa and brought to Spain disguised as a boy, who paints the images of the Haggadah. Their interconnected destinies are meticulously structured and revealed through a complex set of techniques, mostly through exchanges between characters, which is another level of revelation and self-realization through text. Consequently the conversations between characters become “a form of storytelling designed to explore a means by which characters can discover or recuperate a provisional sense of wholeness in their lives,” thereby making storytelling “both a fictional subject and mode, theme and technique,” in the words of Robert Durante (2001, 8–9).

## 2.1 (Hi)stories lost in history

Of course, a book is more than the sum of its materials. It is an artifact of the human mind and hand. The gold beaters, the stone grinders, the scribes, the binders, those are the people I feel most comfortable with. Sometimes, in the quiet, these people speak to me. They let me see what their intentions were, and it helps me do my work (Brooks 2008, 19).

Hanna’s comments on her philosophy and work reveal another dimension besides her dedicated faith and immersion in the world of science; they hint at her desire to render everything explicit, accountable to scientific analysis and logical deduction as it relates to her mediating role in interpreting the voices of the past and reconstructing their histories. However, despite Hanna’s thorough and expert application to the task, it is also implied that a mere factual, scholarly approach on its own will not provide ready access to the truth about the past. More specifically, this assumption seems to endorse Hayden White’s contention on the fictionality of history:

How else can any “past,” which is by definition comprised of events, processes, structures, and so forth that are considered to be no longer perceivable, be represented in either consciousness or discourse except in an “imaginary” way? Is it not possible that the question of narrative in any discussion of historical theory is always finally about the function of imagination in the production of a specifically human truth? (1984, 33)

Moreover, the speech/writing binary opposition established in the novel’s excerpt suggests Hanna’s inherent authority and the privileging of writing as she is the storyteller of other people’s stories, the writing medium for others. Even though Brooks’ novel is not deeply interested in aesthetic experimentation that could be considered truly “postmodern,” such textual locations

give place to discussions about the contentious nature of widely accepted notions of history and literature, as well as the related issues of identity and language. A spate of authors including Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, Brian McHale, and others have developed varying notions of postmodernism, to varying conclusions and interpretations. But there is a shared feature in these refined definitions of postmodernism, as one critic points out: “One ariadnean thread, however, does run throughout even the most labyrinthine discussions, and that thread is history” (Elias 2001, xxvii). By now we have also seen interpretative views, or a critique of the postmodern critique of history, most famously those offered by Terry Eagleton in his book *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (1996)<sup>1</sup> but my discussion will be focused on the precepts of narrative theory and aesthetics of demystifying of historical facts and events, objectivity and truth in this novel.

A literary and theoretical study of history was launched by the postulation that history is founded in storytelling, questioning the absolute knowability of the past, and upsetting the very foundation of authenticity of historiography and the notions of its veracity. Initiated by the historiographic skepticism of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra, the most prominent interpretation of the relationship between literature and history is offered by Linda Hutcheon in her seminal texts *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* and *The Politics of Postmodernism*. She argues that the radical opposition between the two modes is undermined since the reader of the genre of postmodern novel labeled historiographic metafiction is simultaneously aware of the fictionality of fiction and the knowledge that the novel is to a certain degree rooted in real-life events. Consequently, Hutcheon develops the concept of historiographic metafiction as an interweaving of literary theory, history and narration. It is manifested in fiction that explores its own statement by narrating history, and contends that postmodernists, by playing with history, create the potential for a subversive form of cultural critique. Foregrounding the fictionality of history, she sees historiographic metafiction as fundamental in the postmodernist poetics, and “historiographic metafiction thus trades in comprehensive theories for textuality, simultaneously rejecting the celebration of heroic winners in favor of the perspectives of underdogs” (2002, 51).

The question of power and empowerment is central: Brooks’ novel focuses not only on the limits of documentary history but also on its politics. This is intimated towards the end of Hanna’s research on the manuscript when she admits to building an unscientific narrative since facts alone seem insufficient and inadequate for her designs and motivations, and thereby affirms the approach to history as storytelling:

I wanted to give a sense of the people of the book, the different hands that had made it, used it, protected, it. I wanted it to be gripping narrative, even suspenseful. So I wrote and rewrote certain sections of historical background to use as a seasoning between the discussion of technical issues....Then, I wanted to build up a certain tension around the dramatic, terrible reversals of the Inquisition and the expulsion. I wanted to convey fire and shipwreck and fear (264–5).

<sup>1</sup> Eagleton’s conclusion is that postmodernism considers “History, as opposed to history with a small h, [...] a teleological affair,” based on “the belief that the world is moving purposefully toward some predetermined goal which is immanent within it even now, and which provides the dynamic of this inexorable unfurling. History has a logic of its own, [...] but generally speaking history is unilinear, progressive and deterministic” (45).

This excerpt seems to reflect Hutcheon's questioning of historical representation in postmodern culture and distinction of its status, defining the relationship between the past (events) and history (narrative) as "[p]ast events are given *meaning*, not *existence*, by their representation in history" (2002, 78). But the spatial and temporal framework of the novel reminds us that it is not "just a book" whose fate the readers trace, but also the transformations and migrations of cultures which are determined by the authoritative "grand Narratives" of grand empires as the totalizing stories discussed by Jean-François Lyotard (1984) in *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. He argues that due to the fragmentation of postmodern society instead of the grand metanarratives, we have "micronarratives" or "local narratives," a plurality of discourses as one of the key traits of postmodernism. Consequently, there are no absolute or objective truths, and writers and readers are capable of creating and making use of local or provisional truths which have a liberating potential. Such an example is found in the representation of alternative, even marginalized, stories or histories of characters in *People of the Book*, resisting a totalizing "grand narrative."

It has already been noted that this novel resists the typical designation of postmodern writing; for instance, it demonstrates the lack of invoking an external world, i.e. "anti-referentiality," that postmodern fiction has exhibited, with self-reflexiveness as its key dimension. But it does reflect concern with themes such as dislocation, alienation and fragmentation, and issues embedded in the postmodern argument such as authenticity, individuality, a questioning of the real, kitsch, simulation, and repetition, as the manuscript itself is under inspection regarding its genuine origin. Thus, in an episode of the novel set in 1996 Sarajevo, Hanna's expertise is scrutinized and rejected by a male authority, causing her self-doubt and professional and personal withdrawal. Another dimension of postmodernist writing that this novel contains is the effect of blending the "factual" text (that of the official and recognized "truth" of the Hagaddah's destiny) and the literary text (the imaginary reinterpretation of the historical facts in this novel) in an attempt to deconstruct patriarchal history and linear temporality.

## 2.2 Reinterpreting history and self

*People of the Book* does not disclose the self-conscious and self-referential treatment that is typical of historiographic metafiction; hence, it lacks the standard metafictional procedure of introducing the author as a character in the novel. But this novel intimates other metafictional concerns regarding narrative, representation, documentation and legitimacy. Over the last several decades a range of theoretical and critical readings have been devoted to the interrelation of metafictional literature and history, viewing both as types of texts which are deeply affected by language and narrative and thus subject to numerous interpretations. In this regard, the most convincing argumentation has been offered by Patricia Waugh (1984), who contends that metafiction indicates more than the fictional act behind the writing of history, and "that history itself is invested, like fiction, with interrelating plots which appear to interact independently of human design." Due to the narrative structure that links Hanna's story with that of the Haggadah, told from alternating points of view resulting in multiple perspectives, the novel communicates the complexities of writing history. The novel opens with a first person narration and shifts to the formal third-person narration and back and forth again, reminiscent of a feature about story and

discourse that Waugh detects in many metafictional novels “which shift from the personal form ‘I’ of *discourse* to the impersonal ‘he’ of *story* remind the reader that the narrating ‘I’ is the subject of the *discourse*, and is a different ‘I’ from the ‘I’ who is the subject of the *story*” (49, 135).

The tension of polivocality within the novel brings dynamics as well as challenge to the historicity of the text, or, in other words, this tension reaffirms the notion that history is not objective and impartial, but defined by interests of a particular party or ideology. It is useful at this point to recall Dominick LaCapra’s critique of traditional documentary history and the related exploration of relationships between history and theories of subjectivity, experience and identity. Partly reacting to the excessive poststructuralist and postmodernist attempts that reject the referential function of language and narrative, LaCapra (1987, 76) calls for renegotiating the postmodern crisis of history, urging historians to acknowledge that they are in dialogic interchange with the past. Therefore it is possible to see the novel *People of the Book* as a text that inscribes a new historicity that is neither an example of simple historical realism nor a dull variation of postmodern historical fictionality. The new histories, presented in the novel through a third-person narrative and a first person alternation, destabilize the previous rendering of the past and therefore allow for a reinterpretation of events.

Another dimension of postmodernist writing in this novel is the effect of blending the “factual” text (that of the official and recognized “truth” of the Hagaddah’s destiny) and the literary text (the imaginary reinterpretation of the historical facts) in an effort to dismantle history and the linearity of time. For purposes of the latter, shifting in time and space is incorporated throughout the novel, thereby challenging borders and continuity, although the typical postmodernist game-playing is for the most part indiscernible. The alternating narrative perspectives and different discourses of the numerous characters unfolding in a plurality of voices may be seen as a contribution to a specific polyphony in the novel.<sup>2</sup> We do not follow the plot through the lens of an objective world but through multiple perspectives and voices. Hanna’s voice, for instance, is that of a rational loner and passionate professional, the contemporary and tense voice, occasionally colored by “Aussie” expressions. Zahra’s perspective, on the other hand, is that of an artistic and contemplative enslaved Arab girl disguised as a boy in fifteenth century Seville, remote in time and space yet immediate in her intimate revelation of repeated suffering and abuse, her innermost yearnings and persistent resistance. The intimate form of first-person narration of Hanna and Zahra allows for distinctive and excluded histories to be articulated and a new historicity created, generating an emancipatory effect. “Women as historical subjects are rarely included in ‘History’ to begin with” argues Diana Fuss (1989, 95), who encourages authors to break the exclusionary – a monologic narrative of male dominance and progress that constructs others as people without history – which is what Brooks does through characters such as Zara who articulate/write/illuminate themselves into existence. In other words, when Brooks writes the story of Zara, she attempts to recast women and other marginalized groups as individuals with history, or rather, their respective histories. Therefore the act of writing this tale becomes a reversal of exclusion or an act of countering invisibility, as depicted in the following scene:

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<sup>2</sup> *People of the Book* contains multiple equal voices, fulfilling the dialogic or polyphonic text requirement with a resulting dialogic openness, as described by Mikhail Bakhtin, who contrasts this type of text with the conception of the monologic or homophonic novel (encompassing all its voices within a single authorial world-view). See Bakhtin 1984, Ch. 1.

I turned the parchment and suddenly found myself gazing at the illustration that had provoked more scholarly speculation than all the others. It was a domestic scene. A family of Jews—Spanish, by their dress—sits at a Passover meal. We see the ritual foods, the matzoh to commemorate the unleavened bread that the Hebrews baked in haste on the night before they fled to Egypt, a shank bone to remember the lamb's blood on the doorposts that had caused the angel of death to "pass over" Jewish homes. The father, reclining as per custom, to show that he is a free man and not a slave, sips wine from a golden goblet as his small son, beside him, raises a cup. The mother sits serenely in the fine gown and jeweled headdress of the day... But there is another woman at the table, ebony-skinned and saffron-robed, holding a piece of matzoh. Too finely dressed to be a servant, and fully participating in the Jewish rite, the identity of that African woman in saffron has perplexed the book's scholars for a century (19–20).

Even though there are opinions that deem such feminist undermining of gender patriarchy as contrived or as "kindly feminism [that] informs Brooks' efforts to invent women who were important to the creation and existence of the precious book" (Le Guin 2008), my interpretation attributes to this insistence a certain level of necessity to render it thus. If a literary text is understood as part of discursive fields in which power is both reproduced and challenged, then the novel's narrative clearly endeavors to dismantle the authoritarian patriarchal gender structures. An example of inherent deconstruction of masculinist normative in the manuscript is given in the character of Ruti, a Jewish girl in 1492 Tarragona, who secures herself access to a forbidden text. Excluded from the secrets of Kabbalah due to age and gender, she discovers a way to access and experience *jouissance* in the mystery of the text through physical pleasure, i.e. corporeal satisfaction: "She came to think of it as right, somehow, that these two forbidden ecstasies should be linked: that her femaleness, which should have barred her from this study, actually made it possible for her; the yielding up of her now-willing flesh providing the means to acquire delight of the soul." Similarly, in a more contemporary context, Hanna's struggle against exclusion from information and recognition is representative of women's endeavors to shape their empowered, acting selves in a gendered contest. For example, Hanna's mentor demands that she efface herself in the name of high professional standards: "When you have worked well, there should be no sign that you have worked at all. Werner Heinrich, my instructor, taught me that. 'Never mistake yourself for an artist, Miss Heath. You must be always behind your object'" (233, 33).

Unrepresented or misrepresented in traditional historical narratives, female characters such as Hanna or Ruti write out their (hi)stories of the past, discovering that they must find a new way of making history, one that assumes the production of a new historicity. An issue that is related to presenting the past in the form of history is the notion that the complexity of the past exceeds the characters' ability to re-present it fully. A good measure of traditional written history, based on documents, is frequently considered another kind of violence inflicted upon oppressed peoples since the oral history of these silenced or excluded groups was not deemed important or reliable. However, in the opening of the novel there are significant oral storytelling markers—the narrator does not name herself: "I might as well say, right from the jump: it wasn't my usual kind of job." Moreover, the narrator does not address anyone in particular, which constitutes a

rhetorical pattern typically associated with orality. This rejection of the language of documents and evocation of the oral in written texts combines with another important feature that builds, perhaps even conditions the narrative. That pattern is based on contradiction, represented at different levels, adding to the question of how conflicting tensions of the text can be reconciled. For example, in a structural sense we trace the mysterious clues of the manuscript through each chapter backwards through five centuries, while the central story of Hanna moves in the opposite direction, ahead in time. The character presentation offers also interesting binaries: the late nineteenth-century Viennese character Mittl, in declining health and performing sloppy book-binding of the precious manuscript, is sharply contrasted with Hanna's glowing physique and meticulous conservatory works. Hanna's task of protecting the manuscript stands in radical opposition to that of her former supervisor Werner and his rescue mission of the same book which he undertakes as an act of amends for his burning of Jewish manuscripts during WWII. In the following quotation Hanna contrasts ultimate work philosophy and lays bare the opposition between the fragility of the research object ("the book") and the horrors that befell the book's authors and readers ("the people"): "Never stress the book—the conservator's chief commandment. But the people who had owned this book had known unbearable stress: pogrom, Inquisition, exile, genocide, war" (3, 20). This gap between the impersonal and personal adds to the quality of incompleteness and instability of history, and contributes to the realization that the possibilities of truly knowing the past are limited since there is no discursive certainty or wholeness and therefore no single, definitive historical truth.

## 2.3 Interstitial journeys and intercultural dynamics

The rigorous narrative structuring and impressive temporal and spatial scope of the novel, set in both imperial and post-imperial contexts signify the author's textual concern for exploring interstitial spaces between national cultures, histories and genders. The post-imperial context is carried through on multiple levels and consequently adds to the intercultural exchange. Namely, Hanna's mission involves historical research from a postcolonial and post-imperial position: she is an Australian employed by the United Nations, an institution which, ironically yet utterly plausibly, elected her as a neutral expert to do research of material traces of a colonial past. Such colonial legacy is inextricably tied to the history of dispossession and dislocation exposed in the novel, thus diminishing privileged discourses and empowering marginalized voices. As Homi Bhabha maintains, we have witnessed in recent times the dislocation of authoritarian histories founded on the assumptions of imperialism and the rise of "a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices—women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexuality" (1994, 6). The manuscript's bloody and brutal history that is the cause and object of some of the loftiest and lowest human traits provides a wide and diverse exploitation of both historical detail and exposition of the characters' inner lives. Most characters grapple with self-realization and a quest for identity; for example, Hanna, a seemingly hard-boiled Australian who resembles a forensic pathologist or a criminal investigator, has no remembrance of her father and no relationship with her absentee tough mother. When she decides to change her name to the Jewish name of her late father she never knew and to embrace the Australian indigenous culture, she performs an act of expiation and restoration of her self-confidence and identity, guided by a new ethnic and spatial



sensibility. This “return of the prodigal daughter” does more than convey nostalgia of bygone times—it is also an act of defiance of the superficiality, spurious identity makeovers, and desires for instant gratification that define the governing cultural logic of our time.

I’d spent so many years studying the art of our immigrant cultures, and barely any time at all on the one that had been here all along. I’d gone cross-eyed swotting classic Arabic and biblical Hebrew but could barely name even five out of the five hundred Aboriginal languages spoken here.... My job became the documentation and preservation of ancient Aboriginal rock art....

... I traded in my cashmeres and silks for servicable khakis, and...hacked off my long hair. New name, new look, new life (345–6).

Hanna’s reconsideration of her Australian identity and past is linked to British post-imperial conditions, as is the fate of a book of small size but large ethno-spatial implications within the framework of several empires. In an alternative reading it is possible to maintain that the narrator takes a Haggadah-centered view and reviews the implications of postcolonial approaches replacing an empire-focused reading. But the centre/margin binary as represented by the following exchange is a point where postmodernism and post-colonialism overlap; Ozren takes a stereotypical position towards Hanna’s background: “It seems a strange occupation for a person from such a young country, looking after other people’s ancient treasures. ...I suppose you were hungry for some culture, growing up there?” To this Hanna replies:

That young country-cultural desert stuff gets very old. Australia happens to have the longest continuous artistic tradition in the world—Aboriginal people were making sophisticated art on the walls of their dwellings thirty thousand years before the people in Lascaux chewed the end off their first paintbrush....you should consider that immigration has made us the most ethnically diverse country in the world. Australians’ roots run very deep and wide. That gives us a stake in all the world’s cultural heritage. Even yours (24).

This excerpt reveals his attempt at arbitrary qualification as part of a repressive discourse based on the binaries “old/young,” “cultured/rough” or “established/unrecognized,” and, ultimately, “first world/third world.” The response is an example of “the empire strikes back” – Hanna’s post-colonial position of the margin against the centre is one of defiance, albeit somewhat petulant in articulation.

Although the novel does not deal with maps *per se*, there is another spatial notion through intense exploration and alternative mapping in the quest for knowledge and some kind of ultimate truth, even of redemptive (although fictive) space, liberated from the contemporary oppression of inexhaustible duplication. Hanna’s self-exile into the endangered Australian outback and her remapping of that space is supportive of this argument. But perhaps the most accomplished chapter is one which describes Vienna at the close of the nineteenth century, a dramatic vignette evoking the otherwise illustrious imperial first city of Freud, Mahler and Klimt, also as the “capital of carnality, where scandal and gossip were the fuels that stoked the social engine” (110).

## 2.4 Intertextual encounters

Drawing on Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafictional texts that exhibit an interest in depicting research and the interpretation of documents, Suzanne Keen (2001) recognizes an incidence of archival research stories in both postmodern novels and literary fiction, as well as contemporary novelistic sub-genres such as detective fiction and thrillers which she dubs "romances of the archive." Among the characteristics of this type of fiction are scenes set in libraries or in other buildings housing collections of papers and books. In terms of the plot action they are characterized by research in documents and "designate a character or characters at least temporarily as archival researchers, as questers in the archive. They unabashedly interpret the past through its material traces; they build on a foundation of 'documentarism,' answering the postmodern critique of history with invented records full of hard facts" (1). This clearly departs from the deconstructionist approach based on the ideas of Michel Foucault (1969/2002, 3–19) in terms of what he calls "archive" as the sum total of our statements and actions rather than a physical place of repository. Although there are obvious departures from this pattern in *People of the Book*, starting with the different context as Keen analyzes British fictional text only, there are convincing overlaps. Specifically, the Haggadah is a rare book, and Hanna visits libraries, universities, and archives (even an improvised one at the Sarajevo National Bank vault). However, there is a radical difference between the categories of historiographic metafiction and the romance of the archive in that for the latter truth is worth seeking, as argued by Keen (58).

But *People of the Book* may also be seen, at least in part, as a family saga; even if Hanna's melodrama of her relationship with her mother seems to a degree overworked. Her mother is a bossy neurosurgeon, described by Hanna as "the first woman to chair a department of neurosurgery in the history of Australia, was a stranger to self-doubt.... she would never respect me for choosing to be a repairer of books rather than bodies" (21). There is also a dramatic disclosure regarding the identity of her father and of her own unknown ethnic background adding to the similarities to this type of fiction.

I have already pointed out some stylistic features in the novel that counter and revise traditionally entrenched notions of history, representation, and knowledge. The alternating histories, unraveled in tracing the fate of the book over continents and centuries, result in a multi-textured fiction and an intricate interweaving of past voices. This property reveals the tangential position of this novel when attempting its classification as adventure story or historical fiction. But this novel draws on elements of historical chronicle as well as plots about affairs of the heart. Besides complex emotional entanglements, there are episodes of sexual encounter but also violent acts such as the stunningly shocking descriptions of Inquisition torture in the ironically dubbed "relaxation room." In addition, the novel is a beguiling intellectual adventure with elements of forensic drama inevitably tied to Hanna's detective work. Interestingly, the detective-story plot received much attention in metafictional criticism for its mysterious commonality and endeavor to endow a sense to a world gone criminal. Patricia Waugh believes that this genre is similar to metafiction due to the foregrounding of identity issues since "[t]he reader is kept in suspense about the identity of the criminal until the end, when the rational operations of the



detective triumph completely over disorder. Thus the reader enjoys the triumph of justice and the restoration of order, yet until the end he or she has been able to participate vicariously in the anarchic pleasure of the criminal's 'run'. The detective story celebrates human reason: 'mystery' is reduced to flaws in logic; the world is made comprehensible" (82).

The many twists and turns of this tale are enriched with climactic discoveries and a curious heist provides elements worthy of a thriller, in the vein of John le Carré best plots. But the overarching theme is Hanna's quest for information about objects she found while examining the manuscript – a piece of an insect's wing and a hair and for those she didn't find but has indication of – the book's clasps. This detail is related to other topics of quest concerning religion and mystery, with elements reminiscent of *The Name of the Rose* or *The Da Vinci Code*, as in the following sentence when Hanna claims: "I know the flesh and fabrics of pages, the bright earths and lethal toxins of ancient pigments" (18), which a book reviewer (Maslin 2008) dubs "book-preservation exotica." Such an intertextual medley undoubtedly supports both the narrative pattern and dynamics of the novel, but complicates any attempts at designating it as part of one genre or subgenre exclusively. This position presents a challenge not only to classification of the novel but alludes to the inherent complexity of representing a unified, unchallenged history.

## 2.5 Making (no) sense of the trauma of the present

I have already traced how the novel's formula of the research quest combines with other ingredients connecting and spanning different historical periods of the far and more immediate past. Indirectly engaging with debates about the uses of the past through the above outlined strategies, Brooks implicates the inextricably connected issues of heritage and memory, exploring what Homi Bhabha (1984) sees as the fundamental role of memory – that of reflecting on the post-colonial condition. Alluding to the transformative, even therapeutic quality of memory in recreating a shattered self, Bhabha maintains that memory is the necessary and sometimes hazardous bridge between colonialism and the question of cultural identity. Therefore remembering "is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membling, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present" (90). Bhabha's reasoning here is founded upon the belief that memory is the lodged deeply and substantially in the heart of conscious existence.

The research and restoration of the Hagaddah as a cultural artifact linked to collective memory is paralleled by a process of burrowing in individual memory and identity. In order to solve the mysteries of the manuscript, Hanna engages in a self-reflexive and self-revealing examination of her own professional and private concerns that she hides beneath a caustic front of dispassion for anything but her work. For her scientific research Hanna considers material evidence, studies physical traces and interprets the visible clues but she also delves into recesses of individual and collective self-realization similar to those of the self-portraitist Zahra, the African slave, who inscribed her name on her illumination in the Haggadah. This inscribing of oneself into a text through re-inscribing history is an act of her re-memory; centuries later, as portrayed in the novel, Hanna takes Zahra's cue and leaves her imprint for another quester to interpret the traces of the past:

Just as a conservator in the next century, or the one after, would find the seed I dropped into the binding of the genuine haggadah, between the first and second quires. A Morton Bay fig seed, from the fruit of the big twisty trees that line the shores of Sydney Harbour.... My mark. A clue, for someone like me in the far future, who would find it, and wonder ..." (368).

The transformations of the characters due to the experience of the research quest therefore have important ramifications both for the individual and the community.

The novel constitutes a tentative fictional contribution that complements the representation of a complex heritage behind the people of the book. It illustrates how an exceptional artifact of such magnitude and significance transcends borders and artistic value, only to rise into a powerful symbol of survival and deliverance. There are numerous properties that buttress the irresistibility of the story; small wonder then that a precious codex which survives against all odds gains additional importance as symbol of Sarajevo's multiethnic tolerance. It seems that the fate of this sacred book has been a continuous collective trial, as if, in the words of a character, "the Haggadah came to Sarajevo for a reason. It was here to test us, to see if there were people who could see that what united us was more than what divided us" (361). Despite all persecutions, the manuscript has miraculously survived; certainly its destiny's fictional reinterpretation connotes the potential of endurance and rescue for the troubled present. Or does it? Trauma remains, as part of both individual and collective memory, for those of us who lived through the horror of a book burning enacted hundreds of years after the Inquisition and over half a century after Nazi terror. On August 26, 1992, watching helplessly as the valuable holdings of the National and University Library in Sarajevo were reduced to a dirge of fire and ashes, few of us who revere books could remain untouched. Many of us felt like "people of the books."

Like the fictional one, the real-life Haggadah is housed in a special safe room, where it continues to illuminate the paths of history and offer faith amid the sore contemporary plight of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ridden with complex unresolved issues. This is the Haggadah's home, and its history is that of loss, dispossession and division, but also of histories of resistance, empowerment and subjectivity. *People of the Book*, as a fictional text is representative of postmodern challenges to the more traditional approaches to presenting the past, thus claiming a challenging position of interstitial fluidity transcending limitations of space and time. The manuscript tests (once again) a country where, increasingly and alarmingly, interfaith and intercultural understanding and diversity of customs and lifestyles are neither celebrated nor advanced. Although such liminality offers an emancipatory potential, it is often pared down to trite expressions. But the Haggadah is at home in this novel which promotes its prominence and significance in history. To quote Homi Bhabha (1984, 26–7):

When historical visibility has faded, when the present tense of testimony loses its power to arrest, then the displacements of memory and the indirections of art offer us the image of our psychic survival. To live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalences and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and splitting performed

in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity: 'I am looking for the join ... I want to join ... I want to join.'

### 3. Conclusion

In this paper I have analyzed Geraldine Brooks' novel *People of the Book* against the background of history and the process of its reconstruction. The authority of history and fixed knowledge has been in the foreground of postmodernist thinking and a subject of postmodern fiction, but traces thereof have been detected also in other texts, specifically in this novel. Related to the poststructuralist conflation of history and narrative, and the textuality of history, my analytical lenses in reading this novel include an inquiry as to how the histories of those traditionally excluded or silenced can possibly be recast and their past reconstructed. This paper thus traces attempts of different characters to re-imagine the past, attempts that are one of the postmodern challenges to more traditional approaches to presenting history. These preoccupations run parallel with the debate on the postmodern affirmation of a multiple and fragmentary self. The paper also highlights strategies for the introduction of voices of those who have been marginalized or left out entirely and how others have written their history to counter this invisibility and resist the male-centered control and colonial hegemony and legacy. Such a textual approach allowed for alternative, even multiple perspectives to come forth, and to enable intercultural engagement and interstitial fluidity transcending limitations of space and time. The process of re-envisioning the past, both collective and personal, is profoundly tied to memory and may contribute to the agency and power of individuals, but may also condition their chances to gain subjectivity. Or, as Bell Hooks reminds us (1991, 54), "[R]emembering makes us subjects in history. It is dangerous to forget."

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## Two Languages, Number One Authors: The Influence of Bilingual Upbringing on the Literary Accomplishments of Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss

### Summary

This paper focuses on the nature and impact of bilingual upbringing on cognitive development, thought and cultural experience of two bestselling authors, Roald Dahl and Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss). It argues that this bilingual upbringing resulted in a specific use of language in their literary accomplishments. Several segments from representative works by Dahl and Dr. Seuss are examined in order to reveal the stylistic particularities of the two authors, such as their original argot, word play, neologisms, the art of exaggeration and nonsense, as well as various aspects of metaphor. This is to show that bilingualism may be a decisive factor in creating a fruitful environment for the development of original and recognizable mode of written expression, which not only transcends cognitive and linguistic boundaries, but also cultural borderlines, resulting in the emergence of a new cultural artistic identity.

**Key words:** bilingualism, autobiography, word play, neologism, nonsense, conceptual metaphor, exaggeration

## Dva jezika, dva vrhunski pisatelja: vpliv dvojezične vzgoje na literarno ustvarjanje Roalda Dahla in Dr. Seussa

### Povzetek

Prispevek se osredotoča na kognitivno razvojno misel in kulturno izkustvo dveh najbolj prodajanih mladinskih pisateljev, in sicer Roalda Dahla in Theodorja Seussa Geisela (Dr. Seussa). Zagovarja tezo, da je njuna specifična raba jezika posledica njune dvojezične vzgoje. Slogovna razčlemba reprezentativnih del avtorjev izpostavi prvine, kot so argo, besedne igre, neologizmi, pretiravanje, nesmisel ter različne vidike metaforične rabe. Sklene z ugotovitvijo, da je dvojezičnost odločilnega pomena pri zagotavljanju pogojev za razvoj izvirnega in prepoznavnega načina pisane besede, ki ne samo presega kognitivne in jezikovne, temveč tudi kulturne meje, kar ima za posledico pojav nove kulturne umetniške identitete.

**Ključne besede:** dvojezičnost, avtobiografija, besedne igre, neologizmi, nesmisel (nonsense), konceptualna metafora, pretiravanje

# Two Languages, Number One Authors: The Influence of Bilingual Upbringing on the Literary Accomplishments of Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss

## 1. Introduction

When one considers the legacy of two celebrated authors, Roald Dahl and Theodor Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss), it becomes apparent that both exhibited a great amount of widely appreciated talent. Every year on September 13, Great Britain celebrates Roald Dahl Day to honour the accomplished author of nineteen children's books, nine short story collections, as well as television scripts and screenplays. Dahl is, according to children's writer Anthony Horowitz (2006), solely responsible for a "renaissance in children's literature".<sup>1</sup> The 2006 celebration, for example, featured everything from exhibitions to children's reading campaigns, from yellow costumes to "gobblefunking" to films and tea parties. Similarly, in 2004 America marked the National Education Read Across America day in honour of Dr. Seuss on what would have been his hundredth birthday, with fans wearing red and white stovepipe hats and breaking the Guinness World Record for most people simultaneously reading aloud (*Reading Today*, 2004). Upon his death on September 24, 1991, Theodor Seuss Geisel had written and illustrated forty-four children's books. Tellingly, Herb Cheyette of Dr. Seuss Enterprises claims that "one out of every four children born in the United States receives as its first book a Dr. Seuss book" (Nel 2003, 3–4). Additionally, the 2001 *Publisher's Weekly* list of all-time best-selling hardcover children's books contained sixteen Dr. Seuss books in the top 100, a number matched by no other author. Likewise, Roald Dahl, whom *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature* (Zipes et al. 2005, 359) calls "one of the most innovative writers for children in the latter half of the twentieth century," is one of the best-selling children's authors nowadays, both in Britain and abroad, and his wonderfully shocking, grotesque and subversive works, such as *Matilda* or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, have remained irresistible to generations of children (Nudd 1989).

Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl shared a lot more than their ability to write fantastic children's books. Their distinct style possibly owes a lot to their background and circumstances, as they were both raised in bilingual homes. Therefore, the inquiry into their respective works reveals stylistic parallels marked by an almost anarchic use of language filled with neologisms, word play, exaggeration, nonsense and subversive use of metaphor. This paper will deal with bilingualism as a factor affecting various aspects of verbal expression, especially the promotion of divergent thinking. The singular approach to language employed by both authors suggests, in the words of Philip Nel (2003, 24), that "language is both practical and impractical, both a means of communication and a game played for the sheer fun of it." For this reason, Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl may well have profited from their bilingual background by having developed early in their childhood a sense of linguistic flexibility that shaped their unique artistic expression established them not only as literary, but also as cultural icons.

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to this report, on March 10, 2000, BBC News had published a report of a World Book Day survey among a major number of British readers, the result of which placed Roald Dahl at the top of the list of all British authors, even ahead of J. K. Rowling.

## 2. A Writer's Background

It is easily noticeable that much of Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss' lives constitute an integral part of their creation. Events, characters, social relations and attitudes contained on the pages of their works are what once used to be their real-life experiences and observations, as is evident from Dahl's autobiographical *Boy: Tales of Childhood* (1984) and *Going Solo* (1986), as well as reports made by Seuss' biographers Judith and Neil Morgan (1995) or Philip Nel (2003). Arranging non-fictional events into works of fiction requires a large amount of creative talent and authors usually focus on metaphor, assonance, rhythms, and dramatising, as noted by Singleton (in Round 2000). In autobiographical writing, one is provided with material, and is free to focus on one's craft. However, the skill of Theodor Seuss Geisel and Roald Dahl originated in their childhood experiences as well, by means of exposure to simultaneously available cultural backgrounds.

### 2.1 The "Viking" Heritage

Liles (1999) claims that all of Dahl's works mirror a part of his personal life which is enlarged, exaggerated, and therefore fictionalized, much like Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda* (1988), an image of an oppressive authority figure that Dahl encountered at St Peter's and Repton School. Roald Dahl was born in 1916 in Llandaff, Cardiff, Wales, into the Norwegian household of Harald Dahl and Sofie Magdalene Dahl; he developed a strong attachment to his Norwegian roots and folklore (Zipes et al. 2005, 359). In his autobiography *Boy* Roald Dahl (1986, 53) recalls his visits to Norway thus:

All my summer holidays, from when I was four years old to when I was seventeen (1920-1932), were totally idyllic. This, I am certain, was because we always went to the same idyllic place and that place was Norway. Except for my ancient half-sister and my not-quite-so-ancient half-brother, the rest of us were all pure Norwegian by blood. We all spoke Norwegian and all our relations lived there. So in a way, going to Norway every summer was like going home.

This excerpt shows the idealized nature of Roald Dahl's relationship to his heritage initiated through the fact that his parents maintained a connection to their homeland in various ways, but mainly by speaking their native language at home. Accordingly, Roald Dahl's fictionalized attitude towards Norway and the languages he grew up with is evident in *The Witches* (1983, 12):

My grandmother was Norwegian. The Norwegians know all about witches, for Norway, with its black and icy mountains, is where the first witches came from. My father and my mother were also Norwegian, but because my father had a business in England, I had been born there and had lived there and had started going to an English school. Twice a year, at Christmas and in the summer, we went back to Norway to visit my grandmother. This old lady, as far as I could gather, was just about the only surviving relative we had on either side of our family. She was my mother's mother and I absolutely adored her. When she and I were together we spoke in either Norwegian or English. It didn't matter which. We were equally fluent in both languages, and I have to admit that I felt closer to her than to my mother.



It is obvious that Dahl had equal command of both English and Norwegian, because he was raised speaking both, which suggests *simultaneous* or *true* bilingualism (Harley 2001, 143). His parents were also fluent in both languages.

After having been raised as a young child in both Norwegian and English, Roald Dahl started his formal education in English schools, in accord with the wish of his late father, who believed that there was “some kind of magic” connected to English schooling which, in his opinion, transformed a small island into an Empire with the greatest literature in the world (Dahl 1986, 21–2). However, towards the end of his schooling Roald Dahl rejected the prospect of going to Oxford or Cambridge and instead opted to work for the Shell Oil Company which would send him to exciting foreign places such as Africa or China:

I was off to the land of palm-trees and coconuts and coral reefs and lions and elephants and deadly snakes, and a white hunter who had lived ten years in Mwanzabad told me that if a black mamba bit you, you died within the hour writhing in agony and foaming at the mouth. I couldn't wait. (Dahl 1986, 166–75).

Such an appetite for the exotic could have easily been conditioned by his multicultural upbringing, causing him to enjoy flying across cultural and territorial boundaries, while transcending linguistic ones. As one of his reports from school read, “I have never met a boy who so persistently writes the exact opposite of what he means. He seems incapable of marshalling his thoughts on paper” (Nudd 1989). It is precisely this subversive manipulation of language that defined Dahl's literary status.

## 2.2 German Springfield

In Springfield, Massachusetts, where Theodor Seuss Geisel was born in 1904 to Henrietta Seuss and Theodor Robert Geisel, there was a strong community of German-Americans to which the Geisel family belonged. Ted, as he was known, grew up speaking German with his family and English with other the Americans of Springfield (Kaplan 1995). In other words, Theodor Seuss Geisel, much like Roald Dahl, was *truly bilingual* as well, which, according to Brooks' research from 1964, means that he spoke both languages well and with minimal interference (in Javier 2007, 41–2). In their biographical work *Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel* (1995, 14), Judith and Neil Morgan report that Seuss' father encouraged his drawing endeavours, while his mother “Nettie” introduced him to the magic of words, as well as intricacies of sound and language:

From the start this tall, skinny, dark-haired boy showed a love of the absurd and a penchant for exaggeration, elevating ordinary neighbourhood happenings into events of excitement and intrigue. His parents came to consider his recall to be formidable and his ear for meter unrelenting – in both English and German, the language of the household. (4)

Theodor Geisel's playfulness with words did indeed originate in his familial circumstances and attitude. His mother, who worked at his grandfather's bakery, often memorized names of pies by creating little chants and reciting them to children following their bedtime stories (Kaplan 1995). Seuss often said that his mother was responsible “for the rhythms in which I write and

the urgency with which I do it” (Morgan 1995, 7). His sister Margaretha named herself Marnie Mecca Ding Ding Guy, and the locals’ name for the family brewery, originally Kalmbach and Geisel, was “Come Back and Guzzle.”

The Springfield surroundings, including the zoo, the Main Street parades, civic statues and inhabitants with “lollapalooza” names were an obvious inspiration to Seuss, and they often made an appearance in his works later on, “Ted delighted in the world around him – trolleys and horse-drawn carriages, bicycles and ice wagons, delivery vans and yipping dogs, gas lights and the power to wiggle one’s ears, neighbours and names – especially the given name of one friend, Norval” (Derksen 2001).

It is most significant that young Theodor Geisel belonged to the German-American community which aimed was to preserve its native traditions by conducting German services at the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, the gatherings at the Schützenverein and Turnverein,<sup>2</sup> or Christmas Eve celebrations when songs such as “O Tannenbaum” and “Stille Nacht” were sung and German food was prepared (Morgan 1995, 13–8). Yet, when Seuss turned thirteen, two threats started looming over the Geisel household, namely the prospect of America entering the war against Germany and the possibility of nationwide Prohibition, which would result in closing of the family brewery (Morgan 1995, 19). As a result of the anti-German sentiments, the Congress established a Committee on Public Information, declaring that sauerkraut was in fact “liberty cabbage” and frankfurters “hot dogs;” back in Springfield, young Dr. Seuss became known as “the German brewer’s kid with the three-legged dog” (Morgan 1995, 16–20). In the words of Philip Nel (2003, 124), these events which unsettled Seuss’ cultural identity but also caused him to develop a sharp sense of humour and later on attack prejudice in books such as *The Sneetches* and *Horton Hears a Who!*. Consequently, he confessed later on to having been influenced by writers like Voltaire and Swift (Fenkl 2001), causing him often to exhibit revolutionary, radical ideas, “I’m subversive as hell! I’ve always had a mistrust of adults. [And] one reason I dropped out of Oxford and the Sorbonne was that I thought they were taking life too damn seriously” (Kaplan 1995).

In his report on bilingualism, Rafael Art Javier (2007, 57) mentions studies which show that a bilingual may shift his or her languages to “communicate social preference” due to higher “social desirability” of one of the languages. Even though Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss naturally used English as the language in which they communicated their art, vital aspects of their work were based in their childhood experiences, marked by interactions in two languages. Research done by Ahtola (2007, 49–50) further suggests that children raised bilingually are exposed to a wider range of experiences because of increased amount of social interaction, have higher understanding of the communication of others, “the linguistic input in social relations” and “fine detail of social situations.” Therefore, the bilingual upbringing of the two authors might have been the decisive foundation in shaping the unique style of both, by providing them with insights into ways of the world and its inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> The riflery club and the gym.

### 3. Being Bilingual

In view of recent studies, there seem to be numerous advantages to bilingualism, and therefore it might not be a mere coincidence that two authors with such a distinct mode of expression also happened to be raised bilingually. In the words of U. C. Knoepfmacher and Mitzi Myers (Nel 2003, 98–9), “Authors who write for children inevitably create a colloquy between past and present selves,” and, cognitively speaking, the childhoods of Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss were strongly marked by simultaneous exposure to two different cultures and languages. The spectrum of definitions for bilingualism is broad, ranging from Bloomfield’s (1933) which defines the bilingual person as one who possesses “native-like control of two or more languages” to, for instance, Titone’s (1972), describing a bilingual as a proprietor of the capacity “to speak a second language while following concepts and structures of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue” (in Kirkici 2004). For a long time, bilinguals were believed to be overwhelmed with two languages and therefore mentally confused, resulting in lower intellectual abilities, performance and cognition, until 1962 when Peal and Lambert suggested that bilingualism might in fact have a beneficial effect on individuals, causing them to develop increased verbal fluency and mental flexibility due to their exposure to bicultural environment (Ahtola 2007, 43). Some, like Bialystok and Hakuta (1994) have gone so far as to characterize the mind of a bilingual as being structurally different from the mind of a monolingual (in Francis 2002, 375). Essentially, Javier (2007, 76–7) claims that language and its meaning develop through relationships with people and contexts (smells, tastes, sounds, etc.) important to our lives and that “the different emotions associated with these types of experiences are normally represented and stored in what Bucci (1984) calls the *perceptual channels*.”

Consequently, due to exposure to two languages/cultures in the early phase of development, a child raised bilingually may develop flexibility and representational abilities in expressing concepts in different ways, as well as better faculties in representing different mental states (Kovács 2007, 308). The list of linguistic, cognitive and social benefits resulting from a bilingual upbringing includes “better linguistic skills, orientation to linguistic structures, sensitivity to feedback cues, general intellectual development and divergent thinking,” or “concept formation, classification, creativity, analogical reasoning and visuospatial skills, metalinguistic skills, and sensitivity to language structure and detail,” (Ahtola 2007, 43).<sup>3</sup> Mental flexibility, mentioned in many scientific sources, is of great importance for the creations of two authors discussed in this paper, as it is the source of *divergent thinking* and *arbitrary connection between a word and its meaning*. Thus, Ahtola is of the opinion that divergent thinking is a highly elaborative process which includes much creativity, and bilinguals, who possess two sets of vocabulary for one object, exhibit the higher capacity to generate novel ideas, which was confirmed by means of studies such as that conducted by Baker (1988). Finally, as will be demonstrated later on, bilinguals seem to “resist the tendency to believe that the specific word is a property of the object” (Bialystok and Codd 1997). It is therefore implied that the non-conventional style of Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl was shaped by the mental flexibility that originated in their early use of two languages.

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<sup>3</sup> The research referred to in this instance was conducted by Cummins and Swain in 1986 and Diaz and Klinger in 1991.

## 4. Matters of Style

Superficially speaking, the literary styles of Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl have little resemblance to one another. The difference in tone and form is heavily influenced by the uniqueness of each author's handling of words. Yet the origin and the process of constructing a style so distinctive are situated in the same type of linguistic exposure. Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl utilize the same elements in order to construct a language for expression which bends the rules and questions linguistic boundaries. By means of word play, neologisms, exaggeration, humour and nonsense, as well as unconscious implementation of conceptual metaphors, the two authors disregard the conventional form and engage in play rooted in their childhood experiences.

### 4.1 Word Play

In his book *Dr. Seuss: American Icon*, Philip Nel (2003) focuses primarily on Dr. Seuss' style and meter and claims that Seuss' poetry "reveals language as a complex game, with rules made to be bent, and meanings that shift as quickly as their context changes" (Nel 2003, 23). As for the complexity of Dr. Seuss' expression, Nel (2003, 101) even claims that reading his books would be too difficult if employed as a sobriety test. Furthermore, it might be useful to add that Dr. Seuss achieved real success in 1957 with the book *The Cat in the Hat*, which was created out of approximately two hundred and twenty easy-to-read words sent to him by the textbook editor at Houghton Mifflin (Zipes at al. 2005, 27) or *Green Eggs and Ham* (1960), a result of a bet that he could not create a book using only fifty words (Kaplan 1995). Nel (2003, 20) further emphasizes that, while Dr. Seuss' encourages forward movement, "the poetic devices and linguistic games invite us to linger," hereby providing the example "No former performer's performed the performance," a word play which is evidence to the fact that one root (*form*) can be the origin of many different words (Nel 2003, 20). The following example, the text of a cartoon published in June 1941, illustrates Dr. Seuss' playfulness with language and its rules in the context of his bilingual background:

Said a bird in the midst of a Blitz,  
 "Up to now, they've scored very few hitz,  
 So I'll sit on my canny,  
 Old Star Spangled fanny..."  
 And on it he sitz and he sitz.  
 (Dr. Seuss, "Said a bird in the midst of a blitz" in Nel 2003, 40–1)

From the text of the cartoon, it is obvious that Dr. Seuss jovially employs *blending* of English and German, also topical in the political context, in order to produce a humorous effect. Another interesting characteristic of great importance to Seuss' opus is the fact that he accidentally establishes connection to the regional language of America, evident in the excerpt from *If I Ran the Zoo* (1950), "A zoo should have bugs, so I'll capture a *Thwerll* / Whose legs are snarled up in a terrible *snarl*,"<sup>4</sup> (Nel 2003, 10). Certainly, Seuss' "snerl," "figgering," "biggering" or "Super-dee-Dooper-dee-Booper" cannot be described as standard English words; however, such expressions

<sup>4</sup> "Snarl" sounds like a word belonging to the dialect characteristic of central Appalachia (eastern Kentucky).

are a part of Seussian vocabulary brought on by Theodor Geisel's willingness to experiment and invent a new language altogether.

Clearly, bending rules could occur inadvertently, due to the fact that bilinguals are "blessed" with metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility, which is why, as mentioned earlier, a word is merely an *arbitrary* name for an object (Harley 2001, 144). The study by Cummins and Swain in 1986 (in Ahtola 2007, 49) shows that early bilingualism in certain cases accelerates the "separation of sound and meaning," which gives an individual the opportunity to focus on other language aspects more closely. Therefore, numerous observations have proven that bilinguals are indeed superior when performing various verbal tasks, in verbal creativity, language arbitrariness and relation between words (Kirkici 2004, 115).<sup>5</sup> Likewise, BenZeev, in her studies on Hebrew English bilinguals (1977), has concluded that bilinguals tend to analyze language more intensely than their monolingual counterparts (in Athola 2007, 48). Consequently, in tests containing tasks with renaming objects or changing their names, according to Baker (1988), bilinguals exhibited far better skills, not only in the category of meaning, but also grammar (in Athola 2007, 47). Thus, the exposure to two linguistic systems and their rules can lead to "intellectual emancipation" because of the developed dichotomy between form and meaning (Kirkici 2004, 116).<sup>6</sup>

As for Roald Dahl, the most obvious example of divergent thinking and inventiveness with words would be the language in his own creation, "Gobblefunk", originally a part of his 1982 book *The BFG* ("Big Friendly Giant"), and later on compiled and published as the *Gobblefunk Dictionary*, a collection of two hundred made-up words (Sullivan 2007). There are several principles according to which the words are formed, yet again mostly by means of *blending*, and the categories include "words that don't exist (yet) but should because they sound just right for the thing they are describing," such as "delumptious," mixing up words and phrases, such as "dinghummer" and "hippodumpling," mixing two words together, such as "catasterous disastrophe," and strange similes, e.g. "deaf as a dumpling" or "helpless as horsefeathers." For this reason *The BFG* also contains a vegetable known as "snozzcumber," a delicious drink "frobscottle," and noises such as "Whizzpoppers." "Gobblefunk" demonstrates the fact that Dahl does not see language as a set of fixed units, but rather a system which can be easily expanded, changed and enriched. Equally, *Matilda's* Miss Honey illustrates Dahl's attitude well, "...the name on the gate said COSY NOOK. Nosey cook might have been better, Miss Honey thought" (Dahl 2004, 86). Furthermore, Roald Dahl's style is opulent with sound patterns, often including onomatopoeia, alliteration or assonance, as presented in the following insults by the headmistress Miss Trunchbull, "You witless weed! You empty headed hamster! You stupid glob of glue!" (Dahl 2004, 142) as well as in combination with humorous similes, as is evident from the excerpt from *The Witches* (1983), "That face of hers was the most frightful and frightening thing I have ever seen. (...) It was so crumpled and wizened, so shrunken and shriveled, it looked as though it had been pickled in vinegar" (Dahl 1998, 66). Similar stylistic patterns frequently occur in Dr. Seuss' opus as well:

<sup>5</sup> See also Hamers and Blanc (1989); Powers and Lopez 1985; Okoh 1980; Peal and Lambert 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Also consult Harley et al. 1986; Segalowitz 1977.

“I am the Lorax,” he coughed and he whiffed.  
 He sneezed and he snuffled. He snaraggled. He sniffed.  
 “Once-ler!” he cried with a cruffulous croak.  
 “Once-ler! You’re making such smogulous smoke!...” (Dr. Seuss 1971, 40).

Therefore, by means of separating different aspects of language, its meaning, sound and form, both bilingually raised authors managed to upset the boundaries of linguistic rules and create their own easily recognizable mode of expression.

Due to the greater verbal intelligence and originality caused by being bilingual, as well as the awareness that the linguistic sign is arbitrary, those two authors seem to be playing with words in an almost subversive way. They enjoy renaming objects, twisting or breaking rules or resisting only one meaning. Their word play is also the reason why Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss are highly appreciated as children’s authors. Some German researchers state that children enjoy deviation from the norm, both social and linguistic, which usually consists of symbols denoting a departure from everyday life, such as breaking or twisting rules (Ensinger 2003, 55–6). The style of both authors appeals to the aesthetic categories of humour, perceivable through senses, among which is also unfamiliar language, demonstrated by either human or animal. This “play with language and meaning” consisting of “rhymes, cool expressions, the use of scatological language, playing with the context and the meaning of concepts, humorous designations and terms, as well as plays on words and language” (Neuß 2003, 17) which is both attractive to and characteristic of children, suggests a connection of both writers to their childhood selves and therefore their young audiences as well. The dialogue between the present and past self can, therefore, in the case of bilingually raised individuals, function on a rather sophisticated level.

## 4.2 Neologisms

An obvious parallel between the style of Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl is their affinity towards creating new words and names for creatures, objects and places, a trait which can once more be connected to the awareness of the arbitrary meaning and linguistic flexibility characteristic of bilinguals. Therefore, innovative and divergent terminology appears in many of Roald Dahl’s works, for instance in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964, 26), populated with exotic types of candy, such as “WONKA’S WHIPPLE-SCRUMPTIOUS FUDGEMALLOW DELIGHT,” “swudge,” or “LICKABLE WALLPAPER FOR NURSERIES” with pictures of “snozzberries.”<sup>7</sup> The presence of blending seems to be unavoidable in the case of both authors, and therefore in *The Witches* the term “witchophile”<sup>8</sup> makes its debut, while in Dr. Seuss’ *Scrambled Eggs Super!* Peter T. Hooper meets “Wogs” (“the world’s sweetest frogs”) (Nel 2003, 22), as well as the Tizzle-Topped Grouse, the Lass-a-Lack, the Stroodel, the Spritz,<sup>9</sup> the Kweet, the Kwigger, etc. Zipes et al. claim that Theodor Geisel, “whose specialty was high-spirited anarchy,” managed to introduce even more bizarre names of creatures than his predecessor and the father of nonsense, Edward

<sup>7</sup> Examples of blending: sweet+fudge and snooze+berries

<sup>8</sup> “A person who studies witches and knows a lot about them” (39-40).

<sup>9</sup> German borrowings.



Lear (Zipes 2005, 27). Sound patterns seem to be a recurring element and a crucial ingredient in creating neologisms as well, which is why the villains in *The Witches* readily proclaim that they would “spear the blabbersnitch and trap the crabcruncher and shoot the gobblesquirt and catch the catspringer in his burrow” (Dahl 1998, 95). Equally so, in the case of Dr. Seuss, Nel (2003, 26–7) observes:

In *The Lorax*, the Once-ler’s machinery goes “Gullpity-Glupp” and “Schloppity-Schlopp,” which has the effect of “glumping the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed!” The Lorax himself, choking on the “smogulous smoke”, speaks with a “cruffulous croak.” The verb “glumping” sounds like dumping clumps of goo, “smogulous” turns “smog” into an adjective, and “cruffulous” sounds like crusty, huffing, wheezing old man. These words not only sound like what they mean - they’re fun to say. ... Taking rhyme, alliteration, consonance, and assonance to their logical extremes, Seuss reduces words to sounds, amusing to say, but distracting from sense.

Additionally, in *The Lorax* (Dr. Seuss 1971) one encounters creatures such as the Brown Bar-baloots, Humming-Fish and Swomee Swans, plants like Grickle-grass, Truffula Trees, places like Lerkim, North Nitch, South Stitch, and objects such as Snuvv, Whisper-ma-phone, Super-Axe-Hacker and Thneed, humorous and absurd much like Dahl’s Oompa-Loompas in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* or The Bonecruncher, The Manhugger or The Gizzardgulper in *The BFG*. Interestingly enough, two words by Dr. Seuss have managed to enter the English language, i.e. *nerd* from *If I Ran the Zoo* (1950) and *Grinch* from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (1957) (Nel 2003, 25), which proves that unleashed linguistic creativity and subversiveness can also become respectable and proper.

### 4.3 Exaggeration

Exaggeration as a poetic device can be seen as a by-product of bilingualism as well, and both authors are extremely prone to it. As Dahl’s (2004, 111) Matilda says, “[N]ever do anything by halves if you want to get away with it. Be outrageous. Go the whole hog. Make sure everything you do is so completely crazy it’s unbelievable.” As mentioned before, Ahtola’s (2007, 49–50) research places bilinguals in a more fruitful environment with increased social interaction, which is why bilinguals tend to exhibit higher understanding of communication, linguistic input and details involved in social situations. These faculties are more than obvious in both Roald Dahl’s and Dr. Seuss’ works because they intentionally portray ordinary relationships and concepts in such an exaggerated manner in order to evoke a multilayered and in-depth representation of such phenomena.

Liles (1999) claims that the key theme in Roald Dahl’s books is “the use of violence and cruelty by authority figures on the weak,” a direct consequence of his troubled schooling in boarding schools of England described in *Boy*, “... I was appalled by the fact that masters and senior boys were allowed literally to wound other boys, and sometimes quite severely. I couldn’t get over it. I never have got over it” (Dahl 1986, 145). Similarly, the Trunchbull in *Matilda* swings a



child round her head by her pigtails, constructs “The Chokey,” a narrow cupboard designed for torturing pupils, and contemplates inventing a “spray for getting rid of small children” (Dahl 2004, 153). Yet, all the severity of situations described in Dahl’s novels is framed in humour and amidst all the grotesque good wins in rather unconventional ways. In the words of Zipes et al. (2005, 359), “[O]nly the poor and downtrodden children are rewarded. Dahl (...) believed that they [children] respond to forthright portrayals of their lives exaggerated through fantasy.” Therefore, in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* one encounters a main protagonist who is so poor that he only gets one chocolate per year and competes against four embodiments of child vices, such as Augustus Gloop who is “so enormously fat he looked as though he had been blown up with a powerful pump” (Dahl 2005, 21). However, the sadistic characters are usually juxtaposed to idealized authority figures based on Dahl’s own mother, such as Miss Honey in *Matilda* or the grandmother in *The Witches*, a protector and ally who occasionally offers the boy a puff of her cigar and advises him not to bathe too often because “it’s a dangerous habit” (Dahl 1998, 129). Such and other taboo topics are a usual feature in Dahl’s works; his characters are flat and blown out of proportion, which is why Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory is the biggest in the world and he is “the most *amazing*, the most *fantastic*, the most *extraordinary* chocolate maker the world has ever seen!” who does the most “impossible” and “absurd” deeds (Dahl 2005, 8–11). However, the vulgarity often ascribed to Dahl is primarily embedded in the language he uses, in which insults are quite common, “‘Your mummy’s a twit!’ the Trunchbull bellowed. (...) ‘You look like a rat with a tail coming out of its head,’” (Dahl 2004, 108). In most cases, Dahl really does “go the whole hog.”

Equally so, Maurice Sendak (in Nel 2003, 195) characterizes Seuss’ works as “big noisy books with noisy pictures and noisy language... He was a bull in a china closet.” Furthermore, his energetic language accompanied by colourful illustrations seems to “affirm the child’s need to make noise, to be creative, and to make a mess, if need be” (Nel 2003, 195). As in Dahl’s case, Dr. Seuss’ characters also tend to be rebels and underdogs, which explains the existence of green eggs and ham offered by Sam-I-Am and the need to fly a kite in the house in *The Cat in the Hat*. Each in his own way, both authors manage to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary and evoke a sense of liberation. In creating his characters, Dr. Seuss also used recollections of the frustrations of his childhood, having been the outsider in his community due to his ethnicity, and therefore his attitude towards children is very similar to Dahl’s, resulting in characters who “protest the powerlessness of childhood,” are smart and ultimately alone, as Bart in the film *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T* (1953) sings:

But we’ll grow up some day, and when we do, I pray  
We won’t just grow in size and sound.  
And just be bigger pound by pound  
I’d hate to grow, like some I know,  
Who push and shove us little kids around (Nel 2003, 128).

It is precisely due to exaggeration in style and language that both Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl are easily recognizable and, equally, that the reception of their works has been rather divided. Dr. Seuss was accused of “vulgarity, ugly pictures, and [interestingly enough] American-ness” (Nel

2003, 9–10) evident in the titles, even accompanied by exclamation marks, such as *I Can Lick 30 Tigers Today!* (1969), *Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!* (1975), or *Scrambled Eggs Super!* (1953). As for Dahl, “some praised the clear-cut characters, the grotesque villains, the wit, the incidents both dramatic and hilarious; others considered his work bizarre, unethical, sentimental, and nauseating,” because of, for example, *The Twits* (1980), featuring one the most repugnant couples in children’s literature, *Revoltin’ Rhymes* (1982), a disrespectful retelling of fairy-tales in verse, or apparent misogyny in *The Witches* (Watkins and Sutherland 1995, 306–7). Yet, the same exaggeration constitutes humour typical of both authors. According to Prommer et al. (2003, 59), exaggeration pushes the character further into the world of comedy. Therefore, thanks to the bilingual eye for fine detail of social encounters of both authors, the reader is invited to disregard fear of the ugly ways of the world or moralise about them, but rather verbalise them and laugh at them. In this way the language becomes the carrier of powerful messages. Finally, to many critics who question the validity of his writing, Roald Dahl replies, “I never get any protests from children. All you get are giggles of mirth and squirms of delight. I know what children like” (BBC Four). Therefore, for both writers children are the decisive factor in recognizing the appropriate degree of exaggeration.

## 4.4 Nonsense

By means of nonsense and experimenting with the rules of language, Dr. Seuss taught children how to read in Dr. Seuss’ ABC, “X is very useful / if your name is / Nixie Knox / It also / comes in handy / spelling axe / and extra fox” (Nel 2003, 25) and Mr. Wonka in Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005, 86) entertains by claiming that “whipped cream isn’t whipped cream at all unless it’s been whipped with whips. Just as poached egg isn’t a poached egg unless it’s been stolen from the woods in the dead of night,” or that Supervitamin Candy does not have “vitamin S, because it makes you sick, and vitamin H, because it makes you grow horns out of the top of your head, like a bull...” (Dahl 2005, 136). Aside from inventing much candy that challenges all common sense, Roald Dahl also transformed his main protagonist in *The Witches* (1998) into a mouse as a means of achieving a happy ending. Similarly, Dr. Seuss commented on his own books, “I would not call my work a ‘celebration of idiocy.’ I think of it rather as ‘logical nonsense.’ It seems logical to me and children, being strange, find it logical” (Avery et al. 1995, 248). Interestingly enough, Dr. Seuss, a “gallant child-man” (Morgan 1995, 85), also lived his nonsense, as reported by one of his classmates at Dartmouth:

He was not gregarious in the sense of hail-fellow-well-met; there was no self-importance about him. But when he walked into a room it was like a magician’s act. Birds flew out of his hands, and endless bright scarves and fireworks. Everything became brighter, happier, funnier. And he didn’t try. Everything Ted did seemed to be a surprise, even to him. (Morgan 1995, 36)

Probably for this reason his first children’s book *And to Think that I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1937) was inspired by the sound of the *Kungsholm* ship engine while crossing the Atlantic and his *Green Eggs and Ham*, “a masterpiece of minimalism and of nonsense poetry” (Nel 2003, 32), became his most popular book.

The joy found in producing nonsense in the case of both authors can once more be linked to their attachment to two languages, foremostly to the aspect of *arbitrariness* between meaning and form, as well as *divergent thinking*. Bialystok (1987) thus argues that “[bilingual] children must ignore their usual experiences with the sun and moon, cats and dogs, in order to manipulate the names of these objects.” This aspect is clearly expressed in the fantastical and unconfined attitudes of Roald Dahl’s and Dr. Seuss’ characters, which are all the product of a playful imagination. But although Dr. Seuss’ and Roald Dahl’s work seems like fun and play, and nonsense is rarely taken seriously, these two authors were nevertheless hard-working perfectionists. In fact, Bennet Cerf’s claim that Dr. Seuss was a genius evoked the following response, “[I]f I’m a genius, why do I have to work so hard? I know my stuff looks like it was rattled off in 28 seconds, but every word is a struggle and every sentence is like the pangs of birth” (Nel 2003, 35). As for Dahl, sources claim that he heavily relied on his editors and often spent up to six months creating a single short story (Round 2000). It is, therefore, obvious that the tendency to play with language and meaning, frequently accompanied by the need to challenge logic, required skilled craftsmen – something that Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl most definitely were.

## 5. Conceptual Metaphors

Finally, conceptual metaphors underlying the work of Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl can also be brought into connection with their bilingualism. Dahl’s conceptualization of relations among people reflects very fine feeling for social relations that occur despite the ruling conventional metaphors. Although the conventional concept of family involves caring parents who love and understand children, Dahl makes fun of this concept, showing very cruelly how dysfunctional some families can be, using all of the previously mentioned stylistic patterns:

Occasionally one comes across parents who take the opposite line, who show no interest at all in their children, and these of course are far worse than the doting ones. Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood were two such parents. They had a son called Michael and a daughter called Matilda, and the parents looked upon Matilda in particular as nothing more than a scab. A scab is something you have to put up with until the time comes when you can pick it off and flick it away. Mr. Mrs. Wormwood looked forward enormously to the time when they could pick their little daughter off and flick her away, preferably into the next country or even further than that. (Dahl 2004, 4)

Though *Matilda* in particular is full of such examples, many of Dahl’s works deal with unjust treatment of children by authority figures. For this reason Round (2000) emphasizes the sense of isolation and an outsider as the centre of Dahl’s creative process. Even insisting on physical isolation while writing, Dahl developed a narrative voice which usually “lines up with the child reader against the bullying, stupid adults” (Round 2000).<sup>10</sup> In other words, although adults are supposed to help children and protect them, they hurt them, hate them, or even worse, do not care about them. Miss Trunchbull is thus characterized as a “gigantic holy terror” or a “bloodthirsty follower of the stag-hounds” (Dahl 2004, 61, 77) and “A REAL WITCH hates children with red-hot sizzling hatred that is more sizzling and red-hot than any hatred you

<sup>10</sup> Round also quotes Charles Sarland, *The Secret Seven Vs The Twits: Cultural Clash or Cosy Combination?*, *Signal* 42 (1983): 162.

could possibly imagine” (Dahl 1998, 7). However, Dahl also shows contempt for children who are lavished with attention and fully unworthy of it, which explains the existence of “spoiled brats” juxtaposed to the heroes in Dahl’s black and white world. Therefore, a child becomes a “disgusting little blister,” “little viper,” “robber-bandit,” “safe-cracker,” “highwayman” (Dahl 2004, 83, 114), etc. By doing this he subverts readers’ expectations and displays his own personal outlook on human relations.

On the other hand, the underlying conceptual metaphor in Dr. Seuss’ works is *LIFE IS ENTERTAINMENT* – a typically American metaphor (Kövecses 2005), in this case derived from and influenced by the “vernacular of American advertising” (Nel 2003, 10). Having worked in advertising prior to becoming a children’s writer and having acquired the status of an advertising icon with his 1928 insecticide campaign “Quick, Henry, the Flit!”, Dr. Seuss embedded many upbeat, loud and attention-grabbing elements in his work. This is why scrambled eggs are “Super-dee-Dooper-dee-Booper,” and the words of the Once-ler in *The Lorax* (Dr. Seuss 1971) are, “And, for your information, you Lorax, I’m figgering on biggering / and BIGGERING / and BIGGERING / and BIGGERING, / turning MORE Truffula Trees into Thneeds / which everyone, EVERYONE, EVERYONE needs” (Dr. Seuss 1971, 10). In the words of Fenkl, Seuss applies a “complex interweaving of symbolism and anagrams,” relies on the appearance and sound of text, and in this way presents a number of potential meanings supporting the main theme (Fenkl 2001). Furthermore, he tends to systematically add tension to the plot “as if over-inflating a balloon until we, the readers, can’t stand waiting for the ‘pop!’ and then he doesn’t pop it, he just deflates the balloon” (Hurst). Consequently, due to the nature of their upbringing, in their literary works Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss captured the essence of the culture in which they were raised.

In order for a book to become a success, many people need to be able to connect with it on several different levels. In the case of both authors the connection is the product of a lifetime of close observation and experimenting. According to Erbes (2006, 33), effective humour for children is “a kind of humour that goes back to their culture, boosts their self-esteem, connects with their culture and helps them to understand things better. Good humour shows that there can be several points of view.” Therefore, despite the fact that both authors dealt with in this essay were simultaneously drawing experiences from two different cultures, their literature became indigenous to the countries in which they lived. Roald Dahl, who grew up speaking Norwegian and English, is the favourite British author, and Dr. Seuss, who was raised speaking German and English, according to Philip Nel (2003, 1), has gradually become an American icon.

From these examples it is possible to conclude that bilingualism and biculturalism do not muddle identity but, on the contrary, create a distinct cultural voice resulting in the emergence of a new artistic identity. The written expression of both authors is at least partly a reflection of their bilingualism and biculturalism.

## 6. Conclusion

Due to the merging of Europe and global accessibility to various types of information, it has become virtually impossible to confine oneself to one language, one culture, or a single environment. The example of celebrated children's authors, Theodor Seuss Geisel and Roald Dahl, is proof of the fact that bi/multilingualism and bi/multiculturalism are in many ways extremely beneficial. Accordingly, both authors were able to preserve connection to their heritage and nevertheless find a narrative voice which captured the spirit of the country they inhabited. The bilingual upbringing of Dr. Seuss and Roald Dahl significantly influenced their verbal skills and written expression, and was a decisive factor in constructing their unique style, resulting in the heightened degree of divergent thinking, linguistic arbitrariness and perceptive faculties. Therefore, the analysis of selected works by Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss has shown obvious parallels between the stylistic patterns and poetic devices employed in their texts, such as "anarchic" implementation of word play, sound patterns, neologisms, exaggeration, nonsense and humour, as well as unconventionality of conceptual metaphors. Furthermore, the tendency towards subversiveness in all aspects of verbal expression is very apparent in the case of both authors, accompanied by disregard for linguistic rules and expected social norms, which in turn causes deviation from the convention and a delight in children's hearts. Each in his own way, Roald Dahl and Dr. Seuss managed to develop a style so distinct that it cannot be displaced from its maker. Modern Europe implies widespread acceptance of diversity, as well as a population with broad personal understanding of languages, cultures, conceptual backgrounds, history, literature, and the ability to create new types of expression. Incidentally, a "multi-oriented" environment often results in unrestrained and highly entertaining progress. For, as Lewis Nichols (in Nel 2003, 11) observed in his profile of Dr. Seuss:

One further note, this directed to those writers of dissertations and theses on Dr. Seuss. On the table in his hotel room were these objects: One copy of *Live and Let Live* by Ian Fleming; one folder of delicacies offered by Room Service; six partly used folders of matches; two bars of chocolate, one large pear. Dr. Seuss could make something out of this. Can the scholars?

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**III.**

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHING**



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## Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

### Summary

A feature of Italian universities is the high student drop-out rate in nearly all degree courses. It is likely that among the causes of this phenomenon a significant factor is loss of motivation. This study represents the first stage of a longitudinal research project aimed at monitoring students' motivation levels over a three-year period. At the beginning of the academic year 2008-2009 a questionnaire was administered to 150 newly enrolled students of English at the University of Cagliari in Italy. The closed-response items were designed to measure the respondents' instrumental and intrinsic motivation. The responses were then considered in the light of the following variables: age, gender, level of competence in English and choice of degree course. The major finding was that a clear majority of respondents reported a considerably higher level of intrinsic than instrumental motivation, while the most significant variables were shown to be competence level and choice of degree.

**Key words:** instrumental motivation, intrinsic motivation

## Motivacija in usvajanje drugega jezika

### Povzetek

Značilno za universe v Italije je visok osip študentov. Eden izmed razlogov je verjetno tudi izguba motivacije. Članek predstavlja prvo stopnjo v dolgoročnem raziskovalnem projektu, katerega cilj je spremljati motivacijo študentov v obdobju treh let. V začetku študijskega leta 2008/2009 je 150 novo vpisanih študentov angleščine na Univerzi Cagliari v Italiji prejelo vprašalnik, katerega cilj je bil izmeriti instrumentalno in notranjo motivacijo. Odgovore smo analizirali ob upoštevanju starosti, spola, nivoja znanja angleščine in izbire študija. Glavna ugotovitev je ta, da je velika večina študentov izkazala večjo notranjo motivacijo, medtem ko sta bili najbolj pomembni spremenljivki nivo znanja angleščine in izbor študija.

**Ključne besede:** instrumentalna motivacija, notranja motivacija

# Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

## 1. Introduction: the high student drop-out rate in Italian universities

On the web site of ISTAT (*Istituto centrale di statistica*), Italy's official agency for the compilation of statistics, the most recent figures for university drop-out rates refer to the percentages of students who had enrolled in the academic year 2001-2002 and managed to graduate by 2006. At national level, and considering all degree courses, only 40.5% of the 2001-2002 intake had graduated by 2006. The figures vary considerably according to the discipline studied: medicine had the highest graduation rate at 66.2%, chemistry and pharmacology the lowest at 18.5%, while modern languages was in line with the overall average at 40.9%.

It should be noted that in these statistics there is no differentiation between degree courses of three years (83.9% of the total), five years or, in the case of the degree in medicine and surgery, six years. This means that students of the five-year degrees who graduated in 2006 had done so within the official course duration, but students of the three-year degrees, who might have been expected to graduate at the end of the academic year 2003-2004, had already gone two years over the official duration if they did not graduate till 2006. Students of medicine and surgery could not possibly graduate in 2006 because they had not yet completed the course, so the 66.2% graduation rate indicated in the previous paragraph must refer to other degree courses offered by the faculties of medicine.

It is a feature of the Italian university system that “full-time” students are allowed to go *fuori corso*, i.e. take longer than the official course duration to complete their studies. Indeed, the ISTAT figures show that 66% of the 2006 graduates had required more than three years to get their degrees, a percentage that rises to 75.5% in the case of students of modern languages. It is not always clear, therefore, whether a student has genuinely dropped out or has merely failed to stand the pace. In extreme cases a student assumed to have dropped out years ago may suddenly re-appear and demand to be examined on syllabi that are no longer operative. With this difficulty in mind, the ISTAT investigators sought an unequivocal drop-out figure by checking how many of the 2001-2002 intake subsequently re-enrolled for 2002-2003: it was found that approximately 20% abandoned their university studies after just one year.

The picture that emerges is a somewhat desolate one in which a fifth of university students drop out after one year, and of those who persevere, a high percentage fall behind and do not graduate within the official duration of the course (if they graduate at all). As a consequence, Italy has significantly fewer graduates compared with most other countries in the developed world: Benedetti (2008, 2) refers to the 2008 report on education in the developed countries published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCDE), which reveals that only 17% of Italians aged between 25 and 34 are graduates, against an average of 33% for the same age range in the countries investigated. Indeed, Italy is not only behind her EU partners in training graduates, but has also been overtaken by countries such as Chile and Mexico. The same

report also highlights the failure to invest in higher education: Italy spends the equivalent of 8,026 US dollars per university student compared with an OCDE average of 11,512 dollars.

It is not difficult to identify one of the reasons for the high drop-out rate: for most degree courses there is not a rigorous selection procedure for university applicants – the minimum pass mark in the secondary school diploma may well be sufficient – which means that some school leavers who give university a try are far from gifted and possibly not particularly motivated from the beginning (a notable exception concerns the schools of medicine, which set far more stringent entry requirements, and it is no coincidence that graduation rates are highest for this discipline). That may not be the full story, however; if as many as 20% drop out after the first year, it is possible that something occurs during that year to trigger a process of demotivation. For this reason, the research project outlined here was initiated in the hope of gaining some insight into the motivation levels of undergraduates studying English as one of the two or three modern languages in their degree course.

## 1.1 The purpose and design of the questionnaire

The subjects of the survey were 150 newly enrolled students at the School of Modern Languages of the University of Cagliari in Sardinia, Italy. All had signed up to do one of the following degree courses: *Lingue e Comunicazione* (Languages and Media Studies), *Lingue e Culture Europee ed Extraeuropee* (Languages and European and Non-European Cultures) and *Lingue per la Mediazione linguistica* (Languages for Linguistic Mediation). For the sake of brevity, in this work the three degree courses will henceforth be referred to as Lcom, Lcult and Lmed.

All 150 students had opted to study English plus at least one other language from the choice of French, German, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Japanese. 80.5% were female, which is typical for faculties of modern languages in Italy. 69.33% were in the age range 18-20, and since in Italy there is no tradition of taking a gap-year, most had left school in the summer of 2008. A further 26.66% were aged between 21 and 25 and had presumably had some experience of working, or at least seeking work. Only 4%, six individuals, were 26 or older.

Although the School of Modern Languages and Literature in Cagliari has a selection test for prospective students, it is an examination of general educational achievement rather than communicative competence in the relevant target languages. For this reason, there was considerable heterogeneity in the subjects' level of English. Asked to indicate their current level, 12.08% described their English as elementary, 63.76% opted for pre-intermediate and 24.16% rated their level as intermediate or higher. Given the presence of so many subjects with limited English language skills, it was decided that the questionnaire should be in Italian.

In addition to the variables of age, gender, level of English and choice of degree course, it had originally been planned to consider the responses of those whose native language was not Italian. However, the idea was dropped when it became clear that this variable involved very few people, and to have asked them to identify themselves would have compromised their right to anonymity.



The questionnaire was designed to measure the subjects' intrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation with regard to the learning of English. Instrumental motivation is present when the learner has a specific functional goal that depends on acquiring a certain level of competence in the target language: to win a place at university, to get a job or a promotion, to be able to consult scientific papers, and so on. Powerful instrumental motivation may be strong enough to overcome a lack of *integrative motivation* – the desire to 'to learn a language because of positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language' (Gardner 1985, 82–3) – and will thus allow a person to acquire the target language despite negative attitudes towards the TL community; millions of users of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) can express their distaste for American or British culture and people with impressive fluency. Much depends on the degree of communicative competence required; those whose motivation is entirely instrumental, and who only need to use a specific variety of the TL in a limited range of situations, may find that their L2 fossilizes, or to use Schumann's (1978) preferred term, pidginizes, once those circumscribed skills have been acquired.

Intrinsic motivation is essentially the opposite of instrumental motivation since an individual engages in an activity – in this case the learning of a second language – for no utilitarian purpose whatsoever, but merely because s/he gains pleasure and satisfaction from it. It is doing something for its own sake without expectation of tangible reward. Some investigators prefer the term *task motivation*; indeed, in his Intrinsic Hypothesis, Skehan (1989), cited by Ellis (1994, 509), sees intrinsic motivation as deriving from an inherent interest in the learning tasks he or she is asked to perform rather than an overriding concern with the outcome of task completion.

It was decided to use closed- rather than open-ended response items in the questionnaire. Although the latter may yield qualitatively richer data, Brown (2001, 37) lists no fewer than nine disadvantages to their employment, particularly relevant drawbacks being that they are more difficult and time-consuming to answer, which often encourages respondents to skip items, while the data generated are difficult for researchers to interpret and analyze. In contrast:

The major advantage of closed-ended questions is that their coding and tabulation is straightforward and leaves no room for rater subjectivity. Accordingly, these questions are sometimes referred to as 'objective' items. They are particularly suitable for quantitative, statistical analyses because the response options can easily be numerically coded and entered into a computer database.

(Dörnyei 2003, 35)

Two item banks – one to measure intrinsic motivation and one for instrumental motivation – were created, both of which involved Likert scale items offering six possible responses, the Italian equivalents of: (A) strongly agree; (B) agree; (C) partially agree; (D) partially disagree; (E) disagree; (F) strongly disagree. An even number of response options was chosen to avoid the phenomenon of 'sitting on the fence', i.e. when respondents consistently choose the non-committal middle option from an odd number of possibilities.



A potential difficulty with this research is that I conducted it in the institution where I work, with the consequent risk that respondents would seek to provide the ‘right’ answers – i.e. the ones they imagined I wanted to see – rather than sincere responses. In an endeavour to counteract this danger, the questionnaire began with a signed statement affirming that the research was an entirely personal initiative, was not commissioned or even encouraged by the university administration, and that the respondents’ answers would not have the slightest bearing on the grades they would receive during their degree course. It was stressed that the questionnaires would remain entirely anonymous unless individuals elected to provide the optional datum of their student enrolment number (which would later permit comparison between reported motivation and re-enrolment for the second year of the course). Unsurprisingly, the majority chose not to give this piece of information and thus preserved their anonymity.

An English version of the questionnaire is shown in the Appendix to this work.

## 1.2 Piloting and administering the questionnaire

Questionnaires do not emerge fully-fledged; they have to be created or adapted, fashioned and developed to maturity after many abortive test flights. In fact, every aspect of a survey has to be tried out beforehand to make sure that it works as intended.

(Oppenheim 1992, 47)

However much care is taken in the writing of items, ambiguous wording, loaded questions and otherwise dubious elements will occur and will only be detected during pre-testing. Before administering the questionnaire to the target subjects at the University of Cagliari, it was piloted on similar respondents – fifty newly enrolled students of modern languages at the University of Sassari in the north of Sardinia. Analysis of the data produced revealed that responses to one of the items intended to measure intrinsic motivation were in the extremely limited range of two, rather than in the desirable range of five or six. Since all 50 students gave such similar responses, it was clear that the item was practically useless for differentiation purposes and would have to be eliminated from the definitive version of the survey. Similarly, an item was unceremoniously excluded from the instrumental motivation section after the pilot version showed that it had generated answers that bore little correlation with the other items in the section. It was clearly measuring something other than instrumental motivation, and retaining it would have compromised the internal-consistency reliability of that part of the survey. Thus the questionnaire was pared down to the twelve items shown in the Appendix, six each for intrinsic and instrumental motivation.

The target subjects in Cagliari filled in the questionnaire on October 24, 2008 while they were attending colleagues’ General English lessons (in classes that ran concurrently). The brevity and closed-ended nature of the survey meant that it could be completed in a few minutes, so within half an hour all 150 questionnaires had been filled in and collected. I administered the questionnaire personally, which ensured that each class was given precisely the same instructions. Furthermore, in addition to the written statement concerning the ‘unofficial’ status of the

research, I was also able to reassure those enrolled on the Lcom and Lcult courses that they would not have to attend my classes or sit my exams during their three years (or probably more) in the faculty. In the case of Lmed students, who were already attending my lessons, I underlined their possibility of retaining total anonymity if they so wished.

## 1.3 Results

Intrinsic motivation considerably stronger than instrumental motivation	57.33%
Intrinsic motivation moderately stronger than instrumental motivation	24.66%
Similar values for intrinsic and instrumental motivation	14.66%
Instrumental motivation moderately stronger than intrinsic motivation	2.66%
Instrumental motivation considerably stronger than intrinsic motivation	0.66%

*Table 1: Comparison of intrinsic and instrumental motivation (all 150 respondents)*

That most respondents reported generally high motivation was entirely to be expected given that the survey was carried out less than a month into the new academic year when the initial enthusiasm for a new venture had not yet started to fade. Moreover, a degree of self-selection had already occurred in that the students who filled in the questionnaire were those who had shown up for English lessons early in the morning even though attendance on their courses is not obligatory. It might be supposed that even in the first month of the course those with flimsier motivation had found the option of a lie-in more attractive.

What could not be expected was the remarkable imbalance in favour of intrinsic over instrumental motivation. As Tables 2-5 demonstrate, that imbalance is present to a greater or lesser extent when all the variables are taken into account.

	Age 18-20	Age 21-25	Age 26+
Considerably stronger intrinsic motivation	58.65%	52.50%	66.66%
Moderately stronger intrinsic motivation	23.08%	30.00%	16.66%
Similar intrinsic and instrumental motivation	14.42%	15.00%	16.66%
Moderately stronger instrumental motivation	3.85%	0%	0%
Considerably stronger instrumental motivation	0%	2.50%	0%

*Table 2: Intrinsic and instrumental motivation according to age (150 respondents)*

It is clear from Table 2 that age is not a major distinguishing factor. The percentage of respondents with a relatively equal balance between intrinsic and instrumental is very similar for all three age groups, while the only variation of note is the strikingly high percentage of over 26s with considerably higher intrinsic motivation and the 30% of those in the 21-25 age range with only moderately higher intrinsic motivation. Without conducting qualitative research, such as interviewing a sample of respondents, we can only speculate as to the reasons for this relatively minor difference. It is possible that those aged between 21 and 25 have already encountered

difficulties in the job market and have therefore acquired greater appreciation of the utilitarian benefits of becoming proficient in the English language. Similarly, it is possible that people aged 26+ have already secured employment and therefore have no pressing practical need to acquire competence in English. Once again, this cannot be demonstrated without contacting the respondents personally, not least because the admissions office of the University of Cagliari does not distinguish between full-time students and part-timers who combine study with work.

	Male	Female
Considerably stronger intrinsic motivation	51.72%	59.17%
Moderately stronger intrinsic motivation	17.24%	26.67%
Similar intrinsic and instrumental motivation	20.69%	13.33%
Moderately stronger instrumental motivation	6.90%	1.67%
Considerably stronger instrumental motivation	3.45%	0%

Table 3: Intrinsic and instrumental motivation according to gender (149 respondents)

Although none of the 150 respondents skipped any of the twelve items, there were a few cases of omitted personal details, including one person who preferred not to indicate his/her gender.

Gender appears not to be a significant factor: although more male than female respondents have strong instrumental motivation, the overall picture remains very much in favour of intrinsic motivation.

	Elementary	Pre-intermediate	Intermediate+
Considerably stronger intrinsic motivation	55.56%	53.69%	69.44%
Moderately stronger intrinsic motivation	16.67%	27.37%	22.22%
Similar intrinsic and instrumental motivation	22.22%	16.84%	5.55%
Moderately stronger instrumental motivation	0%	2.10%	2.78%
Considerably stronger instrumental motivation	5.56%	0%	0%

Table 4: Intrinsic and instrumental motivation according to level of competence (146 respondents)

Four respondents neglected to indicate their level of competence in English. Of the 146 who did indicate their level of English, the most striking figure is the extraordinary imbalance in favour of intrinsic motivation among those who rate their level of competence as intermediate or higher (24.16% of the respondents). It is hardly surprising that those who have already reached important language-learning goals should be motivated to aim for still higher achievements, for the old adage that success breeds success is often borne out by experience. Indeed, Ellis (1994, 515) cites a series of studies into *resultative motivation* that suggest a strong causal link between goal-attainment and willingness to strive for further success.

It is significant that at this early stage in their degree course, those with only an elementary level of English – i.e. those most likely to struggle – also report high intrinsic motivation.

	Lcom	Lcult	Lmed
Considerably stronger intrinsic motivation	48.57%	47.62%	80.00%
Moderately stronger intrinsic motivation	30.00%	33.33%	14.29%
Similar intrinsic and instrumental motivation	15.71%	16.67%	5.71%
Moderately stronger instrumental motivation	4.29%	2.38%	0%
Considerably stronger instrumental motivation	1.43%	0%	0%

*Table 5: Intrinsic and instrumental motivation according to degree course (146 respondents)*

It emerges that the choice of degree course is by far the most significant variable in differentiating between the respondents' levels and types of motivation. Those who signed up for the course in Languages for Linguistic Mediation have much higher intrinsic motivation and remarkably low instrumental motivation. Possible reasons for this imbalance will be discussed in the next section of this work but it should be pointed out that of the three degree courses, Lmed is the one that is most demanding in purely linguistic terms. In addition to the examinations in general English language skills plus more specialized areas of English grammar, phonology and pragmatics that are broadly similar for all three courses, the Lmed syllabus also involves examinations in translation and interpreting.

Cross-referencing the two variables of degree course and level of competence in English reveals that of the 36 people who rated their skills as intermediate or above, 16 (44.44%) had enrolled on the Lmed course. In contrast, of those who admitted to having only an elementary level of English, just three had decided to do the Lmed degree. The overall picture, therefore, shows that while the vast majority of the people surveyed have high intrinsic motivation, the highest levels of all are reported by those with the greatest linguistic competence, many of whom opt for the most linguistically challenging course available to them.

## 2 Conclusions

The respondents' levels of instrumental motivation are in most cases low in relative rather than absolute terms. Each of items 7-12, those intended to measure instrumental motivation, generated the maximum range of responses (six), while the adoption of Brown's procedure (2001, 173-5) to calculate the internal-consistency reliability produced a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.66. While this value is not good – for Dörnyei (2001, 204) 'we should aim at reliability coefficients in excess of 0.70' – it is nevertheless within the range of what is acceptable. Consequently, the imbalance between the subjects' intrinsic and instrumental motivations appears to be genuine rather than the result of skewed values produced by serious procedural flaws, so the task is to discover why this situation emerges.

The results reported above should be considered in the light of the economic and political context. Although Sardinia is associated in many people's minds with middle- and up-market seaside resorts, the island does not have a thriving economy and employment prospects for

young people – graduates included – are bleak. It is possible that the Cagliari students' relatively low levels of instrumental motivation are the product of a brutally realistic assessment of what a degree in modern languages could do for them in practical terms. In addition to the fact that the Sardinian economy has seen little growth for many years, the timing of the administration of the questionnaire – late October 2008 – also coincided with the worldwide credit crunch and the first indicators of global recession, hardly a moment for humanities undergraduates to feel optimistic about their short-term future. Of the three degree courses, Lmed is the one that ought to have the most direct link with the world of work because of its orientation toward the practical skills of translating and interpreting, yet the students enrolled on this course were those with the strongest imbalance in favour of intrinsic motivation. Finally, domestic politics played a part since the respondents completed the questionnaire at a time of open conflict between the state universities and a government ideologically committed to the privatization of higher education.

Ideally a language learner would have both intrinsic and instrumental motivation since the specific and clearly defined goals of the latter would complement the enthusiasm generated by the former. However, if the prevailing economic conditions are such that instrumental motivation struggles in barren soil, there is little that a university or its lecturers in modern languages can do to alter the situation. Of course, there is no reason why intrinsic motivation alone should not lead to success in second language acquisition. It is, after all, a multidimensional construct that can determine why an individual chooses to engage in an activity, and how long and how hard s/he pursues it. Vallerand (1997), cited by Dörnyei (2001, 27-8) identifies three subtypes of intrinsic motivation: motivation to learn (engaging in an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction of understanding something new); motivation towards achievement (engaging in an activity for the satisfaction of surpassing oneself, coping with challenges and accomplishing or creating something); motivation to experience stimulation (engaging in an activity to experience pleasant sensations). There would appear to be enough in those three categories to keep an individual focused on the learning task. Indeed, it can also be argued that strong instrumental motivation may sometimes conflict with and eventually undermine intrinsic motivation (i.e. when something that begins as a pleasure mutates first into a duty, then into a chore).

The awkward fact remains, however, that if past trends are maintained, 20% of those who reported such high intrinsic motivation in October 2008 will have dropped out by October 2009 and many more will fall by the wayside in subsequent years. Whether loss of motivation is the major, or at least a significant, factor in the drop-out rate remains to be seen. Quantitative investigations like the one reported here can answer questions such as *what* and *how much* but are not particularly suitable for discovering *why*. For this reason, the follow-up questionnaire planned for October 2009 needs to be complemented by qualitative research based on interviews along the lines of Ushioda's (2001) study of Irish students of French at Trinity College Dublin. It is to be hoped that those who sign up for the second year of their degree course will, in reporting on their own feelings and attitudes, also shed some light on why others chose to abandon their studies.

To come full circle, this work finishes where it began with ISTAT figures relating to university students in Italy. The statistical study cited above did more than investigate high drop-out rates

and the very high incidence of students going beyond the official duration of the course before graduating; it also asked successful graduates to report on their feelings about their experience of attending university. People who had graduated in 2004 were contacted three years later and invited to say whether they would repeat the experience: 76.5% said they would re-enrol on the same degree course, 21.6% said they would go to university but to study for a different degree, and only 1.9% said they would not go to university at all. Unfortunately, specific figures are not available for degrees in modern languages. The paradox exists, however, of a university system that loses a high percentage of its students but, for those who literally stay the course, is then viewed as a positive experience. This research project cannot explain that paradox at national level for all degrees, but it does have the more modest aim of shedding some light on the shifting motivation of students of English language at one particular institution.

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## APPENDIX

English version of the questionnaire used at the University of Cagliari in October 2008

I would like to ask you to dedicate a few minutes to the completion of this questionnaire. This is a research project on the motivation of new students enrolling at the School of Modern Languages and Literature of the University of Cagliari in 2008-09. The investigation is a personal initiative and has nothing to do with any official research requested by the administration of the university or of the faculty. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers but only honest answers, and your responses will not have any influence whatsoever on your grades over the next three years. Thank you for your help.

Steve Buckledee, lecturer in English Language, School of Modern Languages and Literature, Cagliari

*Please indicate your reaction to the following statements.*

*Option A = I strongly agree*

*Option B = I agree*

*Option C = I partially agree*

*Option D = I partially disagree*

*Option E = I disagree*

*Option F = I strongly disagree*

1. For me studying English is an enjoyable intellectual activity.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
2. I like the sound of the English language.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
3. Studying English grammar is boring.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
4. Even if I were not studying at university, I would try to improve my English.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
5. Sometimes I get fed up with studying English.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
6. For me it is more important to be able to communicate effectively in English than to get good grades in the exams.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
7. My main reason for choosing to study English is to improve my chances of finding a good job.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
8. In an ideal situation, I would study another language rather than English.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐
9. When I study English I focus only on what I need to pass the exam.  
A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐



10. I am obliged to study English because nowadays you can't do without this language.

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐

11. I will have more chance of earning a good salary if I manage to reach a high level of competence in English.

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐

12. For me passing the exams of English is more important than my real communicative ability in the language.

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐

#### PERSONAL DETAILS

Age	18-20 <input type="checkbox"/>	21-25 <input type="checkbox"/>	26+ <input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	
Current level of English	Elementary <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-intermediate <input type="checkbox"/>	Intermediate or above <input type="checkbox"/>
Degree course	Lcom <input type="checkbox"/>	Lcult <input type="checkbox"/>	Lmed <input type="checkbox"/>
Enrolment number (optional):	_____		

Thank you for your cooperation.

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## Exploring Stereotypes: Scottish and Slovene Jokes in the Classroom

### Summary

It is widely accepted that the use of humour and jokes in particular brings a number of benefits to the EFL teacher. Not only can jokes help to establish a relaxed learning atmosphere, they can also serve as a context in which to study particular aspects of grammar, vocabulary and culture. However, jokes based on national and regional stereotypes tend to be ignored by EFL teachers, as their potential to cause offense has seen them deemed unsuitable for classroom use. The purpose of this paper is to present a different perspective: it is precisely the rather risky nature of these jokes which makes them ideal for classroom use, particularly in lessons with the specific aim of raising students' cultural awareness through the exploration of stereotypes.

**Key words:** Scottish and Slovene jokes, national and regional stereotypes, EFL classroom, cultural awareness.

## Raziskovanje stereotipov – škotske in slovenske šale v razredu

### Povzetek

Splošno znano dejstvo je, da sta humor in še posebej šale zelo dobrodošla pri pouku angleščine kot tujega jezika. Ne le, da šale pripomorejo k ustvarjanju sproščenega vzdušja pri pouku, ampak lahko služijo tudi kot kontekst za pouk določenih vidikov slovnice, besedišča in kulture. Vendar pa učitelji angleščine kot tujega jezika rabijo šale, ki temeljijo na nacionalnih in regionalnih stereotipih, ker so te lahko žaljive in zato neprimerne za rabo v razredu. Namen članka je prikazati, da so ravno te nekoliko problematične šale lahko idealno sredstvo pri pouku, katerega namen je razviti kulturno zavest učencev na primeru stereotipov.

**Ključne besede:** škotske in slovenske šale, nacionalni in regionalni stereotipi, angleščina kot tuj jezik, kulturna ozaveščenost

# Exploring Stereotypes: Scottish and Slovene Jokes in the Classroom

## 1. Introduction

The use of humour and jokes in the classroom is certainly not a novelty; indeed, a simple internet search reveals a wealth of resources devoted to appropriate classroom jokes and how to incorporate them into teaching.<sup>1</sup> EFL practitioners suggest that there are a number of benefits to be had by using jokes in the classroom:

Firstly, humour and jokes may help contribute to a relaxed learning atmosphere, and much has been written about the importance of motivation and *affect* in the learning process, i.e. that a happy learner is a more effective learner. (Kristmanson 2000).

Jokes may also be used to develop specific points of grammar and vocabulary. For example, the following joke could be exploited as a context for study of the (often painful to learn) third conditional:

A little boy goes home to his dad and says: “Dad, you’ll never guess, I managed to save some money today!”

“How did you do that son?” replies the dad.

“Instead of taking the bus home, I ran all the way home behind it.”

“Och, you stupid boy,” exclaims the dad, giving him a clip around the ear. “If you had run behind a taxi you would have saved more.”

The next example is perhaps rather more demanding linguistically, yet the use of the joke here serves as an example of how they may be exploited to investigate language through pun, word play and indeed dialect. A knowledge of Scots pronunciation is required to understand the punchline:

*A Scot goes into a bakery and asks the shop assistant: “Is that a doughnut or a meringue?” To which the assistant replies: “Naw, you’re right.”* The response may at first seem somewhat baffling to a non-Scots speaker, until it is pointed out that the shop assistant does not hear the customer refer to a meringue, as in a fluffy cream filled cake. Instead, she hears “...*am I wrang?*”, which can be translated into standard English as “...*am I wrong?*”

Another interesting aspect of jokes for the teacher is their use as a tool to explore culture in the classroom. They may provide, for example, an insight into different cultural beliefs and practices. Teachers may wish to investigate with their students why the following joke may seem odd or indeed even inappropriate to someone from an Asian culture:

I never forget a face, but in my mother-in-law’s case I am willing to make an exception.

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<sup>1</sup> Searching under jokes for classroom use on Google, for example, brought up The TESL Internet Journal as the first option (<http://iteslj.org>) which provides a list of jokes covering among other topics pun, word play, misuse of English, all submitted by ESL teachers.

According to Muqun and Lu (2006), mother and son-in-laws in Asian cultures usually enjoy a very friendly and respectful relationship which renders the stereotypical mother-in-law jokes of some western cultures (the U.K. included) incomprehensible.

In other examples, we see that specific cultural information is required to understand a joke, which could also provide a context for the study of the culture of the target language. In this example, students would need to know that within Scotland, Glasgow is often seen as a crime-ridden city, and Glaswegians as dishonest:

*How do you address a Glaswegian in a suit? The accused.*

Or indeed, this other rather cruel example, again from a Scottish cultural context:

*A bomb fell on Glenrothes yesterday, Did £4.73 worth of damage.*

Glenrothes is one of the Scottish new towns, re-built in the 1970s to attract business to the area and inject much needed life into the local economy. Since then, Glenrothes has enjoyed a reputation, unfortunately justifiably, for being architecturally ugly.

It is this cultural aspect of classroom jokes that I would like to focus on, and indeed, on a body of jokes normally (some may say with good reason) ignored for classroom use. In particular, I will try to argue that jokes based on national and regional stereotypes can be exploited to develop students' cultural awareness.<sup>2</sup> This may seem something of a paradox at first: the reason these jokes tend to be ignored by teachers is because of their potential to cause offense. However, it is precisely their rather charged or controversial nature which, I believe, makes them ideal for classroom study.

## 2. The Importance of Cultural Awareness

As ESL practitioners we are all aware of the importance of cultural awareness in the language classroom. It could certainly be argued that true communication is somehow impossible without at least a certain level of cultural awareness (Šabec and Limon 2000). As many of our students at Filozofska Fakulteta in Maribor intend to become teachers, it seems somehow especially important for them to become culturally aware: we not only expect them to use English as accurately as possible, but we also expect that they will be able to guide their own students through the maze of cultural issues themselves, hopefully in an atmosphere of openness and tolerance.

As Byram says in his definition of what makes the best teachers: "The best teacher is...the person who can help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures, can help them acquire interest and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives." (Byram et al. 2002, 10)

While we may all agree that developing cultural awareness or indeed intercultural competence is a must, there are certainly a number of hurdles which stand in our way. Fennes and Hapgood (1997), among others, identify stereotypes as being one of the most significant of these obstacles

<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'developing cultural awareness' very broadly here to encompass not only acquiring factual knowledge of another/ other cultures, but also to include developing, as Byram (2002) describes it, the skills, attitudes and values essential to understanding other cultures. This is referred to by Byram and others as intercultural competence.

and indeed state that one of the goals of intercultural learning is to become *conscious of stereotypes and prejudices*. They describe how dangerous stereotypes can be: instead of opening us up to other nations and cultures, they in a sense close us down by narrowing our perceptions of them to a reductive image of people and their habits

University students are certainly not immune to holding such stereotypes. Research carried out by Coleman (1998) found that university students are not only guilty of holding deep-rooted national stereotypes, but they are very often strengthened by the kind of activities we may assume would actually rid students of them: study or work placements abroad. Although no formal studies have been carried out on the students at our faculty, through regular contact and discussion with them in our language development classes, I very strongly suspect that our students also hold the kind of deep-seated stereotypes described above. In order therefore to begin the process of exploring and ultimately challenging those stereotypes, I have developed a series of joke-based exercises which I will present here. Some are tried and tested and where appropriate, I will also discuss the reaction or response of the students to them.

The aim of the exercises is three-fold. The tasks focus initially on the content of jokes. By comparing selected jokes, some of which are based on national stereotypes and others which contain neutral cultural information, students are first asked to define a stereotype and to consider whether or not stereotypes (and indeed these jokes) are somehow *harmful*.

Secondly, students are asked to identify and question the truth of the stereotypes contained in jokes about Slovenes and Scots (and hopefully by extension other nationalities), encouraging them to start thinking about the way they regard other nationalities, and, also importantly, they way others view them.

Lastly, by considering how they *feel* about the jokes in the study (especially those based on the stereotypes held about Slovenes), our future teachers begin not only to explore the issues of political correctness and what is appropriate for the classroom, but are also given an opportunity, if required, to reconsider some of the views they express in previous tasks.

### 3. Classroom tasks

#### 3.1 Joke gathering

The first step in our exercises was to gather the jokes we would use in class. This was a process the learners themselves were actively engaged in. Students were encouraged to find as many jokes about Slovenia and the Slovenes as they could, while I provided the Scottish ones.<sup>3</sup> The only guidance they were given as to content was that they should be happy to tell the joke in front of me and their fellow classmates – this was designed to act as a kind of self-censorship measure. Students were also told that they could bring jokes in Slovene as we would translate them together at a later date.

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<sup>3</sup> The choice of nationalities is significant. The vast majority of our students are Slovene and for them to feel something about these jokes it is important that they can relate to them directly. I am a Scot and by happy coincidence there are a vast number of jokes based on our stereotypical national character.

The material gathered came from a number of sources: mostly the internet (including YouTube), joke sections in newspapers and foreign friends.

## 3.2 Analysis

Once the material was gathered, the jokes were classified into the following sections: jokes about Slovenia and the Slovenes, jokes about Scotland and the Scots, and the jokes Scots make about other nationalities. Each set of jokes has a set of accompanying exercises – language exercises such as matching or gap fill activities (to complete the joke), analysis and reflection activities, follow-up discussion and writing tasks.

We will consider each of these tasks in turn.

## 3.3 Task One: Defining stereotypes

In the first set of tasks the focus lies in defining stereotypes and encouraging the students to reflect on the stereotypes they hold and whether or not they consider them to be harmful. The following joke based on common European stereotypes is presented to the students and they are asked to consider what hell must look like if this is an image of heaven:

*Heaven is a place where the police are British, the cooks are French, the mechanics are German, the lovers are Italian and the Swiss are in charge of organisation.*

Once they have come up with their own suggestions, we compare them with the actual ending of the joke:

*Hell is a place where the police are German, the cooks are British, the mechanics are French, the lovers are Swiss and everything is organised by the Italians.*

The students in previous classes were able to very easily explain why this is such a hellish vision, readily providing an appropriate stereotype for each nation: *the food in the U.K. is awful, the French are better at poetry and the arts...etc.* At this point, students are asked to discuss with a partner which other stereotypes they knew of for other European countries, and again, they had little difficulty in completing this task.

The next step is to complete a task based on jokes about Slovenia. The content here is slightly different, however. Rather than featuring stereotypes, the following jokes contain cultural information (the fact that Slovenia is a small country) which it is necessary to know in order to *get* the joke. First and punchlines are matched to complete the joke; a small selection of the jokes follows:

*Why should you be careful opening an umbrella in Ljubljana?  
You might take someone's eye out in Maribor  
What is the shortest joke in the world?  
A couple were walking along the Slovene coast.*

*Why don't Slovenes need mobile phones?*

*They can yodle from one end of the country to another.*

Once the students had completed the matching task they were asked to decide what the joke played on. They were then asked to compare the content of the Slovenia jokes with the joke about heaven and hell and see if they could find any differences between the types of material they contain.

While this task proved relatively straightforward and the students were able to spot the differences between stereotypes and cultural information fairly easily, it proved slightly trickier for the students to decide upon an appropriate definition of a stereotype. Students were split into pairs and each pair asked to produce a definition, which was then put together to make a class definition. The ideas produced in this exercise include:

*Stereotypes are negative beliefs we have about other people.*

*There is an element of truth in stereotypes.*

*Stereotypes are exaggerated ideas.*

Once a class definition was agreed upon, we compared it to an 'expert' opinion taken from an internet language teaching forum.<sup>4</sup> Students were then invited to revise their own definitions if they so wished.

The follow-up discussion to this activity is certainly enlightening. Students were asked if they felt that stereotypes could be somehow harmful, as claimed in the definition of stereotypes above. There was some resistance to this idea, as the general feeling was that *people don't take stereotypes so seriously*. Certainly, very few of the students made the same link that Fennes and Hapgood (1997) make between stereotypes and prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

There are a variety of exercises available to encourage students to see the connection between stereotypes and prejudice. Byram (2002) suggests a text-based approach, using newspaper articles on the theme of immigration, for example, to alert learners to the expressions we use to describe those who are perceived to be different to us. Sercu (1998) also favours a language and culture integrated approach, encouraging learners to discuss the implications for meaning in the change of conjunction in the following sentences: She is nice but she is French; she is nice because she is French; she is nice and she is French.

I have used the following exercise in class with some success. Students are given a list of nationalities (it could be those above), then the list is expanded to include ethnic groups common in Slovenia (Slovene, Roma, Bosnian, Croatian, British). This is the only information initially provided.

<sup>4</sup> Obviously, definitions of stereotypes vary widely. The one we used in class (at [http://the\\_english\\_dept.tripod.com/stereo2.htm](http://the_english_dept.tripod.com/stereo2.htm)) was full, clear and, importantly for our purposes, very explicitly made the link between stereotypes and prejudice.

<sup>5</sup> Our students are certainly not alone in this view. Beeman (1996) cites his own classroom experience of students expressing similar opinions, which he points out is entirely consistent with a number of studies on prejudice.



They are asked to work on their own to answer the following questions and then justify their answers to their neighbours:

Who would you most and least like to:

- have as a neighbour?
- employ in your company?
- go for a coffee with?
- rent an apartment to?
- baby-sit your child?
- have as a student in your class?

This exercise is certainly far from sophisticated (although we could certainly argue that the stereotypes we are dealing with are also fairly crude), yet it seems to work as it forces us to confront head on the stereotypical beliefs we hold.

### 3.4 Task Two: Identifying and challenging Scottish and Slovene stereotypes

The next task requires students to consider Scottish jokes and stereotypes. The first step is a simple gap fill exercise, where one word from the list provided completes the joke. Each joke contains an example of a stereotype about the Scots and the way we are perceived by others. (The word underlined indicates the missing term on the worksheet.)

A Scotsman and woman have been shipwrecked on a desert island. They have very little food left, not a lot of water and the sun is beating down relentlessly.

“Well,” says the husband. “*I suppose it could have been worse.*”

“Aye,” says the wife. “*We might have bought a return ticket.*”

Dr. McGregor was examining the patient. “Well, *I can’t see much wrong with you. It must be due to drink.*” The patient replies understandingly, “*That’s alright, I’ll come back when you’re sober.*”

(This joke was particularly popular among the students.)

A Scotsman was sitting in a bar, knocking back whisky after whisky. The barman asked him if he was alright. “Well,” said the Scotsman, “*drinking is the only way I can get over my accident.*” “What accident was that?” says the barman. The Scotsman tearfully replies “*I knocked one over with my elbow!*”

The students very quickly ascertain that the first joke plays on the Scottish stereotype of being mean with money, the second on their love of alcohol (especially whisky) and the third manages to combine both of those stereotypes.

Once the students had gathered the required information about Scotland, it was time to turn their attention to Slovenia. Here, the jokes which they had previously collected were put into use. Again, a selection of the jokes follows:

(This joke is tricky to translate into English as it plays on the verb *delati* (to work or do) A Bosnian and a Slovene were walking in the desert one day when they fell into a hole. The Slovene says “*No, kaj bomo zdaj delali!?*” (What are we going to do now? Literally-could also mean work)

The Bosnian replies: “Typical Slovene-always thinking about work!” (It is also worth noting here the stereotype of Bosnians being lazy, in stark contrast to the hard-working Slovene.)

A farmer finds a magic lamp one day. Giving it a polish, he releases a good fairy who has been trapped inside. To reward him for releasing her, she grants him three wishes, but to stop him becoming too greedy, anything he wishes for himself his neighbour will enjoy multiplied. His first wish is for a new car, the second for a busty mistress, the third that his cow suffers a mild heart attack!<sup>6</sup>

The students also provided an example of a joke which is actually an animated cartoon entitled ‘*Mi smo Slovenci*’, found on YouTube. The cartoon originates from Croatia, and features a row of figures animated in the style of the Southpark cartoon singing a song (best described as a little risqué), the refrain of which, translated from the Croatian is *We are Slovenes and we live better than you*.

Students concluded that the jokes about Slovenes suggest that they are hard-working, serious, superior and jealous of others.

It is perhaps worth mentioning here that the first observation the students made regarding the jokes was that there were, they felt, very few jokes about Slovenes as a nation and they thought that could be attributed to the fact that Slovenia is still relatively young, and, in some respects, relatively unknown. As one student so succinctly put it:

*Why would anyone make jokes about us if they don't know who or where we are?*

Some in the class felt that the lack of jokes is due to the fact that Slovenes take themselves too seriously and don't like to make jokes at their own expense.

Many of the students said that it was much easier to find jokes about the regions of the country, which perhaps reflects the fact that Slovenia, although small, does have a number of very distinct regions, with their own particular geography, climate and dialect. For that reason, we included some regional jokes in our exercises. Here, the initial task was that the jokes had to be completed by inserting the correct region or inhabitant of that region, for example:

*A man from \_\_\_\_\_ (Gorenjska) is lying on his death bed.*

*He calls out: Son, are you here?*

*The son replies: Yes, father, I am.*

*The man calls out again: Daughter, are you here?*

*The daughter replies: Yes, father, I am.*

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<sup>6</sup> This one of the *naj mu krava crkne!* jokes, often told in a slightly different version to play on the supposed stinginess of the Gorenci. The farmer wishes that the cows of his neighbours should die, and then his own. When the fairy expresses surprise he claims that then no-one will bother him for milk.

*The man calls out a third time: Wife, are you here?*

*The wife replies: Yes, husband, I am.*

*The dying man calls out again: Well, if you are all here with me, then why the bloody hell is the kitchen light on?*

Once the gap-fill task is completed, students are asked to compile a list of adjectives which would describe the regions featured in the jokes: Gorenjska-mean, Ljubljana (the capital)-arrogant, Dolenjska/Štajerska-drunks, Prekmurje-economically backward.

An obvious question followed: do you think that you personally are any of those things? Are these a fair assessment of the Slovene character? Can there be such a thing as a national character? The point here of course being that if these stereotypes don't hold true for Slovenes, then why should they for other nations.

The next step involves a 'round the wall' activity, where different jokes are placed around the room. Here, the content is slightly different. Instead of general stereotypes about the Scots, there are jokes about how the Scots see themselves and other nationalities. The class was given a list of questions to answer as they worked their way around the room to see what they could find out about the following topics:

Scottish views of the English/Irish. (English arrogant, ignorant about Scotland, superior.

Irish often the butt of jokes, not particularly clever, often the fool)

Scottish and American relations. (Americans see themselves as superior to Scots, everything bigger in the U.S.A)

Relations between Edinburgh and Glasgow. (Rivalry between the two cities:

Edinburgh inhabitants considered arrogant, Glaswegians common, Glasgow crime-ridden).

Views of Glasgow and Aberdeen. (Aberdonians meanest people in Scotland).

The character of the typical Scot (Jock). (The innocent, naïve character, perfect foil to the arrogant Englishman, slightly 'daft', plays bagpipes etc...)

How the Scots see themselves. (Ironic top ten reasons to be Scottish-weather, terrible at sports, good at bar fights and drinking, not English...)

The following jokes based on Scottish attitudes toward the English nicely illustrate the type of joke used in the above exercise. The English are often depicted as arrogant, and ignorant about Scotland, yet the jokes often imply that the Scots have a fairly high opinion of themselves, while the second joke here plays on the somewhat frosty relations the two countries enjoy:

When God was making Scotland, he created a country with fabulous scenery, full of lush greenery, deep lochs and high mountains. He created a people of warmth and character, and a language of great beauty and poetry. A Scotsman asks God, "*Oh Lord, what have we done to deserve this?*" God replies, "*Better not thank me yet, just wait until you see the neighbours I'm giving you!*"

A visitor to Scotland was walking through a farmer's field one day when he spotted a pool of water. He was thirsty and began to drink from it, scooping the water out with his hand. When the farmer saw what he was doing, he cried, "Laddie, dinnae drink fae there, it's fu' ae coo keech!" (Mister, don't drink from there, it's full of cow shit!) The visitor didn't understand and called back, "Speak English please, I'm English!" To which the farmer replied, "*Use two hands, you'll get more that way!*"

After we had analysed the Scottish jokes above, students were asked to comment on whether there were Slovene equivalents for the above jokes, and of course there were. The Edinburgh- Glasgow jokes, with Edinburgh as sophisticated/arrogant and Glasgow down-to-earth/uncivilised, translates very neatly to the rivalry enjoyed by Ljubljana and Maribor. Bosnians take on the role of the Irish in Slovene jokes, and the Irish character, stereotypical Paddy, is actually taken by two characters, Mujo and Haso, whose short dialogues (often in a pidgin Slovene, or in Bosnian itself) leave the audience in no doubt as to their rather limited intellect. The character of Jock is Janezek in the Slovene context and he plays the role of the innocent in a number of contexts: at school, with his parents, in encounters with the police. The perhaps rather dubious honour of replacing the English goes to the Croatians, and indeed the above joke about the traveller drinking the water in the farmer's field has an almost direct equivalent in Slovene based on a Croatian eating poisonous mushrooms. The students certainly interpret this as a sign of the times, as according to them, Croatian jokes are a fairly recent phenomenon in Slovene culture. Their emergence reflects the fact that the two countries are not only now independent but that they have enjoyed somewhat frosty relations of late.

As a follow-up to this task, the students were asked to consider the following questions and their responses were discussed in class. Do they think it is in any way significant that, for example, the Scots laugh at the Irish, and the Slovenes at the Bosnians? Does that tell us anything about the nature of jokes or stereotypes themselves? Do they think it weakens or strengthens the stereotypes contained in these jokes to know that every nation has someone who serves as the butt of the joke. (In some of the classes we were fortunate to have Erasmus exchange students from Turkey and Poland who were able to provide an insight into the national and regional stereotypes their jokes are based on.)

There is one further task students should complete, and that is to consider, having heard jokes about Slovenia and the Slovenes (national and regional stereotypes), how they feel about the content of them. The purpose of this task is two-fold: to probe the answers they provided in the first task of defining stereotypes and also to consider, by exploring whether or not they were upset by the jokes, to decide if they would use these jokes in the classroom themselves. Students are asked to place the jokes in the following four categories:

Those which upset/offended them or made them feel uncomfortable.

Those they would tell to friends and/or family.

Those they would use in the classroom.

Those they would not use in the classroom.

The replies here were rather illuminating: the answers students gave here quite clearly display some rather confused thinking as they seem to contradict the answers given in the very first task asking

them to define stereotypes. Instead of dismissing the jokes as harmless (having previously stated that people don't take stereotypes seriously), students reported that some of the jokes may actually upset them. The key factor they identified is who is actually telling the joke. While it seems to be acceptable to tell a joke about Maribor as long as you are not from Ljubljana, by the same token it is fine to tell a joke about Slovenia or the Slovenes as long as you are not Croatian.

While previously claiming that there is an element of truth in stereotypes (*or else why would they exist?*) the students claimed that in some jokes the stereotype was quite clearly not true. Students often brushed aside suggestions that jokes about their particular region could be offensive to them as they *know them not to be true*. Some answers suggest that students apply the rule about whether stereotypes are true or not selectively, conceding that when a negative stereotype applies to them they are less likely to accept it as true.<sup>7</sup>

As for the use of jokes based on stereotypes in the classroom, a range of opinions were expressed. Some of our future teachers felt that they would avoid any kind of jokes based on stereotype, as it is impossible to judge in advance who may be offended by them. This holds especially, they felt, for jokes based on near stereotypes (Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Montenegrin) as Slovene classrooms often consist of learners with close ties to (parents/grandparents and other relatives) neighbouring countries. Some felt more comfortable with jokes based on somehow less controversial stereotypes – judging that it was more appropriate to use those relating to the Scots or the English, or indeed other English-speaking cultures. A very small group of students took a rather more robust approach, stating that it is important that we are all able to laugh at ourselves, and we should not be afraid of using such jokes in the classroom.

This particular debate led in some classes to a wider (and very fruitful) discussion on appropriate humour in the classroom and also more generally to the kind of topics and themes our future teachers felt they would be comfortable using in their own classroom.

### 3.5 Tackling Stereotypes

How then should we challenge the stereotypes we come across in these tasks and in the course of our language learning or teaching? The tasks I have developed for this purpose are based on two main approaches. The first is to 'knock down' the stereotypes with hard facts. There is an incredible amount of information available about Scotland and Slovenia, and I actively encourage our students to explore questions they have with the resources open to them.<sup>8</sup> Another method of tackling these stereotypes is to personalise them. With the use of social networking sites,<sup>9</sup> students are able to access and set up contact with real individuals from practically any country they like, hopefully encouraging them to see past any fixed ideas they may have about attitudes and behaviours.

<sup>7</sup> This is again entirely consistent with studies on stereotype and prejudice as cited by Beeman (1996)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.gov.si> and <http://www.scotland.gov.uk> are both excellent sources of information about Slovenia and Scotland respectively.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.facebook.com> and <http://www.bebo.com> are perhaps the most popular examples of social networking sites at present.

The other approach is to ‘blow up’ the stereotypes rather than knock them down. This is the approach Dlaske (2000) recommends, describing how the stereotype is then hopefully rendered “unreliable”. Here I place the focus mostly on writing tasks. The first one is to write a personal ad for Scots seeking Slovenes e.g. Jock urgently needs a Mojca. Hard-drinking bagpipe playing ginger-bearded hunk seeks...students should complete the task for Mojca. Another writing exercise asks students to write a diary extract for a day in the life of a typical Slovene, trying to incorporate as many stereotypical features as possible (names, food, hobbies, drinks). The Scottish example begins something like this: Jock Mctavish wakes up to the sound of bagpipes, jumps out from underneath his tartan blanket, and goes to the drinks cabinet for his first whisky of the day...

Writing the top ten reasons to be Slovene has proved popular with our classes. Students have to look ironically at why it is fabulous to be a Slovene. A selection of their ideas follows:

*When abroad, you can talk about people standing next to you, cos no-one understands Slovene anyway; Not everyone gets to live in a chicken-shaped country; You never get fed up of saying ‘No, Bratislava is not the capital... Yes, we do have electricity...’*

## 4. Conclusion

While EFL practitioners may be justifiably hesitant about using jokes based on national stereotypes in the classroom, they should certainly not completely rule out their use. As I hope to have demonstrated in this paper, this type of joke provides an ideal platform for the exploration and ultimately the challenging of what can be often very deeply ingrained stereotypes held by our students. The exercises are certainly not designed to somehow completely resolve the problem of stereotypes, however, they do go some way to probing attitudes and beliefs about them and hopefully triggering the process of reconsidering them. Our own experience has certainly shown that students need help and guidance in clarifying their attitude toward stereotypes – not only in terms of coming to an understanding of what they actually are but also in terms of figuring out their somewhat confused and contradictory beliefs about them, in particular about whether or not they are actually harmful. The joke-based exercises also provide our future teachers with a concrete example of a controversial topic (should we use jokes featuring national stereotypes?) and an opportunity to consider how they would deal with it in their own classroom. By being encouraged to confront and reconsider their ideas, our students are certainly taking a step in the right direction toward raising their cultural awareness and eventually becoming the type of best teacher Byram describes.

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## An evaluation of the school-based teaching practice in the training of EFL teachers by the English department of the Faculty of arts in Ljubljana

### Summary

In the introduction, the article outlines the context of the practical EFL teacher training at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana and provides the general rationale for this component of teacher education programs. The article then focuses on the results of an ongoing evaluation of the school-based teaching practice program for future EFL teachers (which included over 500 participants) from its inception to the present. The instruments used in the evaluation were questionnaires filled in by all the participating students and their mentors, and essay reports written by the students after each of the two obligatory practice weeks. The quantitative and qualitative data complement each other and confirm that school-based teaching practice is of key importance for shaping future language teachers. The large majority of students and mentors judge their practice teaching experience as positive. An active encounter with their future professional reality is also a major milestone in the students' process of professional identification. The study also points out some aspects of the school-based teaching practice which should be further developed. Unfortunately, as can be seen from the conclusion, the current promises / the reality of the Bologna reform do not provide much cause for optimism.

**Key words:** school-based teaching practice, practical EFL teacher training, students, mentors

## Ovrednotenje pedagoške prakse na Oddelku za anglistiko in amerikanistiko Filozofske fakultete v Ljubljani

### Povzetek

Članek uvodoma predstavi kontekst praktičnega usposabljanja učiteljev angleščine na Filozofski fakulteti v Ljubljani ter na splošno utemelji pomen te sestavine študijskih programov izobraževanja učiteljev. V nadaljevanju so predstavljeni rezultati evalvacije sistematičnega izvajanja pedagoške prakse za bodoče učitelje angleščine od njegove uvedbe dalje, s preko 500 udeleženci. Evalvacija je potekala v obliki vprašalnikov, ki so jih izpolnili vsi študentje in njihovi mentorji, ter prostih esejskih poročil študentov po vsakem od dveh tednov obvezne pedagoške prakse. Kvantitativni in kvalitativni podatki se medsebojno dopolnjujejo in potrjujejo izreden pomen praktičnega usposabljanja za oblikovanje bodočih učiteljev angleščine. Velika večina študentov in mentorjev svoje izkušnje namreč ocenjuje pozitivno, za študente pa je vodeno soočenje s poklicno realnostjo tudi ključen mejnik v procesu identifikacije s svojim bodočim poklicem. Evalvacija je pokazala tudi na nekatere vidike pedagoške prakse, ki bi jih kazalo v prihodnosti še razviti in izboljšati, vendar, kot je razvidno iz zaključka, 'bolonjski' obeti žal niso velik razlog za optimizem.

**Ključne besede:** pedagoška praksa, praktično usposabljanje učiteljev angleščine, študentje, mentorji, evalvacija

# An evaluation of the school-based teaching practice in the training of EFL teachers by the English department of the Faculty of arts in Ljubljana

## 1. Introduction

The article presents, discusses, and evaluates one of the most important components of the pre-service training of EFL teachers, i.e. the teaching practice.

The field of second language learning and teaching has seen in recent years frequent and at times drastic changes to which both pre- and in-service teacher training should conform. However, research findings show that in Slovenia this is not the case, as there is a huge discrepancy between education programmes for future EFL teachers and their actual needs (see Cvetek 2005b).

As we live in an age of information overkill it is increasingly difficult to keep up to date with methodological claims and counterclaims calling teachers to follow them. As a consequence of all this, there is much understandable confusion. For some teachers this steady bombardment of information is depressing; for others, however, is a stimulating challenge. Whatever our response, this is most likely the climate in which the next generation of language teachers will learn their trade. Emphasis in both pre-service and in-service teacher training should therefore be on helping equip the prospective and/or practising teacher as effectively as possible to survive and succeed in that climate.

A step towards more practical pre-service training of EFL teachers was made in the academic year 2000/01, when the teaching practice at the *English department of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana* was introduced for the first time. The insiders would agree that, for the Faculty of Arts, that was a historic turning point, an event of such importance that it could have been accompanied by a rephrased Armstrong's famous utterance he used when stepping on the Moon: "That's one small step for a future teacher, one giant step for the teaching profession". Thereby, an important step was made in the direction of integrating the two basic ingredients of professionalism – theory and practice.

Developing professional competence involves teachers in examining and developing their "experiential knowledge" (their opinions and beliefs about learning and teaching based on their own experience of language classrooms), and extending their "received knowledge" (for example, their knowledge of theories of language, of the psychology of language learning, and of opinions, beliefs and practices which are different from their own).

For two decades or so teacher training has been under a strong influence of the so-called reflective model which encourages teachers to explore their teaching in order to gain awareness of their beliefs and practices. Today, practically all (pre- and in-service) teacher training models take a holistic approach to teacher development built on the notion of the teacher as critical and

reflective thinker. The usual argument is that teacher education needs to engage teachers not merely in the mastery of techniques, but in an exploration of the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that underlie their teaching practices: self-reflection as the route to self-development.

Teachers do more than decide on the content and structure of teaching. They also decide on how the second language will be taught. They provide a methodology. It is by means of their chosen methodology that teachers seek to manage the process of language learning.

All teachers have a theory of language learning. That is, they act in accordance with a set of principles about the way language learners behave. This theory, however, may not be explicit. In many cases the teacher's views about language learning will be covert and will only be implicit in what she/he does. The teaching practice helps future teachers make their theory of language learning explicit. It is based on the conviction that teachers will be better off with an explicit set of ideas about language learning. It is only when principles are made explicit that they can be examined with a view to amending or replacing them. Teachers who operate in accordance with implicit beliefs may be not only uncritical but also resistant to change. Teachers who make explicit the principles by which they teach are able to examine those principles critically.

Language teaching has always had a theoretical side and a practical side. *Theory* can be considered from two perspectives: it can mean the collective theoretical knowledge of the profession, which we can call *Theory*, with a capital *T*. It can also mean the personal constructed theories of the individual which we can call *theory*, with a small *t* (Malderez and Bodoczky 1999, 13). In English language teacher education, this *Theory* (i.e. knowledge of and about the subject, and some theoretical pedagogy) is mainly taught at universities. It is assumed that this capital *T* Theory can then be transferred into practice which will be learnt on the job, often only after graduation. The problem is that this transfer very often fails to occur, as the connections between the Theory and the realities of classroom practice are unclear.

Discussions about the optimal ratio between *Theory* (and *theories* with a small *t*) and practice will never cease, and there can be no simple answer to this question. A teacher's expertise, without doubt, consists of both *Theory* (and *theories* with a small *t*) and *practice*, as they are both integral parts of the same skill. This means that classroom events will inform personal theories, and *theories* and *Theory* will inform classroom practice. In this view of initial teacher education, the carefully designed practicum has a vital part to play when it comes to the dynamic interplay of practice and theory.

The teaching practice is, then, a pedagogic framework that helps student-teachers develop the capacity to self-observe, self-analyze, and self-evaluate their teaching – the so called *reflective ability*. It is during the teaching practice period that student-teachers need to establish a reflective habit. Establishing reflection as a habit means learning the skills of reviewing which include noticing, interpreting and evaluating, as well as developing the subsequent skills of planning and selecting. All these skills depend on consciously linking interpretations of classroom events with personally constructed theories. In this view, the teaching practice within pre-service

teacher training represents the central link between theory and practice as it is only here that the principle of “theorizing practice or practising theory” can be applied (Kumaravadivelu 1999; Trappes-Lomax and McGrath 1999, 33).

## **2. Evaluation**

### **2.1 Aim of the Evaluation**

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the organization and implementation of the two-week school-based teaching practice at the Department of English and American Studies at the Faculty of Arts (University of Ljubljana) between 2002 and 2006. The evaluation tried to determine how satisfied the students and the mentors are with respect to the school-based teaching practice within the pre-service language teacher training framework and how the outcomes of the experience are viewed upon. The evaluation was based on qualitative and quantitative data.

### **2.2 Respondents**

The evaluation comprised all students of both single and double major teacher training tracks, who followed their fourth year of English Language and Literature Study Programme at the Faculty of Arts (University of Ljubljana) and participated in their two-week school-based teaching practice between 2002 and 2006. Additionally, the evaluation included all their mentors. The final evaluation sample consisted of 290 students and 325 mentors. The mentors' sample consisted of those mentors who participated in the training seminar for mentors as well as those who did not attend the seminar.

### **2.3 Instruments**

The data were collected by means of questionnaires filled in by all participating students and their mentors, and by means of essay reports written by the students after each of the two obligatory practice weeks. The quantitative part of the evaluation was based on the analysis of two different questionnaires designed for the students and the mentors respectively (Cencič and Cencič 1994). Both questionnaires included questions related to the students' and mentors' experience with respect to the implementation of the school-based teaching practice. Also, in the questionnaires students and mentors were given an opportunity to make comments and suggestions for the improvement of the practice. The questionnaires mainly comprised closed-ended questions (dichotomous questions, multiple choice questions, rating, Likart scale). In each questionnaire, the last question was open-ended.

#### **2.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

The evaluation questionnaires were filled in immediately after the practice. The students handed in their questionnaires together with their teaching practice portfolios. The same applied to essay reports. The data were collected between 2002 and 2006, and statistically processed (descriptive statistics).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Analysis of Students' Responses

According to the course requirements, each student is to complete a two-week, school-based teaching practice, one week in a primary school and another in a secondary school. The majority of the students (60%) believe the length of the practice is adequate. However, there is still a high proportion of the students that feels the practice is too short (37%). Although it seems the students are satisfied with the length of the practice, it should be pointed out that Slovenia lags behind the modern development in this field in Europe and the world (see Cvetek 2005a).

The student's teaching practice can take place at any time during their 4th year of studies in agreement with their mentor. The teaching practice represents an additional workload and is not adjusted to the student's timetable at the department. Thus, in order to fulfil the teaching practice requirement, students miss out some of their regular lectures, seminars and practical language classes. Despite this, it seems that the majority of the students (75%) manage to integrate the practice in the rest of their study requirements. The majority of the students complete the practice during their winter holidays, during a time when there are no examinations or even later, in their graduation year.

One of the main aims of the teaching practice is to progressively introduce and prepare students for their future work in the classroom and enable them to understand a wider context of their future professional career. For students the practice also represents an ideal opportunity to critically reflect upon their future profession. Only on the basis of experience (practice) and reflection on that experience can students decide whether they want to perform the job of a teacher or not. The practice made the majority of the students (65%) passionate and enthusiastic about the teaching profession. However, one third of the students (34%) still wonder whether they want to become language teachers.

Mentors play a key role in the implementation of the teaching practice. Students choose their mentors on their own or ask their former English language teachers to act as mentors. The results of the questionnaires show the students are highly satisfied with their teacher mentors (87%). Mentors are experienced teachers and usually represent the students' first contact with real teaching. At such work, experience, knowledge, patience, sensitivity, and, above all, enthusiasm to work with students are expected from a mentor. During the teaching practice the mentor's main roles are to guide, encourage, observe, analyse and help the student, listen and talk to him/her, plan and execute model lessons, etc. The majority of the students (64%) believe their mentors helped them, but did not limit their autonomy. Also, one third of the students (31%) feel their mentors encouraged and guided them. In some cases it can be observed that the students were left to their own, were in want of help and were not provided the right kind of assistance, feedback or guidance. A mentor's work is highly demanding and complex. It is thus of utmost importance for him/her to be properly trained and ready and willing to perform the work of a mentor.

The teaching practice met the expectations of more than a half of the students (52%). Nevertheless, it can be noted that 47% of the students think the practice only partly answered their expectations. The majority of the students (65%) experienced no problems during their teaching practice. Less than a third of the students (29%) confronted minor problems and 6% of the students faced complicated problems. Minor problems involved mentor's disorganization, scheduling the mentor's and the student's commitments, lack of feedback, problems with timing, problems with the adaptation to the pupils' level of knowledge, portfolio design, variety of methods, filling out forms, lesson planning, ICT use, and so on. Among the major problems identified are scheduling the mentor's and the student's commitments, mentor's lack of understanding, lack of feedback, administration load and handling discipline.

Students complete their teaching practice in two parts, one week at a primary school and another at a secondary school, but usually not successively. The majority of the students (61%) believe the first week of their practice strongly influences the second week; 23% of the students think this influence is profound. On the basis of a mentor's average weekly teaching load (which is 20 lessons), the minimum teaching practice requirement for a student amounts to 13 lessons (see Skela et al. 2003). The majority of the students (73%) feel such a practice load is tiring and demanding, but manageable. Only 11% of the students believe they were overloaded and experienced a very tiring teaching practice. The latter can be ascribed to the problems related to scheduling the mentor's and the student's commitments.

During their teaching practice, the students were given several opportunities to get to know and familiarize themselves with different school characteristics and activities. The majority of the students became acquainted with the organization of instruction, paper work and class leadership. Also, the mentors introduced the students into the ability grouping classes and enabled them to participate in special excursions/days (e.g. fieldwork day, sports day). Some of the students also gained insights into additional and remedial classes, various extra-curricular activities, competitions, consultation hours, school newspapers, working with children with special needs, school concerts and other projects, testing and assessment, etc.

The students feel that the teaching practice focuses too much on portfolio design (e.g. filling out various forms), scheduling the mentor's and the student's commitments, writing detailed lesson plans, lesson observation and, occasionally, depends too much on the mentor. Also, students believe there was not enough teaching, time for discussions, time for thorough reflection about planning and execution of the lessons, observation of different lessons and several teachers, contact with other teachers, practical advice from the mentors, feedback, etc. In addition, some students encountered problems, for which they had not been prepared (e.g. integration of children with special needs, discipline problems, ICT use).

An open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire invited the students to write comments and provide suggestions for further improvement of teaching practice. The majority of students praised and spoke highly of the necessity and usefulness of the practice. The suggestions for improvements were the following:



- teaching practice should last longer and should be extended over several years of studies,
- teaching practice should gain the status of the 'obligatory/compulsory' part in the pre-service teacher training track,
- paper work (e.g. filling out forms, writing essays, reports) should be reduced to a minimum,
- teaching practice could be carried out in pairs,
- teaching practice could be carried out with more than one English language teacher, i.e. more than one mentor could be affiliated with one student,
- the pre-service teacher training staff at the English Department should provide more information about planning lessons, up-to-date changes occurring in schools (e.g. ability grouping, integration of children with special needs, paper work), and
- the English Department should organize several debates and devote more time to reflection upon the practice when the students return from the two-week school-based practice.

## 3.2 Analysis of Mentors' Responses

At the Department students choose their own mentors for the teaching practice. These are usually their former English language teachers in primary and secondary schools. Every year, the department organizes mentor training courses. In the course of the evaluation, it was considered important to seek mentors' opinion as well. In this part of the paper, the analysis of the mentors' questionnaires is presented.

Regarding the length of the teaching practice, the mentors share their opinion with the students. The majority of the mentors (73%) believe that the length of the practice is adequate. 26% of the mentors feel it is too short. Also, 99% of the mentors consider the teaching practice necessary and useful.

A mentor's work is highly demanding and complex. A trainee linked to an experienced mentor represents an additional commitment for the mentor. That is why the mentors were asked to evaluate how successful they were in scheduling the mentor's and the student's commitments. More than a half of the mentors (51%) answered that they experienced some problems which were not of major importance. 40% of the mentors had no problems at all, however, 9% of the mentors feel the trainee required a lot of additional commitment and their free time.

The mentors tried to involve the students into every day school life. The main aim of this was to make students acquainted with school work and extra curricular activities. The majority of the mentors familiarized their trainees with additional and remedial classes, consultation hours and parent-teacher meetings. Less than a third of the students (29%) did not have a chance to familiarize themselves with any of the activities. Additionally, some of the students were given the opportunity to participate in class hours, various competition preparations, ability grouping classes, assessment period meetings, project work, etc.

One of the key mentor roles is to advise the student and guide them through their individual teaching (e.g. telling the trainee what to teach, commenting on their lesson plan, suggesting changes, ironing out problems). The majority of the mentors (53%) told the students what to teach and gave them the material to teach. Only a minority of the mentors allowed students to choose their own topics/themes for the lesson. The latter situation results in the fact that teachers/mentors have to follow a prescribed syllabus through the year and cannot deviate from the plan too much.

Before the actual teaching, the mentor gives considerable help and support to the student by advising them what and how to teach and providing feedback after the teaching. The time during planning and feedback is critical for the students since they can reflect on the planning and teaching experience. The majority of the mentors allocated on average at least half an hour time to the trainee before their individual teaching. Only a small percentage (3%) of the mentors devoted each student less than ten minutes prior to their individual teaching. A similar result can be observed with the time allocated after each individual teaching, i.e. during the feedback session.

The mentors believe that the students feel highly motivated and enthusiastic about the teaching practice and are aware of its importance for their future professional career. 83% of the mentors believe the students to be greatly interested in all the activities performed at school. Nevertheless, 17% of the students only showed interest in their minimum requirements. The latter can be ascribed to the fact that some of the students do not demonstrate interest for the teaching profession or the teaching practice, as it is considered an unofficial part of the studies. The practice may also represent too heavy a work load for them.

The relationship between the teacher and the mentor is of utmost importance and it affects the student's process of professional identification and their ultimate choice about their future professional career. The majority of the mentors (87%) believe they had very good, close and solid relationships with the students. None of the mentors assessed the relationship with their trainee as bad or impersonal.

The mentors believe that the students are qualified and trained for teaching. The majority of the mentors (92%) feel the students have adequate knowledge and skills to perform teaching duties. 8% of the mentors believe the students have adequate knowledge and skills, but lack practice. Regarding the elements of teacher training, the mentors believe that the students feel highly confident and competent as far as the content of instruction (i.e. language) and communication and interaction with pupils are concerned. However, the mentors are convinced that the students lack knowledge and skills in the field of pedagogy/psychology (43%) and teaching (40%). The latter two components are given least attention in the English study programme. Additionally, the mentors believe the students should improve in handling discipline, dealing with children with special needs and the use of ICT. Despite all these weaknesses, the majority of the mentors (85%) felt that the students made considerable progress.

The mentors evaluate the two-week school-based teaching practice as positive. They are also willing to work with additional trainees in the future. It seems that the practice exerts positive influence on the mentors and the students. The majority of the mentors (84%) feel the trainee and the trainee's practice itself influenced their work. The mentors believe that due to this experience they critically examine and reflect upon their work more often and more thoroughly, they become more critical towards their teaching, they are given a chance to see new methods/approaches, they are able to exchange experiences, views and reflections, and they can make improvements with regard to better organization of their own commitments and work.

Despite the considerable impact of the practice on mentors, they think there is still room for improvement. The mentors believe they lack time for guidance in the planning period and feedback sessions after the teaching. They also feel overloaded with regard to administration during the practice and feel that their work is not fairly evaluated and rewarded/remunerated. In order to improve the teaching practice at the Department the mentors made some comments and suggestions. They believe the department could extend the teaching practice, minimise administration, enable students to become attached to more than one mentor and properly evaluate the mentors' work.

### 3.3 Analysis of essay reports

The reflection essays / essay reports that students were required to produce after their teaching practice were not guided in terms of content – students could choose any aspect of their experience to reflect on and discuss. The first aim of analysing their reports was thus to establish which aspects of teaching practice were chosen for discussion the most frequently at the level of the entire research population. In addition to finding out which aspects of teaching practice students find the most important we obtained information on the effects and success of the teaching practice which significantly complements the findings of the quantitative part of the evaluation.

The most prominent theme in the essay reports was the student's personal experiencing and evaluation of the experience as a whole. It is obvious that a student's first practical encounter with their future profession is a very emotional experience. Sabina's essay contains a typical testimony to this as she writes that after her first lesson and discussing it with her mentor "The teaching practice continued in approximately the same pattern, with a feeling of victory at the end of each lesson, and disappointment and puzzlement following shortly after". Many essays begin with descriptions of fear and insecurity before the teaching practice week, and later describe moments of relief and excitement when experiencing success, and occasionally also sadness when experiencing failure. The major role of emotion in the first teaching practice is evident also from the titles that students give their essays, such as "It's challenging!", "A pleasant surprise", "A week in purgatory". A second major theme is closely related to the emotional aspect of the trainee's experience: a shift of identity set into motion by moving from the role of a learner into the role of a teacher. Many students wrote something like Maja, who did her teaching practice at her old high school: "At the beginning I did not feel comfortable in this new situation. Sitting in a staff room having a cup of coffee with all those awe-inspiring faces from only a couple of years ago

required a new perspective on my side. For the first couple of days I had a feeling I am stuck in a limbo, not a student and not a teacher". This transitional period is an inevitable and crucial part of the development of a future teacher, but the initial feeling of "split identity" must sooner or later develop into a sense described very nicely by Martina: "I was standing in front of the class realizing that I am transforming into someone who is able to teach others".

In the formation of a future teacher's professional and also personal self-image a key role is played by the individual's mentor. Many students at least mention their mentor in their essays, and some chose the relationship with their mentor or the analysis of the mentor as a role model as the main topic of their essay. Most of the reported experiences are positive; the mentor was a model for the student in terms of the apprenticeship model of professional training (imitation of the mentor's techniques and behaviours). Mentors also provided valuable instructions and feedback, and some students reported that they saw their mentors as a source of motivation and inspiration.

Many students state that despite having observed their teachers from the perspective of a learner for years, they now saw their mentors / the teacher in a new light. They became aware of the scope of a teacher's professional activities; mostly students noted that a teacher's work is much harder and time-consuming than they had previously thought. They also became aware of the scope of knowledge and competences a good teacher needs, and how important personality qualities are to good teaching. Davor, for example, gave his essay the telling title "Being interesting is a tough gig". Many students wondered what the role of a teacher is in the first place. Some for example realized that nowadays a teacher is no longer the main source of knowledge, as was the case in the past, but should be more like a guide to a learner in the search for knowledge. One of the students describes an excellent example of cognitive conflict, which is crucial to effective learning, and can only be triggered (and overcome) when a learner is faced with practice. She writes that while working with learners she realized that the teacher cannot possibly know the answers to all questions, and that, what is more, that is not even necessary. (Many essays show that students tend to ascribe to the traditional belief that the teacher as an expert should be able to immediately answer any question learners might have or else they have failed in their professional role.) Different students formed somewhat different conceptions of the teacher's role during their practice, but it is interesting that many of them focus on the role of the teacher as shaper of learners' personalities. They find this goal more important than making sure that the learners learn to speak English. Katja, for example, says: "Being a teacher you do have a great impact on your students' lives. You can motivate them to become the best person they can be. On the other hand you can make their lives miserable and have the power to hurt them quite a lot."

It is true that such in-depth reflection is only found in a small number of the essay reports, which is understandable since in their first two weeks in the role of a teacher trainees mostly spend all their energy on executing lessons. Only a few manage to realize already within the first week that they should gradually focus less on themselves (their performance and the many cognitive constraints of executing a lesson) and more on the learners, their responses and needs. Many essays show that students, especially at the beginning of their teaching practice, feel the need to be in complete control of the lesson. This is understandable since they are in a challenging new situation and

control gives them a sense of security. Some students, however, wrote that they realized through the week that complete control is neither possible nor obligatory – it is more important to be flexible. For a young teacher to fully develop this quality, much longer is needed, of course. It is nevertheless encouraging that several students report having made considerable progress even within one week. Špela, for example, says: “With the help of my mentor’s instructions I gradually improved some weaknesses in my teaching from one lesson to another”. Some students even seem to have made progress independently, without particular guidance from the mentor.

There are also other fairly prominent topics in the essay reports, such as the problem of establishing authority in the classroom, the problem of learner motivation (existing motivation and how a teacher can create / increase it) and discipline. Students mostly relate motivation to the teacher’s methodological approach (type of learning activities and motivational value of classroom materials), while authority and discipline are related to the teacher’s personality. Another issue is the level of difficulty. It is understandable that an absolute beginner needs experience and time to pinpoint the level of English vocabulary appropriate for a certain grade of primary school, how to ensure that learners will understand the teacher’s target language talk, what it takes for them to comprehend a certain grammatical rule, etc. Mostly students are aware of this problem even before the beginning of their practice and employ certain strategies to solve the problem (they describe, for example, how they focused on the mentor’s talk during lesson observation so they could later imitate it, or learning through trial and error).

In terms of content and didactics, students mostly reflected on the planning and execution of lessons, focusing on methods, with very little mention of learning aims or content. There is practically no discussion in the essay reports on English as a language system or different aspects of language use, but there is much mention of the student’s practical target language competence and the teacher’s target language use in the classroom. The problems students cite are mostly in the area of adapting teacher talk to learner level (this is a challenge both when learners’ English is lower and when it is higher (!) than that of the trainee), the ratio between Slovenian and English and code-switching in the classroom, and communicative functions specific to language teaching (vocabulary explanation, elicitation etc.)

In terms of general educational issues some students write about how the school was organized and equipped, the state of the Slovenian school system and school reforms. The most frequently mentioned novelties are ability streaming, the introduction of the 9-year primary school and integration of students with special needs (these are topics that are not dealt with in their pre-service courses). Since students take one week of teaching practice at a primary school and another at a secondary school, they of course often compare the two contexts. This, admittedly, mostly resulted in some degree of over-generalizing their experience, but is positive nevertheless since it encouraged the students to consider their career plans (which level would they be more suited to teach at).

A very frequent theme overall was: “Am I a suitable person for the teaching profession?” or “Is teaching a profession for me?”. Irena entitled her essay: “Me – a teacher?”, and another student concluded her essay with: “Now my doubts are gone.” Regardless of whether the essay begins

with “I have always wanted to be a teacher”, most students conclude it with the conviction that this is the right profession for them. This is a key function of the teaching practice within a pre-service teacher education program. In fact it leads to the question: if the encounter with practice is the experience that forces each and every student to consider whether they are on the right study/career track, would it not make sense to ensure that this happens at least in a minimal form in their 1st year of studies, when they can still opt easily for another field, and not as late as in their 4th year or even after that? It is encouraging to see, however, that after the teaching practice many students understand how much learning still lies ahead (“I have a lot more to learn”, “I know that this is just the beginning”, “I hope I will be able to attend training events when I get a full time job”, and similar statements.).

The analysis of over 400 essay reports in which students reflected on their first practical encounter with the reality of their future profession can be concluded by saying that this experience is very important and encouraging for most students. Despite the fact that students have very different personalities and do their teaching practice under sometimes very different circumstances, some general effects inevitably take place. Each and every student gains certain realizations and skills, and also transforms as a person in ways that university studies cannot make possible. Even a superbly designed and learner-centred university course can only simulate reality at best, but it can never have the cognitive and affective potential needed for experiential learning that is inherent to a real situation in practice.

## 4. Conclusion

The results stemming from the ongoing evaluation study of the teaching practice in the English Department at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana show its overwhelmingly positive impact on student-teachers’ professional development. It can be concluded that both the student-teachers and the mentors are satisfied with the teaching practice, and that they firmly believe it is an indispensable ingredient of pre-service teacher education as it gives the student teachers good opportunities for practical applications of what they have learnt during their theoretical studies, and thus developing their capacity “to theorise from practice and practise what they theorise”. The teaching practice has, according to the results, a positive impact on the work of the mentors as well. We can establish that the carefully designed teaching practice contributes significantly to the quality of foreign language teaching in schools in general.

The world seems to be shrinking very rapidly as international barriers break down and people can more easily come into contact with other cultures and languages through travel, communication or new technology. This globalization of the world is a modern and sometimes controversial trend which looks as though it may be here to stay. Europe is the meeting point for a variety of multicultural and multilingual societies. This diversity creates a special need for communication, mutual understanding and tolerance between people. Effective foreign language learning and teaching is, therefore, at the heart of current thinking and discussion in Europe about foreign language teaching at school. Governments are keen to encourage their citizens to have foreign language competence for their country’s economic benefit. In Slovenia, too, this surge of interest

in and need for foreign language learning has led to the many reforms carried out in this area over a period of the last two decades or so. Although these changes (e.g. introducing early foreign language learning) bear witness to the steadily increasing importance attached by the national policy to the teaching of foreign languages, an accompanying pre-service teacher education has been largely missing. In other words, university pre-service teacher training programmes do not take any of these changes into account. In Slovenia, teacher training has not yet been given special priority by the Government and Ministry of Education.

The analyses we have been carrying out within the practicum reveal that most student-teachers emphasize the importance of linking *curricular areas* (i.e. the traditional “professional subject” disciplines of the English language and literature) with the *Theory and Practice of Teaching and Learning*, i.e. the educational or teacher-training subjects. Student-teacher often criticize the “professional subject” courses for being, in terms of content, irrelevant, for their future career and often for being carried out in a boring way as the traditional lecture mode is still the prevailing way of teaching.

Unfortunately, the reality of the Bologna reform does not provide much cause for optimism. The new English Language Study Programme (pedagogical route) that has undergone the Bologna educational reform, is still based primarily on the traditional “professional subject” or “scientific” disciplines (i.e. the study of language and the study of literature), without taking into account the actual nature and needs of the profession for which it has been established. This is not surprising if we know that the new programme is not based on any (thorough) analysis of foreign language teachers’ needs in contemporary society.

During the last fifteen years or so, there has been a strong shift in teacher training from the traditional *applied science model* to the so-called *reflective model* which encourages teachers to explore their teaching in order to gain awareness of their beliefs and practices. This implies experiential learning and action research within the environment where learning and teaching is actually happening, i.e. in the classroom. In this view, the aim of a pre-service teacher education programme is not only to gain (theoretical) knowledge in curricular areas, but to help student-teachers develop their teaching skills, knowledge and attitudes so that they can become more effective and professional teachers. The main emphasis in a training programme for language teachers, whose influence will continue for several decades should, therefore, be placed on the *Theory and Practice of Teaching and Learning*, as this would open up new vistas for their *reflective* approach to classroom learning and teaching.



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

Summary

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

**Key words:** corpus linguistics, EFL, direct speech

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

Povzetek

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

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

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

## 1. Introduction

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

## 2. Background

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

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

### 3. EFL textbook grammar and real language use

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

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

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

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

## 4. The present study

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

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

Based on this background, the research questions for the present study are the following:

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

## 5. A survey of EFL textbooks

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

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

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

Table 1: Overview of EFL textbooks used in Croatian schools

## 5.1 Way to go 5–Students’ Book

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

“I’m tired,” she says to Peter.  
 She tells Peter (that) she is tired.  
 She tells him (that) she is tired.

(*Way to go 5*, 83)

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

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

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

(Way to go 5, 111)

## 5.2 New Headway-English Course

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

“We’ve met before”  
She said they’d met before.

(New Headway, 142)

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

## 5.3 Matrix-Intermediate Student’s Book

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



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

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

Friend: What did she want to know?

José Luis: She asked me what my job was and if any of us had got money problems. She wanted to know why we had come here and whether we were going to make Ireland our home.

Friend: You were talking a long time.

José Luis: Yes, she’s going to write an article about us. She also asked me if we’d found life difficult when we first arrived. And she wanted to know if the people had been friendly when we first arrived.

(*New Opportunities*, 108)

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

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

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

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

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

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

\* *It was like yeah, right, what else was new.* (Script)

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

## 6. Method

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> I am greatly indebted to Enikő Csomay for allowing me to use this corpus for my analysis.

verbs were searched in the two sub-corpora using corpus analysis toolkit *AntConc 3.2.1*. The output from the searches was then manually sorted in order to eliminate all the instances that were not indirect reported speech. The frequency of occurrence of the selected reporting verbs in the two corpora was normalized to occurrences per 10,000 words to allow for comparisons across corpora of unequal size. Both corpora were untagged.

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

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Frequency

A search using corpus analysis toolkit *AntConc 3.2.1* produced the results in Table 2 and Table 3.

Verbs	Occurrences	Frequency (per 10,000 words)
say	228	45.6
tell	19	3.8
ask	10	2
agree	4	0.8
suggest	4	0.8
explain	3	0.6
promise	3	0.6

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 7.2 Tense combinations in indirect reported speech

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

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

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

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

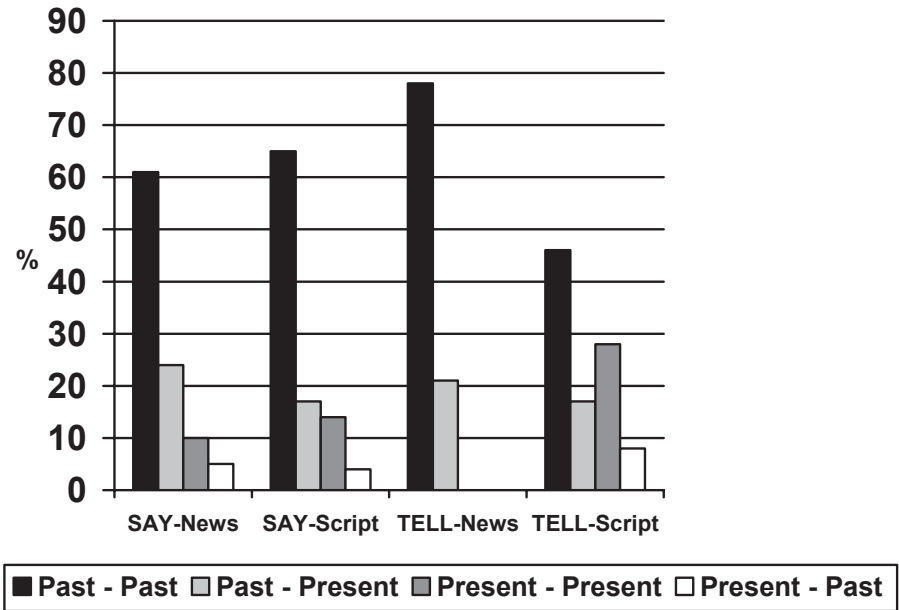


Figure1: Distribution of the four tense combinations in indirect reported speech with “say” and “tell” as reporting verbs, in two registers: News and Script

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

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

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

## 7.3 Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

## 8. Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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## APPENDIX 1: EFL textbooks

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**IV.**

**TRANSLATION STUDIES**



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# The Challenge of Translating Children's Literature: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Translated by Vladimir Nabokov

## Summary

In the article the author focuses on Vladimir Nabokov's translation of Lewis Carroll's novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, made in 1923. The main intention of the article is to analyze Nabokov's translation strategies of domestication, realized in the text as substitution and localization, and to explain possible reasons for his decision in favour of almost complete Russification of the original. It is possible that Nabokov considered children's attitude towards the final result as the most important part of the translation process. Thus, he used domesticated strategies to transfer for Russian children the humour, the originality and brightness of the paradoxical and attractive world of Lewis Carroll, his sense of the absurd and his amazing gift for games of logic and language, providing a recognizable and familiar atmosphere for the readers. Undoubtedly, his young Russian readers were able to identify themselves with the story and to comprehend the complex world created by Lewis Carroll. On the other hand, Nabokov refuses to oversimplify his translation or to patronize its young audience through simplistic translation solutions.

**Key words:** Nabokov, Alice, Carroll, domesticated translation, children's literature

## Prevajanje otroške literature kot izziv: prevod Alice v čudežni deželi Vladimirja Nabokova

### Povzetek

Avtorica analizira prevod pravljice Lewisa Carrolla *Alica v Čudežni Deželi*, izpod peresa ruskega pisatelja in prevajalca Vladimirja Nabokova. Prevladujoča prevajalska metoda Nabokova je metoda podomačitve (*domestication*), ki predpostavlja visoko stopnjo prirejanja in prilagoditve tujega konteksta kulturnemu okolju ciljnega kroga bralcev. Glavni cilj razprave je ugotoviti in pojasniti, na kakšen način in s pomočjo katerih prevajalskih strategij je Nabokov priredil viktorijansko pravljico, da je postala razumljiva in zanimiva za ruske otroke. Priredba izvirnega besedila Nabokova vključuje med drugim zamenjavo parodij na znane angleške pesmi z njegovimi lastnimi parodijami na klasične ruske pesmi, nadomestitev kulturnih prvin, prilagoditev stilističnega nivoja in spremembo angleških osebnih imen. Avtorica namerava pojasniti, zakaj se je Nabokov odločil prav za metodo podomačitve, čeprav je v svojih kasnejših razpravah nedvoumno dajal prednost metodi potujitve (*foreignization*), ki jo je sam uspešno uporabil pri prevodu *Jevgenija Onjegina*.

**Ključne besede:** Nabokov, Alice, Carroll, podomačitev prevodov, otroška književnost

# The Challenge of Translating Children's Literature: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Translated by Vladimir Nabokov

## 1. Vladimir Nabokov: An American Russian

Vladimir Nabokov was one of the most imaginative and accomplished writers of the twentieth century and a rare example of an eminent writer in two languages, Russian and English. He wrote seventeen novels and some sixty-five stories. Many of his works exist in double versions, Russian-English or English-Russian, which he translated himself.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that Nabokov achieved even greater fame in English, which was not his native tongue, and he was one of the few Russian translators who mastered translation in three languages – English, Russian, and French – with equal facility. Undoubtedly, only a few translators in the twentieth century possessed his cultivated translation sensibility. Being also a scientist, Vladimir Nabokov left his followers not only his translations but also his essays and research about the nature and art of translation. Since the 1980s the number of Nabokov scholars has constantly been increasing.

Nabokov's novels, poems and autobiographical works are profoundly researched and analyzed, but the question of Nabokov as a translator still remains relatively unresearched. Probably, his own thoughts about the nature and art of translation may help to highlight this side of his creativity. The translation heritage of Nabokov is enormous: the novel *Colas Breugnon* by Romain Rolland was translated into Russian as *Nikolka Persik*<sup>2</sup> (*Nikolka the Peach*); *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, translated as *Ania v strane chudes* (*Ania in the Land of Wonders*); the author's translations of his own novels *Pnin* and *Lolita* into Russian; English translations of Russian Romantics such as Pushkin, Lermontov, Tiutchev and Fet and later also Mandelstam and Hodasevich. From English to Russian, Nabokov translated Shakespeare, Byron, Keats and Tennyson, and from the French he translated Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

Significantly, even those who did not associate Nabokov with mastery of translation were familiar with his famous translation of Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin* with detailed comments which not only revealed a detailed picture of the great Russian poet's world, but also specified some solutions to the most difficult translation problems.

Obviously, the major problems of translations and different translation methods interested Nabokov throughout his life. He often commented on his own works and made analysis of his own mistakes and inventions.

One of his most famous works devoted to translator's mistakes is the article "*The Art of Translation*" (*Iskustvo Perevoda*) from the collection *Lectures on Russian Literature*. The article contains the classification of three main mistakes, or as Nabokov called them "sins" (1998, 389), made by translators. According to Nabokov, the first type of mistake, obvious lapses caused by

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<sup>1</sup> Nabokov gained his first literary success with his translations of Heine's songs.

<sup>2</sup> In the article the ALA-LC type of Russian transliteration is used.



misunderstanding or wrong interpretation, is the most innocent. To the next type, which is more serious, belong intentional omissions of words and sentences which a translator intentionally did not even try to understand or which he defined as being too difficult or offensive<sup>3</sup> for the imaginative reader. The main “sin” is the intentional polishing of the original<sup>4</sup> in order to conform it to the notions and prejudices of a given public. For this kind of a translational crime, Nabokov suggested torturing the translator as was done in the Middle Ages to punish plagiarism (1998, 392).

Besides clarifying three major types of translation mistakes, Nabokov also defined three types of translators (1998, 394): the scholar who wants to infect the whole world with his love for a forgotten or unknown genius; a literal “podenshchik” (which means a dilettante, a well-meaning hack) whose intentions are certainly good but who is lacking in knowledge; and, finally, a professional writer who possesses a poetic gift but uses it to create his own work instead of transferring the original, who “dresses the author in his own clothes.” Both of the first types are deprived of an artistic gift and even their hard work and numerous comments can not replace imagination and style. The third type may be a talented poet but he may not know the language of the original well enough, or is not as thorough as a scientist and as experienced as a professional translator.

According to Nabokov, in order to create an ideal text, the translator of a foreign masterpiece has to be at least as talented as the chosen author or his or her talents must be of the same nature. Secondly, the translator has to know both nations, both languages, details of the author’s style and method, the origin of the words and word-formations as well as historical allusions. Thirdly, the translator has to be capable of “mimicries”, which means to work as if he were a real author, to rebuild the author’s way of writing and his way of thinking as exactly as possible (1998, 396).

For Nabokov, as a translator, even the slightest detail deserves special attention. Consequently, in his lecture devoted to Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (2000, 325–30), he scrupulously analyzed the type of insect into which Gregor Samsa was transformed. Most commentators thought it was a cockroach, but Nabokov objected to this statement. His precise and professional analysis of the insect in Kafka’s novel resulted in the explanation that Gregor was most likely transformed into a May-bug.

This article focuses on some aspects of Vladimir Nabokov’s translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in which Nabokov used a domesticated method<sup>5</sup> (emphasis on the language and culture of the target text) of quite radical familiarization<sup>6</sup> of the original that illustrates the

<sup>3</sup> Nabokov provides an example of such an omission in the Victorian translation of Anna Karenina when Anna answers Vronskii “I beremenna” (which means I am pregnant in Russian). According to Nabokov, a Victorian reader had to think hard about the nature of a rare illness which Anna might have because the translator thought it would have been offensive to use the word “pregnant” and just wrote the Russian word with Latin letters (Nabokov 1998, 394).

<sup>4</sup> The example provided in the article is a description of the flowers which Ophelia gather in the Russian translation of Hamlet. In the original she gathers simple wild flowers but in the Russian translation there are lilies, jasmine, and violets (translation of A. Kronberg, Saint-Petersburg, 1863). (Nabokov 1998, 395)

<sup>5</sup> Venuti defines domesticated translation as “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values, bringing the author back home.” In this case the translator should erase every shred of foreignness and create a familiarized and immediately recognizable text, adjusted to the target text’s linguistic and cultural dimensions (1995, 20).

<sup>6</sup> In contrast, his translation of Pushkin’s novel in verse Eugene Onegin signified a complete change to an extreme foreignized translation, aimed at keeping the original text as authentic as possible.

translator's intention to satisfy the target audience. The main intention of the article is to analyze domesticated strategies of familiarization of some linguistic and literary dimensions which adjust the text of Carroll's book to the target audience of Russian children.

## 2. Translating children's literature

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is considered a children's classic. During the twentieth century *Alice* has been translated more often than almost any other work, except for the Bible (Carpenter and Prichard 1984, 17), even though the author himself thought when *Alice* was first translated into French, that his book was untranslatable (Kibbee 2003, 308). *Alice* has become a veritable friend of many children and inspired more than fifteen films as well as television and theatre productions and even paintings.<sup>7</sup>

However, translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a daunting task because of the numerous parodies, puns (especially the frequent use of homophones), other types of wordplay, verbal humour, "speaking" names, personification, enciphered allusions, literal interpretations of phraseological components, and unusual metaphors. Carroll himself admitted that the verse parodies could pose the greatest difficulty; without knowledge of the originals, the parodies would be unintelligible and it would thus be better to omit them (Weaver 1964, 33). The Russian translator Boris Zakhoder, who successfully translated *Winnie the Pooh*, was frequently asked: "Why don't you translate *Alice*" – whereupon he would answer: "It would be easier to transpose England" (qtd. in Nikolaeva 1996, 89).

Before discussing Nabokov's translation, some characteristics typical only of children's literature translation should be mentioned. Contrary to common belief, translating for children might not be easier than translating for adults. In the case of children's literature, it is particularly important to access the target audience and to take its interests and abilities into consideration. Zohar Shavit, in his research into translating children's literature, uses the term "freedom of manipulation", suggesting that the translator of children's literature may permit himself/herself changing, enlarging, or abridging the text as well as deleting or adding to it as long as the translator is adjusting the text to make it appropriate and comprehensible for the child. The translator may even adjust the plot, characters and language considering the child's ability to read and comprehend (1986, 112–13). Changing and adjusting the text, the translator has to follow two main criteria: the norms of morality accepted and demanded by the children's system and the assumed level of the child's comprehension (Shavit 1986, 121).

Riitta Oittinen states that, "translating as rewriting for target-language audiences – we always need to ask the crucial question: 'For whom?' Hence, while writing children's books is writing for children, translating children's literature is translating for children" (2003, 128). The interests of the readers, in this case of children, should be considered even more seriously than when one translates for adults. Children's literary scholar Puurtinen (1995, 22) also states that specific characteristics of the child readers, their comprehension and reading abilities, experience and knowledge must be

<sup>7</sup> In 1969, Salvador Dali produced twelve illustrations based on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

kept in mind by each translator to avoid the production of overtly difficult or even uninteresting translations that “may alienate children from reading”. Zena Sutherland maintains that what may be a mild hazard for an adult may be a serious barrier for a child, for instance, foreign names, titles, complex syntax, or allusions to cultural heritage or common knowledge unfamiliar to members of recipient cultures. Sutherland agrees that, in the case of children’s literature, a “new”, domesticated and familiar text can be created instead of a “translation” (1981, 69).

It is hard to decide which elements in the source text can be preserved and which should perhaps be omitted. According to Nikolaeva, the best translation of a children’s book does not necessarily entail precise accuracy and closeness to the original. It is much more important to consider issues of reception and to anticipate readers’ response. Children have to be able “to accept and utilize the book”. A translation should arouse in them the same feelings and associations experienced by the young readers of the source text (1996, 28). Instead of aiming at an “adequate” translation, the translator should aim at an acceptable translation since children with their imperfect reading abilities and limited world knowledge can not and are not expected to tolerate as much strangeness and foreignness as adult readers. It is the task of the translator to make appropriate decisions on how she/he will compensate for the children’s lack of background knowledge without oversimplifying the original and “forcing children into simple texts that have lost any feature of difficulty, foreignness, challenge and mystery” (Stolze 2003, 209).

The use of annotations and comments, a useful instrument in translations for adults, is out of the question for translations for children. Christina Nord (2003, 195) emphasizes the importance of addressee-orientation in a decision for or against annotations,

The problem with the explanations of puns and jokes is that it kills them. A joke that has to be explained is as dead as Dodo. [...] the decision for, or against, annotations must be guided by addressee-orientation. For an adult readership, it may be interesting to read the two texts, either “side by side” or one after another. For children, one text will probably be sufficient.

Nord also distinguishes between instrumental and documentary translation, emphasizing the purpose or the function of the translation which is particularly important for translation of children’s literature because children read more or less for pleasure. Documentary translation aims at producing in the target language a kind of a document of a communication interaction in which “a source culture-sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the source text under source-culture conditions”. In contrast, the instrumental translation process aims at “producing in the target language an instrument for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using (certain aspects) of a source text as a model” (2001, 47).

Any translator who decided to translate an “untranslatable” book should acknowledge the fact that a functioning translation can only be achieved at the expense of some elements in the original. Nabokov’s translation of *Alice* in the Russian language is admittedly successful mainly because the British cultural milieu of the novel was substituted with the Russian.

In his *Alice in Many Tongues: The Translations of Alice in Wonderland* Warren Weaver singled out Nabokov's translations as an "especially clever and sensitive foreign reincarnation of the novel" (1964, 90). Before Nina Demurova's (1967, 1978) and Boris Zakhoder's versions (1971), *Ania v Strane Chudes* had been undoubtedly the most accomplished translation (or adaptation) of Carroll's book in Russian.

### 3. Russification of Alice

One of the main translation challenges in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the translation of humorous nonsense verses, which are parodies of popular poems from Carroll's time. Whenever Alice wants to recite a poem it comes out wrong and funny. Nabokov's translations of verse parodies are domesticated, being at the same time dynamic and pictorial, and they can be thought to have a sufficient appeal to children.

All the poems in *Alice* are parodies upon familiar rhymes, which are related and intertextually connected to Victorian English culture. Among them are a parody of Isaac Watt's didactic poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" (in Carroll's "How Doth the Little Crocodile"); a parody of Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them" (Carroll's "You are Old, Father William"); a parody of the famous nursery rhyme "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (Carroll's "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat"); a parody of Mary Botham Howitt's "The Spider and the Fly," (Carroll's "The Mock Turtle's Song,"); a parody of Isaac Watt's "The Sluggard" (Carroll's "The Lobster Quadrille"); a parody of the popular song "Star of the evening" (Carroll's "Beautiful soup") and a parody of David Bates' "Speak Gently" (Carroll's "Speak roughly").

There is no mystery about whether the target text readers would be aware of the parodies of Victorian English references. Thus, adaptation to the target audience of Russian children required changing the parody of the didactic verses, so common in Victorian pedagogy, with Nabokov's own parody of famous Russian poems which the target audience were expected to recognize. By choosing well-known poems by Pushkin and Lermontov, as well as famous Russian nursery rhymes, Nabokov preserved the original author's intention of presenting an interesting challenge for young reader's of his text as children recognized them. In this case Nabokov's most important translation achievement was to preserve the element of introducing children to play with the text which was a difficult task. As a result, he successfully achieves a comical affect by providing well-known poems in most of which he even managed to save the original meter and rhyme to make it easier to comprehend. By choosing the strategy of substitution, Nabokov successfully manipulated the famous verses belonging to the target culture, in order to ensure that the text be as meaningful and accessible to the target text reader as it was to the source text reader.<sup>8</sup> Nabokov's decision in favour of classical poems instead of simple children verses, which were often used by other Russian translators of *Alice*, signifies his intention to avoid simplification of the original text.

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<sup>8</sup> The same strategy of domestication of original verses was used by another Russian translator of *Alice*, Boris Zakhoder, who followed Nabokov's example and substituted Carroll's verses with Russian equivalents. However, he decided in favor of famous children verses, avoiding classical poems as in Nabokov's case.

The strategy of adaptation employed by Nabokov makes it possible to read *Alice* without the slightest suspicion that her image and her adventures were in fact spawned by an English model. Even the characters' names have become Russian in Nabokov's version. Although one can understand name changes in the poems where rhyme and meter have to be taken into consideration, there seems to be no justification for the name change in the main text. The author did not create the story considering future translations into other languages. Thus, proper names usually play an important role within a story and their domestication often means suppressing the functions they were created for. Thus, Alice in Nabokov's translation was transformed to Ania, a diminutive of the common Russian girl's name Anna. In this case, Nabokov chooses the name with the same initial letter, establishing the sound similarity between Alice and Ania. Regardless of this similarity, it should be noticed that this decision is one of the most contentious because the change of the girl's name signifies the change of the title as well: *Ania v Strane Chudes*. Nabokov remains the only Russian translator in the twentieth century who changed the name of the main protagonist. All other translators have retained the name used in the original.

All personal names in the book are domesticated. Thus, the name "Mabel," which appears in the second chapter when Alice is losing her sense of certainty about herself, is replaced by Asia, and Mary-Ann, the name the White Rabbit calls Alice, with Masha. Both female names are common in the Russian language. Two other common names appear in the fourth chapter. Servants who work for the White Rabbit are called "Pat" and "Bill". In the translation Bill is replaced with Iashka (a colloquial diminutive of the Russian name Iakov) and Pat with Per'ka (a colloquial diminutive of the Russian name Peter). Both of the colloquial diminutives signify the social position of the servants because in Russian diminutives of personal names are usually used to express familiarity or, sometimes, even disrespect. Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie in the Dormouse's story were renamed Masia, Pasia and Dasia (derivatives of the Russian names Masha, Pasha and Dasha) which, according to Connolly, allowed Nabokov to transfer the effect of sound repetition (1995, 19).

Surprisingly, Queen of Hearts and King of Hearts remain unchanged in the translation. Considering the general strategy of domestication, Nabokov could use Russian royal titles of "tsar" and "tsaritsa". However, Queen and Kind of Heart represent playing cards characters and have the same names in Russian. There are a couple of other characters in Nabokov's translation whose names did not undergo domestication. One of them is Caterpillar.<sup>9</sup> The word "gusenitsa" (caterpillar) is a feminine noun in the Russian language, so Nabokov erases the addressing "sir" used in the original. It is interesting that he did not decide to use any other forms of formal address to stress Alice's respectful attitude towards other creatures. The Duchess is also translated directly but the Russian word "gertsoginia" (Duchess) used by Nabokov has German roots and sounds out of place in the whole russified context. The March Hare and the Hatter as well as Dormouse also remain unchanged in Nabokov's translation. Unfortunately, the hidden meaning enciphered in the names of the March Hare and the Hatter is lost in translation. The phrases "as mad as a hatter" and "as mad as a March Hare", common in Carroll's time, have no equivalents in Russian. The White Rabbit as well as the Gryphon and the Pigeon were also translated literally.

<sup>9</sup> Boris Zakhoder translated Caterpillar as "cherviak" (worm) and was criticized for using an unpleasant image.

Not only have the characters names become Russian. Turns of speech and dialogues have been transformed to sound native, as well as the smallest cultural details of Carroll's narrative. Thus, Nabokov uses both Russian measures of length and monetary units. When Alice falls into the rabbit hole she uses miles to talk about distance. Russian children might not be familiar with this word but had to realize it was a very long distance. Nabokov therefore uses the word "versta", inventing a more understandable concept of distance. Connolly also mentions that the sum of one hundred pounds becomes one thousand rubles and shillings and pence are converted to kopecks (Connolly 1995, 19). The supposedly unknown food items were substituted with typical Russian expressions. Thus, the word "pirozhenki", typical Russian pies, is used instead of "tarts". The flower "daisy" mentioned at the beginning of the first chapter is substituted with "dandelion" which is one of the typical Russian field flowers. White Rabbit's servants address him with "vashe blagorodie" instead of "yer honour", an old-fashioned Russian expression used by servant to address the master. "Jack-in-the-box" mentioned in the fourth chapter is not translated at all.

Cultural substitutions do not always receive adequate compensation in Nabokov's version. The most often-cited example is the story of the French Mouse which comes to England with William the Conqueror. In Nabokov's translation England is replaced with Russia and William the Conqueror is replaced with Vladimir Monomakh (a Russian Grand Prince). The degree of this transformation's comprehensibility appears to be questionable because this part of Russian history was not well-known to children.

Translating English puns based on homonyms and language games, Nabokov often invented his own examples based on the similarities between Russian words, as direct translations of homonyms were impossible in most cases. As Nabokov's successful approximation of the effect of English puns is thoroughly explained in Demurova's and Connolly's research, we will have a look only at those examples which are not mentioned in their papers.

For instance, the pun inverted in the conversation between Alice and the Gryphon which involves pairing the meaning of words "lesson" and "lessen". Nabokov invents his own homophone based on the sound similarity between Russian words "urok" (lesson) and "ukor" (reprimand). It is well known that in *Alice Carroll* experimented with nonsense prose and verse – with meaningless sentences or words which have a clear structure but no specific meaning. Thus, describing his early schooling, the Mock Turtle<sup>10</sup> used the word "seography" which is translated as "arfografiia" (spelling) but the Mock Turtle immediately adds that this means "to play harp" because the Russian word "arfa" means "harp". In the same chapter the subject "Laughing and Grief" is translated as "angel'ski ezik" which means "angel's language". This word play is based on the similarity between Russian words "angliiski" (English) and "angel'ski" (angel's). When the Mock Turtle substitutes "Reeling and Writhing" for "Reading and Writing", Nabokov uses "chesat' i pitat'" (combing and feeding) instead of "chitat' i pisat'" (reading and writing).

<sup>10</sup> The Mock Turtle was translated as "chepupakha" (Connolly 1995, 22) which combines two Russian words "cherepakha" (turtle) and "chepukha" (nonsense).



A successful substitution of a word-play is also evident in the chapter “A Mad Tea-Party”. When Alice says that she beats time when she learns music, the Hatter replies that time will not stand beating, personifying the term of time and puzzling Alice. Nabokov invents another kind of misunderstanding between Alice and the Hatter, using the Russian expression “provodit’ vremia” (to spend time). The Russian verb “provodit’” also means to “to accompany”. Alice says that it is boring to spend time like this but the Hatter warns Alice that the Time is sensitive and if she accompanies HIM she should not say HE is boring. After this Nabokov invents his own word-play, transferring the absurdity of the dialogue between Alice and the Hatter. He uses the Russian expression “sest’ na vremia” which means literally “to sit upon the time” but is used in the meaning of “to take a sit for a short time”. Alice says that she “sits upon the time” (just for a while) but the Hatter argues that the Time does not like to be sat upon.

Translating the title of the chapter “A Caucus-Race and a Long Tail”, Nabokov decided to avoid the satirical political connotation implied by the English term “caucus”. He decided to play with the word “kuralessy” instead, which in Russian means “to have enormous, crazy fun”.

Another outstanding characteristic of *Alice* is its lexical and syntactical simplicity. The vocabulary of the original is rather colloquial. Although written in the middle of the nineteenth century, the book contains no old-fashioned words. Most of the dialogues are typical informal discourses. Ignoring this fact, Nabokov sometimes intentionally embellishes the text with additions and substitutions to make it more archaic and sophisticated. Thus, in the conversation between Alice and the Caterpillar, Nabokov renders the expression “short remarks” away from colloquial speech, translating it as “skupa na slova” which means “chary of words” and imbues the narrator’s voice with elegance and sophistication. Talking to Alice, the Duchess uses the word “uvol’t’e” which is an archaic word in Russian and means “leave me in peace” or “do not force me to do something”.

Nabokov’s use of language results in a translation which sounds natural in Russian but at the same time transfers an exact correspondence of the style-level, which is important because Victorian society was so strictly ordered that the smallest disturbance signified comical connotations. In this case his fidelity to the style of the novel is remarkable. Nabokov constantly uses the polite form of addressing other persons (the pronoun “vy” in Russian) when Alice addresses her interlocutors and literally translates all expressions aimed to stress Alice’s politeness and her respectful attitude towards other creatures: “bud’te dobry”, in the conversation with the White Rabbit (“would you be so kind”); “ochen’ vezhlivo otvetila” (“she answers very politely”), in the conversation with the Caterpillar; “bud’te dobry mne ob’iasnit’” (“be so kind and explain to me”), talking to the Duchess; “akh, prostite menia” (“Oh, excuse me!”), in the conversation with the Mouse. There are also no examples of unacceptable slang in Nabokov’s translation.

Nabokov also renders uneducated, lower-class speech successfully, as in an example with the Queen’s gardeners (Five, Seven and Two). The “Miss” with which they address Alice, which is commonly used in sub-standard English speech, is substituted with “baryshnia”, an old-fashioned naming of young women in Russia. The word expresses lower-class respectfulness but in modern Russian it often has humorous connotations.



Nabokov may omit a word, phrase or a whole passage, whenever he finds such an omission justified by his own vision of the original text. Thus, he eliminates Carroll's explanation of Alice's puzzlement with the "Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats?" In this case, Carroll uses two rhyming substantives, "bats" and "cats", which change places in the sentence, providing humorous effect. Nabokov decided to overlook the humorous effect produced by changing subject and object in the sentence. Unlike Carroll's Alice, who attempts to answer the daunting question, Nabokov's Alice simply repeats "cats on the roof, flying mice..."

In the chapter "Pig and Pepper" the Duchess violently shakes her child as she sings her famous "Speak roughly to you, little boy". Nabokov erases this passage completely. Probably, he felt discomfort at the scene's explicit violence.

## 4. Conclusion

Umberto Eco writes in the introduction to *Experiences in Translation*: "Every sensible and rigorous theory of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream" (Eco 2001, ix). This statement attests to the fact that there is no such thing as a perfect translation.

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* remains the only novel for children translated by Nabokov. Consistency in Nabokov's choice of domestication as the main translation strategy in this case is questionable, especially considering his later ideas about the importance of a translation's exactness and accuracy. Allowing himself to russify most aspects of Carroll's *Alice*, including the Russification of the main heroine's name, Nabokov then offered his readers not just a scientifically complete *prose* translation of *Eugene Onegin* but also a transliteration of the original in order to avoid any misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It is astonishing that the Nabokov who once liberally used language facilities to reinterpret an original text in order to make it comprehensible for the target audience came to a complete refusal of any attempt to preserve the original structure of the text (in this case the verse structure of the poem). Probably, in the process of translating his own works, Nabokov came to the conclusion that it was primarily the author's domain to make significant changes, or any changes at all, in a work while translating. Thus, the primary task of the translator may have appeared to him as a representation of the original work in a different language as precisely and exactly as possible, leaving the poetical creativity to the original author. In this case, he might consider himself mainly as an "invisible" scientist whose task it was to preserve the integrity of the text.

Translating Carroll's novel (1923), Nabokov considered primarily his future readers' abilities and interests, creating a translation that would be as accessible as possible to the mind of a child. In other words, Nabokov's translation tended to achieve the same range of functions as the original text. On the other hand, he kept in mind that the target audience does not mean that the original should be oversimplified and that children should not be challenged. Nabokov does not force children into a simple text that has lost any feature of challenge, game and mystery. Although Lewis Carroll's clear intertextuality as well as his references to a particular cultural and historical epoch (Victorian England) were lost in Nabokov's translation, Russian children were

able to recognize the interplay between fiction and reality, to enjoy the humour and originality of the paradoxical and attractive world of Lewis Carroll and to comprehend games of logic and language presented in the novel.

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## Translating postcolonial English: The Italian Translation of D. Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*

### Summary

In postcolonial writing the English language is often intentionally appropriated: it ceases to represent the vehicle of expression of 'Englishness' only and becomes the means of communication of a wider part of the world. Therefore, many strategies are used in postcolonial works as a means of cultural assertion on the part of the writers. Such strategies, however, are extremely difficult to convey in languages which are not directly concerned with issues such as postcolonial resistance to colonial control in literature, as in the case of Italian. Using as a case study the only Italian translation of Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*, I will analyse in this paper a number of strategies employed in the Source Text (ST), concurrently analysing the difficulties related to their translation into Italian. Besides the tools provided by stylistics, structural grammar, translation studies and postcolonial studies, the frameworks of ethnostylistics and translational stylistics are particularly useful in the scrutiny of this text.

**Key words:** Postcolonial English, ethnostylistics, translational stylistics, English/Italian translation, Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*

## Prevajanje postkolonialne angleščine: italijanski prevod dela *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* Dereka Walcotta

### Povzetek

V postkolonialnem pisanju je angleški jezik pogosto podvržen prirojanju: ni več zgolj medij za prenašanje "angleškosti", temveč postane sredstvo komunikacije za širši del sveta. Pri kulturnem opredeljevanju tako postkolonialni avtorji uporabljajo mnoštvo strategij. Takšne strategije pa je izjemno težko vzdrževati v jezikih, ki nimajo neposredne izkušnje z vprašanji, kot je postkolonialni odpor do kolonialnega nadzora v književnosti, in med te jezike spada tudi italijanščina. Na primeru edinega italijanskega prevoda Walcottovega dela *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* avtorica prispevka razčleni številne strategije izhodiščnega besedila ter njihove poustvaritve v italijanskem besedilu. Pri tem se opira tako na izsledke stilistike, strukturalne slovnice, prevodoslovja in postkolonialnih študij kot na dognanja etnostilistike in prevodne stilistike.

**Ključne besede:** postkolonialna angleščina, etnostilistika, prevodna stilistika, angleški/italijanski prevod, *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* Dereka Walcotta

# Translating postcolonial English: The Italian Translation of D. Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*

## 1. Introduction

English is often employed as a *Lingua Franca* and turned into an array of 'Englishes' by non-native speakers, whose native languages influence English in a variety of ways. Postcolonial English represents an antecedent to this phenomenon, for in the colonized world the process began centuries ago, when colonization started.

Furthermore, in the case of the English employed by the ex-colonized, not only has the language been influenced by native tongues through spontaneous linguistic processes, such as language transfer, but it has also been intentionally appropriated as a strategy of resistance and means of asserting identity. Indeed, postcolonial English has ceased to represent the vehicle of expression of Englishness only to become the means of communication of a wider part of the world – as Salman Rushdie stated more than twenty years ago in his famous article "The empire writes back with a vengeance" (1982; my emphasis):

English, no longer an English language, now grows from many roots; and those whom it once colonized *are carving out large territories within the language for themselves*. The Empire is striking back.

As Rushdie himself underscores in this article, the site where the effects of this trend were (and are) most particularly visible is postcolonial literature, where a series of strategies, such as the deployment of intentionally 'ungrammatical' English, is used as a means of cultural assertion on the part of the writer.

Such strategies, however, are extremely difficult to convey in languages, such as Italian, which are not directly concerned with the use of literature as an instrument of postcolonial resistance to colonial control and/or assertion of cultural/national identity.

The aim of this paper will thus be to analyse through stylistics (Short 1996; Pratt 1993), structural grammar (Aarts and Aarts 1982), ethnostylistics (Thompson 2004), translational stylistics (Malmkjær 2004), translation studies (Taylor 1990; Taylor 1998) and postcolonial studies (Hamner 2001; Thieme 1999) the difficulties connected with the rendering of some postcolonial linguistic strategies, and the way these strategies have been dealt with in translation, using as a case study the Italian translation of Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* by Matteo Campagnoli, which is the only Italian translation of this text.

## 2. Overview of Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*

Derek Walcott has re-wrote Homer's epic *The Odyssey* for the Royal Shakespeare Company,

turning it into a play divided into two acts with a structure that Short (1996, 171–2) would define as a variation on the three-level structure:

1. playwright (Walcott)/audience and/or readers (us);
2. narrator (Billy Blue)/narratees (us);
3. characters (included Billy Blue)/characters.

The position of this work, together with many other works by Walcott, within the universe of postcolonial literature is controversial. Indeed, besides their involvement with the sphere of postcolonialism and the linguistic struggle briefly described above, with which Walcott's works share a good deal of concern and a series of common strategies, they also express a whole array of personal and national issues.

Hamner and Thieme, who have written about Walcott extensively, both conclude that Walcott's use of myths, and of Homer's *Odyssey* in particular, present "a process of reverse colonization" (Thieme 1999, 189) and a "creolization process" (Hamner 2001, 376); but they also underline that it also shows the intent on the part of the author of creating a Caribbean product which becomes an expression of cultural and national self-awareness, within and concurrently beyond the postcolonial struggle for resistance to colonial domination in literature. In other words, Walcott refuses to create a sheer imitation of Homer's epic, which would limit "the possibility of creating a new imaginative space by locking its exponent into the agendas created by a discourse of resistance" (Thieme 1999, 192), and opts for the creation of a "creole drama" which is constituted by "an assemblage of fragments, a collage that calls into question the ostensible purity of linguistic and racial roots" (Hamner 2001, 388–9).

In this context, it is useful to recall the concept of "transculturation", originally proposed by the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz, and adopted by Pratt in her study of the "resymbolization" of the figure of La Malinche in the Chicano movement (Pratt 1993). Starting from the problematization of the interaction between dominant and subordinate groups, this concept denies that the latter simply assimilate to the former without questioning this act, and refers instead to the fact that "subordinate groups are *selective* about what they acquire from a dominant culture, and *inventive* about what they do with it" (ibid., 185). In a similar way, the Homeric epic has been *transcultured* into a Caribbean product, namely subjected to appropriation and introduced into a different ideological and national scaffolding – postcolonial *and* Caribbean.

Although the main features of the Greek epic are retained, such as the most important moments of the original plot, a variety of different "creolization" elements meant to "question the ostensible purity of linguistic and racial roots" are employed in the play: the use of different languages (English, non-standard English, transliterated Greek, Latin); the reference to different religious traditions (Greek, African, Catholic); the insertion of new characters (the Philosopher, Stratis, Costa, etc.) and the appearance of characters from the *Iliad* (Thersites); the reinterpretation in a Caribbean or postcolonial framework of two basic episodes (the Circe episode and the Cyclops episode, respectively). However, the level on which this reconstruction is more evident is the linguistic level.

For reasons of space, the next section will be devoted to the analysis of the linguistic behaviour of two of the many characters of the play and of the Italian translation of some of their turns. I have chosen two of the most important characters in relation to the plot and whose parts are constructed first and foremost on a linguistic level, so that they epitomise the postcolonial and cultural issues Walcott concentrates on in the play.

### 3. Billy Blue and Eurycleia

#### 3.1 Billy Blue: a narrator who sings blues

The very first character that the audience/readers meet while watching or reading the play is Billy Blue, the narrator that Walcott creates as of the heirs of Homer's singing skills. Indeed, this character, together with Omeros and Seven Seas in *Omeros* (1990), and Phemius and Demodocus (whose parts are played by Billy Blue in actual fact) in *The Odyssey*, belongs to the group of blind narrators which Walcott creates to populate his works, their blindness being a necessary feature of their poetry. Billy Blue is a singer who sings blues,<sup>1</sup> whose rhythm and idiom are the first Caribbean reference in the work, who mixes epic language with expressions of African-American origin and who, against Greek poetic tradition, sings rhymed couplets with Caribbean accentuation (Hamner 2001, 376). Obviously, the very fact that Billy Blue is the narrator, appearing at regular intervals in the play, renders this character highly important.

The *incipit* of the play is particularly interesting in this respect, hence the first two couplets will be subjected to translational stylistic and ethnostylistic analysis.

BILLY BLUE (*Sings*)

Gone sing 'bout that man because his stories please us,  
Who saw trails and tempests for ten years after Troy.

I'm Blind Billy Blue, my main man's sea-smart Odysseus,  
Who the God of the Sea drove crazy and tried to destroy. (Walcott 2006, 12; I, 1)

BILLY BLUE (*Canta*)(*Sings*)

Canterò di quest'uomo perché la sua storia mi piace,  
[I will sing of this man because his story pleases me]<sup>2</sup>  
Che prove e tempeste ha passato per dieci anni da Troia.  
[Who faced trials and tempests for ten years since Troy]

<sup>1</sup> "In tribal, elemental poetry, the epic experience of the race is compressed in metaphor. In an oral tradition the mode is simple [...]. There is no dying fall, no egoistical signature of effect; in short, no pathos. The blues is not pathos, not the individual voice, it is a tribal mode, and each new oral poet can contribute his couplet, and this is based on the concept that the tribe, inured to despair, will also survive: there is no beginning, but no end" (Walcott 1998, 47; my emphasis). The choice of turning The Odyssey's narrator into a blues singer is thus closely connected with the tribal experience of the Caribbean area, just as the choice of making Billy Blue sing in couplets.

<sup>2</sup> The Italian translation is translated back into standard English for ease of comprehension.



Sono Blind Billy Blue e il mio uomo è Odisseo, astuto e audace,  
 [I'm Blind Billy Blue and my man is Odysseus, clever and bold]  
 Che il Dio del Mare ha fatto impazzire e quasi lo ingoia. (Walcott 2006, 13; I, 1)  
 [Whom the God of the Sea drove crazy and almost swallows him]

The very first line of the play immediately fails to come up to the expectations connected with the epic genre. Just as, while reading a fairy tale, readers expect the first words to be “Once upon a time”, while reading an epic poem or play, the readers expect, at least, its first words to be written or uttered in a standard language. In contrast to these expectations, Billy Blue immediately performs a series of dialectic elisions (Hamner 2001, 376): “Gone” in place of “I’m going to” and “bout” instead of “about”.

The way the hero of the story is introduced is also unusual. The noun phrase “that man”, and the deictic form “that” in particular, seems to ‘follow the rules’ at first, in the sense that the audience/reader still expect a post-modification such as “who has many skills and has travelled for ten years”. But in Walcott’s play the reason for singing Odysseus’ story does not lie in his renown multifaceted ability to survive in every situation; it lies, instead, in the enjoyment roused in the audience and in the narrator by the telling of his stories.

This ‘anti-heroic’ construction of the character is further reinforced in the first line of the third couplet, which follows the first two couplets presented above. This represents the transliteration, using the Latin alphabet, of the first line of the Greek *Odyssey*:

Andra moi ennepe mousa polutropon hos mala polla...

The fact that Odysseus is “polutropon”, (πολύτροπον – “with many skills”), appears in this way to be ‘hidden’ – his talent of being πολύτροπον representing the defining feature of Odysseus’ character *par excellence*. Indeed, the insertion of this adjective in a line where the Greek words are written using the Latin alphabet makes this premodification clear only to those people who have a grasp of Greek and/or who are cognizant with the very beginning of the original Greek text. The average English-speaking reader of the play will find it more difficult to understand the reference immediately, and, in particular, to acknowledge Odysseus’ renowned skills. In other words, the mechanisms employed in the first line of Walcott’s *The Odyssey* and in the first line of the third couplet, (namely, the first line of Homer’s *The Odyssey*), contribute to diminishing the hero’s status greatly.

In the beginning of the second and the fourth line an anaphora is constructed through the repetition of the word “Who”. It should be pointed out, however, that the second pronoun is used ‘mistakenly’; the inflected form “whom” should be used instead, “Who” constituting, in standard terms, a noun phrase performing the function Subject (SU) rather than the function Direct Object (DO).

Line three makes extensive use of alliteration: the letter “b” is exploited in the first alliterative set,

the name of the narrator “*Billy Blue*” being premodified by the epithet “*Blind*”; the letter “m” is employed to create the second instantiation of alliteration, which is used in the noun phrase, of African American origin (Hamner 2001, 376), introducing the hero “*my main man*”; and the letter “s” constitute the final example of alliteration and it is deployed in the premodifier of the hero’s name “*sea-smart*”. Finally, the rhyme scheme, which varies a great deal in the course of the play, is, in these first two couplets, AB AB.

Translational stylistics (Malmkjær 2004, 16) takes into account the relationship between the Source Text, (ST), and the Target Text, (TT), in order to shed light on the reasons for which some translation decisions have been made instead of others, which, in the absence of a direct comparison between the two texts, could not be satisfactorily explained.

Ethnostylistics (Thompson 2004, 55–6), on the other hand, starts by considering the fact that, in the case of some non-standard language varieties, used as the expression of a national and/or sub-national identity, translation is already implied in the ST, in a struggle for supremacy between the non-standard variety and the standard language. Ethnostylistics, then, is focused on considering ethnicity-as-style and style-as-ethnicity.

Indeed, the consideration of both the ST and the Italian translation of the above couplets (together with the close reading of the conversation which will be analysed in section 3.2) provides us with some interesting insights into the difficulties connected with the translation of a variety of English which already implies a process of translation in the ST. To put it another way, we could borrow Jakobson’s terminology (1959) to claim that some parts of Walcott’s play present features of an *intralinguistic* translation (English to non-standard English), which makes the *interlinguistic* translation into Italian even more difficult than it would be in ‘standard’ circumstances.

The first observation than can be made about the TT is that it has been completely normalised – no trace of non-standard language forms is to be found in it. The first line is particularly interesting. The very first words “Gone ’bout” are translated with an Italian standard future tense “Canterò” [I will sing]. Such wording in Italian constitutes a quasi formulaic expression which reminds Italian readers of other famous *incipits* of epic texts, such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*: “arma virumque cano” [I sing of arms and of that man]. The rendering of this “ill-formed” *incipit* into a standard one, (both grammatically and in accordance to the ‘conventions’ related to the *incipit* of epic texts), is noteworthy for a second reason.

The device of beginning his works with a non-standard sentence is not a novelty for Walcott. It was used, for example, to begin *Omeros*;<sup>3</sup> following this publication Walcott won the Nobel prize for literature in 1992. Indeed, it is a device he uses in order to strike the audience at the very beginning of the work and make them understand immediately that they are going to read/watch something ‘non-standard’. Therefore, that the first line of the ST is turned in the TT

<sup>3</sup> “This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes” (Walcott 2003, 12; my emphasis). Fumagalli (2000, 17) reminds the readers of Walcott’s claim about the striking effect of the opening line in *Omeros* “Well, I want to see how they will read this at the BBC”, which reflects perfectly his awareness about the “non-standard effect” brought about by his intentional linguistic choice.

into a standard sentence brings about a twofold effect: it erases the cultural/postcolonial strategy connected with the use of non-standard features in *The Odyssey*, AND the intertextual citation between Walcott's two works. The deictic form "that" is rendered as "questo" [this], thereby diminishing the expectations of the reader/audience connected with the deictic form "that" in the ST, which, as already suggested, implies a more 'epic' postmodification.

The reason Billy Blue provides for singing Odysseus' story – "because his stories please us" – is translated as "perchè la sua storia mi piace" [because his story pleases me], again reducing the power of the ST greatly. Indeed, in the ST the reason asserted for undertaking the enterprise of telling Odysseus' story lies in the enjoyment aroused in the narrator and in the audience (nay, in everybody) by his misfortunes. In the TT the power of this assertion is greatly circumscribed, as to represent Billy Blue's reaction to Odysseus' story only.

The beginnings of lines 2 and 4 maintain the anaphoric structure of the ST, due to the repetition of the pronoun "Che" [Who/Whom]. Nonetheless, since in Italian there is no difference between the subject and the object pronoun, in the TT it is used in the first case to perform the function SU, and in the second the function DO, namely it is used in standard terms, normalising the effect (and the strategy lying behind it) created by the non-standard usage of "Who" in the ST in line four. The alliterative effect in line three is clearly very difficult to maintain. The first alliterating letter "b" is not translated in fact, in the sense that the three words in the ST are reproduced with no variation whatsoever in the TT. This choice creates a problematic situation, since a reader of the TT who is not acquainted with the English language would think the proper name of the narrator to be "Blind Billy Blue", whereas "Blind" is in actual fact an epithet instead. Furthermore, in this way, the Italian TT fails to underline Billy Blue's blindness, which, as suggested above, is an important feature of Walcott's singers, since it allows them to have an extremely developed 'mind-sight'.<sup>4</sup> The second alliterating letter "m" is also lost in the TT. The translation of the expression "my main man" as "il mio uomo" also implies the loss of the African-American origin of the expression in the ST, since "il mio uomo" has no particular connotations in Italian – let alone that of African American origin. Hence, the mingling of cultures operated by Walcott in the ST, as symbolic of the cultural mixture existing in the Caribbean, is lost too. The third alliterating letter "s" is substituted (Malone in Taylor 1998, 52) by the alliterating letter "a" in the TT, just as the translation of the epic epithet "sea-smart" is rendered efficaciously by an equivalent pair of epic adjectives in Italian ("astuto e audace"), thereby maintaining both device and effect of the ST. Finally, the rhyme scheme in these first two couplets is maintained, even though this has made the choice of the Italian present simple tense "ingoia" ("swallows") necessary in *lieu* of the English past simple tense ("tried to destroy").

On the one hand, some of the translating choices analysed (e.g., "Blind Billy Blue" as "Blind Billy Blue" or "tried to destroy" as "ingoia") must be considered in relation to 'typical' translating processes, such as the preference on the part of the translator to respect certain 'special' features of the text, e. g. alliteration or the rhyme scheme. Other choices, on the other hand, are closely

<sup>4</sup> Billy Blue, playing the part of Demodocus, after having been asked whether he can see Odysseus, answers: "Not see. I see through" (Walcott 2006, 274).

connected with the impossibility of translating into Italian any non-standard linguistic variety, since Italian does not deploy non-standard features for a precise strategy of assertion of identity through the linguistic violations of the standard code. This brings about the loss of a whole level of meaning and, if we agree on considering the language as the main means of conveying or asserting one's identity, it then implies the loss of a very important, if not the most important, level of the text.

This loss becomes even more blatant if we briefly take into consideration the last song by Billy Blue, which ends the play (just as his first song opened it). This song is sung in standard English, which seems to be meant to signal the universality of the (Homeric) play: Walcott's *Odyssey* has a Caribbean protagonist, it has been sung in part in non-standard English, but it is, in the end, an expression of Homer's legacy to the world, not only to Walcott and his people. This last song, just like the first one, is still translated into standard Italian, so that the change in meaning connected with Billy Blue's shift to standard English is totally lost.

### 3.2 Eurycleia: an Egyptian nanny

Another character whose identity is constructed on a linguistic level first of all is Eurycleia, who, as in Homer's *Odyssey*, is in this play both Odysseus' and Telemachus' nurse – though she is an Egyptian nurse. As already suggested, John Thieme regards the Caribbean elements of this play to be part of Walcott's "process of reverse colonization" (1999, 189). He also suggests (*ibid.*) that one of the aims of Walcott's enterprise is that of undermining the Western conception of Greece as the cradle of civilization. It is for this reason, he further argues, that a number of aspects of Homer's epic are described as having an Egyptian, hence African, genealogy. Robert Hamner (2001, 377) also underlines the importance the nurse has in the play, since "as an intimate of Ithaca's royal family for two generations, Eurycleia has used her nursery to shape the developing minds of Odysseus and his son Telemachus" – implying that Egypt (Africa) has deeply influenced Greece just as it has influenced the Caribbean.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Eurycleia has opened Telemachus' and Odysseus' "gates of imagination" (Walcott 2006, 86). To such an important character Walcott has assigned a language which is profoundly affected by West Indian patois (*ibid.*). This is clearly meant to further creolize the play and to contribute to inserting as many Caribbean's elements as possible into the text, concurrently stressing the paramount importance they have.

The excerpt which will be scrutinized is a part of the first conversation involving both Telemachus and Eurycleia. Telemachus has just seen a swallow, whom he has heard speaking:

TELEMACHUS

You said Athena, the sea-eyed, is Egyptian.

EURYCLEIA

But never in life me call any bird captain.

TELEMACHUS

<sup>5</sup> In the first conversation with Telemachus, a part of which is going to be analysed in this section, Eurycleia claims that Egypt must cradle Greece until Greece will be mature enough (cf. Walcott 2006, 28).

She said she'd argued with God to save my father.

EURYCLEIA

Nancy stories me tell you and Hodyseus.

TELEMACHUS

I believe them now. My faith has caught a fever.

EURYCLEIA

Launching your lickle cradles into dreaming seas.

TELEMACHUS

What are those stories? An old slave's superstition?

EURYCLEYA

People don't credit them now. Them too civilized. (Walcott 2006, 26–28; I, 2)

TELEMACO

Tu mi hai detto che Atena dall'occhio marino è egiziana.

[You have told me that Athena with a sea eye is Egyptian]

EURICLEA

Si, ma in vita mia mai ho chiamato un uccello capitano.

[Yes, but in my life I have never called a bird captain]

TELEMACO

Ha detto che per salvare mio padre ha litigato con Dio.

[She said that to save my father she had argued with God]

EURICLEA

Favole che Euriclea ha raccontato a te e Odisseo.

[Fairy tales that Eurycleia has told you and Odysseus]

TELEMACO

Adesso ci credo. Alla mia fede è venuta la febbre.

[I believe them now. My faith has caught a fever]

EURICLEA

E lancia su mari sognanti la tua piccola culla.

[And launches into dreaming seas you little cradle]

TELEMACO

Che storie erano? Superstizioni di una vecchia ancella?

[What were those stories? An old maidservant's superstition?]

EURICLEA

La gente non le ascolta adesso. Troppo civilizzati. (Walcott 2006, 27–29; I, 2)

[People don't listen to them now. Too civilized]

In the first line of this extract, the importance that the Egyptian Eurycleia has had in “shaping the developing mind” of Telemachus is instantly recalled: he reminds his nurse of what she has told him, namely that the goddess who will side with Odysseus in order to help him go back home, Athena, is also Egyptian. Eurycleia's reply immediately shows her deeply non-standard idiolect. The subject pronoun “I” is substituted by the object pronoun “me” and the verb tense is totally unclear. “[c]all” seems to be a bare infinitive, so that it is not easy to claim whether

it represents a present tense (“I call”, which would not be grammatically logic though) or a present perfect tense “I have called”, or even a future “I will call”. The same linguistic features can be traced in Eurycleia’s second answer. Together with the substitution of “I” by “me” and the uncertain verb form “tell”, she mispronounces Odysseus’ name (“Hodisseus”) and talks about “Nancy stories”. Here, Eurycleia truncates “Anansy” into “Nancy”, which is common in the West Indian vernacular (Hamner 2001, 377). Anansy is a sort of “Spiderman hero” of African origin who has special significance for slaves, since he represents the underdog who manages to emerge triumphantly (Barret in Hamner 2001, 378). He is a central figure in the tales told by *nanas* and *dadas* to their children born in exile in the West Indies (ibid.). His figure therefore represents a culture bound concept, which must be added to the creolizing patterns populating the play gaining more and more importance as the play develops: these “Nancy stories” are, in actual fact, the only cure for the fever which has caught Telemachus’s faith.

Nevertheless, Eurycleia continues to show her disbelief in her subsequent answer, where she depicts the image of Telemachus’ cradle floating on a “dreaming sea”. Here, another feature typical of the West Indian vernacular is manifest, namely the sounding *k* in lieu of *t* in “little” (Hamner 2001, 377). Furthermore, she talks about “cradles”, as if Telemachus (who, by this point in the play, is a grown-up man), had more than one cradle when he was a baby (which is possible, especially for a prince, but still improbable) – we might therefore hypothesize that the use of the plural in *lieu* of the (more logical) singular is also to be ascribed to the nanny’s idiolect.

It is interesting to note that, to this claim on the part of Eurycleia about Telemachus’ excessively imaginative thought, Telemachus appears to react angrily and to perform a Face Threatening Act (FTA; Brown and Levinson 1987) by calling her “old slave” and doubting the truth of her past words. It could be objected that the noun “slave” also means “submissive or devoted servant”, and that this might be the meaning intended by Telemachus. It is logical to conclude, however, that the first meaning is the intended one, given a) the premodification (“old”), which is a value laden and negatively connoted adjective when it is used in the face of the person one is talking to, and, more importantly, b) the fact that a servant has contradicted a prince, probably arousing his indignation.

The last turn taken by Eurycleia is a sort of mixture. The first sentence is perfectly correct in standard English terms. This shift to standard English appears to be an attempt on the part of Eurycleia to avoid arousing Telemachus’ anger again, which drives her to construct a standard sentence which is concurrently an explanation and a silent apology. Apparently believing that this first sentence is sufficient as an apology, she goes back to her “normal” linguistic behaviour. The second sentence exhibits again the substitution of the subject pronoun “they” with the object pronoun “them”, the elision of the auxiliary verb “are” and the absence of the marker of the past participle “-[e]d” in “civilise[d]”.

All of these connotations on grammatical, phonetic and cultural levels related to Eurycleia’s vernacular completely disappear in the TT. As a telling start, the nurse’s first turn is totally normalised. The grammatically incorrect subject and verb in the ST “me call” are translated as “ho chiamato” in the

TT, which is the standard Italian verb tense corresponding to “I have called”. Furthermore, in the TT the subject pronoun “Io” – “I” – is not expressed, which is a possibility offered by the grammar of Italian but not by English grammar. In other words, this particular difference between the grammars of the two languages necessarily implies the ‘correction’ in the TT of the ‘mistake’ in the ST. The time adverb “mai” (“never”) preceding the verb phrase “ho chiamato” contributes to creating a slightly marked syntagmatic form, the unmarked one being “non ho mai chiamato” rather than “mai ho chiamato”; this form, indeed, tends to be connoted as a more formal or poetic structure in Italian, which is the exact opposite of Eurycleia’s idiolect.

The same translating operation is performed in Eurycleia’s following turn. Verb and subject are turned into standard forms, and the name of the protagonist is also normalised. On the other hand, the reference to “Anansi”, as stated above, is one of those culturally bound concepts which are highly difficult to translate into a TT whose Target Language (TL) does not provide a similar idea. Therefore, the choice of the translator has been that of substituting this narrow, specific concept with a broader, non culture bound one, namely “Favole” (“Fairy tales”).

The third of Eurycleia’s turns exhibits a similar translating process. The phonetic feature “lickle” is transformed back into the standard form through the use of the Italian adjective “piccola” (“little”) and the plural noun “cradles” in the ST is turned into the singular, more logical noun “culla” (“cradle”) in the TT.

Eurycleia’s last turn is particularly interesting. The first grammatically correct sentence in the ST is translated with a similarly grammatically correct Italian sentence, which implies again the loss of the layers of meaning connected with the nurse’s choice to switch from the non-standard idiolect to the standard language. Furthermore, the reason for Eurycleia’s linguistic switch is also rendered less straightforward in the TT because of the translation of the noun phrase “old slave” with the Italian noun “ancella” (“maidservant”), which, in Italian, has positive, poetic rather than negative connotations.

The second sentence reveals an attempt to reproduce the strategy employed in the ST in the TT too. The ST subject “them” is left out (we have already observed that the subject must not necessarily be expressed in Italian). The missing auxiliary verb in the ST is also missing in the TT, while the past participle, which is not grammatically correct in the ST, is turned into a standard past participle in the TT. This gives birth to an Italian sentence with neither subject nor main verb – a sentence which tries to reproduce the ST sentence structure as closely as possible. Nevertheless, this sentence is not an ungrammatical one in the TL, since the elision of the subject is common practise and that of the main verb is also allowed, when there are no doubts about which auxiliary or lexical verb should be used. In this case “Troppo civilizzati” (“Too civilized”) leaves no doubt about the fact that the standard sentence should be “Loro sono troppo civilizzati” (“They are too civilized”).



## 4. Conclusion

A necessarily brief analysis of a number of the features of Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* has been carried out. Many other interesting features have not been scrutinized due to space limitations. This brief analysis has shown that the translation of a non-standard variety, whose deployment is related to postcolonial and personal issues of revision of the colonial order and assertion of identity, becomes a highly difficult enterprise when the TL is a language such as Italian.

It could be thought that the linguistic strategy of deploying a non-standard English variety could be reproduced in the case of an Italian TT by the use of one of the many local dialects available in the country. In fact, it might happen that, in order to connote the provenance of a character or a whole work, one of the Italian dialects would be chosen. However, dialects in Italy tend to be thought of as a vehicle of amusement, the majority of jokes been based on local languages and on the funny stereotypes connected to those languages: a person coming from Milan only thinks about work and money, a person coming from Florence necessarily has a good sense of humour, and so on. In the case of a postcolonial ST employing a non-standard linguistic variety, therefore, not only would the selection of an Italian dialect impede the same effect related to the ST strategy, but it would also result in a 'funny' text for the target culture readers.

As far as Italian is concerned, the language is not, or it is no longer, part of a broader project of national/cultural self-awareness through language. Stated differently, the use of a non-grammatical variety of Italian meant to reproduce the non-standard variety of English would not 'make sense' to the Italian readers, because they are not acquainted with the violation of the code as a means of challenging the *status quo*. Obviously, this adds a further complication to that highly challenging process that is literary translation.

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**V.**



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