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## TRANSFER IN THE USE OF INTENSIFIERS

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Language transfer constitutes an important factor in second language acquisition and refers to “any instance of learner data where a statistically significant correlation [...] is shown to exist between some feature of the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired” (Ellis 2012: 351).<sup>1</sup> Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008) investigate different areas of language use, among others, areas in which transfer is very common. The study of transfer should concentrate on the influence of a learner's L1 on the learner's use and acquisition of L2 (Ellis 2012: 351). Crosslinguistic effects can be measured as errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance (or underproduction), and over-use (Ellis 2012: 354). Butler, Black-Maier, Raley and Marsh (2017: 433) mention recent studies of the potential for retrieval practice to promote transfer of learning. These studies provide “evidence to support the conclusion that variability during retrieval practice improves transfer of learning” (Butler, Black-Maier, Raley and Marsh 2017: 435). According to Ellis (2012: 366), studies have found evidence of transfer effects in all aspects of production: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse as well as in reception.

When learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at an advanced level, Croatian university students predominantly use the intensifier *very*. Therefore, we would like to explore to what extent they are familiar with this grammatical category in English (L2), and to check if there is a connection between the use of intensifiers in L2 and L1 (the Croatian language). Consequently, the aim of this paper is to answer the following questions: Do advanced university students of English in Croatia (L1 Croatian) know how

<sup>1</sup> The term ‘crosslinguistic influence’ (CLI) was proposed by Sharwood Smith and Kellerman (1986) as the superordinate neutral term. In this paper we will use the term ‘transfer’.

to use intensifiers (the category of amplifiers) in L2? Which intensifiers do they mostly use? In which collocations do intensifiers occur? Is there a connection between the use of intensifiers in L2 and L1, i.e. can the appropriate use of intensifiers in both languages signal lexical transfer?

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 gives a brief view of studies of transfer from different approaches, particularly of lexical transfer. Section 3 addresses intensifiers in light of their definition, collocations, and meaning. Section 4 comprises the analysis and discussion which lead to the conclusion.

## 2 TRANSFER

Due to the fact that transfer refers to language acquisition, it can be discussed from different perspectives, i.e. from that of universal grammar (cf. Daftarifard and Shirkhani 2011) or behaviourist studies (cf. Sakel 2011: 39), where transfer “is seen as inevitable due to linguistic habits formed in the first language (L1) being transferred to a second language (L2)”. This led to the assumption that “difficulties during L2 acquisition could be traced back to L1 influence: when the two languages were similar, learning was said to be facilitated, while differences would lead to difficulties in language learning” (ibid.). Furthermore, Sakel (2011: 41) describes how contact linguistics and transfer studies can benefit from one another, referring to similarities between languages, since it is easier “to learn a language similar to one's first language [...] than learning a typologically different language [...]”. Also, when speakers assume and perceive similarities between languages, they are more likely to transfer elements between the languages”.

Transfer can be examined either as a psycholinguistic phenomenon or as a societal phenomenon, i.e. at the level of individual and at the level of society. The former focuses on the individual language users whereas the latter is “usually researched in relation to the consequence of language contact” (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008: 29). In this study we will investigate transfer as a psycholinguistic phenomenon because we will examine the individual users' choice of lexical items in the particular context. There are two general approaches to investigating transfer as a psycholinguistic phenomenon, depending on the level of attention given to individuals. Therefore, the intrasubjective approach focuses on the patterns of transfer “found in the language use of individuals”, whereas the intersubjective approach “focuses on patterns of use observed in relatively large, well-defined groups of language users” (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008: 30). In our study we will use the latter approach and it will be framed as a cross-sectional study in terms of Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008: 32), i.e. the data will be “collected from individual language users at a single point in time”.

There are various definitions of transfer or crosslinguistic influence as an important process in L2 acquisition. Odlin (1989: 1) believes that “transfer is the influence resulting

from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired”. Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008: 1) see crosslinguistic influence as “the influence of a person's knowledge or use of another language”, which is “a highly complex cognitive phenomenon that is often affected by language users' perceptions, conceptualizations, mental associations, and individual choices” (ibid. 13).

In his study, Jarvis (2000) identifies three criteria for identifying transfer: (1) intra-group homogeneity, (2) inter-group heterogeneity, and (3) similarities between native language and interlanguage performance. These similarities can be investigated, as Ellis (2012: 353f) proposes, through the comparison of the use of a particular feature in both languages (errors are identified, and the learner's L1 is inspected to determine if the error type corresponds to an L1 feature) as well as through the use of a particular feature in both languages. In Ellis's opinion (2012: 352), transfer effects can be examined through reception (listening and reading) or production (speaking and writing).

Regarding directionality, Jarvis and Pavlenko (2008: 14) differ between the following possible transfer directions: forward transfer L1-L2, reverse transfer L2-L1, lateral transfer L2-L3, and bidirectional transfer. They also (ibid. 21) name ten dimensions which characterize a given type of transfer: Area of Language Knowledge / Use (phonological, orthographic, lexical, semantic, morphological, syntactic, discursive, pragmatic, sociolinguistic), Directionality (forward transfer, reverse transfer, lateral transfer, bi- or multi-directional transfer), Cognitive Level (linguistic, conceptual), Type of Knowledge (implicit, explicit), Intentionality (intentional transfer, unintentional transfer), Mode (productive, receptive), Channel (aural transfer – involves speech, visual transfer – involves writing and other forms of non-spoken verbal communication), Form (verbal transfer, non-verbal transfer), Manifestation (overt transfer, covert transfer), Outcome (positive transfer, negative transfer).

Transfer can be studied from the perspective of learning vocabulary, i.e. as lexical transfer, and can refer to the form of the word that is learned and its function in a given communicative situation.<sup>2</sup> Lexical transfer refers to “the influence of word knowledge in one language on a person's use or knowledge of a word in another language” (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008: 72). If a word is present in our mental lexicon, we can pronounce and spell it, we can define its grammatical class and syntactic properties, we know its meaning(s) and collocations it occurs in, as well as associations with other words (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008). Vocabulary knowledge is one of the most important components of learning a foreign language on all levels, and comprises words that learners really use and those that they understand. Pavičić Takač (2008: 9) describes the role of L1 in vocabulary acquisition as variable and depending on the degree of equivalency between

2 In their study, Gulan, Kresić and Pavić Pintarić (2017: 26) investigated the concept of potential effective transfer which refers to “the competence to correctly apply the *form* and *function* of a particular linguistic element in the performance in another language on the basis of the learner's interlingual identifications”.

languages. Transfer can also be influenced by the learner's "perception of linguistic and cultural distance" (ibid.).

### 3 INTENSIFIERS

Intensity, as one of the basic human cognitive categories (Wingender 2005), has an important function in the communicative setting because the speaker expresses an attitude towards a topic. Intensifiers can also be used for expressing emotions, i.e. subjectivity (cf. Athanasiadou 2007; Martin and White 2005), and are often dealt with as a function class (cf. Van Os 1989: 83f), due to the fact that many lexical items can be used as intensifiers. Cacchiani (2017: 1) deals with adjectives which "are the natural locus of intensification", and points out that degree adjectives build an "ever-changing prototypical category". Intensifiers are optional means of emphasis, as a category they show the need for "new, more emotional and expressive elements" (Cachiani 2017: 4).

The intensifiers that we deal with in this paper, are adverbs as in *very* hot and *really* interesting, and are defined by Méndez-Naya (2017: 249) as linguistic elements "which indicate the degree or the exact value of the adjectives they modify". Intensifiers "reinforce or attenuate a variable feature in the element" (Paradis 1997: 41) they modify, and adverbial intensifiers constitute an open word class, as they change quickly, since speakers wish to be original and interesting to their audience (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 281).<sup>3</sup>

Since intensity can be presented using a scale with two spheres: intensity above and below the norm, while the norm is culturally determined, the term intensifiers<sup>4</sup> refers to "adverbs that scale the quality of an adjective or adverb up" (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 281). According to Martin and White (2005: 141-143), up/down scaling can modify adjectives, adverbs, and verbs and it can refer to the scaling of qualities (*relatively miserable, fairly miserable, very miserable, extremely miserable, utterly miserable*), the scaling of verbal processes (*this upset me slightly, this upset me a bit, this upset me somewhat, this upset me greatly*), or the scaling of modalities (*just possible, somewhat possible, quite possible, very possible*).

According to their position on the scale, there are various divisions of intensifiers. Bolinger (1972) distinguishes between boosters (upper part of scale), moderators (middle of the scale), diminishers (lower part of the scale), and minimizers (lower end of the scale). For Quirk and Greenbaum (1976: 214), there are three semantic

3 Intensifiers can also undergo delexicalization, a process in which "the original meaning of the word is gradually lost as it evolves into a marker of intensification" (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 284). The more delexicalized an intensifier becomes, "the more it will lose its lexical restrictions and increase in frequency" (Lorenz 2002 144).

4 Reichelt and Durham (2017) give an overview of different terms: adverbs of degree (Biber et al. 1999), intensive adverbs (Stoffel 1901), degree modifiers (Paradis 1997), or degree words (Bolinger 1972).

classes of intensifiers: emphasizers (e.g. *definitely*), amplifiers and downtoners. Amplifiers consist of subclasses named maximizers (e.g. *completely*) and boosters (e.g. *very much*), whereas downtoners include compromisers (e.g. *kind of*), diminishers (e.g. *partly*), minimizers (e.g. *hardly*), and approximators (e.g. *almost*). According to Quirk and Greenbaum (1976: 218), compromisers have “a slight lowering effect”, diminishers and minimizers “scale downwards considerably”, and approximators influence the force of the verb.

In this paper we investigate amplifiers, i.e. maximizers and boosters<sup>5</sup>. Kennedy (2003: 470) lists the most frequent amplifiers in British English as *very, so, really, too*, followed by *absolutely, bloody, damn, real, completely, totally*. American English shows a similar distribution, but *bloody* is not frequent, whereas *real* is more common. The investigation of Ita and Tagliamonte (2003) shows that *very* and *really* are the most used intensifiers in a community in York, the UK, whereas the youngest population predominantly uses *really*.

Adverbial intensifiers occur in collocations, mostly with adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. In collocations with adjectives, Paradis (1997) differentiates between scalar, limit and extreme adjective collocates. Scalar adjectives are modified by moderators and boosters, and are fully gradable. Biber et al. (1999: 545) point out that adverb-adjective collocations are frequently used in conversation in both British and American English. They list the most frequent amplifier-adjective collocations in British English as *very good, very nice, really good, really nice, and too bad*. Common collocations in American English are *really good, too bad, very good, real good, real quick, really bad, really nice, too big, and very nice*.

This investigation will show which collocations are mostly used by the targeted Croatian students of English and whether their knowledge of L1 influences the choice of intensifiers in L2.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Methodology

This study investigates transfer from the intersubjective approach, which focuses on patterns of use observed in relatively large groups of language users. Linguistic transfer primarily arises from interlingual associations formed between structures (e.g. words) in L1 and L2. Consequently, the use of certain structures in L1 will activate the use of the corresponding structures in L2. Due to the influence of L1, students can be expected to select certain intensifiers over others in contexts where there are multiple

5 In order to avoid mixing different terms, in our analysis and discussion we will refer to them all as intensifiers.

alternatives (cf. Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008: 80). Nevertheless, since intensity is one of the main cognitive categories, we expect positive transfer in the use of intensifying lexical means in English in our study, even though Croatian and English are typologically distant languages, Croatian belonging to Slavic and English to Germanic languages.

In order to explore to what extent Croatian first-year university students are familiar with intensifiers in English (L2) and to check if there is a connection between the use of intensifiers in L2 and L1, we used cloze-tests and translation tasks from Croatian (L1) into English (L2), as well as questionnaires. This methodology was used because it enabled testing a large number of BA students majoring in English at the same time. The study was done in October 2018 on a sample of 79 students (60 female and 19 male) aged between 18 and 20 who had been learning English in formal education (elementary and high schools) in Croatia for between eight to 12 years. Out of that number, 10 students started learning English in the kindergarten, and 11 students attended additional English classes at private language schools.

First, the students were supposed to complete a cloze-test supplying the missing intensifiers in 20 sentences selected from two youth novels by the Croatian author Sanja Pilić, *Mrvica iz dnevnog boravka* and *E baš mi nije žao*. The goal of this task was to determine which intensifiers will be used by Croatian students.<sup>6</sup> Afterwards, the students were asked to translate those sentences into English, so that it could be examined whether their native language influences the choice of collocations in the foreign language. At the end, they were given a questionnaire consisting of the following tasks: to define the term ‘intensifiers’, to mark familiar English intensifiers in one list as well as familiar Croatian intensifiers in the other, and to provide adverb-adjective and adverb-verb collocations for those Croatian intensifiers they marked as familiar. In this part of the questionnaire the students were supposed to list collocations containing Croatian intensifiers, so that we could check whether they actually use them in everyday situations.

The present analysis includes seven out of 20 sentences in Croatian containing adverb-adjective collocations, which were translated by using adverb-adjective collocations in English. These are sentences 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 19, which are listed in the Appendix. However, sentences 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 20 as well sentences 1 and 17 are excluded from the present analysis because the former contain adverb-verb collocations, e.g. *strašno mrzim* (sentence 5), and the latter adverb-adverb collocations, e.g. *strašno je toplo* (sentence 17). Furthermore, sentence 13 is not analysed in this paper as the Croatian adjective *zaljubljen* is translated by the prepositional phrase *in love* and, consequently, does not contain an adverb-adjective collocation. In short, due to the complexity of this grammatical category and the number of different structures which can be used in translation, we decided to leave the remaining sentences for further research.

6 Croatian collocations were checked in the corpus of youth novels, in the Sketch Engine (the corpus Croatian Web: hrWaC 2.2, RFTagger), and by native speakers.

The students' translation of adverb-adjective collocations in English were then marked as either acceptable or unacceptable. These collocations were checked with the tool Sketch-Engine (Word Sketch: the corpus English Web 2015, enTenTen15). The collocations that were not found in this corpus were checked by two native speakers employed at two Croatian universities.

Based on the above described tasks, the use of intensifiers in L1 and L2 is compared. Positive transfer occurs when students use the acceptable intensifier in adverb-adjective collocations in L2. On the other hand, negative transfer occurs when they do not use an acceptable intensifier. In addition, the effects of transfer cannot be examined if a different structure is used instead of an adverb-adjective collocation. The results of this cross-sectional study are presented in the sections that follow.

## 4.2 Cloze-tests and translations

According to the results of the cloze-test, it can be claimed that the students used the acceptable Croatian intensifiers in order to complete the sentences. In 54% of the translated sentences the students used the translation of both the acceptable intensifier and the adjective. The translations of the remaining 46% of the sentences were unacceptable due to the following reasons:

- 1) the adverb does not collocate with the adjective in 8% of the sentences, e.g. *awfully annoying*, *dreadfully incapable*, *deadly insulted*;
- 2) either/both the incorrect adverb or/and the incorrect adjective were used in 17% of the sentences, e.g. *ludo zbunjen* = *\*terrifying confused*, *neopisivo dosadna* = *\*undescribably boring*, *totalno nesposobni* = *totally \*incapable*, *strahovito nesposobni* = *\*sadly \*unable*, *strahovito uvrijeđena* = *\*fearlessly \*worried*;
- 3) either/both the adverb or/and the adjective were not translated in 16% of the sentences; or
- 4) a different structure was used instead of an adverb-adjective collocation in 5% of the sentences, e.g. *užasno naporan* = *such a pain in the neck*, *totalno zbunjen* = *that totally confuses me*, *smrtno dosadan* = *boring as hell*, *strahovito lukav* - *cunning like a fox*.

Different structures in 4) are generally acceptable in translation, but our study was focused on transfer in the form of adverb-adjective collocations. Therefore, we analysed only the collocations in which the students used the acceptable intensifying adverb with an adjective in English.

Table 1: Acceptable use of Croatian intensifiers Table 2: Acceptable use of English intensifiers

Intensifier	Number of acceptable uses
totalno	70
veoma	67
jako	59
užasno	51
strašno	44
duboko	39
sasvim	36
smrtno	34
neopisivo	33
strahovito	27
zbilja	26
zaista	24

Intensifier	Number of acceptable uses
really	75
very	62
totally	44
completely	28
deeply	22
terribly	15
so	13
extremely	7
horribly	3
awfully	2
indescribably	2
incredibly	2
dreadfully	1
that	1
amazingly	1

Tables 1 and 2 show the Croatian and English intensifiers that were used in the sentences as well as the number of the sentences in which they were used acceptably. It is evident that the prevailing Croatian intensifier was *totalno*, the equivalent of which, *totally*, was not used to the same extent. Still, the Croatian intensifiers *veoma* and *jako* can be found in numerous sentences, which is also true for their English equivalent *very*. Although the Croatian intensifiers *užasno*, *strašno*, and *strahovito* were frequently used, their equivalents in English *terribly*, *horribly*, *awfully*, and *dreadfully* were rarely used. Instead, in the translation of the above mentioned intensifiers the students preferred the English intensifier *really*. Even though the intensifier *really* was used to a great extent in the English sentences, the Croatian equivalents *zbilja* and *zaista* were not used in many sentences. Furthermore, the Croatian intensifier *duboko* was translated with the English equivalent *deeply* only to some extent as well, and the same is true of the Croatian intensifier *sasvim* and its English equivalent *completely*. It is rather striking that although in the Croatian sentences the intensifiers *smrtno* and *neopisivo* were frequently used, the English intensifier *deadly* was not used at all, at least in the acceptable sentences, whereas the English intensifier *indescribably* was used in a few sentences. Also, the English intensifier *so* was used in order to translate the Croatian intensifiers *užasno*, *jako*, *strašno*, *smrtno*, *totalno*, *sasvim*, and *veoma*.

Table 3: Use of intensifiers in adverb-adjective collocations

Sentence No.	Croatian collocation	English collocation	No. of uses
4.	zbilja naporan zaista naporan	really annoying	11
	jako naporan veoma naporan	very annoying	4
6.	totalno zbunjen	totally confused	25
	jako zbunjen veoma zbunjen	very confused	7
	sasvim zbunjen	completely confused	6
	strašno zbunjen	terribly confused	3
	užasno zbunjen	horribly confused	2
	zbilja zbunjen	really confused	4
7.	duboko zbunjen	deeply confused	1
	sasvim nesposobni	completely incapable	9
9.	totalno nesposobni	totally incapable	4
	duboko uvrijeđena	deeply offended	17
10.	zbilja uvrijeđena	really hurt	1
	užasno dosadna	terribly boring	4
	strašno dosadna	horribly boring	2
	strahovito dosadna	dreadfully boring	1
	zaista dosadna zbilja dosadna	really boring	3
	neopisivo dosadna	indescribably boring	2
	jako dosadna	very boring	1
	totalno dosadna	totally boring	1
sasvim dosadna	completely boring	1	
12.	veoma lukav	very cunning	5
19.	veoma iznenađen jako iznenađen	very surprised	25
	totalno iznenađen	totally surprised	5
	zbilja iznenađen zaista iznenađen	really surprised	2
	duboko iznenađen	deeply surprised	1
	strašno iznenađen	terribly surprised	1
	užasno iznenađen	terribly surprised	1

Table 3 lists Croatian adverb-adjective collocations used by the students, as well as their English translations together with the number of uses. On the whole, there were

149 instances of positive transfer in the translation of the sentences, which supports the fact that the knowledge of one language (Croatian) affects the choice of words in another language (English in this case). In other words, the students preferred specific English intensifiers in contexts where more solutions were possible, as can be best seen in the following examples: *totalno zbunjen* – *totally confused* (25), *veoma/jako iznenađen* – *very surprised* (25), and *duboko uvrijeđen* – *deeply offended* (17). On the other hand, there were only nine examples of negative transfer where the intensifiers were translated literally without taking the whole collocation into consideration, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Unacceptable English translations of collocations

Sentence No.	Croatian collocation	English collocation (unacceptable)	No. of uses
4.	strašno naporan	awfully annoying	1
	užasno naporan	awfully annoying	1
7.	užasno nesposobni	dreadfully incapable	1
	strahovito nesposobni	horribly incapable	1
	strašno nesposobni	awfully incapable	1
9.	smrtno uvrijeđena	deadly insulted	1
	strahovito uvrijeđena	horribly offended	1
19.	smrtno iznenađen	deathly surprised	1
	strašno iznenađen	awfully surprised	1

According to the above results of 54% of acceptable translations and 8% of unacceptable adverb-adjective collocations, it may be implied that positive transfer exists because students seem to have used the examined structures in L1 to select the corresponding structures in L2.

### 4.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire comprised four tasks and was given to students after the cloze-test and the translation of the sentences. First, the students were asked to define the term ‘intensifiers’, which was done correctly by 37 students (47%). Then, they were given the list of English and Croatian intensifiers determined in Pavić Pintarić and Frleta (2014). Students were first given the list of English intensifiers (*completely, utterly, awfully, really, very, greatly, thoroughly, madly, perfectly, immensely, highly, grievously, horribly, extremely, deeply, deadly, utterly, furiously, wildly, madly, absolutely*) and asked to circle the ones they knew. According to their answers, it can be argued that the most students are familiar with the following English intensifiers: *absolutely, awfully, completely, deeply,*

*entirely, extremely, furiously, horribly, madly, perfectly, really, strongly, very* (100%); *bitterly, deadly, greatly, highly, totally, wildly* (90-99%); *thoroughly* (82%); *grievously, immensely, utterly* (61-68%).

In order to check their knowledge of Croatian intensifiers, we asked them to indicate with which of the following they are familiar: *dozlaboga, krajnje, posve, potpuno, sasvim, totalno, duboko, grdno, izrazito, jako, odviše, pošteno, pretjerano, previše, silno, smrtno, strašno, stvarno, užasno, vraški, vrlo, zaista, zbilja, kudikamo*. The results show that the students are familiar with most of these, as follows: *stvarno* (100%); *jako, užasno, totalno, pretjerano, strašno, previše, potpuno, pošteno vrlo, upravo* (99-90%); *zbilja, duboko* (87-86%); *zaista, posve, sasvim, smrtno, krajnje, izrazito* (78-71%).

The students were then asked to write some adverb-adjective and adverb-verb collocations with the intensifiers that they marked as familiar in the previous question, from which it may be seen that they use intensifiers in various collocations in their native language, e.g. *potpuno uvjerena, duboko uvrijeđen, previše glup, smrtno dosadan, krajnje ozbiljan, totalno nezainteresiran, strašno naporan, užasno dobar, posve razočarana, stvarno glupa, totalno lud, jako znatiželjan, silno tužan, vrlo zahtjevan, duboko ganuta / potpuno je poludio, silno se trudim, potpuno se slažem, smrtno se plašim, duboko se ispričavam, znatno si se promijenio, pošteno se naradio, grdno se varaš, silno se veselim, ona se užasno boji, grdno sam pogriješio, pošteno sam se namučila*.

The last section of the questionnaire contained the following questions: Was it demanding to answer this questionnaire? Was it demanding to translate the sentences? Was it demanding to complete the sentences? Do you usually think about using the words you were supposed to provide in order to complete the sentences? According to their answers referring to Croatian intensifiers, some students (41%) thought thoroughly about which intensifier to use, whereas others (33%) used them automatically without considering different options, and some were undecided concerning the use of intensifiers (17%). Finally, for 61% of the students it was not difficult to complete the sentences, which cannot be said for the translation as more than half of them (53%) found it demanding.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to examine to what extent first-year undergraduate university students of English at Zadar University, Croatia are familiar with English and Croatian intensifiers and in which collocations they are used. Familiarity with intensifiers and their acceptable use in both languages could imply that the knowledge of intensifiers in L1 might lead to their proper use and correct knowledge about them in L2. The research questions refer to familiarity with English intensifiers, their most common use, the collocations with intensifiers, and the connection between L1 and L2 which could explain positive transfer.

The results show that Croatian students are familiar with intensifiers in L2 but still predominantly use *really* and *very*. They also know how to use intensifiers in Croatian but prefer *totalno*, *veoma* and *jako* to others: *totalno* represents the highest possible degree, whereas *veoma* and *jako* refer to a high degree and are stylistically neutral. Although intensifiers are considered to be an open class with possibilities of accepting new items, students tend to use the well-known and neutral forms of *very* (*veoma*, *jako*). Nonetheless, the English intensifier *really* was used in order to translate not only the Croatian intensifiers *zbilja* and *zaista*, but also a whole range of different intensifiers, e.g. *veoma*, *jako*, *užasno*, *strašno*, *strahovito*, *neopisivo*, *totalno*, *sasvim*, *smrtno*.

It seems that intensifiers in both L1 and L2 are used in a similar way, i.e. students use combinations of different adverbs and adjectives in both Croatian texts and their translations. This leads to results which show positive transfer in translations from L1 into L2. Relying on their L1 knowledge, students tend to use acceptable intensifiers in their L2 as well, e.g. *totalno* – *totally*, *very* – *veoma*, *jako*, *sasvim* – *completely*, *strašno*, *užasno*, *strahovito* – *terribly*, *horribly*, *dreadfully*, *duboko* – *deeply*, *zaista*, *zbilja* – *really*, *neopisivo* – *indescribably*. Also, where it was possible, some answers show different elements in collocations, e.g. adverb-adjective for the Croatian adverb-verb, e.g. *užasno se razočarala* = (*was*) *terribly disappointed*, *veoma se iznenadio* = (*was*) *very surprised*, or adverb-adjective for the Croatian adverb-adverb, e.g. *strašno je toplo* = (*it is*) *awfully warm*. Still, the intensifying element was not omitted and was translated correctly. This usage shows awareness of the syntactic traits of both languages.

Negative transfer was found in a few examples which were literal translations of Croatian e.g. *strašno/užasno naporan* – *awfully annoying*, *užasno nesposobni* – *dreadfully incapable*, *strahovito nesposobni* – *horribly incapable*, *strašno nesposobni* – *awfully incapable*, *smrtno uvrijeđena* – *deadly insulted*, *strahovito uvrijeđena* – *horribly offended*, *smrtno iznenađen* – *deathly surprised*, *strašno iznenađen* – *awfully surprised*. These collocations are unacceptable in English, and the reason why the students used them might be their reliance on knowledge of individual words in their native language, which they translated literally regardless of collocation. It seems that students know how to use intensifiers in both L1 and L2, but when it comes to using them in collocations, especially those they do not frequently use, L1 plays a significant role in the choice they make.

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## APPENDIX

### Sentences used in the cloze-test

1. Tebi je lako, ti imaš sestru, a ja sam jedinica. Ponekad je to **strahovito** naporno.
2. Ja idem u školu i nesretan sam. **Jako** se stidim svoje nesreće.
3. – Blesava koza! – Marina se **zaista** naljutila.
4. – Teta Dragica je mrzovoljna, antipatična i ima bradavicu na nosu. – **Zbilja** si naporan.
5. **Strašno** mrzim imati sokne na nogama.
6. Rodio sam se s nekakvim kvocijentom inteligencije i **sasvim** sam zbunjen.
7. Roditelji su mi **totalno** nesposobni za privređivanje, a družu se samo s isto takvima.
8. Robotko se **veoma** iznenadio.
9. Princeza je bila **duboko** uvrijeđena, a priča se skoro rastrgala od bijesa na komadiće.
10. Nedjelja je **užasno** dosadna.
11. Mamica se **strašno** zabrinula, maknula je policu s knjigama iz sobe, a enciklopedije je dobro sakrila.
12. Pametniji popušta. A najpametniji – (to sam ja) – ide u kino i na rođendan. Zar nisam **neopisivo** lukav?
13. Vremenska prognoza glasi: **Smrtno** sam zaljubljen!

14. Moja razrednica se **užasno** razočarala.
15. Mame nije bilo u blizini. Vrlo je ponosna na svoje kuhanje i **nikako** ne bi voljela čuti kako ogovaramo njeno kulinarско umijeće.
16. Ljudi mnogo govore o ljubavi. Ali to su samo riječi. Riječi su zarobile svijet i **sasvim** se izlizale.
17. –**Strašno** je toplo-dodala je bakica.
18. Ponekad je dosadan, jer je i on prilično pametan, a mi pametni **zbilja** znamo gnjaviti.
19. Cobra nam je otvorio vrata i bio **ludo** iznenađen.
20. Bio sam shrvan. Ljubav me **strašno** iscrpila.

## POVZETEK

### Transfer pri rabi prislovov za izražanje jakosti

Prispevek proučuje transfer pri rabi angleških prislovov za izražanje jakosti na primeru hrvaških študentov angleščine. Transfer je predmet številnih raziskav, saj je pomemben dejavnik učenja drugega jezika, ki vpliva na različna področja jezikovne rabe. Pričujoči prispevek se osredotoča na učinke leksikalnega transferja pri rabi prislovov za izražanje jakosti na primeru študentov prvih letnikov dodiplomskega študija angleščine na Univerzi v Zadru. S presečno študijo smo poskušali ugotoviti, ali obstaja povezava med rabo prislovov za izražanje jakosti v drugem in maternem jeziku oziroma ali znanje o rabi prislovov za izražanje jakosti v maternem, hrvaškem jeziku vpliva na znanje o rabi teh prislovov v drugem jeziku, angleščini. Dojemanje jakosti je človekova osnovna kognitivna sposobnost, ki pomembno vpliva na sporazumevanje. Govorci svoja čustva in odnos do dane teme izražajo prav s pomočjo prislovov za izražanje jakosti. Slednji se pojavljajo tudi v različnih kolokacijah – kot določila pridevnikov, prislovov in glagolov. V raziskavi smo se osredotočili na prislove za izražanje jakosti v pridevniških zvezah. V študiji smo rabo tovrstnih prislovov preučevali na razmeroma veliki skupini učencev tujega jezika. Podatke smo zbrali s pomočjo vprašalnikov, nalog z zapolnjevanjem vrzeli in nalog s prevajanjem. Pri tem sta nas zanimala zlasti pomen in povezovalnost prislovov za izražanje jakosti.

**Ključne besede:** transfer, prislovi za izražanje jakosti, hrvaški študenti, angleščina kot tuji jezik

## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates transfer in the use of English intensifiers by Croatian students of English. Since transfer is an important factor in second language acquisition and is very common in different areas of language use, it has been the subject of various studies. In this paper, we focus on lexical transfer investigating its effects on the use of intensifiers among first-year undergraduate

university students of English at Zadar University, Croatia. The aim of this cross-sectional study is to examine whether there is a connection between the use of intensifiers in L2 and L1, i.e. whether the knowledge of intensifiers in L1 Croatian influences learners' use or knowledge of intensifiers in L2 English. Intensity is a basic human cognitive category and has an important function in communication. Specifically, the speaker expresses emotions or an attitude towards a topic using intensifiers. Furthermore, intensifiers are used in different collocations modifying adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. However, this study focuses only on intensifiers that appear in adverb-adjective collocations, and their use is observed in a relatively large group of language learners at a single point in time. Relevant data are collected using questionnaires as well as cloze-tests and translation tasks which focus on semantics and collocation.

**Keywords:** transfer, intensifiers, Croatian students, EFL