

ISSN 2520-2073 (print)  
ISSN 2521-442X (online)

# TRAINING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

*'Education is an ornament in prosperity and a  
refuge in adversity'*

*- Aristotle*

**Vol. 6  
Issue 3  
2022**

Issue doi: 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3  
Quarterly journal published by  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)

# TRAINING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

ISSN 2520-2073 (print)  
ISSN 2521-442X (online)

Quarterly journal published by RUDN University

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr Elena N. Malyuga	Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia
Barry Tomalin	Glasgow Caledonian University London, London, UK
Dr Michael McCarthy	University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK
Dr Wayne Rimmer	University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
Dr Gary Massey	Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland
Dr Robert O'Dowd	University of León, León, Spain
Dr Olga V. Aleksandrova	Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation
Dr Lilia K. Raitskaya	Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University), Moscow, Russia
Dr Alex Krouglov	University College London, London, UK
Dr Igor E. Klyukanov	Eastern Washington University, Cheney, USA
Dr Mai Nguyen-Phuong-Mai	Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands
Dr Joongchol Kwak	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea
Dr Chai Mingjong	Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China
Dr Enrique Quero-Gervilla	University of Granada, Granada, Spain
Dr Iván Vicente Padilla Chasing	National University of Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia

## ADVISORY BOARD

Dr Zrinka Friganović Sain	Rochester Institute of Technology, Croatia
Dr Jean Langlois	Sciences Po, France
Dr Evgeniya V. Ponomarenko	MGIMO University, Russia

## EDITORS

Elena N. Malyuga, Editor-in-Chief (RUDN University) [malyuga-en@rudn.ru](mailto:malyuga-en@rudn.ru)  
Barry Tomalin, Editorial Consultant (Glasgow Caledonian University London) [barrytomalin@aol.com](mailto:barrytomalin@aol.com)  
 Elizaveta G. Grishechko, Executive Secretary (RUDN University) [grishechko-eg@rudn.ru](mailto:grishechko-eg@rudn.ru)

## COMPUTER DESIGN

Elizaveta G. Grishechko

## FOUNDER

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)  
6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., 117198 Moscow, Russian Federation <http://eng.rudn.ru>

## PUBLISHER

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russia  
6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., 117198 Moscow, Russia

## EDITORIAL BOARD ADDRESS

6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., 117198 Moscow, Russia

## EDITORIAL BOARD POSTAL ADDRESS

6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., Office 97, 117198 Moscow, Russia

## PHONE

+7 (925) 585-67-46

## EMAIL

[tlcjournal@rudn.ru](mailto:tlcjournal@rudn.ru)

Training, Language and Culture is accessible online at <https://rudn.tlcjournal.org>  
Publication schedule: four issues per year coming out in March, June, September and December

Printing run 100 copies. Order No 23. Open price.  
Signed to print 4.09.2022. Date of imprint 20.09.2022. Format 60x84/8.  
Offset paper. Offset printing. Typeface "Optima, Impact".  
Printer's sheet 10,02

Printed at RUDN University Publishing House:  
3 Ordzhonikidze str., 115419 Moscow, Russian Federation  
Ph.: +7 (495) 952-04-41; Email: [publishing@rudn.ru](mailto:publishing@rudn.ru)

## AIMS AND SCOPE

Training, Language and Culture (TLC) is a peer-reviewed journal that aims to promote and disseminate research spanning the spectrum of language and linguistics, education and culture studies with a special focus on professional communication and professional discourse.

## FOCUS AREAS

Training, Language and Culture covers the following areas of scholarly interest: theoretical and practical perspectives in language and linguistics; culture studies; interpersonal and intercultural professional communication; language and culture teaching and training, including techniques and technology, testing and assessment.

## LICENSING

Publications from issue no. 3 2022 are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public License (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows unrestricted use of works for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. This means that people can share the material (copy and redistribute in any medium or format), as well as adapt it (remix, transform, and build upon the material) for non-commercial purposes as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as the license terms are being followed. For more information please read the summary of the CC BY-NC licence at Creative Commons.

Content published up to and including Issue no. 2 2022 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License (CC BY 4.0), which allows unrestricted use of works, including for commercial purposes, subject to attribution. This means that people can share the material (copy and redistribute in any medium or format), as well as adapt it (remix, transform, and build upon the material) for any purpose, even commercially, as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as the license terms are being followed. For more information please read the summary of the CC BY licence at Creative Commons.

## INDEXATION

The journal is currently indexed in Scopus, DOAJ, Russian Index of Science Citation, Ulrich's Web, Linguistics Abstracts Online (Wiley), Google Scholar, EBSCO, ROAD, CyberLeninka, British Library, Bodleian Libraries (University of Oxford), Ghent University Library.

## ACCESS TO PUBLICATIONS

This journal is an open access journal. All articles are made freely available to readers immediately upon publication. Our open access policy is in accordance with the [Budapest Open Access Initiative \(BOAI\)](#) definition. It means that articles have free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. For more information please read [BOAI statement](#). This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge (open license [Creative Commons](#)).

## PEER REVIEW

Training, Language and Culture is committed to ensuring a fair and productive peer review process to secure the integrity of the scholarly record. The purpose of peer review is to assist the Editors in making editorial decisions and through the editorial communications with the author it may also assist the author in improving the paper. Training, Language and Culture uses double-blind review, which means that reviewers are unaware of the identity of the authors, and authors are also unaware of the identity of reviewers. The typical period of time allowed for reviews is 3 weeks.

## PUBLICATION SCHEDULE AND VOLUME

The journal is published quarterly (four issues per year coming out in March, June, September and December) with each issue incorporating 6 to 8 original research articles, 1 to 4 reviews on relevant books and other publications on the subjects within the Aims and Scope of the journal, as well as reports on events and latest news. Print will be available on demand.

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

In selecting (review process included), preparing (editing) and publishing manuscripts, editors of Training, Language and Culture are guided by international standards of publication ethics. TLC Editorial Board will carefully and responsibly consider all reasonable complaints regarding violations found in published materials. Journal publisher, RUDN University, is a co-founder and member of the [Association of Science Editors and Publishers \(ASEP\)](#) and supports the [ASEP Declaration on Ethical Principles for Scientific Publications](#). The journal also adheres to the policies promoted by the [Committee on Publication Ethics \(COPE\)](#).

## COPYRIGHT NOTICE

The right of authorship belongs to the authors of articles. The authors transfer the rights to use the article (including the use and distribution of an article in the Open Access) to the publisher of the journal on a non-exclusive license (Publishing Agreement (Public Offer) available on TLC website). At the same time, authors remain full rightsholders.

Correspondence relating to editorial matters should be addressed to the Editors via journal contact email at [tlcjournal@rudn.ru](mailto:tlcjournal@rudn.ru)  
Online archive of all issues published in Training, Language and Culture is available at <https://rudn.tlcjournal.org/archive.html>

Responsibility for opinions expressed in articles and reviews published and the accuracy of statements contained therein rests solely with the individual contributors

Detailed information on the journal's aims and scope, editorial board, publication policy, peer review, publication ethics, author guidelines and latest news and announcements is available on the journal's website at <https://rudn.tlcjournal.org>

Publishing Agreement (Public Offer) to Publish an Article in the Academic Periodical 'Training, Language and Culture' is available online on the journal website at <https://rudn.tlcjournal.org/publication-policy.html>

# CONTENTS

- 5 **About our contributors**
- 7 **Introduction to Issue 6(3)** by Elena N. Malyuga

## Original Research

- 9 **CROATIAN EFL LEARNERS' COLLOCATIONAL COMPETENCE: CONGRUENT AND INCONGRUENT COLLOCATIONS**  
by Jakob Patekar and Nataša Košuta
- 32 **TECHNICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF TEACHING EFL AND ESP UNIVERSITY COURSES ONLINE: A CASE STUDY OF THE 2020-2021 CURRICULUM**  
by Elena V. Ryazanova and Sergei B. Dekterev
- 45 **PONDERING ON THE WAYS TO ENHANCE UNIVERSITY REPUTATION**  
by Yulia N. Ebzeeva and Natalia M. Dugalich
- 55 **CROSS-DISCIPLINARY VARIATION IN METADISOURSE: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN-AUTHORED RESEARCH ARTICLE ABSTRACTS**  
by Olga A. Boginskaya
- 67 **INCONSISTENCY OF TRANSLATING MEDICAL ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS INTO THE ARABIC LANGUAGE**  
by Siddig Mohammed
- 78 **CHALLENGING INTERCULTURAL DISCOMFORTS: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING**  
by Monika Hřebačková and Martin Štefl

## Book Reviews

- 89 ***Theoretical and applied perspectives on teaching foreign languages in multilingual settings: Pedagogical implications (a review)***  
original work by A. Krulatz, G. Neokleous and A. Dahl (Eds.) reviewed by Maurice Cassidy and Elena I. Madinyan
- 92 ***Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume (a review)***  
original work by D. Little and N. Figueiras (Eds.) reviewed by Evelyn Vovou

## News & Events

- 95 **RUDN University News**
- 96 **TLC News**

## About our contributors

### **Jakob Patekar**

General Education Chair at RIT Croatia. Holds a PhD in Language Teaching. Teaches Introduction to English Language Teaching at the University of Rijeka (Croatia). From 2015 to 2019 was involved in developing the new curriculum of English for elementary and high schools. Research interests include early language learning, language assessment, language policy, collocations, and punctuation.

### **Nataša Košuta**

Assistant Professor at the Department of German Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka (Croatia). Holds a PhD in Language Teaching. Teaches language teaching methodology courses such as Teaching Young Language Learners. Current research projects focus on the contrastive analysis of collocations and on early language learning.

### **Elena V. Ryazanova**

Associate Professor at St. Petersburg University (Russia) holds a PhD in Linguistics. Has been teaching English and linguistics at various academic establishments of Russia, among which are Saratov State University, St. Petersburg University, and St. Petersburg University of Culture. The PhD thesis (2001) focused on the comparative study of the linguistic picture of the world in English and Russian popular ballads. Research interests include cognitive linguistics, language of folklore and English language teaching methodology.

### **Sergei B. Dekterev**

Associate Professor at St. Petersburg University (Russia) holds a PhD in Linguistics. Has been teaching English for Special Purposes and linguistics at St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg State Institute of Culture, and Russian State Hydrometeorological University. The PhD thesis (1999) focus on the category of abstract and its representation in language. Research interests include comparative linguistics, analysis of language corpora, and English language teaching methodology.

### **Yulia N. Ebzeeva**

Associate Professor, holds a PhD in Linguistics. Head of Foreign Languages Department at the Faculty of Linguistics, Director of the Institute of Modern Languages,

Intercultural Communication and Migrations at RUDN University (Russia). Vice-Rector for Educational Operations at RUDN University. Research interests cover foreign language teaching methodology, cultural aspects of language learning, intercultural communication.

### **Natalia M. Dugalich**

Associate Professor at Foreign Languages Department, Faculty of Linguistics, RUDN University (Russia). Holds a PhD in Linguistics. Research interests include semantic condensations, contrastive language studies, phraseology, and foreign language teaching methodology.

### **Olga A. Boginskaya**

DSc in Linguistics, professor in the Department of Linguistics and Cross-cultural Communication at Irkutsk National Research Technical University (Russia). Research interests cover academic discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, currently focusing on metadiscourse markers in academic prose.

### **Siddig Mohammed**

Assistant Professor of Translation at Qassim University, English Language and Translation Dpt, College of Science and Arts (Saudi Arabia). Expert in English to Arabic translation, holds a PhD in translation studies from Gezira University (Sudan). Research interests include translation, interpreting, and languages, notably medical, legal, media, and political translations.

### **Monika Hřebačková**

Head of Language Studies and an Associate Professor at MIAS School of Business, Czech Technical University in Prague (Czech Republic). Teaches courses on Business English, English for Specific and Academic Purposes, Intercultural Communication and Social Competences. Supervises foreign language teacher training and lifelong learning programmes. Introduced virtual exchange into CTU's language curriculum. Was awarded the best HE Erasmus project in 2018 for developing Intercultural Communicative Competence. Coordinates national and international projects, currently the project on interdisciplinary collaborative approaches to learning and teaching (INCOLLAB). Publishes in academic journals and presents at international conferences.

### **Martin Štefl**

DSc in Linguistics, Professor at the School of Business of the University of Chemistry and Technology Prague (Czech Republic). Research interests include foreign

language teaching methodology, special education, curriculum theory, intercultural communicative competence, and educational psychology.

**Elena I. Madinyan**

Teaching Assistant in the Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, currently working on her PhD in Linguistics. Research interests include metaphorical repre-

sentations in language, media discourse, corpus studies, lexical-semantic fields theory, foreign language teaching methodology, and multilingual studies.

**Evelyn Vovou**

DSc in German Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece). Research interests cover multicultural foreign language teaching, second language acquisition, and language ecology.

## Introduction to Issue 6(3)

by Editor-in-Chief Elena N. Malyuga

Welcome to the September issue of Training, Language and Culture. This issue offers multifaceted studies looking into learners' collocational competence, the teaching of ESP and EFL university courses online, the ways to enhance university reputation, the language of research articles, the problems occurring in translating medical abbreviations and acronyms, and storytelling as an instrument of promoting intercultural communicative competence.

In *Croatian EFL learners' collocational competence: Congruent and incongruent collocations* Jakob Patekar and Nataša Košuta (Croatia) show the patterns of learners' struggling with the two different types of collocations and offer methodological solutions for their training and assessment. The study highlights the various issues associated with teaching congruent and incongruent collocations to Croatian learners of English, most of which emerge at the intersection of grammar and vocabulary, thus posing a true challenge to both teachers and students. The study concludes that while high schoolers make collocational errors regardless of whether they are congruent or incongruent, they make more mistakes with the latter type of collocations, and this difference is statistically significant. This research opens up an array of avenues requiring further investigation into incongruent collocations, collocational competence, and strategies learners use when producing collocations. Of particular interest are the thorough appendixes offered in the article to suggest sample tests and their assessment maps for practical application or consideration.

In *Technical, psychological and behavioural aspects of teaching EFL and ESP university courses online: A case study of the 2020-2021 curriculum* Elena V. Ryazanova and Sergei B. Dektarev (Russia) deal with the issues of online EFL and ESP teaching and learning under an instructor's supervision to pinpoint the various sets of problems encountered by both teachers and students in distance education. The study answers a set of important questions, including: (1) What technical problems did the students face in online English classes and how did they influence the process of education? (2) What psychological and behavioural aspects occurred in the process of online English studies and how did they influence students' engagement? (3) In what way did the switch to online learning affect the

students' effectiveness in the English classroom and how did it correspond with performance results? (4) What are the perspectives of online EFL learning at the university from the students' point of view? As the authors conclude, taken together, the findings do not disapprove of taking advantages of modern IT technologies to deliver certain parts or modules of the English language syllabus within the university curriculum to facilitate the autonomous work of learners. However, the obstacles one might encounter in this process should be taken into account in order to boost students' performance and further streamline the online teaching/learning procedures.

In *Pondering on the ways to enhance university reputation* Yulia N. Ebzeeva and Natalia M. Dugalich (Russia) take on a challenging mission to dissect the underbelly of QS World University Rankings by analysing the impressive rise in RUDN University ratings through the years. Focusing on the strict ranking methodologies implemented in compiling the QS rankings, the authors analyse them against the background of the road map of RUDN University and other Russian universities. The study proposes a compelling breakdown of the growth of RUDN University positions in QS World University Rankings by subject, pinpoints the university's priority areas of development, explains the new forms of university activity, looks into its image strategies in research promotion, and considers cooperation with employers as one of the forces behind the university's advance in ranking lists. The article will be of interest to all practicing educationalists and administrative staff aspiring to lead their universities into a better future.

In *Cross-disciplinary variation in metadiscourse: A corpus-based analysis of Russian-authored research article abstracts* Olga A. Boginskaya (Russia) exposes the intricate differences in research article abstracts authored by Russian scholars within the subject fields of Applied Linguistics and Engineering. The metadiscourse markers – hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions – analysed as part of two sub-corpora reveal disciplinary variation of use, proving that Russian linguists take far more explicitly involved positions than writers in the field of engineering. Therewith, the study found that a rather large percentage of the respondents had not known that metadiscourse was a common feature in academic prose and had never thought about the role of metadiscourse in academic prose. This particular finding highlights the pedagogical implications suggesting that metadiscourse and academic writing should be a more prominent part of the curriculum.

In *Inconsistency of translating medical abbreviations and acronyms into the Arabic language* Siddig Mohammed (Saudi Arabia) turns to the issue of translation equivalency as one of the cornerstones of translation studies. The focus on medical translation equivalence is a topic of its own considering the risks and responsibilities involved. Upon explaining the basics of medical translation as a challenge, the author poses the questions to be addressed, including: (1) What is the source of inconsistency in acronyms and abbreviations? (2) What is the effect of the inconsistency of acronyms and abbreviations in the medical field? (3) How to deal with acronyms and abbreviations inconsistency? The study summarises a number of valuable conclusions, such as the importance of the translator's awareness of acronyms and other medical terminologies commonly used by medical practitioners, and the expediency of rendering abbreviations in full and according to the intended meaning based on different contexts.

Finally, in *Challenging intercultural discomforts: Intercultural communicative competence through digital storytelling* Monika Hřebačková and Martin Štefl (Czech Republic) discuss the pedagogical potential of digital storytelling, understood as multimodal pedagogy that encourages creative expression and self-representation, as a tool for challenging and mitigating perceived communicational and intercultural discomfort within the context of intercultural competence development and training. The authors argue that collaborative digital storytelling in multicultural teams raises intercultural

awareness by creating a safe, structured, and facilitated virtual space for students to develop their ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language and represents a viable tool of challenging and overcoming intercultural discomfort by providing an opportunity for repeated intercultural interaction through negotiation of meaning and intersubjective construction of knowledge as well as by providing motivating real-life context for students' work. The study concludes that by accentuating dialogue and student-centred approaches, digital storytelling provides a viable framework within which students might apply, reflect on and critically assess dominant models in intercultural communicative competence, thus developing a deeper level of engagement with their subject matter, as well as a stronger sense of ownership of their academic work.

The issue also comes with two book reviews: *Theoretical and applied perspectives on teaching foreign languages in multilingual settings: Pedagogical implications* reviewed by Maurice Cassidy and Elena I. Madinyan, and *Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume* reviewed by Evelyn Vovou.

As is customary, recent news from RUDN University and TLC finalise the issue.

TLC welcomes contributions in the form of articles, reviews and correspondence. Details are available online at [rudn.tlcjournal.org](https://rudn.tlcjournal.org). If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at [tlcjournal@rudn.ru](mailto:tlcjournal@rudn.ru).



# Original Research

## Croatian EFL learners' collocational competence: Congruent and incongruent collocations

by Jakob Patekar and Nataša Košuta

**Jakob Patekar** RIT Croatia, Croatia [jakob.patekar@outlook.com](mailto:jakob.patekar@outlook.com)

**Nataša Košuta** University of Rijeka, Croatia [nkosuta@ffri.uniri.hr](mailto:nkosuta@ffri.uniri.hr)

**Article history** Received December 15, 2021 | Revised September 7, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The authors declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** The research was funded by University of Rijeka, Project 'Contrastive Analysis of Collocations in Croatian, German, and English' (uniri-human-18-29), and by the Croatian Science Foundation, Project 'Metaphorical Collocations – Syntagmatic Word Combinations Between Semantics and Pragmatics' (IP-2020-02-6319)

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-9-31

**For citation** Patekar, J., & Košuta, N. (2022). Croatian EFL learners' collocational competence: Congruent and incongruent collocations. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 9-31.

*The paper describes Croatian EFL learners' collocational competence with regard to congruent and incongruent collocations. Congruent collocations are those which express the same meaning in both languages with similar lexical components, whereby a direct translation from L1 into L2 produces an appropriate collocation. On the other hand, incongruent collocations use different lexical components in the two languages to express the same meaning and a direct translation from L1 into L2 most likely produces an error. Based on this difference between the two types of collocations, the hypothesis is that participants would be more successful in producing congruent as opposed to incongruent collocations due to a positive crosslinguistic influence. To test the hypothesis, 175 Croatian high school students at different year levels (ages 15-18) were tested by using a 22-item task in which they were asked to translate collocations from L1 Croatian into L2 English. The results show that students were more successful in producing congruent than incongruent collocations, and their collocational competence grew with year level and the number of foreign languages spoken.*

**KEYWORDS:** congruent collocations, incongruent collocations, collocational competence, English as a foreign language, EFL, crosslinguistic influence



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Collocations, as words that habitually go together, are an important part of language. Indeed, Nation (2001) goes so far as to equate collocational knowledge with language knowledge, stating in addition that '*all fluent and appropriate language use requires collocational knowledge*' (Nation, 2001, p. 523). Regarding the latter, James (1998, p. 152) claims that '*adherence to*

*the collocational conventions of an FL contributes greatly to one's idiomaticity*'. (The quotation actually continues on to mention 'nativelikeness' as a result of adhering to collocational conventions and 'foreignness' as a consequence of failing at producing correct collocations; however, seeing that in the academic community the native speaker is no longer considered the ideal towards which the foreign language learner should strive

(e.g., Cook, 1999), we understand that the goal of developing collocational competence is to become highly proficient in the foreign language, rather than to become native-like.) Hence, we can conclude that collocational competence needs to have a prominent place in foreign language learning and teaching, especially since lexical errors, of which collocational errors are a part, are considered as most severe in terms of error gravity (James, 1998) because they hinder effective communication. Ivir and Tanay (1975) recognised the particular challenge of learning collocations and pointed out that when acquiring the lexical fund of a foreign language, *'every student faces two types of challenges: one is to learn the meaning of individual lexical items, and the other is to learn how these items combine to form collocational bonds'* (Ivir & Tanay, 1975, p. 29). It is no wonder that Borić (2004) believes that collocational competence *'should become an integral part of any form of teaching vocabulary of a foreign language'* (p. 63). Similarly, based on her review of literature and current SLA research on collocations, Košuta (2012) concludes that developing collocational competence needs to be given a prominent place in foreign language classrooms and that a contrastive approach to studying and teaching collocations may help students understand and learn collocations better. The importance of the contrastive approach in analysing and teaching collocations is likewise emphasised by Čeh (2005) and Jurko (2010) in the L1 Slovenian and L2 English context.

While there are numerous studies of collocational competence in L2 English, research with L1 Croatian is surprisingly modest, and there are virtually no studies from the aspect of congruency, that is, studies looking at the difference between congruent and incongruent collocations in L1 Croatian and L2 English. However, from recent studies in the Croatian context (Brkić Bakarić et al., 2022; Keglević Blažević, 2022; Patekar, 2022; Stojić & Košuta, 2021, 2022) that analysed, among other things, the underlying metaphors in metaphorical collocations in four languages (Croatian, German, English, and Italian), it emerges that in these languages there is, in certain cases, an overlap, or congruence, while in other cases, different metaphorical collocations are used to express the same meaning, which is an evidence of incongruence.

Nesselhauf (2003), to whose research we return at a later point, seems to have been among the first to revive the interest in studying collocations from the aspect of congruence, decades since Marton (1977) wrote

about lexically congruent and non-congruent syntagms. Congruent collocations are those which express the same meaning in both languages with similar if not identical lexical components, whereby a direct translation from L1 into L2 produces an appropriate collocation (e.g., *pokazati poštovanje = to show respect*). On the other hand, incongruent collocations use different lexical components in the two languages to express the same meaning, and a direct translation from L1 into L2 most likely produces an error (e.g., *ići na živce ≠ to go on one's nerves = to get on one's nerves*).

Seeing that research into other first and foreign languages (Nesselhauf, 2003; Wolter & Gyllstad, 2011, 2013; Wolter & Yamashita, 2015, 2018; Yamashita, 2018; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010) has shown that crosslinguistic influence and congruency play a significant role in learning and processing collocations, we were interested to see whether Croatian speakers of English would show the same pattern of struggling more with incongruent than congruent collocations and thus carried out this study. In the following part we explore the findings of studies on collocational competence of Croatian speakers of English and then look at the conclusions from international studies on the congruency effect in collocational competence.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Collocational competence of Croatian speakers of English

As mentioned previously, there are no studies of collocational congruency with L1 Croatian and L2 English, but there are a few that examined Croatian speakers' collocational competence in English (e.g., Begagić, 2014; Koren & Rogulj, 2017; Miščin, 2015a; Miščin, 2015b; Miščin, 2016; Miščin, 2017; Pavičić Takač & Lukač, 2013; Pavičić Takač & Miščin, 2013). In most of these, the target language was English for specific purposes, primarily in medicine and business. In the following part we look at the key findings from these studies to gain an insight into the collocational competence of Croatian speakers of English.

Begagić (2014) tested 40 students of English in Zenica in their first and fourth years of university, describing them as native speakers of BSC (Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian). Their productive competence was tested via a translation task including 60 items and a receptive task including 72 items with lexical collocations. Based on the results, the author deems the students' overall collocational competence unsatisfactory and attributes this lack of competence to students' native language in-

fluence and to the way they were taught English. Nonetheless, Begagić (2014) found that fourth year students had performed significantly better than first year students and that the participants' receptive knowledge was much better than the productive.

Koren and Rogulj (2017) examined the collocational competence of 84 fifth- and sixth-year students of medicine using a multiple-choice and a two-way translation task. The authors also investigated the participants' perception of learning collocations. The collocations were extracted from teaching materials. The results show that participants rely on their L1 and approximation to produce collocations, and that their collocational competence was greater at the receptive than the productive level. The authors did not find a statistically significant difference between the collocational competence of fifth- and sixth-year students.

Miščin (2015a) analysed collocational exercises in English textbooks used in Croatian elementary and high schools and found that they are sporadic and predominantly target receptive collocational competence. In the same study, she tested the collocational competence of 80 elementary and high school students via a multiple-choice task, a gap-fill task, and a translation from English into Croatian and vice versa, with a total of 20 items (collocations). She found that students rely on their native language and thus produce erroneous collocations and that their competence grows with years of learning the language.

In another study, Miščin (2015b) examined the collocational competence of 40 first- and second-year students of business English by a multiple-choice and gap-fill test. The collocations were extracted from the business English corpus compiled by the author. Miščin (2015b) found the participants' collocational competence below average.

Miščin (2016) also tested 50 first-year and 60 sixth-year students of medicine as well as 20 first-year and 20 second-year students of management via multiple-choice and gap-fill tasks and found medical students performing better than management students, noting that sixth-year students of medicine had greater collocational competence than first-year students. This difference was not observed between the first- and second-year students of management. Miščin (2016) concludes that students rely on their first language and use approximation in producing collocations.

In a subsequent study, Miščin (2017) studied the collocational competence of 42 students of financial management using multiple choice and gap fill tasks

*'To summarise the findings of the collocational competence of Croatian learners of English, it is obvious that collocations present a challenge as researchers claim that the participants' level of collocational competence is low, and they identify L1 influence as one of the major causes of collocational errors'*

and found that L1 was not the source of errors in translation; rather, it was the students' lack of knowledge of financial terms in either language that contributed to poor results. Nonetheless, the receptive knowledge of collocations proved to be greater than the productive.

Pavičić Takač and Lukač (2013) analysed 298 essays written by Croatian learners of English as part of their state exam following high school specifically looking at adjective-noun collocations. The results showed that learners tended to overuse general adjectives (e.g., *big problem* as opposed to *major problem*) and that their choice was influenced by their L1 when there was a direct translation (e.g., *free time* in contrast to *spare time*). Regarding the latter, the authors find that congruent collocations '*facilitate transfer, however, they also limit NNS choice of collocation*' (Pavičić Takač & Lukač, 2013, p. 396).

Pavičić Takač and Miščin (2013) tested the collocational competence of 101 Croatian students of medicine (first-year and fifth-year) and 26 medical doctors. The test consisted of three types of tasks: multiple-choice, gap-fill, and translation (from English into Croatian and vice versa). The latter task in which the participants had to translate a collocation into English proved to be the most difficult. The results show that the participants' receptive knowledge was greater than productive, and that their overall competence increases with what the authors identify as years of exposure and active use. Nonetheless, the authors conclude that the participants' collocational competence is 'rather limited' (Pavičić Takač & Miščin, 2013, p. 247) and that errors stem from the participants' heavy reliance on the first language and their use of approximation as a strategy (using near-synonyms).

To summarise the findings of the collocational competence of Croatian learners of English, it is obvious that collocations present a challenge as researchers claim that the participants' level of collocational competence is low, and they identify L1 influence as one of

major causes of collocational errors. In some cases, researchers found that collocational competence increases with years of learning and exposure, but not always within one year. Finally, receptive knowledge of collocations has in a few cases shown to be greater than the productive.

## 2.2. Studies on the congruency effect in collocational competence

Although there are no studies on collocational congruency with L1 Croatian and L2 English, research by Štefić et al. (2010) does in fact examine the matter by looking at the collocations in the corpus of dental texts and differentiating between full, partial, and zero translation equivalents. The authors provide examples for full equivalents (*oral medicine = oralna medicina*), partial equivalents (*end organ = ciljni organ*), and zero equivalents (*scarlet fever = šarlah*). The authors conclude that partial equivalents present a challenge and that zero equivalents present a major problem in translating from English into Croatian.

At this point we shall refer to two studies conducted in the Croatian context, but with L2 German, as they specifically address the issue of collocational congruency and are the only such studies known and accessible to the authors of this paper. Stojić and Košuta (2017, 2020) found a strong L1 influence in the use of collocations in Croatian speakers of German when they analysed essays on the state exam following high school as well as essays of university students. They noted a negative L1 influence (one resulting in errors) in the use of incongruent collocations in L2 German, whereas congruent collocations did not prove to be problematic.

There are studies with other first languages and L2 English that we can also draw conclusions from. Nesselhauf (2003) analysed 32 essays by German university students of English in their third and fourth years, found a strong L1 influence that resulted in collocational errors, and concluded that *'non-congruent combinations were consistently far more difficult for the learner than the congruent ones'* (Nesselhauf, 2003, p. 236). Yamashita and Jiang (2010) investigated 20 speakers of English, 24 Japanese-speaking ESLs and 23 Japanese-speaking EFLs, all at university level or above, using a 58-item cloze test. They found, among other things, that the latter group *'took longer and made more errors when they responded to incongruent collocations'* (Yamashita & Jiang, 2010, p. 660). As for the speakers of English as a second language, they conclude that the *'long-lasting congruency effect on the ESL users' error*

*rate suggest that incongruent collocations are difficult to accept in the L2 mental lexicon and acquiring this type of collocation takes a long time, requiring a massive amount of exposure to the L2'* (Yamashita & Jiang, 2010, p. 660-661). Wolter and Gyllstad (2013) tested the collocational competence in L2 English of 25 Swedish-speaking university students and found that L1 has a considerable influence on the processing of L2 collocations, with incongruent collocations taking longer to process than the congruent. Peters's (2016) participants were 41 Dutch-speaking learners of English at university level and in her study, based on a test with 18 collocations (9 congruent and 9 incongruent), she found that congruency had an effect only when participants had to recall the collocation, and not when they had to recognise it. She believes that when incongruent collocations are semantically transparent (e.g., *to make an effort*) they do not pose a challenge at the level of perception, but they still do at the level of production. Finally, Wolter and Yamashita (2018) tested 47 Japanese-speaking learners of English at university level (intermediate/advanced) and found that incongruent collocations were processed more slowly than the congruent in both the intermediate and advanced groups.

To summarise the findings of studies on the congruency effect in collocational competence, research on native speakers of German, Japanese, Swedish, and Dutch has so far confirmed that incongruent collocations present a particular challenge to English language learners as they take longer to process and are more difficult to learn and use properly. In the following part of the paper, we turn to our research to examine the role of congruency in Croatian speakers' collocational competence in English.

## 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 3.1. Research aim and questions

The aim of this research was to investigate the collocational competence of Croatian-speaking learners of English with a special emphasis on the difference between their ability to use congruent and incongruent collocations. In our research, we were guided by the following questions.

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the average score on congruent collocations and the average score on incongruent collocations?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the collocational competence based on the participants' (a) programme, (b) gender, (c) years of learning English, and (d) number of foreign languages?

### 3.2. Participants

The participants were 175 high school students, native speakers of Croatian; 61 came from a vocational school in Zagreb and 114 from a comprehensive school (Cro. *gimnazija*) in Rijeka. There were more female (73.1%) than male (26.9%) participants in the study, and they were of different ages, but up to 18 years old (Figure 1).

Most fifteen-year-old participants had learned English for eight years (from grade 1 of elementary school), sixteen-year-olds for nine years, and eighteen-year-olds for eleven years, and the distribution of the years of learning for the whole sample is given in Figure 2.

Finally, as can be seen in Figure 3, most participants (59%) spoke another foreign language in addition to English, usually German or Italian.

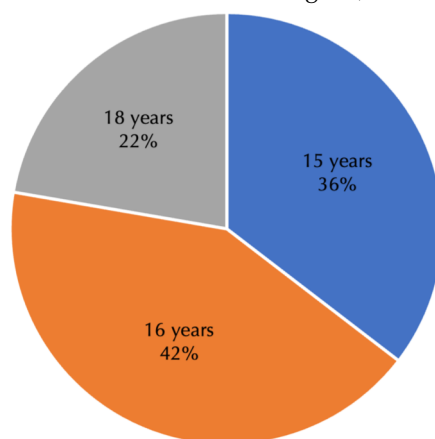


Figure 1. Participants' age distribution

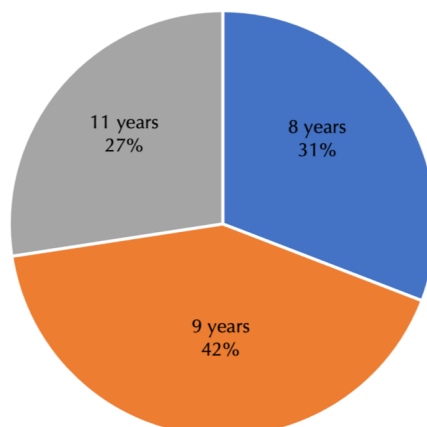


Figure 2. Distribution of years of learning English

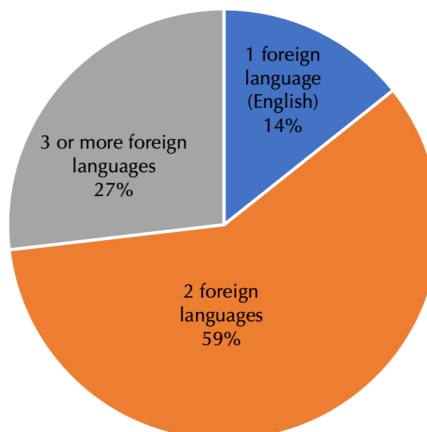


Figure 3. Number of foreign languages spoken among participants

### 3.3. Instrument

The instrument consisted of a task with 22 items – 11 sentences targeting congruent collocations and 11 sentences targeting incongruent collocations (Appendix A). The sentences were in English, with a blank that needed to be filled in by translating the collocation in Croatian given in parentheses below the blank. We opted for translation as a way to test the participants' collocational competence at the level of production rather than using a different task such as writing a text, which probably would not have given us all the target collocations due to the phenomenon of avoidance (Schachter, 1974), whereby learners avoid using vocabulary and grammar they find difficult). The order of the sentences was randomised. The task was preceded by questions aimed at collecting general participant data: gender, age, years of learning English, and knowledge of other foreign languages.

Out of eleven congruent collocations (Table 1), seven were selected from handbooks designed for intermediate learners (Dixson, 2004; McCarthy & O'Dell,

2017; Woolard, 2005), and four from the handbook intended for advanced learners (O'Dell & McCarthy, 2017).

In terms of incongruent collocations (Table 2), nine were selected from the handbook for intermediate learners and two from the handbook for advanced learners.

The rationale behind including two levels (intermediate and advanced) is that the First European Survey of Language Competences (European Commission, 2012) found that Croatian learners in grade 8 of elementary school (students around 14 years of age) can range from level pre-A1 to B2 in terms of their listening, reading, and writing skills, and we can imagine that a range of levels of proficiency would be found throughout high school as well.

All the collocations are considered lexical collocations of the L1 type in line with the classification suggested by Benson et al.'s (2010) combinatory dictionary of English. More exactly, they are all *verb + noun* collocations in both English and Croatian.

Table 1  
*Congruent collocations*

NO.	SOURCE CROATIAN COLLOCATION	TARGET ENGLISH COLLOCATION
1	<i>priuštiti si putovanje</i> (afford oneself trip)	to afford a trip
2	<i>pojavit se na sudu</i> (appear on court)	to appear in court
3	<i>prijaviti se za posao</i> (apply for job)	to apply for a job
4*	<i>susresti se s poteškoćama</i> (encounter with difficulties)	to encounter difficulties
5*	<i>pronaći rješenje</i> (find solution)	to find a solution
6*	<i>održati tiskovnu konferenciju</i> (hold press conference)	to hold a press conference
7	<i>objaviti članak</i> (publish article)	to publish an article
8	<i>podignuti glas</i> (raise voice)	to raise one's voice
9	<i>pokazati poštovanje</i> (show respect)	to show respect
10	<i>preskočiti obrok</i> (skip meal)	to skip a meal
11*	<i>predati izvještaj</i> (submit report)	to submit a report

\*Collocations from the handbook for advanced learners.

Table 2  
*Incongruent collocations*

NO.	SOURCE CROATIAN COLLOCATION	TARGET ENGLISH COLLOCATION
1**	<i>dodijeliti nagradu</i> (assign/allot/allocate/award prize)	to award a prize
2	<i>napisati zadaću</i> (write homework)	to do homework
3**	<i>pronaći sreću</i> (find happiness/felicity/luck/ fortune)	to find happiness
4	<i>ići na živce</i> (go on nerves)	to get on one's nerves
5**	<i>izdati priopćenje</i> (publish/issue/bring out announcement)	to issue a statement
6**	<i>pripaziti na trgovinu</i> (attend to/see to/look after/take care of store)	to mind the store
7**	<i>predstavljati prijetnju</i> (represent/constitute/pose threat)	to pose a threat
8	<i>donijeti presudu</i> (bring verdict)	to reach a verdict
9**	<i>objaviti album</i> (publish/announce/issue/release album)	to release an album
10	<i>imati šanse</i> (have chance)	to stand a chance
11**	<i>osnovati obitelj</i> (found/establish/set up/start family)	to start a family

\*\* We found these collocations incongruent because a learner needs to select an appropriate synonym from a number of them in order for the direct translation to be successful and result in an appropriate collocation. English translations of the source Croatian lexemes are based on Bujas (2011).

### 3.4. Procedure

The survey was distributed in February 2020 in two high schools – a comprehensive school in Rijeka and a vocational school in Zagreb. The participants filled out the survey during their regular English class. The data was analysed in March 2020 using SPSS 25.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each of the 22 items was scored on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 meaning 'empty or incomplete', 2 – 'incorrect', 3 – 'correct, but not in the target form', and 4 – 'correct in the target form'. To elaborate on the score of 3, this meant that the participant did indeed produce another collocation used in English or found another way to express the meaning. The acceptability of the participants' answers was checked in the Corpus of Contemporary American English and British National Corpus as the most recent sources of information on collocations/collocability. Minor spelling mistakes were

disregarded, as well as the mistakes in the use of articles or tense. Some answers were categorised as incorrect even though they are grammatically correct and confirmed in the corpus because we found they did not quite capture the meaning of the original collocation in English, for example, the participants' use of *have a family*, *raise a family*, or *settle down* for *osnovati obitelj*.

At the beginning of the analysis, we shall look at the average scores for congruent and incongruent collocations (Figure 4).

In the group of congruent collocations (from *to afford a trip* to *to submit a report*), we see that participants scored below 3 on collocations *to publish an article*, *to hold a press conference*, *to appear in court*, *to encounter difficulties*, and *to submit a report* (in score descending order).

In the group of incongruent collocations (from *to award a prize* to *to start a family*), participants scored above 3 only in two cases, *to find happiness* and *to*

*start a family*, so clearly, in contrast to scores on congruent collocations, the participants did not do so well. The participants' lowest scores were for the collocations *to submit a report, to issue a statement, and to reach a verdict*.

Clearly, in both groups of collocations there are those that prove more difficult than others, which means that congruent collocations can also pose a challenge. What the collocations with the lowest scores

have in common is that most of them belong, if we may put it like that, to the world of adults and administration – appearing in court, publishing an article, submitting a report, issuing a statement, etc. However, this could only be one of the factors as there are other collocations that the participants did not do so well on and that in fact belong to the world of teenagers (doing homework, releasing an album, getting on one's nerves, etc.). Furthermore, it should be noted that all the collocations

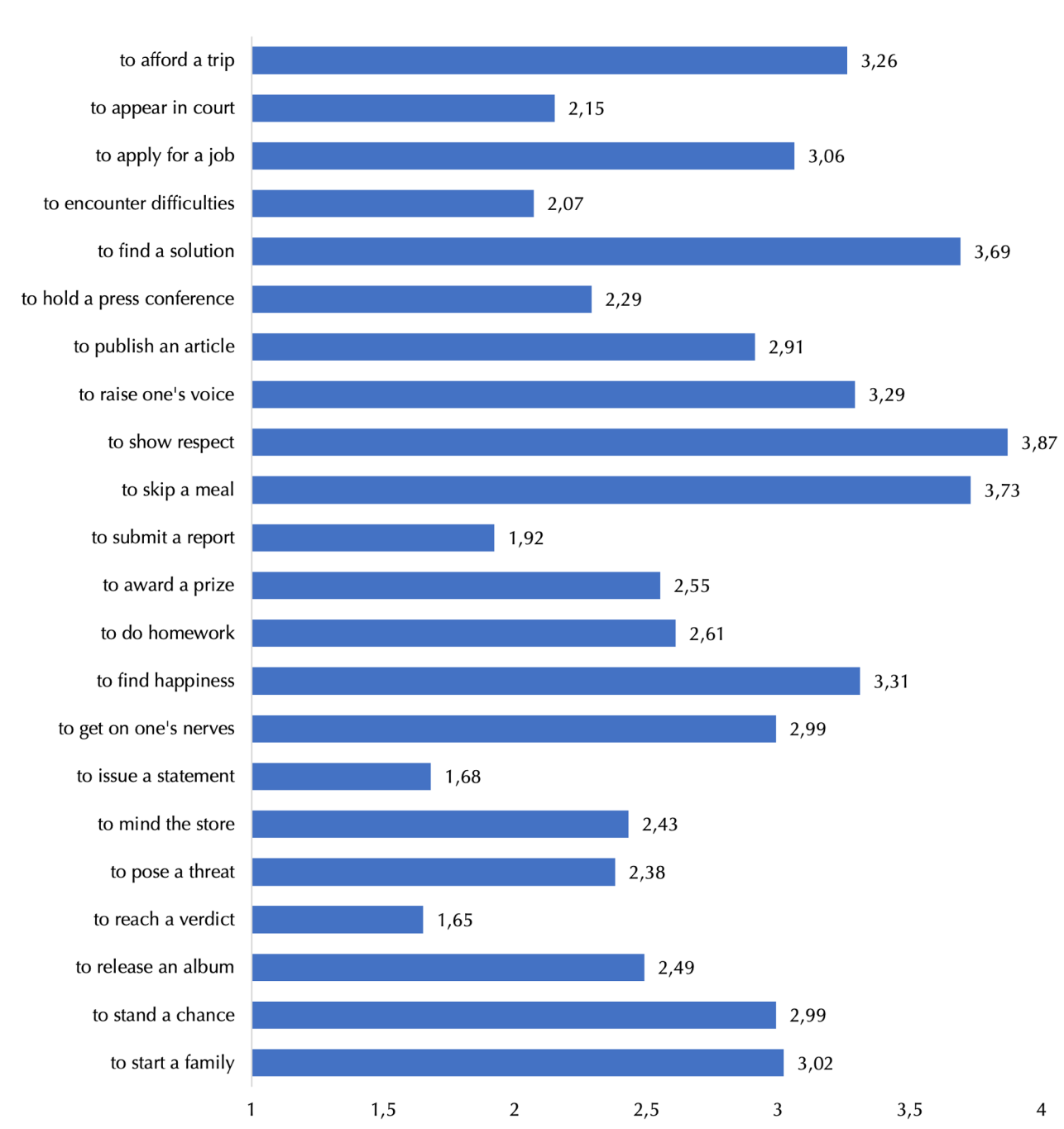


Figure 4. Average score per target collocation (congruent and incongruent)



*'Clearly, in both groups of collocations there are those that prove more difficult than others, which means that congruent collocations can also pose a challenge. What the collocations with the lowest scores have in common is that most of them belong, if we may put it like that, to the world of adults and administration...'*

in the test were extracted from handbooks for English language learners at appropriate levels; thus, it could be presumed that the participants should have been generally familiar with such collocations.

Appendix B provides a detailed overview of the participants' answers for all the collocations, giving first the target form and then the acceptable answer (correct, but not target form), and finally the incorrect answer. It also contains the number of occurrences of correct, target answers and an indication of the most common correct, but not target answers as well as incorrect answers. Here, we shall mention several examples of collocational errors, and these will help us gain an insight into different strategies that learners seem to be using in an attempt to provide a correct answer.

One of the obstacles to using the correct collocation is the well-known problem of Croatian speakers of English, and that is the misuse of prepositions, which occurs as a result of crosslinguistic influence and is one of the most common errors found in learners' written output (Patekar, 2017). For example, instead of producing the appropriate collocation form *appear in court*, the participants wrote *appear at court* and *appear on court*, or *show up to court*, etc. Prepositions were also a challenge with the item *mind the store*, where the participants wrote *look for the shop*, *look out the store*, *look up for shop*, *watch for the store*, *watch on the market*, *watch out for the shop*, *watch over the shop*, etc. in their attempt to convey the same meaning as *pripaziti na trgovinu*. As a side note, this is the only collocation that no participant produced in the target form – the answer, when correct, was mostly *watch the store/shop*.

Next, the participants often reach for a synonym to form the collocation, but the synonym does not simply collocate with the base or collocator to convey the target meaning. This is best illustrated by the participants' attempts to say *osnovati obitelj* in English, *build a family*, *create a family*, *ensemble a family*, *form a*

*family*, *found a family*, *make a family*, etc., where the issue was with the verb; an example with the challenging noun is the collocation *afford a trip*, for which the participants wrote *afford a vacation*, *afford the journey*, *afford travel*, etc.

Furthermore, the participants in certain cases attempt to express the same meaning of the Croatian collocation by using a word as closest to its meaning as possible, which is exemplified by the participants' answers to the congruent collocation *podignuti glas*: *be loud*, *scream*, *shout*, *speak loudly*, *speak up*, *talk back*, *yell*, etc.

Similarly, the participants sometimes use associations in their attempt to convey the target meaning, which is evident in trying to say *ići na živce* in English in quite innovative ways: *freak me out*, *make me crazy*, *piss me off*, *push my buttons*, *stress me*, etc.

At times, the participants use a word or structure that is simpler or more frequent than the target collocation, such as the correct *hand in a report* or *turn in a report* instead of the specific and target *submit a report*, or the incorrect *give a report* (which has a different meaning). Another example is the participants' quite common use of *give an award* instead of *award a prize*.

Finally, we found interesting examples such as *sign up for a job* instead of *apply for the job* and *post an article* instead of *publish an article*; it seems that the words *sign up* for *prijaviti* and *post* for *objaviti* are more present in teenagers' vocabulary due to their intensive use of computers and mobile devices and the internet: one *signs up* for an account and *posts* something on social media. Speaking of teenagers' vocabulary, the authors were intrigued to find out that *to drop an album* is in fact a slang expression for *to release an album* and accepted the answer as correct.

As can be seen from this brief analysis, participants use a range of strategies in an effort to produce a correct collocation.

To find an answer to the first research question – whether there is a statistically significant difference between the average score on congruent collocations and the average score on incongruent collocations – we first calculated the average scores for participants' responses to 11 congruent and 11 incongruent collocations. We then carried out a paired samples t-test. As can be seen in Table 3, the participants scored higher on congruent ( $M = 2,9309$ ) than incongruent ( $M = 2,5534$ ) collocations. Table 4 shows that there is a significant average difference between the scores on congruent and incongruent collocations ( $t = 12,813$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 3  
*Mean results of congruent and incongruent collocations*

	MEAN	N	SD
Congruent collocation average	<b>2,9309</b>	175	,61618
Incongruent collocation average	<b>2,5534</b>	175	,53046

Table 4  
*Statistically significant difference between the mean results*

	MEAN	SD	SEM	T	DF	SIG. (2-TAILED)
Congruent collocation average – Incongruent collocation average	,37754	,38980	,02947	12,813	174	<b>,000</b>

This finding confirmed our hypothesis that incongruent collocations pose a greater challenge than congruent collocations for Croatian learners of English. This has previously been found with L1 Croatian and L2 English by Štefić et al. (2010) who talk about full, partial, and zero equivalents, with the latter two being identified as problematic from the perspective of translation. The results of a study on L1 Croatian and L2 German (Stojić & Košuta, 2017, 2020) point to the same conclusion. As described in the theoretical part of the paper, research on other first languages (Nesselhauf, 2003; Peters, 2016; Wolter & Gyllstad, 2013; Wolter & Yamashita, 2018; Yamashita & Jiang, 2010) clearly shows that congruent collocations are processed faster and are easier to learn and use properly in contrast to incongruent collocations.

Our second research question was aimed at finding out whether there is a statistically significant difference

in collocational competence depending on four variables: programme, gender, years of learning English, and number of foreign languages. We first calculated the average score on all 22 collocations, which represents the level of the participants' collocational competence (ranging from 1 to 4).

Following that, we carried out Levene's test for the homogeneity of variances and a t-test for the three average scores (total average, congruent collocation average, and incongruent collocation average) and the participants' programme.

Table 5 shows that there is a difference between the participants' programme regarding all three average scores, with comprehensive school students having a higher score than students from vocational school when it comes to congruent collocations, incongruent collocations, and the total average. As can be seen in Table 6, this difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 5  
*Mean results according to averages and programme*

AVERAGE	PROGRAMME	N	M	SD
Total average	Vocational school	61	<b>2,5120</b>	0,52148
	Comprehensive school	114	<b>2,8652</b>	0,51187
Congruent collocation average	Vocational school	61	<b>2,6902</b>	0,65132
	Comprehensive school	114	<b>3,0597</b>	0,55799
Incongruent collocation average	Vocational school	61	<b>2,3336</b>	0,47955
	Comprehensive school	114	<b>2,6710</b>	0,52072

Table 6  
Statistically significant difference between the means

		LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCES		T-TEST FOR EQUALITY OF MEANS		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig, (2-tailed)
Total average	Equal variances assumed	0,051	0,821	-4,321	173	<b>0,000</b>
Congruent collocation average	Equal variances assumed	2,366	0,126	-3,935	173	<b>0,000</b>
Incongruent collocation average	Equal variances assumed	0,898	0,345	-4,196	173	<b>0,000</b>

We believe that this finding can be explained by the profile of learners who enrol in the two types of high schools. Seeing that the admission criteria for comprehensive schools are higher than for vocational schools, we presume that the participants from the comprehensive school are academically stronger than their peers in the vocational school, in many if not all subjects, including English. Nizonkiza's (2011) study showed that there is 'a predictive relationship between lexical competence, collocational competence, and L2 proficiency' (p. 137), which means that it can be expected that those who are generally better at English will also have a greater collocational competence.

In the next step of quantitative analysis, Levene's test for the homogeneity of variances and t-test for the

average scores and the participants' gender were carried out. There is a slight difference in average scores in favour of female participants, but this difference is not significant (Table 8).

This is an interesting and unexpected finding as female learners tend to do be more proficient than male learners, as research in the Croatian context with L2 English has shown (Patekar, 2017; Zergollern-Miletić, 2007). Surprisingly, none of the studies mentioned in the theoretical part, dealing with the Croatian speakers' collocational competence in L2 English, examined the effect of gender.

Hence, our finding should be explored in further studies to confirm whether collocational competence is resistant to the effect of gender.

Table 7  
Mean results according to averages and gender

AVERAGE	GENDER	N	M	SD
Total average	Female	128	<b>2,7569</b>	0,54710
	Male	47	<b>2,7017</b>	0,52677
Congruent collocation average	Female	128	<b>2,9539</b>	0,63972
	Male	47	<b>2,8683</b>	0,54849
Incongruent collocation average	Female	128	<b>2,5598</b>	0,50942
	Male	47	<b>2,5360</b>	0,58947

Table 8  
*Statistically significant difference between mean results*

		LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCES		T-TEST FOR EQUALITY OF MEANS		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Total average	Equal variances assumed	0,017	0,896	0,597	173	<b>0,551</b>
Congruent collocation average	Equal variances assumed	1,087	0,299	0,814	173	<b>0,417</b>
Incongruent collocation average	Equal variances assumed	2,547	0,112	0,262	173	<b>0,793</b>

To find out whether the number of years of learning English made a difference in the participants' collocational competence, we carried out Levene's test and, depending on the homogeneity of variances, Welch's test and one-way ANOVA, followed by Games-Howell and Scheffe post-hoc tests. The means in Table 9 show a clear trend in the rise of scores with the years of learning English. The differences in scores based on

years of learning English are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) between all three groups (8 years, 9 years, 11 years) when it comes to the total average and congruent collocations.

However, for incongruent collocations, the difference is only statistically significant between those who had learned English for eight years and those who had learned it for eleven years (Table 10).

Table 9  
*Mean results according to years of learning English and averages*

	Years of learning English	N	M	SD
Total average	8 years	54	<b>2,4781</b>	0,53887
	9 years	73	<b>2,7400</b>	0,53279
	11 years	48	<b>3,0421</b>	0,38512
Congruent collocation average	8 years	54	<b>2,5959</b>	0,63486
	9 years	73	<b>2,9127</b>	0,56718
	11 years	48	<b>3,3354</b>	0,40219
Incongruent collocation average	8 years	54	<b>2,3604</b>	0,50069
	9 years	73	<b>2,5682</b>	0,55621
	11 years	48	<b>2,7479</b>	0,45090

Table 10  
Statistically significant difference between mean results

				MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)	SIG.
Total average	Games-Howell	8 years	9 years	-,26185	<b>0,020</b>
			11 years	-,56394	<b>0,000</b>
		9 years	8 years	,26185	<b>0,020</b>
			11 years	-,30208	<b>0,001</b>
		11 years	8 years	,56394	<b>0,000</b>
			9 years	,30208	<b>0,001</b>
Congruent collocation average	Games-Howell	8 years	9 years	-,31681	<b>0,012</b>
			11 years	-,73949	<b>0,000</b>
		9 years	8 years	,31681	<b>0,012</b>
			11 years	-,42268	<b>0,000</b>
		11 years	8 years	,73949	<b>0,000</b>
			9 years	,42268	<b>0,000</b>
Incongruent collocation average	Scheffe	8 years	9 years	-0,20785	0,081
			11 years	-,38755	<b>0,001</b>
		9 years	8 years	0,20785	0,081
			11 years	-0,17970	0,171
		11 years	8 years	,38755	<b>0,001</b>
			9 years	0,17970	0,171

This finding is in line with previous studies that found the effect of years of learning on learners' collocational competence (Begagić, 2014; Miščin, 2015a; Miščin, 2016; Pavičić Takač & Miščin, 2013). It is interesting to note that for incongruent collocations it seems to take longer for collocational competence to develop, as the difference is statistically significant only between those learning English for eight and those learning English for eleven years, which is not the case with congruent collocations the knowledge of which seems to grow in a shorter period (one or two years).

The same statistical procedure as above was carried out for the variable of the number of foreign languages. The mean results in Table 11 show that the average score increases with the number of foreign languages a participant knows. However, this difference in scores is not statistically significant between all groups,

but only some of them, as evident from Table 12. In terms of the total average, the difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) between those who speak only English and those who speak three or more foreign languages; the case is the same for the difference between those who know two foreign languages and those who know three or more.

For the average score on congruent collocations, the difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) only between those who speak two foreign languages and those who speak three or more.

Finally, when it comes to incongruent collocations, the difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) between those who speak only English and those who speak three or more foreign languages, as is the case with the difference between those who know two foreign languages and those who know three or more.

Table 11  
 Mean results according to averages and the number of foreign languages

	NUMBER OF FLs	N	M	SD
Total average	1 FL (English)	25	<b>2,5468</b>	0,54235
	2 FLs	103	<b>2,6939</b>	0,53244
	3 or more FLs	47	<b>2,9515</b>	0,50331
Congruent collocation average	1 FL (English)	25	<b>2,6568</b>	0,55507
	2 FLs	103	<b>2,9041</b>	0,62128
	3 or more FLs	47	<b>3,1355</b>	0,57819
Incongruent collocation average	1 FL (English)	25	<b>2,4364</b>	0,59370
	2 FLs	103	<b>2,4840</b>	0,50778
	3 or more FLs	47	<b>2,7677</b>	0,49356

Table 12  
 Statistically significant difference between mean results

				MEAN DIFFERENCE (I-J)	SIG.
Total average	Scheffe	1 FL (English)	2 FLs	-0,14708	0,457
			3 or more FLs	-,40469	<b>0,009</b>
		2 FLs	1 FL (English)	0,14708	0,457
			3 or more FLs	-,25761	<b>0,023</b>
		3 or more FLs	2 FLs	,40469	<b>0,009</b>
			1 FL (English)	,25761	<b>0,023</b>
Congruent collocation average	Scheffe	1 FL (English)	2 FLs	-0,24728	0,185
			3 or more FLs	-,47873	<b>0,007</b>
		2 FLs	1 FL (English)	0,24728	0,185
			3 or more FLs	-0,23145	0,094
		3 or more FLs	2 FLs	,47873	<b>0,007</b>
			1 FL (English)	0,23145	0,094
Incongruent collocation average	Scheffe	1 FL (English)	2 FLs	-0,04758	0,918
			3 or more FLs	-,33126	<b>0,037</b>
		2 FLs	1 FL (English)	0,04758	0,918
			3 or more FLs	-,28368	<b>0,009</b>
		3 or more FLs	2 FLs	,33126	<b>0,037</b>
			1 FL (English)	,28368	<b>0,009</b>

This finding is in line with previous research that points to the benefits of knowing more foreign languages. It appears that learning a foreign language helps learners develop metalinguistic awareness, which in turn enables them to learn a subsequent foreign language more easily as they are able to activate previous knowledge, look for crosslinguistic similarities, use strategies, etc. (Jessner, 2006). This finding was confirmed in the Croatian context with L2 English and L3 German and Italian (Patekar, 2017; Zergollern-Miletić, 2007).

To sum up, statistical analysis has provided us with answers to our two research questions. The participants achieved a better score on congruent than incongruent collocations, and the difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). This has confirmed our hypothesis that learners will find it challenging to produce collocations that they cannot translate directly and easily from the first language, Croatian. As for the other research question for which we turned to inferential statistics, the analysis has shown that the programme, the years of learning English, and the number of foreign languages play a role in learners' collocational competence, whereas gender does not.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Collocational competence is at the intersection of grammar and vocabulary (Stojić, 2012). This is why researching collocational competence – and learning collocations – is a true challenge.

In our study we tested Croatian high school students' collocational competence with a special emphasis on the difference between congruent and incongruent collocations. Our study does have limitations. For instance, the size of certain groups in the sample could be larger or more balanced. Furthermore, the participants' collocational competence was tested on 11 congruent and 11 incongruent collocations, altogether 22 items; this might be considered a small number of collocations, but other studies used a similar number of items to test collocational competence (e.g., Miščin, 2015a; Peters, 2016). In any case, further research should be based on a larger number of congruent and incongruent collocations. In addition, further studies might provide an answer as to the actual ratio of congruent to incongruent collocations. Another limitation is that the participants' competence at the productive level was tested by a translation task. The fact that the participants saw the collocation written in Croatian might have strongly influenced their answer. The use of

collocations might have been different if it had been a different task, such as writing a text; however, we did not opt for such a task due to the phenomenon of avoidance (Schachter, 1974) and our apprehension that we may not get sufficient data in that way. Nonetheless, it might be a good idea to test productive collocational competence by several different tasks in addition to translation. Finally, the focus of the study was on the congruent/incongruent parameter, while other factors such as frequency, idiomaticity, specificity/generality, and context of use were not considered. Thus, it would be valuable to analyse the results of the study from those aspects as well. Despite these limitations, we find the results and conclusions of our research valid.

Regarding the first research question, whether there is a statistically significant difference between the average score on congruent collocations and the average score on incongruent collocations, we found that there is a statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) difference between the scores on congruent and incongruent collocations, with the participants scoring higher on congruent ( $M = 2,9309$ ) than incongruent ( $M = 2,5534$ ) collocations. With regard to the second research question, whether there is a statistically significant difference in the collocational competence based on the participants' programme, gender, years of learning English, and number of foreign languages, we found the following. There is a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) between comprehensive school students and vocational school students in favour of the former. In view of gender, there is no statistically significant difference. When it comes to the difference in the years of learning English, there is a statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) difference between the three groups (8 years, 9 years, 11 years). Likewise, there is a statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) difference between those who speak only English and those who speak three or more foreign languages, as well as those who know two foreign languages and those who know three or more.

High school students make collocational errors regardless of whether they are congruent or incongruent, but they make more mistakes with the latter type of collocations, and this difference is statistically significant. In their effort to produce the right collocations, learners use a variety of strategies, which merit a separate study. Some learners believe that a collocation in English can be expressed using the same lexical components as in Croatian and thus use direct translation to produce the target collocation. In the case of congruent collocations, L1 influence is in fact positive, but in the case of

incongruent collocations, the approach results in errors. Some mistakes do not necessarily result from L1 influence, but from the lack of knowledge of the L2, whether of the expression as a whole (e.g., *to mind the store, to get on one's nerves*) or of the collocational range of an otherwise familiar word. It appears that learning incongruent collocations takes longer, which was confirmed in previous research and in our study as well because the results show that those with more years of learning English score better than those with fewer, but only when this difference is longer than a year. The number of spoken languages also plays a role in collocational competence, which was previously confirmed for language proficiency. In our research gender did not have an effect on collocation competence, but this needs to be investigated further on a larger and more balanced sample.

Our findings have several implications. As previously stated, this study has opened a number of avenues requiring further research when it comes to incongruent collocations, collocational competence, and strategies learners use when producing collocations. While collocations are an interesting linguistic phenomenon in and of themselves, they are of particular interest to applied linguistics – learners with a high lev-

el of collocational competence are able to express themselves more clearly, concisely, and correctly. Yet, we know that many studies in the Croatian context have found learners' collocational competence to be low or below average (e.g., Miščin, 2015a; Miščin, 2015b; Miščin, 2017; Pavičić Takač & Miščin, 2013). It seems collocations are not given sufficient attention in class, especially when it comes to their use. In her study, Miščin (2015a) found that elementary and high school textbooks lack exercises that target collocations, especially at the productive level. Due to a demanding curriculum and a lack of time, English language teachers rely heavily on textbooks, which may be the reason collocations are rarely explicitly or sufficiently taught in Croatian schools. Therefore, materials developers and teachers should provide EFL learners with more collocation exercises, targeting in particular the use of incongruent collocations. This does not mean that collocations should be taught in isolation; on the contrary, students should be made aware of the contexts, genres, or styles in which particular collocations are used. In order for materials developers and teachers to do all of this, further research is needed with L1 Croatian and L2 English that would result in an inventory of frequent incongruent collocations at different levels of study.

## Appendix A

Test on collocations

Gender: female/male

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years spent learning English: \_\_\_\_\_

Other languages you speak (apart from Croatian): \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the following sentences. Below each line there is a phrase in Croatian that you need to translate into English. Don't leave anything blank – do your best to provide an answer.

There are 22 sentences. The first sentence is completed for you as an example.

- 0) They had to evacuate the building.  
(*evakuirati zgradu*)
- 1) She should \_\_\_\_\_ to her boss.  
(*pokazati poštovanje*)
- 2) He \_\_\_\_\_ in a prestigious journal.  
(*objavio članak*)
- 3) Scientists are trying to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(*naći rješenje*)



- 4) If you \_\_\_\_\_ now and then, it won't hurt you.  
(preskočiš obrok)
- 5) The minister \_\_\_\_\_.  
(održao tiskovnu konferenciju)
- 6) He \_\_\_\_\_ against the other candidate.  
(nema šanse)
- 7) Don't \_\_\_\_\_!  
(podiži glas)
- 8) I will \_\_\_\_\_ you told me about.  
(prijaviti se za posao)
- 9) We don't expect to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(susresti se s poteškoćama)
- 10) I guess it's time to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(osnovati obitelj)
- 11) You should \_\_\_\_\_ first and then you can play outside.  
(napisati zadaću)
- 12) \_\_\_\_\_ in what you do.  
(nađi sreću)
- 13) The new virus \_\_\_\_\_ to humanity.  
(predstavlja prijetnju)
- 14) The government \_\_\_\_\_ in which it denies all allegations.  
(izdala priopćenje)
- 15) Slow drivers \_\_\_\_\_.  
(idu mi na živce)
- 16) They haven't \_\_\_\_\_ yet.  
(donijeli presudu)
- 17) They failed to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(pojavit se na sudu)
- 18) I can't \_\_\_\_\_ to the seaside this year.  
(priuštiti si putovanje)
- 19) They \_\_\_\_\_ in time.  
(predali izvještaj)
- 20) She \_\_\_\_\_ last month and it's already on every top list.  
(izdala album)
- 21) They \_\_\_\_\_ to the best salesperson in the company.  
(dodijeli su nagradu)
- 22) Could you \_\_\_\_\_ for a minute? osnovati obitelj  
(pripaziti dućan)
- 23) They want to \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(osnovati obitelj)

**Appendix B**

Correct, acceptable, and incorrect answers on the test

	CORRECT, TARGET ANSWER	CORRECT, ACCEPTABLE ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER***
1	afford a trip (113)**	afford to travel	*afford a vacation afford money to go afford the journey afford travel buy a trip pay for my trip pay myself a vacation spend on a trip
2	appear in court (9)	come to court come to the court show up at the court show up in court	appear at court appear before judge appear on court appear on trial *show on the court show themselves on court show up at the judgement show up in front of the judge show up on court show up to court show up judge hall
3	apply for the job (103)	–	applicate for job apply for the position candidate for the job go to a job interview log in for work put out the application for the job *sign up for the job sign up for work register for a job report myself for a job
4	encounter difficulties (5)	come across difficulties meet with difficulties run into difficulties	come across any inconveniences deal with any trouble encounter with difficulties face any obstacles face difficulties face the problems face with difficulties find any difficulties find it difficult find ourselves in problems get in trouble have a problem have any casualties have any trouble have trouble meet complications meet up with difficulties meet up with problems meet with any inconveniences meet with struggles surround with difficulties
5	find a solution (149)	–	find an answer resolve the issue

	CORRECT, TARGET ANSWER	CORRECT, ACCEPTABLE ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER***
6	held a press conference (63)	had a press conference	did a press conference had a media conference had the newspaper conference held a stamp conference hosted the press conference kept the conference minister conferention
7	published an article (101)	–	*posted an article published a column published a paragraph published news
8	raise your voice (119)	–	be loud higher your voice scream shout speak loudly *speak up talk back volume up your voice yell
9	show respect (166)	pay respect	–
10	skip a meal (155)	miss a meal	dismiss breakfast jump meal
11	submitted the report (21)	handed in the report turned in the report	brought the task delivered the report did the assignment filed the report *gave a report gave in the report gave the essay gave the report gave their research handed out the report handed over the report handed the report handed the report over have given the essay published the article sent in the report
12	awarded the prize (9)	handed the award have awarded the reward gave out an award *gave the prize presented the award	declared an award
13	do homework (53)	–	make homework *write homework
14	find happiness (116)	–	find fortune *find luck look for happiness search for luck

	CORRECT, TARGET ANSWER	CORRECT, ACCEPTABLE ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER***
15	get on my nerves (86)	–	annoy me are always annoying me are driving me crazy are irritating are on the top of my head freak me out get me on nerve go to my nerves make me angry make me crazy make me nervous nerve me piss me off push my buttons stress me
16	issued a statement (16)	put out a statement released a statement	filed a statement gave an announcement gave out a statement gave out a warning gave the explanation has come up with a statement has published a notice has submitted a statement made a response *made a statement published an account released a notification said news
17	mind the store (0)	keep an eye on the shop keep an eye on the store look after the store take care of my store take care of the shop watch after the store	check on shop check on store check the store have an eye on the shop look for the shop look out the store look up for shop pay attention on market take a look at the store take over mall take over the store watch for the store watch on the market watch out for store watch out for the shop watch out the shop watch over the shop watch the market
18	poses a threat (14)	*is a threat presents a threat represents a threat	is showing disaster is threatening sets threat symbolises a threat
19	reached a verdict (6)	–	brought judgement brought the verdict come to an agreement delivered judgement gave the final decision given the verdict

	CORRECT, TARGET ANSWER	CORRECT, ACCEPTABLE ANSWER	INCORRECT ANSWER***
			*made a decision *made a judgement made a verdict made the conviction passed the judgement prosecuted him reached judgement
20	released an album (52)	came out with an album dropped an album put out an album put out her album	dropped out album published an album put up an album recorded an album
21	doesn't stand a chance (36)	*doesn't have a chance has no chance	can't stand a chance hasn't got odds no way
22	start a family (97)	–	become a family build a family create a family ensemble a family form a family found a family grow our family *have a family make family raise a family set a family settle down

\* Marks a frequent occurrence.

\*\*The number in parentheses following the correct, target collocation refers to the number of participants who provided the answer.

\*\*\*Some answers were categorised as 'incorrect' even though they are grammatically correct and confirmed in the corpus because we found they did not quite capture the meaning of the original collocation in English. For example, the participants' use of *have a family*, *raise a family*, or *settle down* for *osnovati obitelj*. Another example is *face difficulties* which does not capture the meaning of *encounter difficulties* because we can encounter difficulties but not necessarily face them. Thus, we could not accept *face difficulties* because that would be changing the meaning of the utterance.

## References

- Begagić, M. (2014). English language students' productive and receptive knowledge of collocations. *ExELL*, 2(1), 46-67. <https://doi.org/10.1515/exell-2016-0003>
- Benson, M., Benson, E., & Ilson, R. (2010). *The BBI combinatory dictionary of English. Your guide to collocation and grammar*. Johns Benjamins.
- Borić, N. (2004). Collocations as part of the lexical approach in foreign language teaching (with special reference to the English language). In D. Stolac, N. Ivanetić, & B. Pritchard (Eds.), *Contemporary trends in foreign language teaching* (pp. 63-75). Croatian Society for Applied Linguistics.
- Brkić Bakarić, M., Načinović Prskalo, L., & Popović, M. (2022). A general framework for detecting metaphorical collocations. In *Proceedings of the 18th Workshop on Multiword Expressions* (pp. 3-8). LREC Publishing.
- Bujas, Ž. (2011). *Unabridged Croatian-English dictionary* (4th ed.). Globus Publishing House.
- Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the native speaker in language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(2), 185-209. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587717>
- Čeh, Ž. (2005). Contrastive exercises for teaching collocations. *ELOPE*, 2(1-2), 185-192.
- Dixon, R. J. (2004). *Essential idioms in English. Phrasal verbs and collocations* (5th ed.). Longman.

- European Commission. (2012). *First European survey of language competences: Final report*. [https://mk0ncvvot6usx5xu4d.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final\\_Report\\_Eng.pdf](https://mk0ncvvot6usx5xu4d.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final_Report_Eng.pdf)
- Ivir, V., & Tanay, V. (1975). Collocations of the English verb 'take' with a noun as an object and translation equivalents in the Croatian language. *Strani Jezici*, 4(1-2), 29-37.
- James, C. (1998). *Errors in language learning and use. Exploring error analysis*. Routledge.
- Jessner, U. (2006). *Linguistic awareness in multilinguals: English as a third language*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Jurko, P. (2010). Slovene-English contrastive phraseology: Lexical collocations. *ELOPE*, 7(2), 57-73. <https://doi.org/10.4312/elope.7.2.57-73>
- Keglević Blažević, A. (2022). Metaphorische Kollokationen – zum Problem ihrer theoretischen Festlegung und empirischen Erforschung. *Slavia Centralis*, 15(1), 190-200.
- Koren, S., & Rogulj, J. (2017). Collocational competence of non-native speakers of English in the medical profession. *Zbornik radova Veleučilišta u Šibeniku*, 3(4), 19-31.
- Košuta, N. (2012). On the issue of developing collocational competence in foreign language. *Strani Jezici*, 41(3), 263-276.
- Marton, W. (1977). Vocabulary learning as problem no. 1 of language teaching at the advanced level. *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin*, 2(1), 33-57.
- McCarthy, M., & O'Dell, F. (2017). *English collocations in use: Intermediate*. CUP.
- Miščin, E. (2015a). Collocational competence of primary and secondary school students. *ExELL*, 3(1), 8-25.
- Miščin, E. (2015b). Testing collocational competence of business English students. *Global Scholastic Research Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 7(1), 6-19.
- Miščin, E. (2016). Collocation competence of medical and business English students. In D. Omrčen & V. Cigan (Eds.), *From theory to practice in the language of the profession* (pp. 144-158). Association of professional language teachers at higher education institutions.
- Miščin, E. (2017). Collocational errors of financial management students. In D. Stolac & A. Vlastelić (Eds.), *Language as a subject of study and language as a subject of teaching* (pp. 221-235). Croatian Society for Applied Linguistics.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nesselhauf, N. (2003). The use of collocations by advanced learners of English and some implications for teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 24, 223-242. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/24.2.223>
- Nizonkiza, D. (2011). The relationship between lexical competence, collocational competence, and second language proficiency. *English Text Construction*, 4(1), 113-146. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1075/etc.4.1.06niz>
- O'Dell, F., & McCarthy, M. (2017). *English collocations in use: Advanced* (2nd ed.). CUP.
- Patekar, J. (2017). *Utjecaj hrvatskoga kao materinskoga jezika na pisani ostvaraj na engleskome kao stranome jeziku kod učenika osmoga razreda* [Doctoral thesis, University of Zagreb].
- Patekar, J. (2022). What is a metaphorical collocation? *Fluminensia*, 34(1), 31-49. <https://dx.doi.org/10.31820/f.34.1.5>
- Pavičić Takač, V., & Lukač, M. (2013). How word choice matters: An analysis of adjective-noun collocations in a corpus of learner essays. *Jezikoslovlje*, 14(2-3), 385-402.
- Pavičić Takač, V., & Miščin, E. (2013). Exploring the collocational competence of non-native users of medical English. *JAHHR*, 4(1), 235-256.
- Peters, E. (2016). The learning burden of collocations: The role of interlexical and intralexical factors. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(1), 113-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168814568131>
- Schachter, J. (1974). An error in error analysis. *Language Learning*, 24, 205-214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1974.tb00502.x>
- Štefčić, L., Mravak-Stipetić, M., & Borić, V. (2010). Collocations in the language of dentistry: Examples from oral medicine. *Acta Stomatologica Croatica*, 44(3), 176-187.
- Stojić, A. (2012). *Collocations. Contribution to theory and practice*. University of Rijeka Press.
- Stojić, A., & Košuta, N. (2017). Kolokacijske sveze u mentalnome leksiku učenika stranoga jezika. *Fluminensia*, 29(2), 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.31820/f.29.2.9>
- Stojić, A., & Košuta, N. (2020). Kollokationen in der fremdsprachigen Textproduktion – am Beispiel des Sprachenpaares Kroatisch-Deutsch. *Fluminensia*, 32(2), 7-31. <https://doi.org/10.31820/f.32.2.4>

- Stojić, A., & Košuta, N. (2021). Metaphorische Kollokationen – Einblicke in Eine Korpusbasierte Studie. *Linguistica*, 61(1), 81-91.
- Stojić, A., & Košuta, N. (2022). Izrada inventara metaforičkih kolokacija u hrvatskome jeziku – na primjeru imenice godina. *Fluminensia*, 34(1), 9-29. <https://doi.org/10.31820/f.34.1.4>
- Wolter, B., & Gyllstad, H. (2011). Collocational links in the L2 mental lexicon and the influence of L1 intralexical knowledge. *Applied Linguistics*, 32, 430-449. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amr011>
- Wolter, B., & Gyllstad, H. (2013). Frequency of input and L2 collocational processing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 35, 451-482. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263113000107>
- Wolter, B., & Yamashita, J. (2015). Processing collocations in a second language: A case of first language activation? *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 36, 1193-1221. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0142716414000113>
- Wolter, B., & Yamashita, J. (2018). Word frequency, collocational frequency, L1 congruency, and proficiency in L2 collocational processing: What account for L2 performance? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 40, 395-416. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263117000237>
- Woolard, G. (2005). *Key words for fluency. Intermediate collocation practice*. Thomson ELT.
- Yamashita, J. (2018). Possibility of semantic involvement in the L1-L2 congruency effect in the processing of L2 collocations. *Journal of Second Language Studies*, 1(1), 60-78.
- Yamashita, J., & Jiang, N. (2010). L1 influence on the acquisition of L2 collocations: Japanese ESL users and EFL learners acquiring English collocations. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44, 647-668. <https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2010.235998>
- Zergollern-Miletić, L. (2007). Mastery of writing skills in English at the end of primary and secondary education among Croatian students. *Metodika*, 8(1), 190-204.

JAKOB PATEKAR

RIT Croatia | 15 Damira Tomljanovića Gavrana, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia  
[jakob.patekar@outlook.com](mailto:jakob.patekar@outlook.com)

NATAŠA KOŠUTA

University of Rijeka | 10 Trg braće Mažuranića, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia  
[nkosuta@ffri.uniri.hr](mailto:nkosuta@ffri.uniri.hr)

# Original Research

## Technical, psychological and behavioural aspects of teaching EFL and ESP university courses online: A case study of the 2020-2021 curriculum

by Elena V. Ryazanova and Sergei B. Dekterev

**Elena V. Ryazanova** St. Petersburg University, Russia [e.v.ryazanova@mail.ru](mailto:e.v.ryazanova@mail.ru)

**Sergei B. Dekterev** St. Petersburg University, Russia [aries03@mail.ru](mailto:aries03@mail.ru)

**Article history** Received March 28, 2022 | Revised September 5, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The authors declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** [10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-32-44](https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-32-44)

**For citation** Ryazanova, E. V., & Dekterev, S. B. (2022). Technical, psychological and behavioural aspects of teaching EFL and ESP university courses online: A case study of the 2020-2021 curriculum. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 32-44.

*Taking measures against the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2021 many universities all over the world had to transform their formal classes into distance or online courses. The article deals with the issues of online EFL and ESP teaching and the learning process in distance format under an instructor's supervision. The research is based on the feedback data of the survey conducted for the Political Science students who were taking up the English language university course online in the 2020-2021 curriculum instead of formal classes. The aim of the research was to reveal the technical, psychological and behavioural aspects of English language distance learning in a virtual MS Teams classroom as well as to analyse the students' self-assessment of the efficiency and results of the distance EFL course. Applying quantitative and qualitative data analyses together with the method of involved observation, the authors arrive at conclusions concerning the still existing technical problems preventing students from working effectively, the disruptive character of certain psychological and behavioural patterns in a virtual classroom, as well as discrepancies between the amount of effort students put into their work and their academic achievements. Study results show both the drawbacks of the distance online format compared to the traditional formal classroom and the possibilities of effective implementation of distance forms of education at some stages of the English language educational process or within particular modules of the curriculum.*

**KEYWORDS:** distance education, e-learning, online education, coronavirus pandemic, EFL, ESP



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus pandemic brought higher education institutions face to face with the emergency of transforming traditional formal education into its distance variant. While in the 2020 spring term the lock-

down almost paralysed the curriculum process that appeared to be spontaneous and badly organised, the following 2020-2021 academic year was not as unexpected for most of the universities many of which were for the most part ready to distance, online and blended



forms of teaching and learning. A lot of high educational establishments joined the unified teaching platforms providing the opportunity for their teachers and students to use the platform's applications effectively through the cooperative log-in systems of identification.

Although many teaching authorities and university officials show optimism about the effectiveness of transformation to the distance (online) format of education and even see the future perspective in such forms of education, many scholars and teachers are deeply critical of these hasty conclusions as there are still lots of aspects and issues of distance and online education which need to be studied thoroughly. Among those are technical issues to tackle including equipment status both of educators and students, as well as methodological aspects connected with the insufficient modern e-teaching methodology development, the shortage of online application teaching programmes for university courses via e-platforms. On top of that there are psychological and pedagogical issues of student's engagement into distance electronic education process, lagging behind are the aspects of physiological and medical concerns about the effect online education has on the health of all the participants in the process.

This research aims to study the technical, psychological and behavioural aspects of the distance online education process as well as the assessment of its effectiveness by the students of the Political Science university department who were involved in the EFL course in the 2020-2021 academic year.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term *distance learning* appeared long before the coronavirus pandemic and was applied to mark the process of education when the participants are divided from each other by space and sometimes even time zones. Distance education was seen effective in the situation when educators and students appeared to be physically separated (Rumble, 1986), the organisation of such education had a structure and function different from a traditional classroom format (Keegan, 1988), it was an autonomous form of education planned and guided under the supervision of tutors (Holmberg, 1986; 1989). The students were given more independence, demanding from them a higher level of learner control. At that stage distance education was provided without any means of modern technologies, the participants of academic learning process communicated via the postal service and used printed lecture notes and different didactic teaching materials. Initially, distance

education was mainly asynchronous without the opportunity of meeting their instructors on a weekly bases. For teaching supervision students used to come to the university for their regular term sessions twice or thrice a year which is now still being practiced in distance learning curricula at many universities.

Due to the emergency measures against the coronavirus pandemic and the quick change of forms of education from traditional formal classroom to the remote variants without an adaptation period and methodology development, the terms *distance education* or *distance learning* eventually have substituted the term *electronic learning* that is the process of getting an education using online communications technologies. Hence, *distance learning* in many academic papers has been fused with *e-learning*, and the means of delivering distance education are considered to be IT technologies (Schneider, 2020, p. 18). Therefore, in this study we will apply the term *distance learning* in its modern scholarly interpretation as a process of education in which an educator and a student are physically distant from each other and the educational academic communication is being provided with the help of modern technologies, such as computers, smartphones, tablets and other electronic devices that allow us to communicate synchronically or asynchronously via the Internet. In terms of the modern distance learning process, the curriculum courses are delivered through online classes or distance classes using a virtual classroom that is a video conferencing tool where instructors and students engage with each other and with learning material.

The results of switching on to distance learning in higher institutions are being widely discussed in academic research all over the world. Some academics and experts in education put forward an idea of the effective implementation of distance learning in higher education (Chirikov et al., 2020; Akimova et al., 2015; Romero-Ivanova et al., 2020; Wotto, 2020; Krishnan et al., 2020). Others observe both the pros and cons of the technology-aided distance learning process (Schneider, 2020; Skorobrenko, 2020; Sayer & Braun, 2020; Perrotta & Bohan, 2020; Sadeghi, 2019), while a number of researchers disapprove of the distance educational process as a whole, stating that the system of higher education is not ready for such radical change of educational format and discussing the risks to the system of education and the potential effects on the physical and psychic health of students (Kiselev, 2020; Dozhnikov, 2020; Sahu, 2020), which inevitably undermines the quality of education. There are good examples of im-

*'All in all, the pedagogical community agrees that the effectiveness of the remote learning process depends on the efficacy of interaction between educators and students, the competent utilisation of digital electronic technologies and adapted methodology, the efficacy of digital teaching materials, the manner of their delivery and the quality of feedback'*

plementing modern technologies and integrating online resources into existing EFL programmes, the special modules being developed to enhance students' autonomous activities (Dobrova & Rubtsova, 2020). The authors point out 'a need to implement digital technologies' as 'this ensures the efficiency of transferable skills fostered during the process of learning English' by new generations of students who are digitally minded (Dobrova & Rubtsova, 2020, p. 323).

More research papers focus on technical aspects of the distance learning process, paying attention to the equipment status and IT incompetence of some teachers and students (McDomhnaill et al., 2021; Peñalver & Laborda, 2021). The challenges of adaptation to the virtual classroom in urban and rural areas are discussed by Satpute (2021). There are observations of high costs of online learning and slow Internet connection at some universities (Demuyakor, 2020) while others pose a question of the importance of technical servicing support in the process of distance learning (Kiselev, 2020, p. 99). Some works are devoted to successful testing of online communicative platforms such as G suite for education (Basilaia et al., 2020).

Psychological and behavioural aspects of a virtual classroom are being observed by the scholars (Kudryavtseva, 2014; Mavrodieva, 2020) who show the necessity of rigorous investigation into this area. Taking into consideration all the advantages of distance IT educational format, the authors draw attention to such effects of distance online learning as 'absent-mindedness, lack of concentration on teaching material, quick distraction of students' (Mavrodieva, 2020, p. 250). Scholars pose an issue of the gap in investigating the impact that online learning has on the physiology and health of learners and educators (Schneider, 2020, p. 22; Dozhdikov, 2020, p. 26-27). The necessity of establishing time limits for working and studying online is also

being discussed, which draws on primary research of the interrelation between time spent in front of the computer and the development of depression (Madhav et al., 2017).

All in all, the pedagogical community agrees that the effectiveness of the remote learning process depends on the efficacy of interaction between educators and students, the competent utilisation of digital electronic technologies and adapted methodology, the efficacy of digital teaching materials, the manner of their delivery and the quality of feedback (Vayndorf-Sysoeva & Subocheva, 2020; Skorobrenko, 2020).

Even though some scholars show successful examples of adaptation of specific university courses to the distance online format (Akimova et al., 2015; Mavrodieva, 2020), they are scarce and not substantial enough to be representative of the entire system of higher education.

Nevertheless, there are lots of issues that are still missing thorough consideration in academic literature. Among them there are aspects of organisational, technical and content structure of distance education as well as the shortage of rules and norms of communicative digital behaviour having to do with digital etiquette and digital ethics. The term *digital etiquette* comprises 'the rules of behaviour culture in virtual Internet space and the norms of behaviour culture while interacting both in real life and Internet social communities' (Mamina & Yelkina, 2019, p. 29). Some universities, such as Stanford University (USA) and the Higher School of Economics (Russia) have already tried to manifest the behaviour norms of virtual conference meetings, however, 'before the coordinate values of those norms are established/developed, it is challenging to systematise and codify them' (Sychev, 2021, p. 82).

To see how the above-mentioned aspects of EFL and ESP online teaching and learning revealed themselves in the 2020-2021 curriculum, this study aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What technical problems did the students face in online English classes and how did they influence the process of education?
2. What psychological and behavioural aspects occurred in the process of online English studies and how did they influence students' engagement?
3. In what way did the switch to online learning affect the students' effectiveness in the English classroom and how did it correspond with performance results?
4. What are the perspectives of online EFL learning at the university from the students' point of view?

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

#### 3.1. Participants

This paper aims to study the technical, behavioural and psychological aspects of the distance learning process and observe the efficacy component of virtual EFL classes delivered for the students of the Political Science department within the 2020-2021 academic period based on learners' feedback.

The survey was conducted on 74 informant respondents of first-, second- and third-year undergraduate students getting their bachelor's degree in Political Science at university, who were doing the EFL course during the 2020-2021 academic year. As a result of administrative regulations against the epidemiological situation with Covid-19, all foreign language classes at the university in 2020-2021 were given strictly online with the help of electronic communicative technologies. To follow the English language course programme, students were put into learning teams based on their placement test results. The English classes in most cases were given in 4 academic hours per week using MS Teams.

#### 3.2. Course design

The course is designed to have interim assessments at the end of each term including portfolio and test work, with the end-of-the-course computer-designed B2 test compiled according to the European CEFR scale. The course syllabus consists of General English studies as well as the bases of ESP in the sphere of political science. MS Teams allows the lecturer to design the virtual classroom, deliver virtual class sessions, set up the tasks and deadlines, get the works submitted by the students, provide feedback, and monitor students' performance. The student-educator interaction is available synchronously in a virtual classroom, and asynchronously in general and private chatrooms and through the feedback comments in the task section.

#### 3.3. Methods

The method of the research is conducting a survey which makes inferences from data collected by means of the questionnaire specially designed for research purposes using Google Forms. The questionnaire is aimed to get the students' response on the technical, behavioural and psychological aspects of distance learning, self-assessment of their productivity and results. The first set of questions directly deals with technical issues of distance learning communication during the lessons: 1. Have you got a specially equipped work-

place for distance learning? 2. Which technical devices do you mostly use for the online English class? 3. How often within the academic year did you experience technical problems? 4. Which technical problems occurred during the virtual classroom sessions? 5. Were there any cases when you couldn't join the class because of technical problems?

The second set of questions was designed to reveal psychological and behavioural patterns that might have occurred in the process of distance learning: 1. Did you experience stress or discomfort during the online lessons? 2. Mark the scenarios in the distance class that are true for you (it is more difficult to work in an online class compared to a formal classroom; it is easier to perform in an online class compared to a formal classroom; I feel embarrassed talking to the microphone; I feel embarrassed in front of the camera; I don't switch on my camera because it influences the quality of broadcasting; I don't switch on my camera because my appearance doesn't match the social educational environment; I don't switch on my camera because there are other people present or the background is not appropriate; I have difficulties in concentrating in an online class).

Finally, to observe the efficacy component of the distance EFL process, the third set of questions was developed: 1. How often do you get distracted during the distance EL class? 2. Mark all possible options to indicate what might distract you during the online class (extraneous noise; completing assignments for other disciplines; social networks and mobile connection; presence of members of the family, friends and other people; other). 3. Mark all possible options to indicate the activities you enjoy performing online (compiling writing assignments; vocabulary and grammar practice; communicative practice (speaking, making presentations; comprehensive reading and discussion; listening comprehension practice). 4. Assess the effectiveness of your online performance compared to the traditional classroom work (decreased; stayed the same; increased; not sure). 5. Assess the formal results of your online performance based on test grades, writing assignments, and other assessed papers compared to the results achieved in a traditional classroom format (increased; stayed the same; decreased; not sure). 6. Which format would you prefer to continue your EL studies in the university (distant/online, blended, traditional/formal)?

The last question was designed to ascertain students' preferences about the format of the EL university course they would like to take in the near future.

After collecting data from the survey, the next step was to process the questionnaire responses employing a mixed-method approach with statistical computational analysis, quantitative and qualitative analyses of students' responses, as well as the inclusive method of involved observation of the whole educational process.

#### 4. STUDY RESULTS

##### 4.1. Technical aspect of distance/online education

The main objective to meet was to explore the challenge of a technical nature the participants of online educational process might have experienced. We were interested in the technical status of learners, the equipment they use for their online studies, the quality of Internet connection, and other possible technical factors that might prevent them from an effective learning process.

Most respondents reported having a specially equipped working place (96%), while only a few reported the lack of it (4%). According to the question-

naire results most students appeared to be rather well-equipped and use computers/laptops (65%), or both computer and a mobile phone (28%) and only a few students use primarily smartphones for online classes (5,5%), and very few use the combination of several gadgets like computer, tablet and a smartphone (1%).

Although many students are quite well equipped for their distance classes, there are still many of those reported to have faced technical problems, though the frequency of such difficulties wasn't significantly crucial. Most of the respondents replied they only *sometimes* experienced technical difficulties (43%), another group of 38% marked the option *rarely*, 12% of the informants chose the option *not often*, while only 6% mentioned that they *frequently* faced technical problems (Figure 1). Most of the students were preparing for their studies in the circumstances of pandemic restrictions, therefore they appeared to be technically better prepared for the distance learning process in the 2020-2021 academic year.

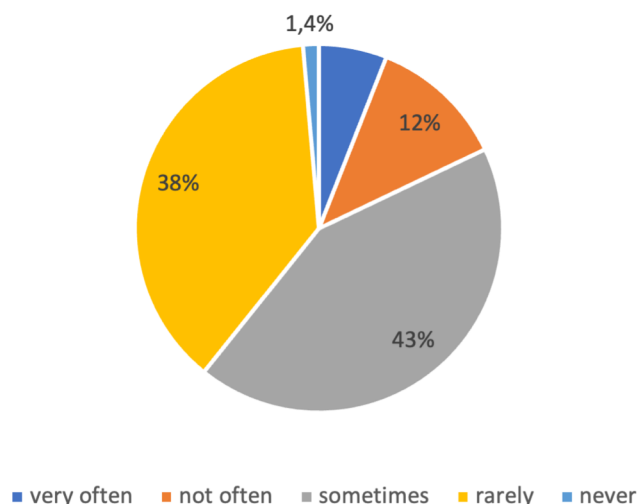


Figure 1. How often within the academic year did you experience technical problems?

Technical obstacles most often mentioned by students referred to poor quality of broadcasting (56%), non-operating camera (22,5%) or non-operating microphone (38%). A considerable number of students complained about not hearing their lecturer (32%) or the other students (27%). Several learners mentioned unstable Internet connection and failure in operating MS Teams (Figure 2). All difficulties observed undoubtedly influenced the quality of distance English classes and undermined students' performance online. However, having paid attention to the frequency of those technical obstacles mentioned above, it could be concluded

that most technical disadvantages occurred not very frequently (as the bulk of respondents (93%) together reported *sometimes*, *rarely*, *not often*) and couldn't affect the quality of distant class seriously though sometimes influenced its efficacy.

Surprisingly, the question of concern is that while few students experienced technical difficulties (about 6%), a substantial number of respondents (46%) mentioned that there were situations when they couldn't join the class because of a technical problem. Almost half of the students might have used technical reasons as an excuse for skipping an online class.

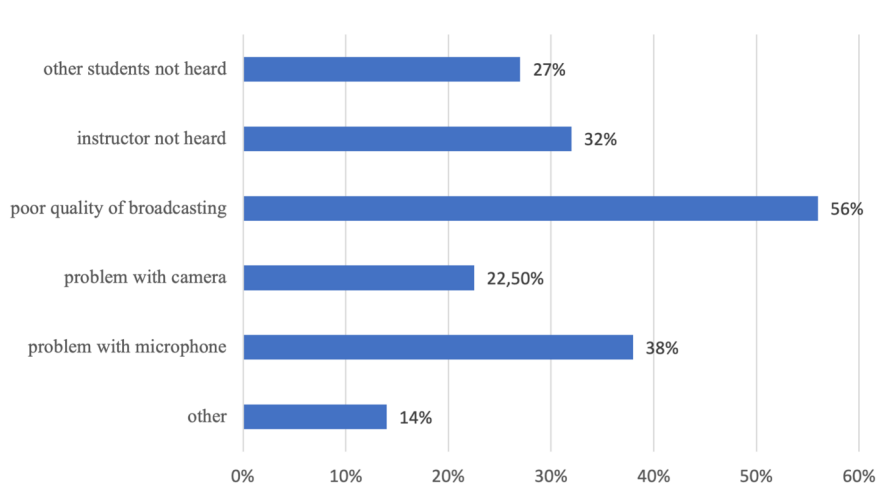


Figure 2. Which technical problems occurred during the virtual classroom sessions?

#### 4.2. Psychological and behavioural aspects

To analyse psychological and behavioural aspects of a distance classroom we aimed to register the following: occurrence of stress during the online lesson, and the reasons to switch off cameras and microphones while being present in a virtual class. Switched off cameras is the most disturbing pattern of students' behaviour that lecturers complain about in distance learning. According to educators, students very rarely turn on their cameras even in the process of spoken communication with the teachers or other students, which may be considered a break in digital etiquette and disruption of university regulations for online class procedures. Cases of switched off microphones are considerably less frequent and only occur occasionally.

The survey on the stress factor showed that, for the most part, learners feel quite comfortable in the virtual classroom and are not under stress (73%). However, about 22% of them admitted the occasional presence of the stress factor while only 5% of students commented frequent occurrence of stress.

Figure 3 shows that almost half of the respondents noticed that they feel more comfortable being engaged in an online English class (46%), while those who find it easier working in a traditional formal classroom amounted to 26%. Meanwhile 8% of informants get embarrassed talking to the microphone and almost one third (28%) of students feel too shy to turn on their cameras during the lesson. Therefore, the data shows the presence of a certain psychological barrier in a rather significant number of online learners.

The survey results have allowed us to reveal the three reasons, other than embarrassment, that prevent students from making their cameras operate (Figure 3):

their appearance that is inappropriate for the learning environment (32,5%), the broadcasting failure because of camera issues (38%), and the most popular answer was an inappropriate background or other people's presence (50%).

Meanwhile, a rather large percentage of learners admitted having difficulties with concentration during a distance class (39,2%) (Figure 3). Some of them are constantly distracted (19%), about half of the students get distracted from time to time (46%) and only one third of the respondents (28%) rarely abstract themselves from the learning process (Figure 4). Figure 5 shows the exterior reasons that cause learners' distraction and decrease their concentration on the teaching material. Those patterns of behaviour relate to the presence of members of the family or other people in their room (54%), networking or mobile connection (60%), extraneous noise (39%) and completing assignments for other curriculum disciplines (22%).

Evidently, the factor of declining concentration and increasing distraction appears to be a serious problem that considerably influences the effectiveness of students' work in a virtual class. The absence of the instructor's control of what is going on behind the screen immediately affects students' engagement. Even though most of the students have a well-equipped workplace, many of them ignore the necessity of being isolated from any exterior distractions and arrange their workspace appropriately for the learning environment, avoid getting distracted, switch off mobile and networking connections that are not needed during the lessons. On the contrary, the possibility to keep their cameras turned off allows them 'to relax'/'hide' from the lecturer always having an excuse of technical problems.

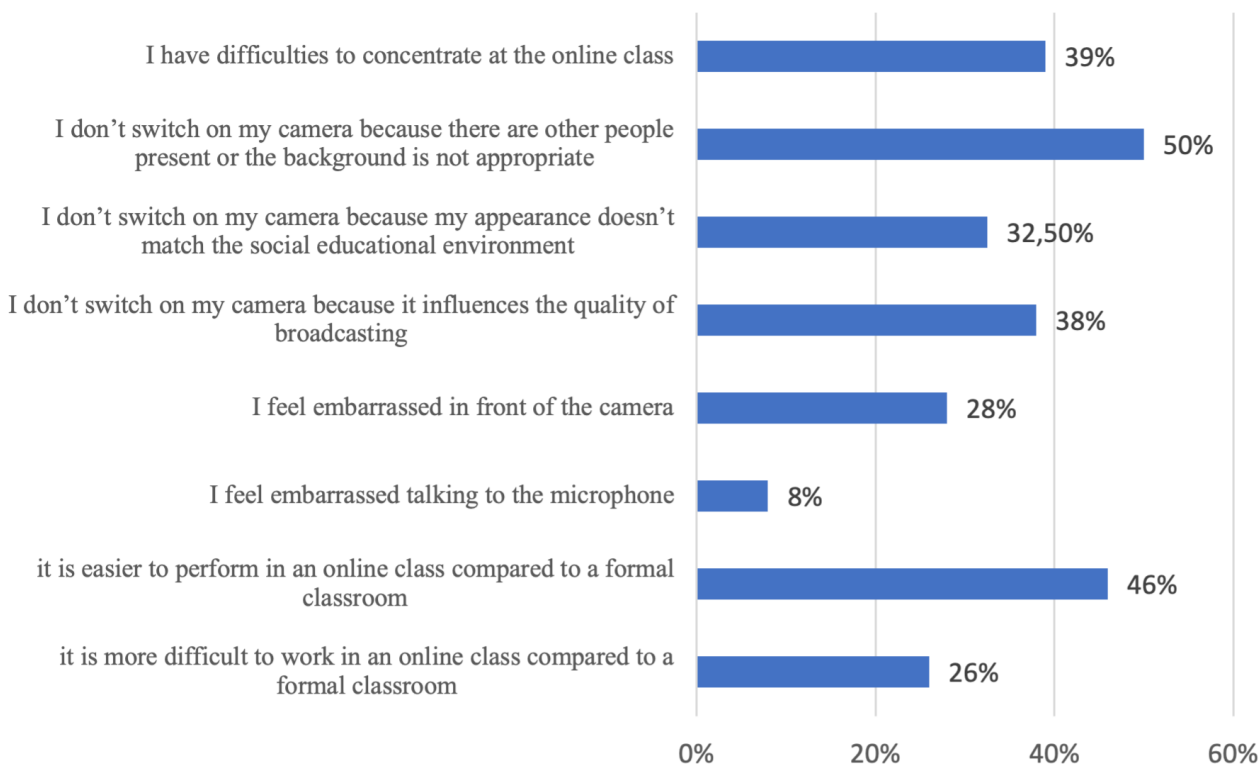


Figure 3. Mark the scenarios at a distance class that are true for you (all possible options)

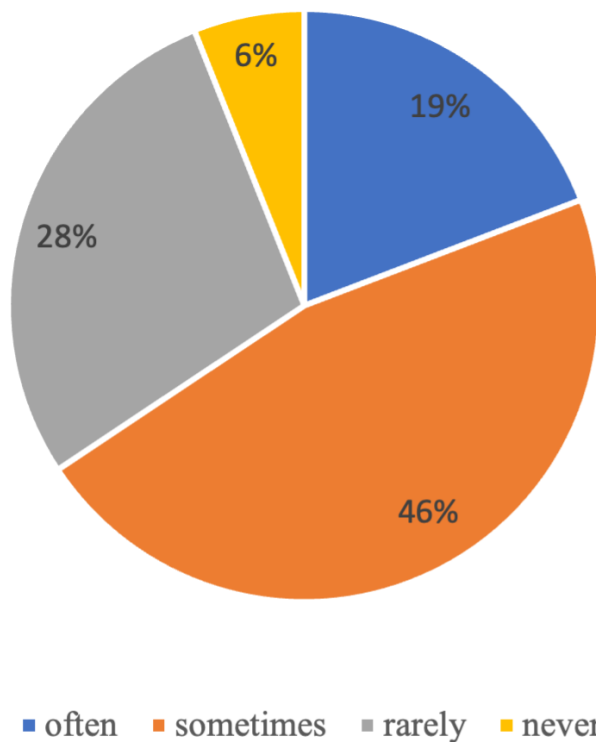


Figure 4. How often do you get distracted at a distance EL class?

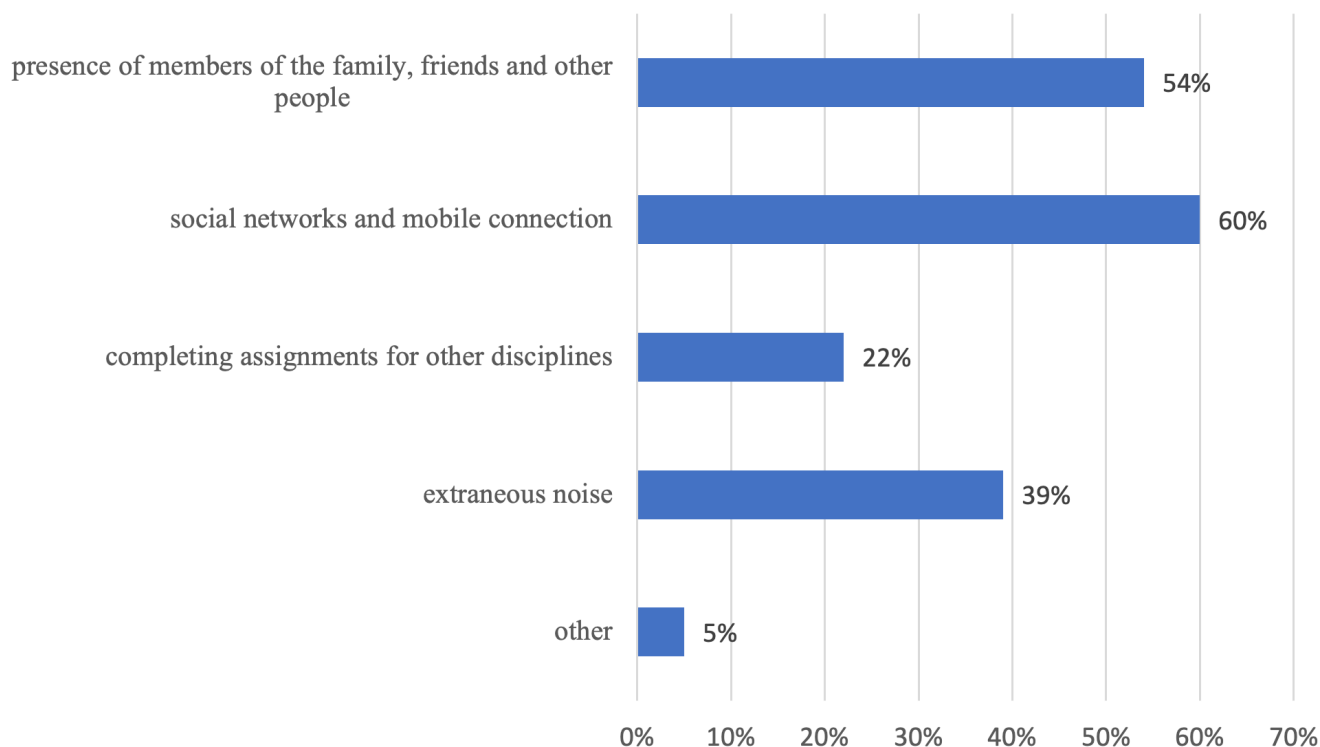


Figure 5. What might distract you during an online class? (Mark all possible options)

### 4.3. The efficacy of students’ performance and assessment results (students’ evaluation)

The questionnaire results show that most of students find it not difficult to deal with different types of tasks aimed to develop the essential language competences in online learning. The leading position in popularity is taken by oral communicative activities and presentations (58%). A substantial number of students enjoy completing writing assignments online (42%) as well as doing reading comprehension tasks (46%). The online vocabulary and grammar activities are popular with 34% of students, while about 33% of respondents are quite happy with online audition activities.

Surprisingly interesting are the results of effectiveness assessment by the students themselves (Figure 6) in comparison with the results of their performance (Figure 7) during the year in a distance format. Assessing the effectiveness of their work in the English language online class (Figure 6) about 42% of participants didn’t notice any changes in comparison with their productivity in traditional format, 26% of them think that their productiveness decreased in the process of distant learning, while 22% of students believed the quality of their work improved.

However, there is a noticeable discrepancy between the assessment of the effectiveness of students’ work and the evaluated results (Figure 7) based on performance grades they got during the academic year. Consistently, about 45% of informants reported the same level of performance results within the distant learning process, which mainly corresponds to the number of those who consider their effectiveness staying the same as in a traditional language classroom (42%) in Figure 6.

Nevertheless, the results were better with an excessive number of people (42%) in Figure 7 compared to those who improved their productivity (21,6%) in Figure 6. It might be due to availability of reference materials while doing test work and writing assignments, that are not allowed during the test in traditional formal classrooms. It is also possible to ask other students for help as it is not easy for the instructor to control students working autonomously online.

The same reason might be given to justify the fact that while only 7% of learners in Figure 7 reported that their results became worse, the decline in effectiveness was noticed by almost one fourth of the students (26%) in Figure 6.

Such disproportion in effectiveness and performance results might be related to the lack of methodology development to provide assessment and control online, as well as the teachers' inability to monitor the stu-

dents working on their assignments online both during the lesson and in the interim assessment, which is connected with the imperfection of telecommunication systems at their present state of development and design.

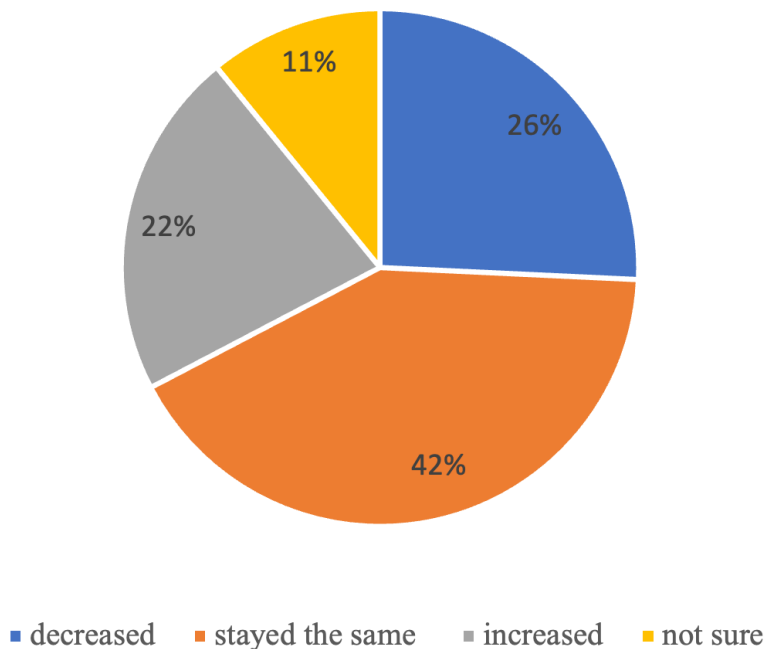


Figure 6. Assess the effectiveness of your online performance compared to the traditional classroom work

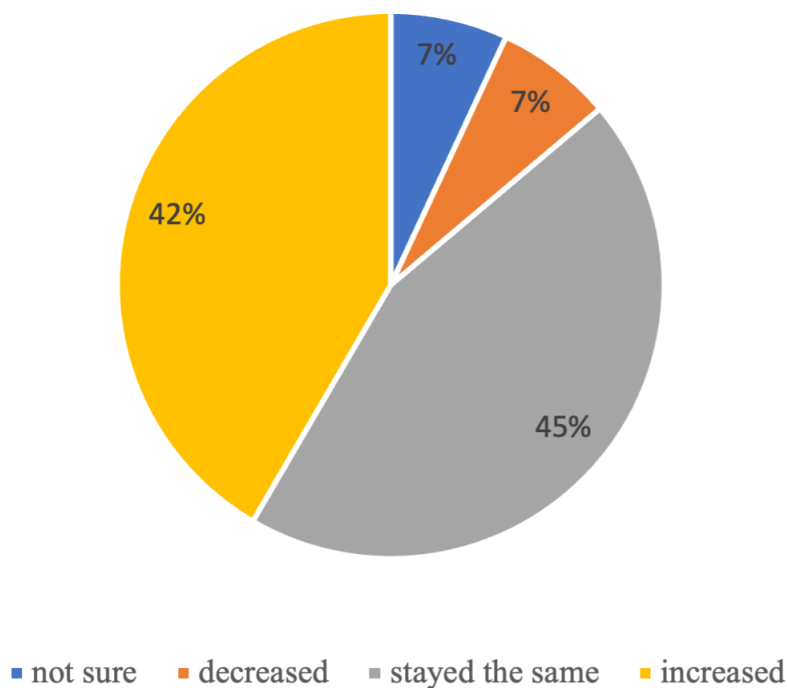


Figure 7. Assess the formal results of your online performance (based on test grades, writing assignments, and other assessed papers) compared to the results got in traditional classroom format



#### 4.4. The perspectives of distant and traditional format of EFL learning as seen by students

At the end of the survey the students were asked to choose in which format they would prefer to be enrolled into their future English class. They were also given the opportunity to give their comments on the format they have chosen. The opinions were divided into three groups.

About half of the informants (45%) indicated their willingness to continue English studies in a distance format, the rest of the respondents showed either their readiness to return to the traditional format of learning (29%) or to use a blended learning format having partly classes online and partly in the classroom at the university department (27%). It is important to take into consideration the factor of effort and time economy as the choice of a distance or blended format was mainly caused by the lack of the necessity of spending more than two hours commuting to the department, which most of the students of political science have to face. The second factor that influenced the choice in favour of a distance format is connected with the preferences of students to devote more time to their major disciplines rather than do their best in the English class. Some of them are not properly motivated and do not see the reasons to attend the English class offline.

Nevertheless, those students who are more encouraged to obtain a good level of English language knowledge and skills in their comments share an opinion that in spite of all the advantages of distance learning (*no time spent on travelling to the department, comfortable environment at home, getting enough sleep, meals at hand, not forgetting one's learning materials, could be combined easily with work or other activities*) the traditional format of studying in the classroom under a good instruction is more effective (*discipline and strictness, less distracting factors, setting one's mind on studies, no temptation to engage into activities other than studying*). The supporters of the traditional format also report that in the process of online learning the efficacy of communication in English goes down as it becomes more difficult to interact verbally with the lecturer and other students. They comment that more students complete their tasks carelessly, unscrupulously and dishonestly.

Those in favour of the blended format see its advantages in certain learning scenarios, for example, they find it comfortable to study language theory and grammar or to be engaged in listening comprehension activities virtually with the help of online IT technologies. At

the same time gaining practical skills in oral and written communication appears to be more productive in the classroom under the supervision of a teaching instructor.

#### 5. DISCUSSION

The scope of this study was limited in terms of collecting data from the informants of only one university department and needs to be extended in further research. Nevertheless, the study offers some valuable insights into what is going on in an average English language distance class at many universities and fits in with the previous studies (Schneider, 2020; Peñalver & Laborda, 2021; Skorobrenko, 2020; Dobrova & Rubtsova, 2020), where the researchers highlighted functional, technical and efficacy problems as some of the most challenging and marked online learning environment as not completely comfortable due to the lack of real communication. The critical observation of data obtained in this study proves that existing obstacles mentioned by other scholars have a significant impact on the quality of students' performance.

Notwithstanding its limitations, the study suggests that it is definitely premature to speak about absolute advantages of the distance format of EFL university classes over the traditional format of interaction in the classroom which has been suggested in previous research by Dozhdikov (2020) who sounds very sceptical about the possibility of successful substitution of traditional educational format by the online learning promoted by some educators and officials in the field of higher education. It should be doubted that massive online substitution of most university courses will bring its benefits without losing the quality of education.

The effectiveness and quality of distance education still cast doubt and cannot be considered equal to the quality of the learning process in traditional studies on campus. As might be observed very clearly from the present study, the decline in students' engagement and concentration outlined in previous studies by Kudryavtseva (2014) and Mavrodieva (2020) is apparent and the technical difficulties described in this survey correlate partly to those mentioned in the other works by McDomhnaill et al. (2021), Peñalver and Laborda (2021), Satpute (2021), and Kiselev (2020).

The psychological and behavioural patterns of students' behaviour revealed in this research show the urgent necessity of developing teaching online technologies to enhance the role of instructor presence observed in prior research on MS Teams by Park and Kim (2020).

*‘Taken together, the findings do not disapprove of taking advantages of modern IT technologies to deliver certain parts or modules of the English language syllabus within the university curriculum to facilitate the autonomous work of learners’*

It also showed the emergency of designing virtual classrooms in accordance with the rules of digital etiquette and educational university policy, which has been proposed by Sychev (2021) as the need for codifying the norms of videoconferencing.

The advantages and disadvantages of employing distance forms of learning mentioned by students in their comments are in line with prior studies done by Sadeghi (2019) who observed the advantages such as ‘studying from anywhere, saving time and money, no commuting, flexibility, earning while studying’ and disadvantages of studying online such as ‘high chances of distraction, no social interaction, difficulty staying in contact with instructors’ (Sadeghi, 2019, p. 83-84). Hence, it looks more reasonable to introduce short distance courses or some parts of the educational modules aimed to develop specific competences in certain areas of knowledge and integrate them into the curriculum. This research shows that students take it positively in case they are given the opportunity to complete some tasks autonomously with the help of technologies while at the same time enjoying the opportunity of face-to-face communication with teachers and groupmates in the process of seminars and workshops.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This research project was undertaken to investigate the technical, psychological and behavioural aspects of distance educational processes at EFL classes of the Political Science students at Saint Petersburg University within the 2020-2021 academic year. The second aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of students’ work in a virtual classroom in comparison with the results of their performance during the online academic year. Based on the analyses of data retrieved from the survey the following conclusions can be drawn from the present study to answer research questions.

1. Even though most students are prepared and well equipped to be engaged in the online distance process of learning a foreign language, they still face technical difficulties that cannot be avoided with the

help of faculty or university administration. The obstacles are sometimes caused by the quality and speed of the Internet connection and programmes for telecommunication that are used in the process of distance education. At present the IT technologies in the telecommunication sphere are not yet desirably effective to allow stable Internet connection without failures and delays of live performance/broadcasting as the participants of the process appear to be in different regions of the country and use different types of personal equipment and Internet services. Even without facing particular problems of a technical nature some unscrupulous students might use them as an excuse to skip an online class, not to be engaged in the learning process or not to appear on air with their camera switched on, which leads to inappropriate behaviour showing lack of digital etiquette and disregard of university regulations.

2. From a psychological and behavioural perspective, the evidence from this study suggests that average effectiveness of students’ work in a virtual classroom decreases due to plenty of distracting factors related to being at home or dormitory, sometimes outside or on the way. This undesirable pattern of behaviour can be explained by students’ unwillingness to arrange their workplace according to the learning environment, to respect the rules of digital etiquette and follow the university regulations for online classes.

3. The students’ performance results and interim online assessment grades obtained through distant tests without an authorised system of proctoring and monitoring can’t be considered qualitative and reflective of their real level of language knowledge and skills. Even employing the system of proctoring at the final end-of-the-year attestation procedure does not solve the problem of providing ongoing monitoring of learners’ performance in a distant class within the academic year.

4. However, the results show quite a positive attitude of students towards using a computer-mediated format for certain types of language activities which definitely speaks in favour of the successful implementation of computer technologies in the language learning process at a university, correlating with some of the findings offered by other scholars, e.g., Chirikov et al. (2020), Akimova et al. (2015), Romero-Ivanova et al. (2020), Wotto (2020), Krishnan et al. (2020).

Taken together, the findings do not disapprove of taking advantages of modern IT technologies to deliver certain parts or modules of the English language syllabus within the university curriculum to facilitate the autonomous work of learners.

## References

- Akimova, O., Bobyрева, N., Palutina, O., & Pomortseva, N. (2015). Distance language education. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 348-356. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.558>
- Basilaia, G., Dgebuadze, M., Kantaria, M., & Chokhnelidze, G. (2020). Replacing the classic learning form at universities as an immediate response to the Covid-19 virus infection in Georgia. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science & Engineering Technology*, 8(3), 101-108. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2020.3021>
- Chirikov, I., Semenova, T., Maloshonok, N., Bettinger, E., & Kizilcec, R. F. (2020). Online education platforms scale college STEM instruction with equivalent learning outcomes at lower cost. *Science Advances*, 6(15), Article eaay5324. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aay5324>
- Demuyakor, J. (2020). Coronavirus (Covid-19) and online learning in higher institutions of education: A survey of the perceptions of Ghanaian international students in China. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 10(3), Article e202018. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/8286>
- Dobrova, T., & Rubtsova, S. (2020). ESP/LSP/GE fusion as an implementation of education continuity ideas from the perspective of fostering vital skills of generation Z in the shadow of new reality: Case study. *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 8(3), 319-329. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22190/JTE-SAP2003319R>
- Dozhdikov, A. V. (2020). Online learning as e-learning: The quality and results (critical analysis). *Higher Education in Russia*, 29(12), 21-32.
- Holmberg, B. (1986). *Growth and structure of distance education*. Croom Helm.
- Holmberg, B. (1989). *Theory and practice of distance education*. Routledge.
- Keegan, D. (1988). Problems with defining the field of distance education. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, 2(2), 4-11.
- Kiselev A. (2020). Distance learning of students: Problems and prospects of its development after the Coronavirus pandemic. *Development of Education*, 2(8), 97-100.
- Krishnan, I. A., Ching, H. S., Ramalingam, S., Maruthai, E., Kandasamy, P., De Mello, G., ... & Ling, W. W. (2020). Challenges of learning English in 21st century: Online vs. traditional during Covid-19. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(9), 1-15. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v5i9.494>
- Kudryavtseva, M. G. (2014). Possibilities of distance learning as a means of foreign language learning motivation among students of Economics. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 152, 1214-1218. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.09.301>
- MacDomhnaill, C., Mohan, G., & McCoy, S. (2021). Home broadband and student engagement during Covid-19 emergency remote teaching. *Distance Education*, 42(4), 465-493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2021.1986372>
- Madhav, K. C., Sherchand, S. P., & Sherchan, S. (2017). Association between screen time and depression among US adults. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 8, 67-71. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2017.08.005>
- Mamina, R. I., & Yelkina, E. E. (2019). Network society and its realities: Digital etiquette. *Discourse*, 5(2), 24-34.
- Mavrodieva, I. T. (2020). Communication behavior of students in a virtual classroom. *Psychology in Education*, 2(3), 247-256. <https://dx.doi.org/10.33910/2686-9527-2020-2-3-247-256>
- Park, C., & Kim, D. G. (2020). Perception of instructor presence and its effects on learning experience in online classes. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, 19, 475-488. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4611>
- Peñalver, A. E., & Laborda, G. J. (2021). Online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic: How has this new situation affected students' oral communication skills? *Journal of Language and Education*, 7(4), 30-41. <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2021.11940>
- Perrotta, K. A., & Bohan, C. H. (2020). A reflective study of online faculty teaching experiences in higher education. *Journal of Effective Teaching in Higher Education*, 3(1), 50-66.
- Romero-Ivanova, C., Shaughnessy, M., Otto, L., Taylor, E., & Watson, E. (2020). Digital practices & applications in a Covid-19 culture. *Higher Education Studies*, 10(3), 80-87. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5539/hes.v10n3p80>

- Rumble, G. (1986). *The planning and management of distance education*. Croom Helm.
- Sadeghi, M. (2019). A shift from classroom to distance learning: Advantages and limitations. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 4(1), 80-88. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29252/ijree.4.1.80>
- Sahu, P. (2020). Closure of universities due to Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19): Impact on education and mental health of students and academic staff. *Cureus*, 12(4), Article e7541. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.7541>
- Satpute, K. (2021). Challenges and adaptability of language teachers towards virtual classrooms during Covid-19. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, 9(3), 517-526. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22190/JTE-SAP2103517S>
- Sayer, P., & Braun, D. (2020). The disparate impact of Covid-19 remote learning on English learners in the United States. *TESOL Journal*, 11(3), Article e00546. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.546>
- Schneider, L. B. (2020). The realities of distance education in the context of the pandemic. *Higher Education Today*, 29(7), 18-23. <https://dx.doi.org/10.25586/RNU.HET.20.07.P.18>
- Skorobrenko, I. A. (2020, October 6-9). Distance learning: Pandemic lessons. In *Proceedings of the 4th Research Conference Informatisation of Education and E-Learning Methodology* (pp. 532-536). Siberian Federal University Press.
- Sychev, A. (2021). Etiquette and ethics of videoconferencing. *Journal of Practical Ethics*, 57, 74-82.
- Vayndorf-Sysoeva, M. E., & Subocheva, M. L. (2020). Remote learning in a pandemic condition: Problems and ways to overcome them. *Problems of Modern Pedagogical Education*, 67(4), 7-74.
- Wotto, M. (2020). The future high education distance learning in Canada, the United States, and France: Insights from before Covid-19 secondary data analysis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(2), 262-281. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0047239520940624>

ELENA V. RYAZANOVA

St. Petersburg University | 7-9 Universitetskaya Embankment, 199034 St Petersburg, Russia  
[e.v.ryazanova@mail.ru](mailto:e.v.ryazanova@mail.ru)

SERGEI B. DEKTEREV

St. Petersburg University | 7-9 Universitetskaya Embankment, 199034 St Petersburg, Russia  
[aries03@mail.ru](mailto:aries03@mail.ru)

# Original Research

## Pondering on the ways to enhance university reputation

by Yulia N. Ebzeeva and Natalia M. Dugalich

**Yulia N. Ebzeeva** Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Russia [ebzeeva-yun@rudn.ru](mailto:ebzeeva-yun@rudn.ru)

**Natalia M. Dugalich** Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Russia [dugalich-nm@rudn.ru](mailto:dugalich-nm@rudn.ru)

**Article history** Received June 1, 2022 | Revised August 29, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The authors declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-45-54

**For citation** Ebzeeva, Yu. N., & Dugalich, N. M. (2022). Pondering on the ways to enhance university reputation. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 45-54.

*The article describes positive experience of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), which has risen significantly in QS World University Rankings, both in the overall assessment and in the subject ranking. The authors provide factual material and give recommendations for a step-by-step strategy for reorganising educational and scientific activities of the university with a view to increasing the quality of education services, which include the allocation of priority areas; application of new forms of work; development of image strategies in the field of scientific activity and cooperation with employers. The study is based on the analysis of the methodology of the world's leading rankings. It also focuses on the implementation of the road map of RUDN University and other Russian universities. To reveal best practices, the authors break down the activities of RUDN University while implementing the 5-100 programme and other activities with a view to promoting the university in international university rankings and enhancing its reputation. Study results suggest that the most important steps in determining the direction in the development of the university are the selection of priority areas of activity, organisation of new forms of work, the attraction of leading international and Russian scientists in a certain field of activity for cooperation, the support and development of scientific projects, cooperation with scientific, educational, practical and industrial organisations in Russia and the world, development and implementation of a number of image strategies in the field of scientific activity, and working with employers to organise internships and further employment of university graduates.*

**KEYWORDS:** QS World University Rankings, subject ranking, RUDN University, best practices, university reputation, Scopus



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education at the present stage is a costly educational service for the applicant, and the choice of the place where to study is based on several factors. An important factor when choosing a university is its place in world rankings (Bebenina, 2018; Stukalova, 2019; Neudachin, 2020; Antyukhova, 2020; Akoev et al.,

2021). In addition to attracting enrollees, the researchers identify such goals for compiling rankings as (1) economic, which means the attractiveness of investments in the university, the justification of tuition fees and the university's contribution to the export/import of educational services, (2) image (place in the table, growth in international rankings is included in the information

*'As researchers and teachers in intercultural studies, we need to recognise what brings us together, not the differences that might drive us apart. We need to recognise our tendency to see the world through our own filters, and often we are not aware of what that filter is'*

that the university posts online willingly), and (3) political, which implies increasing the attractiveness of the national education system as a whole. This goal provides for an increase in the number of national universities included in the global ranking, which enhances the competitiveness of the educational system of a particular country. The high positions of universities in global rankings and the number of top universities that have entered the world rankings form a certain contribution to the image of the state, and the university's attractiveness for foreign applicants increases the share of the educational sector in the country's export structure.

In world educational practice nowadays, we can observe a relatively new terminological combination *leading international rankings* which implies three rankings that, in the process of development, have gained a reputation as the most impartial and voluminous assessment of the educational services market. These include QS World University Rankings, Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE), and Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). QS World University Rankings occupies the leading position among them.

QS World University Rankings is an annually published university ranking, a product of the QS Quacquarelli Symonds system. It includes general and subject rankings with 51 subjects and 5 subject areas. QS World University Rankings has been known since 1990 and is considered the world's most popular source of comparative data on the success of universities worldwide. QS World University Rankings also lists alumni employability rankings, top campus listings, higher education system performance rankings, rankings by location, and business school rankings, including global MBA, EMBA, distance online MBA, etc.

The QS World University Rankings methodology is based on the collection and analysis of data provided by universities on their websites, and it is also measured based on the analysis of indicators, such as the quality of research, the demand for graduates from employers, the quality of teaching and internationalisation. To compile these indicators, QS methodology implies a

survey and voting of representatives from employers and experts from the academic community. The quantitative indicators, which include the number of citations relative to the number of teachers, the ratio of the number of international students to the total number of students, the ratio of the number of international teachers to the total number of teachers, are taken from university reports. Publication activity statistics are compiled using the Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases. The indices used to evaluate the university are classified into 5 areas: social sciences, natural sciences, life sciences and biomedicine, technological sciences, and arts and humanities.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In these conditions, heads of universities are interested in gaining positive experience in promoting universities in the world educational institutions ranking lists (Salimova et al., 2021; Ebzeeva et al., 2022; Ebzeeva, 2021; Ebzeeva & Gishkaeva, 2022). Heading for rankings, each university goes through four main stages, each of which is a notable achievement:

1) *being in the lists* – a start; the inclusion of a university means getting a place in the ranking table, and for small regions/countries it is often the norm to be represented by only one university; as a rule, for QS World University Rankings, the starting position is 1201+;

2) *growth of general indicators* – a forward movement to the top of the ranking tables or maintaining the positions of the previous year (Kudryashova, 2021);

3) *growth in subject rankings* – purposeful work on one or several subject areas, which is displayed in the ranking table in a separate table; can significantly differ upward from the overall ranking of the university (Vorobeva et al., 2021);

4) *growth according to certain criteria* – work on the indicators according to which the university was initially different or has the goal of distinguishing itself; such indicators can be, for example, the level of internationalisation or the degree of the campus comfort (Kozyrskaya, 2020).

The inclusion of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in the overall QS World University Rankings in 2012 with a relatively high starting position of 501-550 showed its recognition by the world educational community. The next stage was an increase up to 471-480 in 2014. This was followed by a stage typical for many newcomers in the ranking when RUDN University experienced a decrease in the ranking table of 2015-2017 to 601-650.

The accumulated experience, participation in the 5–100 programme, and the university's own ambitions led to the formation of a strategy for the development of the university, its roadmap set a goal – further advancement both in the overall ranking and in rankings by subject area.

RUDN University was set up as a multidisciplinary university, its specialisation was not determined by the status itself unlike, for example, Kazan (Volga region) Federal University the status of which determined its central function (including state and other investments) in higher education compared to other universities in the region. Moreover, RUDN University is not a university with a historically established specialisation unlike Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT/Moscow Phystech) – one of the first research institutes in Russia, the specialisation of which is determined by its origin – Moscow Mechanical Institute of Ammuni-

tion. Another example is Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University ETU-LETI (energy) or Bauman Moscow State Technical University (historically – engineering and instrumentation in defence). Further movement of RUDN University in the overall ranking in the QS World University Rankings has been progressive: in 2018 it was in the 501-550th place in the overall ranking, in 2019 – 446, in 2020 – 392, in 2021 – 326, in 2022 – 317. However, the most strategically justified was the work of RUDN University on promotion in subject rankings (Table 1). RUDN University has been present in rankings by subject: since 2019 – Modern Languages, Linguistics and Arts & Humanities; since 2020 – Mathematics, Social Sciences & Management, Economics & Econometrics, and Chemistry; since 2021 – Engineering Petroleum, Law & Legal Studies, Computer Science & Information Systems, and Business & Management Studies.

Table 1

*Growth of RUDN University positions in QS World University Rankings by subject*

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Modern Languages	–	151-200	101-150	88	58
Linguistics	–	251-300	151-200	101-150	71
Mathematics	–	–	351-400	201-250	201-250
Engineering Petroleum	–	–	–	101-150	51-100
Law & Legal Studies	–	–	–	151-200	151-200
Arts & Humanities	–	366	345	245	173
Social Sciences & Management	–	–	401-450	273	254
Economics & Econometrics	–	–	451-500	351-400	351-400
Computer Science & Information	–	–	–	451-500	401-450
Business & Management Studies	–	–	–	451-500	401-450
Chemistry	–	–	551-600	501-550	123

In 2021, RUDN University was represented in 11 subject rankings of the QS World University Rankings. The most effective is the promotion of the university in Modern Languages and Linguistics. In 2019, RUDN University became 151-200 in the subject ranking Modern languages; in 2021 it took the honourable 88th place; and in 2022 has soared to new heights – 58th

place in the world. The EECA University Rankings awarded RUDN University the 58th position, the Graduate Employability Rankings – 301-500th position.

In conducting this research, we used the method of analysing the data of the world's leading rankings and their methodology, having focused, first of all, on QS World University Rankings. We also implied the results

of SWOT-analysis of the activities of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia based on the material of the roadmap and activity reports for the last five years, as well as the analysis of data from the roadmaps of other leading Russian universities.

The main task of applying SWOT analysis was to build a strategy for the development of activities while realising that the main driving forces for successful growth are taken into account. It is generally accepted that this type of analysis is suitable for designing and introducing a development strategy for an enterprise, service and product. In recent years, SWOT analysis has also been used for introspection, so it is involved in building a strategy for personal professional growth.

### 3. RUDN UNIVERSITY ADVANCES IN QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS BY SUBJECT

#### 3.1. Priority areas of development

RUDN University was established in 1960 as a multidisciplinary university. Medical, Agricultural, Engineering, along with the faculties of humanitarian orientation, posed the task of determining the areas of special attention which require forces and funds with a view to modernising and optimising the educational process. The first important step was the allocation of a priority direction for the scientific development of RUDN University, which included Mathematics, Medicine, Chemistry, Physics, and Modern Languages. The main projects were concentrated in five research institutes, created on the base of university's oldest departments of Physical, Mathematical and Natural Sciences:

1) Nikolski Mathematical Institute (functional analysis, theory of function spaces, differential equations of various types, and nonlinear analysis);

2) Joint Institute for Chemical Research (JICR) (synthesis of drugs for the treatment of neuropsychiatric and oncological diseases, computer modelling of the biological activity of molecules of the structure and properties of substances and their biological activity);

3) Institute of Applied Mathematics and Telecommunications (development of new technologies in the field of mobile communications and software for data transmission channels);

4) Institute of Innovative Engineering Technologies (artificial intelligence using GPU technologies, surface engineering, vibration and multi-wave seismic exploration, enhanced oil recovery of productive formations, composite materials in construction);

5) Academic Research Institute of Gravitation and Cosmology (fundamental physics).

*'RUDN University was established in 1960 as a multidisciplinary university. Medical, Agricultural, Engineering, along with the faculties of humanitarian orientation, posed the task of determining the areas of special attention which require forces and funds with a view to modernising and optimising the educational process'*

The creation of research institutes in these areas of scientific activity in RUDN University made it possible to focus the activities of the teaching staff on solving theoretical issues within several scientific projects, the results of which, as a rule, become visible to the international scientific community through publications in journals indexed on high-ranking platforms. Developing new areas of research, for example, questions of mathematical medicine, RUDN University scientists are attracting leading research institutes in Russia, international organisations and foreign universities for cooperation.

When determining the priority areas of the university's activities, the university's own resources and history, it is necessary to consider priority areas identified by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, global trends, and experience of other countries (see, e.g., Riccardo et al., 2020).

In the humanities, the reorganisation of the scientific and educational space led to the creation of the Institute of Modern Languages, Intercultural Communication and Migration working in two directions: (1) development of innovative models of teaching foreign languages; training of professional translators, including simultaneous interpreters for international organisations; (2) study of migration processes, for example, the representation of languages and cultures in various socio-cultural contexts, primarily in an urbanised environment, analysis of linguocultural identity, expert and analytical activities in the legislative regulation of migration processes (Moskvitcheva & Viaut, 2019).

#### 3.2. New forms of university activity

The second step towards success should involve the expansion of cooperation with world leading scientific centres, experts from other countries, new partners within the country. Thus, the Institute of Modern Languages, Intercultural Communication and Migration has created Dynamics of Languages in a Minority Situation



– the Franco-Russian laboratory working on interdisciplinary research of ethnic minority languages in Europe and Russia.

Attracting foreign researchers is a new form of educational and scientific activity. On a regular basis, RUDN University concludes labour contracts with international specialists who work in classrooms and engage in research and publishing activities.

Bringing international specialists to Russian universities is one of the mechanisms for resolving the issue of increasing its competitiveness in the world market of educational services. The leading universities in the QS World University Rankings have international staff, and the indicator of the share of international teaching staff is the basis of one of the markers of this ranking.

The experience of a foreign specialist allows creating an educational programme that meets the standards of the world's leading universities. Furthermore, the programme is taught in English, which brings it to a new level. The government provides the necessary assistance in attracting international scientists and promises support, for instance, in obtaining visas or introducing changes in legislation in the field of international recruiting. Thus, the status of a 'highly qualified specialist' was introduced in 2010. This status gives an international specialist the following benefits: no quota and work permit acquisition procedures; 30 to 13% tax reduction; residence permits granted under the simplified procedure, including for family members. However, not every international specialist can apply for this status, since their threshold minimum is 2,000,000 roubles in annual income. The right to lower the threshold level to 1,000,000 roubles belongs to universities that have the status of national research centres. In general, an international specialist working at a Russian university is a necessary resource but faces a number of organisational and legal problems.

Expanding the horizons of cooperation is the work on the creation of the UNESCO Chair of Sociolinguistics and Global Migration Processes, which was motivated by the necessity to carry out research, expert-analytical and consulting activities in the field of sociolinguistics, modern languages, migration, and intercultural communication, which is impossible without cooperation with leading international scientists and educational organisations.

The activities of the Chair of the declared format are designed to contribute to the implementation of the UNESCO Strategy for the dissemination of literacy among youth and adults (2020-2025). The key direction

of the development of scientific thought within the Chair's project activities is the analysis of linguocultural identity, the representation of languages and cultures in various socio-cultural contexts, primarily in an urbanised environment. The UNESCO Chair is one of the forms of recognition of the importance of an educational institution in the specialised scientific environment. At the moment in Russia there are just over 20 Chairs in the field of education.

An important innovation of Russian universities is the development and expansion of programmes of continuing education, currently receiving the utmost attention. According to the Federal Law on Education in the Russian Federation, continuing education is aimed at meeting educational and professional needs, the professional development of a person, ensuring the compliance of their qualifications with the changing conditions of professional activity and social environment. In a changing market, the re-profiling and activation of professional skills along with the improvement of existing skills is a highly demanded educational service.

Continuing education is an area of activity in high demand for any university: among other things as part of activities to increase the social significance of a higher education lecturer (see, e.g., Efimova et al., 2022). Its implementation is possible through continuing education programmes, where students are required to have secondary specialised or higher education in the same subject area. The content of the continuing education programmes correlates with the educational programmes of the university.

### 3.3. Image strategies in scientific activity

The third step is work on the scientific image of the university, which, in our opinion, is most successfully carried out with the help of conferences at various levels. For modern higher education, combining teaching and research activities by the staff of a country's leading research centres – universities – is not new. In fact, a scientific conference is the best opportunity to show scientific potential, exchange relevant scientific information and methods. The activities of universities in organising and holding conferences is a long-standing practice. Many RUDN conferences are annual (e.g., Firsov Readings) or held once every 2-3 years (e.g., Novikov Readings) and have an established circle of permanent participants. Traditionally, conferences held by the university end with the publication of a collection of articles by the authors participating in the conference.

*‘Orientation of the teaching staff to the publication of their research in English, stimulation of their publication activity in international journals and participation in international conferences brought significant results. Thus, in 2020, the number of articles published in the subject area Modern Languages in Q1-Q2 journals amounted to 50, of which 45 articles (90%) were published in English; 40 papers (80%) – in international scientific journals, 10 articles (20%) – in Russian journals (3) or in conference proceedings (7)’*

One of the necessary conditions for the implementation of this step is the accumulation of a significant number of publications by RUDN University employees available to the world scientific community, i.e., published in quartile scientific journals.

Quartality of a journal is determined by two bibliometric indicators: the Journal Citation Reports impact factor in the Web of Science database and the SCImago ranking, which is calculated based on citations in the Scopus database. Popularity and recognition, as well as the fact of trust in the quality of scientific analysis of articles in journals of high quartiles (Q1-Q2) are confirmed by a large number of references to articles published in them.

Both in the citation bases and in analytical materials that describe the achievements of RUDN University in general and the Institute of Modern Languages, Intercultural Communication and Migration in particular, scientific research and, accordingly, journals are divided into categories, within which journals are ranked by quartile.

Since the quartile of a journal is associated with the length of time of its indexing in international scientific citation databases, so far only two RUDN University journals working in the field of Modern Languages have a high quartile – Russian Journal of Linguistics published by RUDN University, and New Research of Tuva published in collaboration with RUDN University.

Orientation of the teaching staff to the publication of their research in English, stimulation of their publication activity in international journals and participation in international conferences brought significant results.

Thus, in 2020, the number of articles published in the subject area Modern Languages in Q1-Q2 journals amounted to 50, of which 45 articles (90%) were published in English; 40 papers (80%) – in international scientific journals, 10 articles (20%) – in Russian journals (3) or in conference proceedings (7). The articles offered research findings, including in the areas developed in the Institute of Modern Languages, Intercultural Communication and Migration. 15% of the teams of authors are young scientists – post-graduate students and doctoral students. Some of the works were the result of collaboration with employees of international universities (5). Research topics are presented in the following areas: (1) practical knowledge and teaching of various aspects of the language; (2) languages and cultures in the modern world; (3) discursive research; (4) dictionaries and corpus linguistics; (5) language for special purposes.

The growth of the recognition of scientific linguistics journals published by RUDN University should also be attributed to image strategies in the field of scientific activity (Moskaleva & Akoev, 2021; Malyuga & Grishchko, 2021; Beatty, 2022), which, in our opinion, correlates with the growth of the positions of Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia in the subject areas of Modern languages and Linguistics. At present, the following scientific journals are published at RUDN University in the subject area under consideration, which are included in the international citation databases.

1. Russian Journal of Linguistics, which in 2021 became one of the Q1 Scopus editions and ranks third in the subject ranking of scientific journals in Russia according to RSCI (ranked 274 in the overall Science Index ranking for 2020). Russian Journal of Linguistics has a long history. It was founded in 1984 and for a long time it was the main linguistic journal of Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia. It was established by Russian linguist Lev Novikov, who identified such areas of the journal’s development as functional semantics, functional grammar, and the linguistics of a literary text. The editorial board of the journal includes scientists from Russia, Australia, the UK, Germany, Israel, India, Spain, Italy, Canada, Qatar, China, Lithuania, the USA, and Japan. A distinctive feature of the journal is the regularly scheduled special issues coming out 2 or 4 times a year to address the most challenging research questions. Guest editors of such issues are well-known Russian and international scientists. A comprehensive deep study of the complex linguistic problems helps clarify controversial issues, offers comprehensive presentation

*'The growth of the recognition of scientific linguistics journals published by RUDN University should also be attributed to image strategies in the field of scientific activity, which, in our opinion, correlates with the growth of the positions of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in the subject areas of Modern languages and Linguistics'*

of various scientific schools, and contributes to the development of the best possible research principles. In 2022, Russian Journal of Linguistics was recognised by Elsevier, together with the Association of Science Editors and Publishers, as the result of the most successful practice in publishing a scientific journal in the field of social sciences and the humanities.

2. RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics (12th place in the subject ranking of Russian scientific journals according to RSCI) and Russian Language Studies (20th place in the subject ranking of Russian scientific journals according to RSCI; placed 618 in the overall Science Index ranking for 2020; included in the number of journals indexed in Scopus in 2020 and Scopus Q2 in 2022). RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics was founded in 2010, the focus of its scientific interest being research in the field of the general and special theory of language, theories of speech and speech activity. The articles in the journal present an analysis of the semiotic characteristics of sign systems, language units of different levels and text, semiotics and poetics of literary texts and a comprehensive and comparative study of the typology of categories and units of language. The editorial board of the journal includes scientists from Russia, Belarus, China, Slovakia, Kazakhstan, and Spain. The journal has a recognisable profile of published works. It is steadily growing in rankings. 30% of the content is published in English or in two languages (English and Russian).

3. Training, Language and Culture published by RUDN University – indexed in Scopus Q1 since 2022 – a journal focused on publishing research articles in the field of teaching foreign languages, comparative linguistics and linguo-culturological research. A distinctive feature of the journal is the English version, and a high percentage of international authors (ranked 108 in the subject ranking of Russian scientific journals ac-

ording to RSCI; ranked 3131 in the overall Science Index ranking for 2020; the youngest of the journals under consideration – founded in 2017, it has demonstrated a rapid increase in recognition in the scientific world, as evidenced by the high Scopus quartile). The editorial board of the journal includes scientists from Russia, Germany, the UK, Spain, China, Colombia, Korea, the Netherlands, the USA, Croatia, France, and Switzerland. The main direction of the journal is scientific works devoted to various aspects of language teaching to strengthen the links between theory and practice, intercultural communication, mutually enriching international cooperation between teachers. Open access, publication of all content in English, participation of world-famous linguists and several thematic areas (Finding Culture in Language; Current Challenges in Language Teaching and Learning: Perspectives, Practices and Provisions; More than Meets the Eye: A Closer Look at Professional Discourse; Profession-Oriented Research: Educational and Methodological Perspectives) allowed the journal to receive well-deserved recognition in the scientific community.

All the journals presented above have taken significant steps to change with a view to achieving a high level of recognition in the scientific world. Importantly, their focus is on successful global practice. Thus, the international scientists representing the editorial board correspond to the goals and objectives of the journals under consideration. This correlates with the recommendations for the development of scientific journals, including the need for representation of various organisations of the regions of Russia and other countries of the world. It is also highly recommended to *'provide coverage with the use of scientific specialisations of members of the editorial boards when publishing and working in all scientific areas and sections of the journal'* (Alimova & Brumshteyn, 2020). Narrowing the thematic representation and working on special issues allows us to create an individual profile for the journal. Attracting new highly cited authors leads to an increase in the attention of the scientific community and to an increase in the competitiveness of the journal portfolio.

In the era of digital technologies and social networks, the university is involved in its own promotion on both public and personal levels. The level of public promotion is represented in the official website as well as the official YouTube channel.

RUDN University newspaper *Druzhba* and RUDN University television centre are also involved in promoting RUDN University in the media space. The staff

of the editorial board of the newspaper, which is published twice a month, inform a wide and mainly internal audience of university employees and students about significant events and important changes in the work of the university, which stimulates them to new aspects of educational and social activities. Currently, the newspaper is also published online.

The expansion of the boundaries of RUDN University's recognition is also facilitated by its promotion at the private level. For example, many university researchers post public speeches on their personal channels, have social networks, representing the department, faculty or journal.

The personal level of university promotion in the global educational space can be illustrated by the participation of employees in the editorial boards of international scientific journals (currently 10 employees of the Faculty of Philology are members of the editorial boards of scientific journals), since the invitation to cooperate with them is based on the personal scientific achievements of a member of the editorial board, but is necessarily associated with their affiliation.

The recognition of a university in the world can be assessed through the expansion of the geography of experts, whose opinion of the university is one of the criteria for evaluating the activities for the ranking. Scientific contacts of the university are made up of a number of factors, the most important of which, in our opinion, is the activities carried out within the academic mobility programme. This programme stimulated the scientific and pedagogical staff of the university to regularly participate in full-time scientific conferences and educational exhibitions, where, along with the presentation of the results of their scientific research, an employee of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia exchanged views with teachers from other universities, and also talked about certain new areas of activity, about the specific conditions for teaching students at RUDN University, announced scientific journals published by the university and many others.

Summing up, it should be noted that in the modern world, participation in international university rankings not only stimulates universities to search for new solutions that improve the quality of educational services but is also a constant aspect of the university's attention to its image. The positive experience of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, which has demonstrated a rapid rise in the subject ranking of the area Modern Languages and Linguistics, will be of interest to the Russian academic community.

### 3.4. Cooperation with employers

We consider the fourth step to be efforts aimed at organising the post-educational stage of a student's activity – practice and employment. Students who receive education in Linguistics, Philology and Modern Languages are in demand in the labour market, however, for example, in Moscow they are competing with graduates of other humanitarian faculties and universities of the capital. To ensure the connection between RUDN University and employer, the following steps have been taken:

- establishing the Consortium of Russian educational organisations for the joint implementation of the cluster approach in the field of science, education, industrial and educational partnerships abroad. The year 2020 confirmed the need for universities and interested organisations to work together in recruiting students and graduates of Russian universities to implement the tasks set in the federal Export of Education project;

- establishing the University Practice and Employment Department designed to (1) expand the geography and areas of cooperation with the largest employers in Russia and abroad, (2) create and update the database of current vacancies, (3) offer professional consultations for students on recruiting issues including compiling and posting of their CVs in the database, (4) organise internships for Russian and international graduates, (5) offer project activities with practice for students, (6) establish collaboration with RUDN University Alumni Association on issues of employment for students, bachelors and masters.

Students of the Faculty of Philology find work in companies in diverse fields of activity, such as mass media (correspondent, copywriting, editing, translation with RBC, Russia Today International news Agency, TV Centre channel; teaching Russian, literature, foreign languages at schools; exhibition business (organisation, translations, copywriting, work at the stand, including in foreign languages, e.g. at Messe Dusseldorf Moscow, LLC; advertising activities (copywriting, work with clients, translation with the 2050.Lab National Centre for Industrial Design and Innovation; office work and management with the Embassy of Grenada to the Russian Federation, VTB Bank and many others. These areas of activity imply both temporary employment (for the period of practical training and part-time work of students), and permanent work after their graduation.

A special area of attention of RUDN University in matters of student employment is citizens of foreign countries studying at the university. For international

students, jobs are being created both at the university itself (for example, the established tradition of a construction team, a volunteering system, etc.), and in the increasing number of international companies with which the university cooperates on student practice and employment.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The stages of the work of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in being promoted in the international rankings of the best universities in the world in the subject areas mentioned above allow us to summarise our positive experience in several universal recommendations.

1. Determining priority directions for scientific activity. This stage should be based on a SWOT analysis of the university's activities to determine the exceptional qualities of its activities, which are its competitive advantage and allow laying the foundations for further development without key changes. Thus, the creation or enhancement of the connection between the scientific and scientific-practical activities of the university with the enterprises of the region and/or with the scientific institutions of the region makes it possible to strengthen the priority areas identified at this stage.

2. Organising new forms of work (scientific institute, laboratory, scientific centre) with a change in the functionality of the teaching staff of the university and the invitation to leading scientists in this field of activity to cooperate with them; support and development of scientific projects and cooperation with scientific and educational, scientific and practical and industrial organisations in Russia and worldwide. This stage in-

cludes both the enlargement of existing units and the creation of fundamentally new ones within existing universities. Globalisation in the field of higher education makes it possible to implement cooperation with the world's leading universities, which, in turn, leads to an increase in interest in a particular Russian university.

3. Developing and implementing image strategies in the field of scientific activity (conferences, publication activity, specialised scientific journals as part of the publication activity of the university, popularisation of the university and its achievement of a level of international recognition in the world). Perceiving the university as an enterprise that can be changed using various image strategies makes it possible to make visible the efforts described above and their results.

4. Working with employers to organise internships and further employment of university graduates. Creating links between graduates and employers has always been a priority for universities, but it is at the present stage that these tasks have become feasible through a system of internships and practices, as well as recruiting, which involves enterprises from various fields of activity.

Outside this system, university graduates who could not find a job in their field of studies within two years after graduation reduce their level of training, and the enterprise does not receive a qualified employee with the most recent information about the subject of activity and the necessary skills.

The organised mutual efforts of the university and the employer make it possible to solve this problem both within the region or country, and at the international level.

#### References

- Akoev, M. A., Valeeva M. V., & Yablokov, E. B. (2021). Concentration of human capital in research universities as the basis of competitiveness of education systems and its reflection in global university rankings *Science Management: Theory and Practice*, 3(2), 137-160.
- Alimova, N. K., & Brumshteyn, Ju. M. (2020). The composition of the editorial boards of leading Russian scientific journals: Analysis of approaches to the formation and organisation of work in modern conditions. *Scientific Periodicals: Problems and Solutions*, 1-2. <https://nppir.ru/01NP120.html>
- Antyukhova, E. A. (2020). University rating in the global educational space. *Science Journal of Volgograd State University. History. Area Studies. International Relations*, 25(2), 253-267. <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2020.2.19>
- Beatty, K. N. (2022). Powering the future: Academic journals and language research. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(1), 9-19. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-1-9-19>
- Bebenina, E. V. (2018) Special features of rankings as feedback systems in educational sphere. *Values and Meanings*, 4(56), 54-63. <https://doi.org/10.24411/2071-6427-2018-10013>

- Ebzeeva, Y. N. (2021). QS subject focus summit 2020 on modern languages and linguistics: Languages and migration in a globalized world. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 25(2), 299-316. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-2-299-316>
- Ebzeeva, Y. N., & Gishkaeva, L. N. (2022). Implementation of Russian universities' strategies in the context of international academic rankings. *RUDN Journal of Public Administration*, 9(1), 7-19. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2312-8313-2022-9-1-7-19>
- Efimova, G. Z., Gribovskiy, M. V., & Sorokin, A. N. (2022). Social prestige of a scientific and pedagogical specialists in Russia and Europe: Paradoxes of subjective perception of the profession. *Educational Studies Moscow*, 2, 117-139. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2022-2-117-139>
- Kozyrskaya, I. E. (2020). China in the global market of higher education services. *Russian and Chinese Studies*, 4(4), 316-325. [https://dx.doi.org/10.17150/2587-7445.2020.4\(4\).316-325](https://dx.doi.org/10.17150/2587-7445.2020.4(4).316-325)
- Kudryashova, A. V. (2021). Tomsk polytechnic university tackles global challenges of modern Russian higher education. *Pedagogical Review*, 2(36), 57-66. <https://dx.doi.org/10.23951/2307-6127-2021-2-57-66>
- Malyuga E. N., & Grishechko, E. G. (2021). How to build the foundation for a successful research journal: Training, Language and Culture best practices. *Science Editor and Publisher*, 1, 48-58. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24069/2542-0267-2021-1-48-58>
- Moskaleva, O. V., & Akoev, M. A. (2021). Forecast of the development of Russian scientific journals: Open access journals. *Scholarly Research and Information*, 1-2, 33-62. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24108/2658-3143-2021-4-1-2-29-58>
- Moskvitcheva, S., & Viaut, A. (2019). An introduction to comparing categorizations of minority languages. In S. Moskvitcheva & A. Viaut (Eds.), *Minority languages from western Europe and Russia* (pp. 1-10). Springer. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24340-1\\_1](https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24340-1_1)
- Neudachin, I. G. (2020). Management of the rating competitiveness of universities. *Information Systems and Technologies*, 3(119), 37-46.
- Riccardo, R., Montserrat, L. C., Georgios, A., Sofia, S., Melisande, C., Miguel, V. B., ... & Giuditta, D. P. (2020). *Academic offer of advanced digital skills in 2019-2020. International comparison: Focus on artificial intelligence, high performance computing, cybersecurity and data science*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2760/225355>
- Salimova, T. A., Ivanova, I. A., & Sysoeva, E. A. (2021). Global and national university rankings: A multivariate analysis. *Education and Science Journal*, 23(10), 11-43. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17853/1994-5639-2021-10-11-43>
- Stukalova, I. B. (2019) The competitive capacity of Russian universities and academic rankings. *Modern Education*, 2, 1-7. <https://dx.doi.org/10.25136/2409-8736.2019.2.29724>
- Vorobeva, E. S., & Krakovetskaya I. V., Nyurenberger, L. B. (2021). The competitive positions of Russian universities in the global education market: Summing up the first results and new horizons of Russia superiority initiatives. *Creative Economy*, 14(3), 287-312. <https://doi.org/10.18334/ce.14.3.100668>

YULIA N. EBZEEVA

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia | 6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., 117198 Moscow, Russia  
[ebzeeva-yun@rudn.ru](mailto:ebzeeva-yun@rudn.ru)

NATALIA M. DUGALICH

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia | 6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., 117198 Moscow, Russia  
[dugalich-nm@rudn.ru](mailto:dugalich-nm@rudn.ru)

# Original Research

## Cross-disciplinary variation in metadiscourse: A corpus-based analysis of Russian-authored research article abstracts

by Olga A. Boginskaya

**Olga A. Boginskaya** Irkutsk National Research Technical University, Russia [olga\\_boginskaya@mail.ru](mailto:olga_boginskaya@mail.ru)

**Article history** Received May 28, 2022 | Revised September 8, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The author declared no conflicts of interest

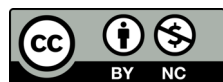
**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-55-66

**For citation** Boginskaya, O. A. (2022). Cross-disciplinary variation in metadiscourse: A corpus-based analysis of Russian-authored research article abstracts. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 55-66.

*The article deals with metadiscourse variation in academic texts across disciplinary boundaries. Its main focus is on the distribution of metadiscourse markers in Russian-authored academic prose in the field of applied linguistics and engineering. The study assumes that the distribution of metadiscourse devices is determined by disciplinary norms. The theoretical basis of the study is Hyland's taxonomy of metadiscourse markers. With the aim of investigating metadiscourse in English-medium research article (RA) abstracts by Russian authors, the present study adopted a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The results revealed that RA abstracts feature four types of metadiscourse markers whose distribution varies across two disciplines representing the humanities and hard sciences. The study also investigated the degree of familiarity of linguistics and engineering scholars from leading Russian universities with metadiscourse devices and their awareness of the need to use them in research articles. To achieve this goal, a survey was conducted to obtain data on knowledge of metadiscourse as a discursive strategy. The findings carry therefore pedagogical implications for academic writing course designers and instructors and can enhance non-native English writers' knowledge of academic writing conventions in the discipline.*

**KEYWORDS:** research article, abstract, academic discourse, academic genre, interactional metadiscourse markers, corpus



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the insufficiently studied English-language academic prose by writers from Russia where English has been used as a language of scientific publication only for the last 20 years. To meet the requirements of international academia, Russian writers need to gain a good command of academic English for performing various academic tasks. Being familiar with rhetorical strategies, including metadiscourse markers

in the discipline, empowers L2 writers to comply with the existing academic writing conventions (formal tone, convincing argumentation, objective analysis, a balance between authority and humility, lack of ambiguity, evidence-based critique and evaluation, consistent referencing, etc.).

Research article (RA) abstracts serve as a screening device (Huckin, 2006) that affects editor and reviewer decisions for accepting the article. In addition, a prop-

erly organised abstract helps attract more readers and increase citation count. Abstracts serve, therefore, as a vehicle for promoting the article (Hyland, 2009) and as a point of departure for the article to unfold.

To contribute to the literature on the genre of RA abstracts and their rhetorical organisation, in particular metadiscourse properties, this study aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What metadiscourse devices are used in English-medium RA abstracts by Russian authors from two disciplines – applied linguistics and engineering?

2. What is the frequency of occurrence of metadiscourse markers in RA abstracts across the two disciplines?

3. What is the degree of familiarity of expert academic writers with metadiscourse devices and awareness of the need to use them in their articles?

By addressing these questions, the study intends to give an insight into the body of knowledge about differences in metadiscourse patterns in RA abstracts by non-native English-speaking writers representing humanities and hard sciences. Notably, the findings can delineate the influential role of metadiscourse drawing the reader into the more detailed exposition.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1. Corpus design

Since the RA abstracts collected were used as a repository of data, the approach employed in the present research to answer the research questions is corpus-based. The current study was conducted on a corpus of RA abstracts derived from six journals in the field of applied linguistics and from six journals in the field of engineering: *Journal of Politeness Research* (two issues per year), *Intercultural Pragmatics* (four issues per year), *ESP Today* (two issues per year), *Training, Language and Culture* (four issues per year), *Russian Journal of Linguistics* (four issues per year), *Cognitive Linguistics* (four issues per year), *Computer Optics* (six issues per year), *Sustainable Development of Mountain Territories* (four issues per year), *Renewable Engineering* (12 issues per year), *Materials Today Energy* (four issues per year), *Eurasian Mining* (two issues per year) and *Energies* (four issues per year). The focus on applied linguistics and engineering RAs is due to the author's membership in the linguistics discourse community and their experience in teaching EAP to engineering students. Knowledge of the academic writing norms in these disciplines helped thus helped the author identify and describe general metadiscourse trends.

146 abstracts were randomly selected from the recent issues of these journals and divided into two sub-corpora. The number of words in each sub-corpus was 23,786 and 19,167 respectively which makes up 42,853 words altogether. Each sub-corpus included 73 RA abstracts. The aim of this corpus-based approach was to examine the frequencies of occurrence of metadiscourse devices in the disciplines.

The examples quoted in this article are coded by indicating the number of the sub-corpus: '1' for the applied linguistics sub-corpus and '2' for the engineering sub-corpus.

### 2.2. Questionnaire

To achieve the third goal of the study, an online survey of the knowledge and use of metadiscourse was conducted among 49 scholars from four leading Russian universities. Participants were selected for their expertise and affiliation. Visiting professors affiliated with foreign universities were not involved in the survey. All selected scholars were contacted by email and volunteered to participate in the online survey. Since the survey was anonymous, no consent from the participants was required.

Before conducting the survey, the scholars were given three RA abstracts in their field containing interactional metadiscourse and asked to identify metadiscourse devices in sentences. Then the survey designed to gather some supporting data for the study was conducted. The scholars were asked three yes-no questions: (1) whether they had known before that metadiscourse was common in academic discourse, (2) whether they managed to identify metadiscourse devices used in the text, and (3) whether they thought that metadiscourse was an important aspect of academic prose.

### 2.3. Data analysis

The study used both qualitative and interpretative methods. The quantitative analysis supplemented with contextual analysis was applied to all instances of metadiscourse markers to examine the socio-pragmatic context in which linguistic units are used to identify whether they serve the metadiscourse purpose. At the first stage, metadiscourse markers were identified manually in 73 applied linguistics RA abstracts and in 73 engineering RA abstracts. At the second stage, the metadiscourse markers that appeared in the two sub-corpora were analysed in context. Using Hyland's (2005) taxonomy, the metadiscourse markers were di-



vided into four groups: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Engagement markers were not found in the corpus. Since the sizes of the two sub-corpora were not equal, the raw frequencies and normalised frequencies of occurrence of metadiscourse markers per 1,000 words were calculated to facilitate statistical comparison. The occurrences were processed with AntConc 3.4 which can ensure the accuracy of research results. At the third stage, scholars' responses for each item in the questionnaire were analysed and summarised in a table format.

### 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1. Previous research into RA abstracts

Previous studies on RA abstracts have attempted to reveal their rhetorical structure (e.g., Boginskaya, 2022b; Gessesse, 2016; Ji, 2015; Rochma et al., 2020; Saidi & Talebi, 2021; Tocalo, 2021), generic patterns (e.g., Cross & Oppeheim, 2006; Darabad, 2016), linguistic features (e.g., Kozubíková Šandová, 2021; Kuhl & Mousavi, 2015), cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural peculiarities (e.g., Alonso Almeida, 2014; Belyakova, 2017; Boginskaya, 2022a; Hu & Cao, 2011; Lorés Sanz, 2006; Martín, 2003; Muñoz, 2013; Perales-Escudero & Swales, 2011; Stotesbury, 2003; Van Bonn & Swales, 2007; Yang, 2013), interpersonal features (e.g., Lorés Sanz et al., 2010; Khedri et al., 2015; Kuhl & Mousavi, 2015), subjectivity, evaluation and engagement elements (e.g. Biber, 2006; Lyda & Warchal, 2014; Stotesbury, 2003; Wang & Pramoolsook, 2021; Bondi, 2014). Ji (2015), for example, made an attempt to find similarities and differences in the structure of abstracts written by native English speakers and Chinese English learners. The results obtained indicate that the Chinese learners focus too much on introduction move and have trouble using tenses properly. Saidi and Talebi (2021) have explored the constituent moves and move patterns of RA abstracts published in Iranian and international journals in the field of applied linguistics and revealed no significant difference in terms of the frequency of the moves in the abstracts. Kozubíková Šandová (2021) investigated RA abstracts from a different perspective. Her study has focused on variation in the use of metadiscourse markers in 96 RA abstracts from the field of applied linguistics published over the last 35 years. The study has revealed that the distribution of these linguistic means has undergone diachronic changes. Wang and Pramoolsook (2021) have examined the stance expression in terms of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Their findings have

revealed a genre-specific convention in using these categories of stance and discipline-specific variations of stance expression.

Previous studies have also shed light on RA abstracts written by members from different discourse communities: medicine (e.g., Salager-Meyer, 1992), applied linguistics e.g., (Lorés Sanz, 2004; Hu & Cao, 2011), engineering (e.g., Abarghooeinezhad & Simin, 2015; Belyakova, 2017), law (e.g., Alonso-Almeida, 2014), etc. Alonso-Almeida (2014), for example, explored the categories of evidentiality in a corpus of English and Spanish abstracts in the fields of medicine, computing, and law. Abarghooeinezhad and Simin (2015) made an attempt to analyse RA abstracts by native English speakers and Iranian speakers in the field of electronic engineering, focusing on the rhetorical structure. It was also found that there were some variations between the sub-corpora. Belyakova's (2017) study aimed to conduct a cross-linguistic comparison of abstracts written in English by Russian novice researchers and native English-speaking experts in geoscience. The results allowed for hypotheses on some distinctive features of abstracts written by Russian geoscientists.

While these studies are valuable, there is still a complementary contribution to be made by corpus-based studies that compare metadiscourse in RA abstracts from different disciplines and reveal discipline-specific features. Writing RA abstracts in each particular discipline deserves a more detailed examination.

#### 3.2. Metadiscourse and metadiscourse devices

As a product of social communication, academic prose contains various metadiscourse *devices* 'used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community' (Hyland, 2005, p. 37). These devices 'help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect, organise, and interpret material in a way preferred by the writer and with regard to the understandings and values of a particular discourse community' (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 157).

In recent decades, several taxonomies of metadiscourse elements have been proposed (e.g., Beauvais, 1989; Crismore, 1984; Hyland, 2004, 2005; Hyland & Zou, 2021; Hyland et al., 2021; Vande Kopple, 1985). Most of them divide metadiscourse markers into textual and interpersonal. According to Vande Kopple's (1985, p. 87) taxonomy, for example, textual markers include illocution markers, attitude markers and commentaries.

Interpersonal markers include text connectives, code glosses, validity markers, and narrators. While the former show *'how we link and relate individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and coherent text and how individual elements of those propositions make sense in conjunction with other elements of the text'*, the latter *'help us express our personalities and our reactions to the propositional content of our texts and characterise the interaction we would like to have with our readers about that content'* (Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 87).

Twenty years later, Hyland (2005) developed a taxonomy of metadiscourse that encompasses the interactional aspect of discourse based on external and internal relations. As Hyland (2005, p. 45) put it, an internal relation *'connects events in the account and is solely communicative, while an external relation refers to those situations themselves'*. In other words, while external relations refer to the propositional content, internal ones – to metadiscourse.

Hyland (2005) distinguished between five types of metadiscourse markers: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Hedges were conceptualised by Hyland (2005) as linguistic devices indicating the writer's decision to recognise alternative viewpoints, withhold complete commitment to a proposition, indicate that a statement is based on the writer's plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge. Boosters are words which allow writers to *'suppress alternatives, presenting the proposition with conviction while marking involvement, solidarity and engagement with readers'* (Hyland, 2005, p. 145) and

strengthen an argument by suggesting the reader draw the same conclusions as the writer. Attitude markers are linguistic resources used to express the information affected by the presence of attitude verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. They demonstrate importance, surprise, agreement, frustration, obligation and help the writer create a convincing discourse and establish disciplinary competence. Self-mentions are devices that refer to the degree of explicit author presence in the text and send *'a clear indication to the reader of the perspective from which their statements should be interpreted, distinguishing their own work from that of others'* (Hyland, 2005, p. 148).

The degree of authorial presence in the text is signalled explicitly by the first person singular or plural pronouns and corresponding possessives. Finally, engagement markers are devices that are used to focus readers' attention or include them as discourse participants (Hyland, 2005, p. 53). They can also involve rhetorical positioning of readers, guiding them to interpretations. These are reader pronouns (*you* and *your*), personal asides questions, and directives.

## 4. STUDY AND RESULTS

### 4.1. Qualitative and quantitative analyses of metadiscourse

Using Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of metadiscourse markers, interactional metadiscourse markers that appeared in the corpus were distributed between four groups presented in Table 1. The table summarises the raw and normalised frequencies of interactional metadiscourse in two sub-corpora.

Table 1  
*Raw and normalised frequencies of metadiscourse in the corpus*

METADISDISCOURSE MARKERS	SUB-CORPUS 1		SUB-CORPUS 2	
	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency
Hedges	373	16.2	32	1.7
Boosters	165	7.17	107	5.6
Attitude markers	202	10.4	61	3.2
Self-mentions	182	8.8	22	1.1
Total	922	40	222	11.7

The raw and normalised frequencies were different across the two sub-corpora. The normalised frequencies demonstrate that in applied linguistics, the number of metadiscourse devices is 4.2 times more than in engineering. We can assume that linguists are more careful in making claims, anticipating, acknowledging, challenging and suppressing alternatives. The most striking aspect is the dominance of self-mention markers in the applied linguistics sub-corpus and its low frequency in the engineering RA abstracts. The reason is writing conventions developed by the hard sciences discourse community that advises its members to avoid personal pronouns in academic prose. In the humanities the prohibition of the use of personal pronouns is considered to hurt the authors' ability to distinguish their views from other authors' perspectives.

In applied linguistics, the most frequent metadiscourse markers were hedges accounting for 16.2 in every 1000 words. In engineering, boosters were employed more frequently than other types (5.6 in 1,000 words). Attitude markers were found more frequently in applied linguistics RA abstracts where they emphasised crucial or debatable findings as well as the novelty and usefulness of the studies presented.

#### 4.1.1. Hedges

Regarding the distribution of hedges across disciplines, the number of instances in 1,000 words in each of the sub-corpora was different: 16.2 in applied linguistics and 1.7 in engineering. As can be seen from these figures, the difference is striking – more than nine times. This difference might be explained by the ability of hedges to weaken the authorial claim and reduce the degree of reliability for the authorial statement which is not welcome in the hard sciences. Here are some examples of hedging devices derived from the corpus.

*Improving the performance, increasing productivity, reducing the metal consumption of grinding equipment and other mining machines is **usually** a very expensive process.* (2)

*These explanatory strategies – definition, description, exemplification, and metaphorization – are **typically** employed with the aim of improving the comprehensibility of jury instructions.* (1)

The hedges employed by the authors express willingness to convey respect for alternative views. In the example below, hedging expresses distance from the authorial claim:

*Our results suggest that politeness is based on different communicative styles and expressive traditions, which **appear** to vary across cultures.* (1)

The following examples illustrate the case when hedging basically weakens the propositional content by reducing the degree of certainty for the authorial statements:

*A statistical trend is found in which a smaller curvature would **typically** lead to a higher charge rate of negative charges after CE.* (2)

*It plays a key role in the 'theory of possible worlds' which was initiated by G.W. Leibniz, restarted in the 1950's and is still **fairly** popular in formal logic, in philosophy of mind, and in cognitive semantics.* (1)

In these examples, the purpose of using hedges *mostly* and *fairly* is to make the authorial claims less certain.

The corpus-based analysis revealed that hedges are mainly expressed by the modals *can*, *may*, *might*, the adjective *possible*, the verb *to seem*, the adverbs *possibly*, *probably*, and *rather*.

The frequency of occurrence of the most frequent linguistic means used for hedging is presented below in Table 2.

Table 2  
Normalised per 1,000 words frequency of occurrence of linguistic means used for hedging in the corpus

LINGUISTIC MEANS	APPLIED LINGUISTICS	ENGINEERING
may	7.1	0.5
possible	3.4	0.3
can	2.0	0.5
rather	0.9	0.1
probably, possibly	0.6	0.1

#### 4.1.2. Boosters

The study revealed that boosters were less frequent in applied linguistics RA abstracts. In both sub-corpora, the Russian writers used boosters to emphasise their assertions and produce persuasive arguments. The difference in the frequency of occurrence of boosting devices might be attributed to the discipline-specific rhetorical conventions of argumentation. The engineering discourse community believes that truth is self-evident without the need for argument and tends to rely on experiential knowledge in reasoning giving less attention to possible counterarguments. The following examples illustrate the case.

*Optical sensors are **widely** used in the biomedical, chemical and food industries.* (2)

*The sensitivity of the sensor is **highly** dependent on its material and structure.* (2)

In the following example derived from the applied linguistics sub-corpus, the adverbial expression of *great theoretical interest* assists the writer in leading the readers to the same reasonable inferences (Hyland, 1998).

*The consideration of the nature and peculiar features of the speech act as a unit of normative socio-speech behaviour is **of great theoretical interest** as it helps examine the mechanisms of speech and identify specific trends and practical significance, for example, for the adequate identification and description of discursive strategies to the full extent.* (1)

In the example below, the author anticipates possible responses from the reader but chooses to prevent them suppressing thereby any alternative views.

*The results **show** that despite reviewers' individual styles there are some culture-specific traits in the styles of reviews.* (2)

The boosting device *show* is used here to express the conviction with which the authors communicate their research results and construct 'rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against their voices' (Hyland, 2005, p. 53). The study revealed that the most frequent boosting device in both sub-corpora was the verb *to show* (Table 3).

Table 3  
 Normalised per 1,000 words frequency of occurrence of linguistic means used for boosting in the corpus

BOOSTING DEVICE	APPLIED LINGUISTICS	ENGINEERING
to show	2.5	1.4
to demonstrate	1.7	1.1
in particular	1.2	0.7
in general	1.1	0.2
mainly	0.9	0.1
definitely	0.6	0.3

#### 4.1.3. Attitude markers

The attitude markers rank second in both sub-corpora. Here is an example from the corpus.

*This method, combined with methods of spectral-phase Fourier transforms and statistical tests, is the most effective way to obtain **reliable** quantitative results for solving engineering problems of atmospheric wave optics.* (2)

In the example above, attitude is signalled by the adjective *reliable* conveying positive evaluation of the

results which can be obtained by the authors. In the example provided below, the attitude marker *important* emphasises the significance of the study conducted by the authors.

*The analysis of the speech act of agreement, as one of the most **important** for dialogic communication, made it possible to single out a variety of communicative units involved in its implementation, as well as to reveal the diversity of the modal characteristics transmitted by them.* (SC1)

In the following examples, the attitude markers create a rhetorical effect which constructs a problematic issue worthy of research.

*Besides, some light will be thrown on the advancements and **debatable** questions arising within discourse theory as reflected in its methodology.* (1)

*The prefrontal anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) responds to visual stimuli, yet **little** is known about if and how visual experience modifies ACC circuits.* (2)

The statements with attitudinal markers were more frequently found in the applied linguistics abstracts rather than in the engineering sub-corpus (cf., 10.4 attitude markers per 1,000 words in the applied linguistics sub-corpus vs 3.2 attitude markers per 1,000 words in

the engineering sub-corpus). Following Hyland (2005), it may be assumed that humanities writers are less able to rely on the quantitative methods to establish their claims, and this enhances the need for more explicit evaluation with attitude markers.

In the corpus, attitude markers were expressed by adjectives or adverbs showing the author's attitudes and encoding positive or negative values: *important, efficient, interesting, little, useful, effective, correctly, problematically*. The adjectives *important* and *efficient* were the most frequent attitude markers in the applied linguistics sub-corpus. The adverb *correctly* and the adjectives *efficient* and *effective* were most frequently used in the engineering RA abstracts (Table 4).

Table 4

*Normalised per 1,000 words frequency of occurrence of linguistic means used for expressing attitudes in the corpus*

ATTITUDE MARKER	APPLIED LINGUISTICS	ENGINEERING
important	3.1	0.7
efficient	3.0	0.9
effective	1.1	1.1
useful	0.9	0.6
debatable	0.3	0.1
accurately	0	0.3

#### 4.1.4. Self-mentions

Table 2 shows that the distribution of this group of interactional metadiscourse markers across the two disciplines is uneven. The largest number of all cases of self-mention were in the applied linguistics RA abstracts, with 8.8 per 1,000 words compared with only 1.1 per 1,000 words in the engineering sub-corpus. Writers in the field of engineering prefer to downplay their personal role in the research to highlight the phenomena under study. By choosing an impersonal style, they suggest that research findings are unaffected by individuals, which strengthens the objectivity of results. In contrast, in the humanities, the first person singular and plural pronouns help writers take a personal stance and demarcate their own studies from those of other writers. The differences may be attributed to the influential role of the engineering scientific paradigm advising avoidance of personality in academic

prose, a trend towards an objective, impersonal way of writing established in the field of engineering. The differences force us to consider the practice of academic writing as a social act. As Berkenkotter and Huckin (2016) put it, academic writers are social actors who are familiar with disciplinary norms. In the same vein, Hyland (1998) argued that academic writers need to ratify their claims to obtain collective agreement that their data represent facts rather than opinions. Similarly, Varttala (2001) claimed that the different uses of metadiscourse devices are a manifestation of writers' adherence to the disciplinarily accepted rules of academic interactions. According to Takimoto (2015, p. 103), the rhetorical choices made by academic writers '*seem to be constrained by the discourse norms and rhetorical styles of each discipline*'. The compliance with discipline norms is required for authorial claims to be accepted by the disciplinary community.

In the corpus, self-mentions were signalled by the use of the first person singular and plural personal pronouns *I* and *we*, and the corresponding possessive forms *my* and *our*.

*In this essay, I report what I had to do to carry out this complex and ambitious project, what forms and kinds of linguistic and cultural competence I had to acquire ... (1).*

*Our results demonstrate that simple sensory stimuli can be used to reveal how experience functionally (or dysfunctionally) modifies higher-order prefrontal circuits and suggest a divergence in how ACC and V1 encode familiarity. (2)*

The self-mention markers used in these excerpts highlight the authors' contributions, help their authorial selves.

In the engineering RA abstracts, no occurrences of the first person singular pronouns were found (Table 5). In the applied linguistics sub-corpus, the first-person plural pronouns were more frequent (6.9 per 1,000 words) and used even in single-authored RA abstracts, which is typical of the Russian academic writing style influenced by the mentality of collectivism and socio-centrism (Krapivkina, 2014).

In Russian academic discourse, the employment of the first person plural pronouns instead of singular pronouns is usually motivated by the desire to present an author's own opinion as the opinion of a discourse community thus enhancing the significance of the research (Krapivkina, 2017). In their English-language RA abstracts, Russian authors follow the writing conventions prevailing in Russian academia.

Table 5  
Normalised per 1,000 words frequency of occurrence of self-mentions in the corpus

SELF-MENTION MARKER	APPLIED LINGUISTICS	ENGINEERING
I	0.9	0
we	4.8	0.9
my	0.2	0
our	1.9	0.2
us	0.2	0.1
me	0	0

#### 4.2. Metadiscourse survey results

As metadiscourse is an element of pragmatic competence, teaching how to use metadiscourse devices is crucial for EAP instructors. Despite the significance of metadiscourse in academic prose, it is not often taught in EAP classes, and it is difficult and time-consuming for non-native speaker academic writers to be able to use metadiscourse efficiently. At the same time, teaching how to use metadiscourse devices can be beneficial for non-native English writers' publications to be accepted and published in prestigious international journals.

To achieve the third goal of the present study, an online survey was conducted among 49 Russian scholars from four leading Russian universities with the in-

tention to reveal the degree of Russian expert academic writers' knowledge of metadiscourse devices. Participants were selected according to their author's expertise and affiliation. Novice academic writers or visiting professors affiliated with foreign universities were not involved in the survey. The survey included three questions (Figure 1).

Table 6 presents the percentage of 'yes' and 'no' answers to each of these questions. The percentage was calculated in Percentage Calculator, an online tool designed to calculate percentages.

Through the analysis of these answers, it was revealed that most of the participants (68%) stated that they had not known that metadiscourse was a common feature in academic prose and 73% of them had never

thought about the important role of metadiscourse devices in their research articles. Only 8% of the participants managed to recognise more than 70% of the metadiscourse devices employed in the academic texts

given to them for analysis. For the most part, these were epistemic modals such as *can*, *may*, *could*, adverbs *usually*, *probably*, *almost*, *particularly* and personal pronouns *we* and *our*.

### Metadiscourse in academic prose

1\* Do you know that metadiscourse is common in academic discourse?  
 Да  Нет

2\* Did you managed to identify more than 70% of the metadiscourse devices used in the text?  
 Да  Нет

3\* Do you think that metadiscourse is an important aspect of academic prose?  
 Да  Нет

Figure 1. Metadiscourse survey's questions

Table 6  
Metadiscourse survey's results

QUESTIONS	PERCENTAGE OF 'YES' ANSWERS	PERCENTAGE OF 'NO' ANSWERS
Question 1	32	68
Question 2	8	92
Question 3	27	73

## 5. DISCUSSION

The assumption about the uneven distribution of interactional metadiscourse devices in applied linguistics and engineering RA abstracts made in the abstract was confirmed by the research results obtained in the study. Through the cross-disciplinary analysis of the two sub-corpora, disciplinary variation in the frequency of metadiscourse markers was revealed. Russian linguists took far more explicitly involved positions than writers in the field of engineering.

Regarding Research Question 1, the study found that both applied linguistics and engineering researchers made use of the four types of metadiscourse (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions). Engagement markers were not found in both sub-corpora.

In answering Research Question 2, the analysis revealed that in the applied linguistics RA abstracts the number of metadiscourse markers was four and a half

times more than in the engineering sub-corpus since linguists were much more careful in making claims and in anticipating, acknowledging, challenging and suppressing alternatives.

The study also identified the dominance of self-mention markers in applied linguistics and their lower frequency in the engineering texts, since the engineering discourse community advises its members to avoid any personal pronouns in their papers. In the humanities, including linguistics, personal pronouns are employed to distinguish authorial views from other people's perspectives. It was also revealed that in applied linguistics the most frequent metadiscourse markers were hedges, while in engineering, boosters were more frequent than other categories.

Attitude markers were found more frequently in the humanities, since in these sciences research novelty and usefulness are less evident than in the hard sciences. The differences in the use of metadiscourse

markers by Russian writers from applied linguistics and engineering may be attributed to the existence of cross-disciplinary writing conventions.

Regarding Research Question 3, the study found that the high share of the participants had not known that metadiscourse was a common feature in academic prose and had never thought about the role of metadiscourse in academic prose. This extremely low degree of familiarity with this rhetorical feature indicates the need to teach metadiscourse to novice academic writers for them to gain a good command of academic language for presenting their research results in the international arena. Knowledge of conventional metadiscourse markers used in research articles in the field empowers novice writers to comply with the existing writing conventions. This supports the findings of previous studies which indicated that the teaching of metadiscourse could help raise academic writers' awareness of metadiscourse (Hinkel, 1997; Hyland, 1998, 2005).

The study has some other pedagogical implications. Firstly, when teaching metadiscourse, EAP teachers should use common metadiscourse devices, such as those from Hyland's (2005) list. Secondly, more examples of how to use metadiscourse markers in research articles should be introduced by EAP teachers. They should be taken from academic prose by native academic writers in the field. Thirdly, although there are some textbooks, which offer guidelines on the use of metadiscourse devices, they are rather general and do not focus on RA abstracts, which is a separate academic genre different from the RA. It seems that explicit teaching of metadiscourse in RA abstracts can help raise awareness of the interactional aspect of this genre among L2 writers and increase their ability to interact with readers and make their claims more persuasive.

## References

- Abarghooeinezhad, M., & Simin, S. (2015). Analyses of verb tense and voice of research article abstracts in engineering journals. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 4, 139-152. <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ILSHS.47.139>
- Alonso-Almeida, F. (2014). Evidential and epistemic devices in English and Spanish medical, computing and legal scientific abstracts: A contrastive study. In M. Bondi & R. Lorés Sanz (Eds.), *Abstracts in academic discourse: Variation and change* (pp. 21-42). Peter Lang.
- Beauvais, P. J. (1989). A speech act theory of metadiscourse. *Written communication*, 6(1), 11-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088389006001002>
- Belyakova, M. (2017). English-Russian cross-linguistic comparison of research article abstracts in geoscience. *Estudios de Lingüística Universidad de Alicante*, 31, 27-45. <https://doi.org/10.14198/ELUA2017.31.02>
- Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (2016). Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition, culture, power. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315538747>

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper explored metadiscourse in English-medium RA abstracts written by Russian authors from a cross-disciplinary perspective which previously did not attract the attention of discourse analysts. Despite the emergence of studies on RA abstracts and their rhetorical structures, their focus has been on a comparison of research articles written by L1 and L2 English writers. This paper dealt with cross-disciplinary differences in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers and how Russian writers in the two fields express their attitudes towards the reader and present the content in English-medium academic prose.

Admittedly, the research results presented here are limited due to the small size of the corpus and should be understood as trends in the two disciplines which can be confirmed or disproved by large-scale research into the ways metadiscourse is used by different disciplines.

By identifying the metadiscourse preferences of academic writers from different disciplines, we can learn more about conventional rhetorical practices which would help novice writers learn stylistic features typical of discourses in the field.

More metadiscourse studies should be done with different academic genres to determine their interactional features.

Diachronic variation in the use of metadiscourse markers in RA abstracts could be also of interest. Comprehensive research that results in instruction for teaching metadiscourse skills would be of interest to EAP teachers and course designers. Metadiscourse in research articles is a promising field of research which can help us see how different disciplinary contexts affect rhetorical choices.



- Biber, D. (2006). Stance in spoken and written university registers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(2), 97-116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2006.05.001>
- Boginskaya, O. (2022a). Creating an authorial presence in English-medium research articles abstracts by academic writers from different cultural backgrounds. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 16(2), 49-70.
- Boginskaya, O. (2022b). Functional categories of hedges: A diachronic study of Russian-medium research article abstracts. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 26(3) (in press). <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-30017>
- Bondi, M. (2014). Changing voices: Authorial voice in abstracts. In M. Bondi & R. Lorés Sanz (Eds.), *Abstracts in academic discourse: Variation and change* (pp. 243-270). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0351-0701-2/11>
- Crismore, A. (1984). The rhetoric of textbooks: Metadiscourse. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 16(3), 279-296. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0022027840160306>
- Cross, C., & Oppenheim, Ch. (2006). A genre analysis of scientific abstracts. *Journal of Documentation*, 62(4), 428-446. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00220410610700953>
- Darabad, A. M. (2016). Move analysis of research article abstracts: A cross-disciplinary study. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 8(2), 125-140. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v8i2.9379>
- Gessesse, C. M. (2016). An investigation into the macro rhetorical structures of the EFL research abstracts of graduates of 2013: The case of Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 6(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ojcm/2534>
- Hinkel, E. (1997). Indirectness in L1 and L2 academic writing. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27(3), 361-386. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(96\)00040-9](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(96)00040-9)
- Hu, G., & Cao, F. (2011). Hedging and boosting in abstracts of applied linguistics articles: A comparative study of English-and Chinese-medium journals. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(11), 2795-2809. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.04.007>
- Hyland, K. (1998). *Hedging in scientific research articles*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.54>
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. University of Michigan Press. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.6719>
- Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*. Continuum.
- Hyland, K. (2009). *Academic discourse: English in a global context*. A & C Black.
- Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2004). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 156-177. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/25.2.156>
- Hyland, K., Wang, W. & Jiang, F. (2021). Metadiscourse across languages and genres: An overview. *Lingua*, 265, Article 103205. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2021.103205>
- Hyland, K., & Zou, H. (2021). 'I believe the findings are fascinating': Stance in three-minute these. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 50, Article 100973. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2021.100973>
- Huckin, T. (2006). Abstracting from abstracts. In M. Hewings (Ed.), *Academic writing in context* (pp. 93-103). Continuum.
- Ji, X. (2015). Comparison of abstracts written by native speakers and second language learners. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 5, 470-474. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2015.55041>
- Khedri, M., Chan, S. H., & Tan, H. (2015). Interpersonal-driven features in research article abstracts: Cross-disciplinary metadiscoursal perspective. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 23(2), 303-314.
- Kozubíková Šandová, J. (2021). Interpersonality in research article abstracts: a diachronic case study. *Discourse and Interaction*, 14(1), 77-99. <https://doi.org/10.5817/di2021-1-77>
- Krapivkina, O. A. (2014). Pronominal choice in academic discourse. *Middle East Journal of Scientific Research*, 20(7), 833-843.
- Krapivkina, O. A. (2017). Linguosemiotic analysis of the correlation of concept and notion (case study of scientific and popular scientific discourse). *Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University Bulletin*, 7(4), 209-222.
- Kuhi, D., & Mousavi, Z. (2015). A diachronic study of interpersonality in research articles' discussion section: The field of applied linguistics. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, 2(4), 6-13.

- Lorés Sanz, R. (2006). 'I will argue that': First person pronouns as metadiscoursal devices in research article abstracts in English and Spanish. *ESP Across Cultures*, 3, 23-40.
- Lorés Sanz, R. (2004). On RA abstracts: From rhetorical structure to thematic organisation. *English for Specific Purposes*, 23(3), 280-302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2003.06.001>
- Lorés Sanz, R., Mur-Dueñas, P., & Lafuente-Millán, E. (2010). *Constructing interpersonality. Multiple perspectives on written academic genres*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Lyda, A., & Warchal, K. (2014). Gender and academicity: Insights from research article abstracts. In M. Bondi & R. Lorés Sanz (Eds.), *Abstracts in academic discourse: Variation and change* (pp. 111-130). Peter Lang. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0351-0701-2/11>
- Martín, P. M. (2003). A genre analysis of English and Spanish research paper abstracts in experimental social sciences. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22(1), 25-43. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(01\)00033-3](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00033-3)
- Muñoz, C. M. (2013). The 'I' in interaction: Authorial presence in academic writing. *Revista De Lingüística y Lenguas Aplicadas*, 8(1), 49-58. <https://doi.org/10.4995/rlyla.2013.1162>
- Perales-Escudero, M., & Swales, J. M. (2011). Tracing convergence and divergence in pairs of Spanish and English research article abstracts: The case of Ibérica. *Ibérica*, 21, 49-70.
- Rochma, A. F., Ariastuti, A., & Ashadi, A. (2020). Rhetorical styles of introduction in English language teaching (ELT) research articles. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 304-314. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i2.28593>
- Saidi, M., & Talebi, S. (2021). Genre analysis of research article abstracts in English for academic purposes journals: Exploring the possible variations across the venues of research. *Education Research International*, 1, Article 3578179.
- Salager-Meyer, F. (1992). A text-type and move analysis study of verb tense and modality distribution in medical English abstracts. *English for Specific Purposes*, 11(2), 93-113. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(05\)80002-X](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(05)80002-X)
- Stotesbury, H. (2003). Evaluation in research article abstracts in the narrative and hard sciences. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2(4), 327-341. [https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585\(03\)00049-3](https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585(03)00049-3)
- Takimoto, M. (2015). A corpus-based analysis of hedges and boosters in English academic articles. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(1), 95-105. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v5i1.836>
- Tocalo, A. W. I. (2021). Move structures and their rhetorical verbs of research article abstracts across Englishes. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), Article 34593. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i1.34593>
- Van Bonn, S., & Swales, J. M. (2007). English and French journal abstracts in the language sciences: Three exploratory studies. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6(2), 93-108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2007.04.001>
- Vande Kopple, W. (1985). Some exploratory discourse on metadiscourse. *College Composition and Communication*, 36(1), 82-93. <https://doi.org/10.2307/357609>
- Varttala, T. (2001). *Hedging in scientifically oriented discourse: Exploring variation*. University of Tampere Press.
- Wang, F., & Pramoolsook, I. (2021). Attitude in abstracts: stance expression in translation practice reports and interpretation practice reports by Chinese students. *Discourse and Interaction*, 14(1), 100-123. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5817/DI2021-1-100>
- Yang, Y. (2013). Exploring linguistic and cultural variations in the use of hedges in English and Chinese scientific discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 50(1), 23-36.

OLGA A. BOGINSKAYA

Irkutsk National Research Technical University | 83 Lermontova Str., 664074 Irkutsk, Russia

[olgaa\\_boginskaya@mail.ru](mailto:olgaa_boginskaya@mail.ru)

# Original Research

## Inconsistency of translating medical abbreviations and acronyms into the Arabic language

by Siddig Mohammed

**Siddig Mohammed** College of Science and Arts, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia [s.mohammed@qu.edu.sa](mailto:s.mohammed@qu.edu.sa)

**Article history** Received May 19, 2022 | Revised September 7, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The author declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-67-77

**For citation** Mohammed, S. (2022). Inconsistency of translating medical abbreviations and acronyms into the Arabic language. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 67-77.

*The paper identifies the challenges of translating variants of medical documents that include acronyms and abbreviations, which are standard in medicine, pharmacology, and healthcare contexts and documents, thus intending to examine the inconsistency of abbreviation and acronym use in a medical context. The study adopts the descriptive approach to investigate the inconsistency of medical abbreviations in English that include multiple medical meanings/versions of acronyms and abbreviations to be translated into Arabic. The samples considered in this study are documents frequently utilised in the medical context in hospitals, including graphic signs, medical reports, admission forms, and prescriptions. The documents included 18 medical abbreviations and acronyms to be translated from English into Arabic. The results revealed that the abbreviations and acronyms used in medical documents showed a discrepancy in the translation, and many versions of translations are possible. Therefore, the findings underpinned the main challenges of translating acronyms and abbreviations from English as a source language into Arabic as a target language and the consequentiality of training for the medical translators to overcome these challenges. The study concludes that medical abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms are more frequent and multi-version and lack consistency in several documents, including medical reports, resulting in many challenges. This may also lead to erroneous versions in translation. Thus, it is recommended translators' vigilance be raised to overcome the obstacles that impede translation accuracy.*

**KEYWORDS:** *abbreviation, acronym, medical term, initialism, standardisation, English, Arabic, medical translation*



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Medical translation as a challenge

Based on the subject matter, scholars of translation generally divide translation into non-literary and literary translation. Non-literary translation covers scientific and technical translation. Medical translation is categorised as a subdivision of scientific translation (Pan, 2021). It is a precarious field since it is concerned with

issues relating to the life and health of the human being. This field embraces peculiar Latinate and Greek terminologies, initialisms, abbreviations, acronyms, and eponyms. When translating these constituents from English into the Arabic language, translation challenges occur due to non-equivalence and inconsistency. There are multiple versions for each type, and Arabic does not conventionally adopt the abbreviation systems. It is ad-

*'Medical translation is a precarious field since it is concerned with issues relating to the life and health of the human being. This field embraces peculiar Latinate and Greek terminologies, initialisms, abbreviations, acronyms, and eponyms. When translating these constituents from English into the Arabic language, translation challenges occur due to non-equivalence and inconsistency'*

ditionally complicated by the fact that many readers also encounter difficulties in the pronunciation of words and their senses. This challenge of pronunciation is due to the Latin and Greek origin of words and amalgamations of words. Understanding the source of medical terms is consequential since it allows the translator to infer the designation predicated on the whole purport and engender the exact equivalence in the target language (Montalt & González-Davies, 2014, p. 232).

Medical translation includes translation of scientific and pharmaceutical texts (Gobet & Rega, 2022). It has been noted that medical syntax, abbreviations, and acronyms differ from everyday language in their specificity. Herget and Alegre (2009) identify medical language as one of the languages of special purport. As a component of the language system, it is considered a component of professional or technical communication as well as context-specific communication.

Several medical conditions, procedures, and diseases have been named after the researchers who discovered them, including Parkinson's disease, Crohn's disease, and Cushing's disease. As the name insinuates, possessive terms are those that describe diseases that were named after their first discoverers, like Crohn's disease. Medical language withal uses coalescences (Farghal, 2000, p. 45), which are incipient words made from another word. As derived from 'capsule' and 'tablet', the term 'caplet' pertains to the similarities found between capsules and tablets.

The challenges of acronyms and abbreviations occur when converting these elements into Arabic. It is difficult to identify a standard counterpart because they are unusual and require conventional guidelines to produce. Thus, this study investigates the phenomenon of inconsistency by exploring the main challenges of converting acronyms and abbreviations into Arabic.

## 1.2. Research problem

In the medical field, abbreviations and acronyms are regularly used by physicians and medical practitioners in different settings. The reason for adopting them is that the abbreviations and acronyms are laconic and used to facilitate communication in specific settings. Therefore, when translating abbreviations, medical translators may find it easy to do that. For instance, when they translate abbreviation like BP (blood pressure) *daght aldam*, PR (pulse rate) *mueadal alnabd*, Temp (temperature) *alharara*, RR (respiratory rate) *mueadal altanafus*, BOS (blood oxygen saturation) *mueadal tashbae alaksijin*, CBC (complete blood count) *surat aldam alkamila*, X-ray *alshiyeyaata alsinyia*, and CT (computerised tomography) *alashieat almaqtaeia*, it may be easy to render the abbreviations and acronyms because they are the basic abbreviations as they resemble the visual signs used when admitting a patient to the hospital. However, when translating medical documents with abbreviations such as such MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) *alranin almighnatisiu* and MRI (medical records information) *maeakum altibiya*, and IRF (impaired renal function) *aikhtilal wazayif alkulaa* and IRF (improvement in renal function) *tahasun wazayif alkulaa*, it is a bit challenging. Therefore, the problem raised in the present article is illustrated by the fact, as many experts have confirmed, that abbreviations and acronyms are likely to have multiple equivalents in the source (SL) and target languages (TL). The abbreviations may have a minimum of fifteen different meanings (Moris, 2020). For example, BAL, bronchoalveolar lavage and British antilewisite, and rDNA may refer to both ribosomal and recombinant DNA, which may mean blood alcohol level, bronchoalveolar lavage. In the study, this problem is known as the inconsistency of translating abbreviations and acronyms and is emphasised. Strategies are proposed to facilitate its translation due to the different meanings, and solutions are suggested.

## 1.3. Research objectives and questions

One of the most irritating aspects of studying medical data is the widespread use of acronyms. Some abbreviations are standard, and the general public understands what they signify. For example, the term 'Rx' is commonly used to refer to a pharmaceutical prescription. Attempting to comprehend discipline-specific or provider-invented abbreviations, on the other hand, can be frustrating. When looking at the abbreviation in context, the translators can figure out what it means. If this

method fails, contacting a medical professional may be necessary. If the desired practitioner is unavailable, a nurse or office manager can typically assist. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to provide a list of all medical acronyms (Appleby & Tarver, 2006, p. 231). Abbreviations and acronyms, unlike medical terminology, are challenging to comprehend and translate from one language to another due to the various origins of Latin; Greek, English, and French, healthcare phrases have proven to be problematic. There have been numerous studies on the difficulties in translating medical words from English to Arabic. Kamil and Hazem (2019), for example, investigated the reasons of difficulty of translating abbreviations and acronyms into Arabic. Other researchers such as Shuhan et al. (2022) investigated the semantic challenges of translating acronyms and abbreviations. However, the present study aims to address the topic from a different perspective and analyse how a variety of medical, pharmaceutical, and health-related documents and contexts use inconsistent transliteration of abbreviations and acronyms. It also aims to clarify translation procedures for dealing with abbreviations and acronyms that are difficult to translate.

To that end, this paper examined the following research questions.

1. What is the source of inconsistency in acronyms and abbreviations?
2. What is the effect of the inconsistency of acronyms and abbreviations in the medical field?
3. How to deal with acronyms and abbreviations inconsistency?

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Acronyms and abbreviations as part of medical language

The language of medicine is characterised by brevity, which implies using short phrases, acronyms, and abbreviations. Thanks to Hippocrates, who inherited vast knowledge from earlier civilisations and established a medical school, scholars of that time were able to collaborate to write works on anatomy, physiology, pathology, hygiene, and medical ethics. Later, the Greeks established Alexandria, which became a melting pot of societies and ideas, languages, and cultures from the Mediterranean, the East, India, and Egypt. Greeks knew that the museum and library housed works on anatomical dissections, physiological experiments, and collections of animals classified by scholars and provided veterinary research and livestock oppor-

*'Attempting to comprehend discipline-specific or provider-invented abbreviations, on the other hand, can be frustrating. When looking at the abbreviation in context, the translators can figure out what it means. If this method fails, contacting a medical professional may be necessary'*

tunities. In the corresponding studies and documents, abbreviations and acronyms were used extensively (Montalt & González-Davies, 2014).

Acronyms and abbreviations are laconic forms of words or phrases that are spelled differently according to language rules. Acronyms are abbreviations created by combining the first letters of two or more words. According to Ehrlich and Schroeder (2014), *Light Amplification Stimulated by Radiation Emission* is made into an acronym for laser. Yule (2010) defines acronyms as new words formed by combining the initial letters of a group of other words. Medical acronyms such as ICU (Intensive Care Unit), CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), and MRI (Magnetic Resonance Image) are commonly used in medical fields. They are words formed from one to more initial capitalised letters or syllables. AIDS is the perfect example of an acronym that stands for *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*. Other examples include REM which refers to *Rapid Eye Movement*, and SIDS standing for *Sudden Infant Death Syndrome*. Physicians commonly use many abbreviations and acronyms in medical settings. Kasprovicz (2010) attributes the everyday use of abbreviated words in the medical field to the historical tradition of medical language and the economy in space and time. Byrne (2014) discussed the peculiarity of abbreviations and acronyms as their meanings can vary depending on the subject, context, or even the company or organisation that produces the original text. The use of acronyms is motivated by either catchiness or brevity. Polysemy is also not uncommon in abbreviations and acronyms, which may have up to 15 different meanings (Davis, 2020; Montalt & González-Davies, 2014).

### 2.2. Formation and definitions

Aarts et al. (2020) view acronyms as initialisms pronounced according to ordinary grapheme–phoneme conversion rules. Shortening complex words is a long-standing practice. INRI, for example, is a Roman-era abbreviation. However, their use was limited until the

Second World War, when the creation of new acronyms increased significantly because they were a convenient way to speed up and encrypt communication (Izura & Playfoot, 2012, p. 862). Throughout their history, acronyms and abbreviations have been classified differently. Kafi (1991) classified abbreviations into four major and five minor categories: word clippings, acronyms, word blends, or word segments. Clippings are polysyllabic words formed by removing the final parts of the word, for example, *lab* from *laboratory*, or *flu* from *influenza*. Alsulaiman et al. (2019) classify clipping into four types: initial, final, medial, and complex. The final type, omitted in the last part, is the standard one, as in *clit* (clitoris). The first segment is the relocation of part of a word, as in *shrink* (head-shrinker). The medial clipping occurs when the middle segment of a comment is removed, as in *specs* (spectacles). When clipping is done to compound word segments, the phrase complex clipping is used. It can be done by leaving out the final part of the first word and the initial, for example, *sci-fi*. Acronyms are made by combining the first few letters of a word or phrase, such as AIDS and LAZER.

Another aspect of terminology is the use of eponyms in medical texts. An eponym, according to Newmark (1981, p. 198), is any word that is the same as or derived from a proper name and has a similar meaning. According to Newmark (1981), there are three categories of phrases derived from people, objects, and places. In a nutshell, eponyms are medical terms named after people. These medical terms are sometimes abbreviated and difficult to understand and translate, such as *Parkinson/Parkinson's*, *Eustachische Rohrer/Eustachian tube*, or *Cushing syndrome*. An eponym is the name of a disease, structure, operation, or procedure coined after the person who discovered or described it first. Alzheimer's disease, for example, is named after the German neurologist Alois Alzheimer (Ehrlich & Schroeder, 2009, p. 13). According to Crystal (2004, p. 120), acronyms and abbreviations can be defined as initialisms because there is no universal agreement on the definition of the idea. For brevity, acronyms have typically consisted of at least three initial capital letters formed from the abbreviation.

### 2.3. Structure and meaning of inconsistency

One of the difficulties in translating acronyms and abbreviations is the inconsistency of the components of these medical fields. Having different source languages (English and French), for example, from which medical

Arabic seeks most of its corpora, other translations work independently. Furthermore, multiple codified lexical resources are viewed as significant contributors to the diversity of terms reflected in terminological inconsistency (Crystal, 2004). However, terminological inconsistency is caused primarily by the lack of clear criteria for translators to translate medical texts. The type of target audience further demonstrates this, and its level of professionalism and education are frequently overlooked in the translation process. In this light, the following section examines medical terminology and medical translation. It begins with an examination of English medical terms, their etymologies, and their etymologies in Arabic. According to Newmark (1988), acronyms are frequently created within specific subjects and identify products, appliances, and processes based on their degree of importance and depending on whether there is either a standard equivalent term in translation or if it does not yet exist.

There are few medical abbreviations and acronyms in Arabic, and they are rarely used. According to Newmark (1988), Arabic resists and explains most acronyms. As a result, the Arabic translator directly translates each word when translating acronyms and abbreviations. Consider the following example to demonstrate this: MRI is an abbreviation for 'magnetic resonance image', which is translated in a complete form as *altaswir bialranin almighnatisii*.

According to Albin (1999), Latin is the preferred language for anatomical nomenclature, while Greek is preferred for pathology. González-Davies (2014), on the other hand, believes that most medical terms are of Greek origin, and attributes the Greek conception of medical terms to the physicians of ancient Greece, including Hippocrates. More reasons for the Greek sources of medical terms are given by John (2005), who claims that modern Western medicine can be traced back to the 5th century BCE when the Greek physician Hippocrates was born (460-377). First, the disease is attributed to physical causes, medical practice is distinguished from priestly ministries, and diagnosis is taught by observing and treating natural processes via fostering or restoring them. Hippocrates and his disciples and successors, including Galen, created many Greek medical texts.

Many of the anatomical, pathological, and therapeutic terms found in those writings are still in use today, with little or no change in meaning. Creating medical terminology is not an easy task; it necessitates the application of linguistic rules. Indeed, a word root ne-

cessitates a basic understanding of the term and the source language and a study of its etymology, which comes from the coining of terms in the Greek and Latin languages.

Furthermore, when developing a term, it should generally include a vowel *-o-* to have a soothing effect on the word's sound when applying a suffix. On the other hand, prefixes do not require further modification to be added to a word root because they usually end in a vowel or vowel sound. Spinello (2001) describes the

formation of medical terminology with the word 'myocarditis' in her article on the history of medical terminology. The scholar suggests that the term 'myocarditis' is formed by combining the Greek prefix *my/mys*, meaning 'muscle', with *-o-*. If we combine the Greek root word 'cardio', which means 'heart', and the suffix 'itis', which means 'inflammation', we get 'myocarditis', which refers to an inflamed muscle layer of the heart. In terms of meaning, many acronyms and abbreviations have multiple meanings (Table 1).

Table 1  
*Multiple meanings of medical abbreviations and acronyms*

ABBREVIATION/ACRONYM	PRIMARY MEANING	SECODNARY MEANING	TERTIARY MEANING
CLD	chronic liver disease	chronic lung disease	–
BCA	bladder cancer	breast cancer	–
ABP	ambulatory blood pressure	arterial blood pressure	–
SSE	saline solution enema	soapsuds enema	–
PBL	primary breast lymphoma	primary brain lymphoma	–
CHD	congenital heart disease	coronary heart disease	–
RVH	renovascular hypertension	right ventricular hypertrophy	–
PCU	palliative care unit	primary care unit	protective care unit
TICU	thoracic intensive care unit	transplant intensive care unit	trauma intensive care unit
LFD	lactose-free diet	low-fat diet	low-fibre diet
PHTN	portal hypertension	prehypertension	pulmonary hypertension
SAD	social anxiety disorder	seasonal affective disorder	–

The list of medical abbreviations and acronyms with several meanings in Table 1 shows abbreviations and acronyms with three initials or more. Medical professionals will almost certainly use these initials as acronyms. Because they imply numerous meanings in English in the originating language, these medical abbreviations potentially have many Arabic equivalents. As a result, many translation versions are expected, and inconsistency emerges because of the diversity of source and target languages.

Nonetheless, abbreviations have been employed to denote one item at a time; acronyms may, to some extent, have a fixed meaning. For example, the abbrevia-

tions AIDS and LASER have evolved into full words frequently translated using the transference approach, which is based on the acronym's precise pronunciation and sometimes includes explanations. Other abbreviations and acronyms that follow the same translation strategy include HIV, SARS, Laser, rehab, lab, DNA, RAN, etc.

On the other hand, there are far too many abbreviations, frequently mixed up with others. For example, Social Anxiety Disorder and Seasonal Affective Disorder are both abbreviated as SAD. Thus, inconsistency is expected because of multiple abbreviations for different phrases.

#### 2.4. Dealing with the inconsistency of translating acronyms and abbreviations

Because TL acronyms for SL technical acronyms do not exist, the only option is to convert the SL acronym to an EXTT or an ATT and then explain it in TL. In MTC, instead of being arabicised, acronyms are translated as initialisms. Except for 'electromagnetic', blending is displayed as TL compounds, meaning that the TL blend is superfluous if the clipped part can be recovered in the SL blend. Antivirus, for example, cannot be translated into TL because the prefixes *anti-* and *mono-* are unrecoverable in both languages. According to Newmark (1988), there is a conventional equivalent term in translation or a descriptive statement if one does not yet exist.

Al-Qinai (2006, p. 49) claims that the relatively high illiteracy rate in the Arabic-speaking world may impede the development of native acronyms in this regard. The tendency of native speakers is to become comprehensible by eliminating opaque abbreviations. Because the Arab world gets most of its advanced technology from the West, nations of origin are given titles and abbreviations.

When translating documents from English, Hlongwani (2012) noted several challenges that translators experience. Among these were inconsistencies in word-for-word translation, equivalents, excessive transliteration, and converting words from English without changing the grammar and terms with no equivalence.

#### 2.5. Translation strategies

Abbreviation translation strategies in various languages have been extensively researched, revealing a generally universal nature of their translation. The standard and palpable principle of abbreviation translation is required to achieve equivalent abbreviations in SL and TL. Several translation strategies can be used to achieve this principle. The first strategy is replacing an abridgement of a SL with an equivalent abridgement of a TL. The second strategy is adopting the abbreviation of a SL and using it in the TL via equivalents. This strategy aims to translate alphabetic-numeric abbreviations, which are part of some indexing systems and specifications. The third strategy aims at the translation of abbreviations utilising the transliteration method. The fourth strategy is the translation of abbreviations using the transcription method. Derivation of a new abridgement is recommended only when the translator closely collaborates with specialists and has good reasons to rule out all strategies of abbreviation translation mentioned

*'Abbreviation translation strategies in various languages have been extensively researched, revealing a generally universal nature of their translation. The standard and palpable principle of abbreviation translation is required to achieve equivalent abbreviations in source language and target language. Several translation strategies can be used to achieve this principle'*

above. Thus, translation strategies presented above can be divided into two large groups, depending on the method in question, i.e., normalisation and explication.

Kuzmina et al. (2015, p. 552-553) suggested the following as the main strategies for conveying the foreign abbreviation.

1. Transference. The substitution of a foreign abbreviation for an equivalent abbreviation. This strategy assumes such abbreviation is found in the TL and is most commonly used to translate scientific and technical texts, particularly for the transference of abbreviation definitions for various physical qualities, units of measurement, etc.

2. Borrowing. Foreign abbreviations, mostly words with Latin roots, are borrowed. This strategy is relatively uncommon and is primarily used to transfer abbreviations that are part of any symbol system.

3. Transliteration. This strategy is primarily used to provide proper names in the TL.

4. Transcription. This strategy provides abbreviations in the TL that do not have a correlative form.

5. Descriptive translation. This strategy is used with no equivalent abbreviation in the TL.

#### 2.6. Standardisation of medical abbreviations and acronyms

Scarpa (2020) defines consistency as the uniformity of style and language across all textual components of a product and all products produced by the same company. The usability (how well a text functions in its intended context) and readability (how straightforward a text is to read in terms of its formal qualities) of a technical document are both improved by consistency (argumentation pattern, sentence and word length, word choice, proportion of complex words, active vs passive voice). Macklovitch's (1995) terminological consistency means that *'each terminological unit should receive the*



same translation throughout the final text so that readers are not unduly confused' (Macklovitch's, 1995, p. 1). That terminological consistency is generally accepted as being one property of a good translation.

Abbreviations serve a practical purpose, such as concisely using words in a limited space or avoiding spelling errors. Their use, on the other hand, can come at a high cost. Abbreviations are sometimes misunderstood, misread, or misinterpreted. Their use lengthens the time it takes to train healthcare professionals, wastes time trying to figure out what they mean, occasionally disrupts patient care, and occasionally puts patients at risk.

According to Peate (2013), abbreviations and acronyms can be used efficiently as the documentation style, particularly if the meanings are understood by people using them. They can be described as being archaic, ambiguous, and inducing errors when not used precisely. The reason for using them globally in healthcare is about patients' safety and health issues. Misinterpretation of abbreviations and acronyms could lead to healthcare errors because of obscurity and unfamiliarity. However, they save time, especially in an emergency. In ER, for instance, visual signs are taken where abbreviations such as BP are for blood pressure, T for temperature, R for respiration, etc. Standardisation, which allows users of the TL content to communicate successfully, is one of the most crucial features of technical translation (Sarairoh, 2001, p. 35). Consistency in the signifier-signified method of correspondence is required to maintain required standards.

Medical facilities around the world are required to provide standardised abbreviations and acronyms for use in medical settings. The standardisation process includes identifying accepted abbreviations and acronyms and then informing and providing access to the list of these approved abbreviations to employees. In cases where the facility accepts more than definitions, the list will be updated regularly. Some local abbreviations and acronyms, however, are unique. Doctors use standardised abbreviations when writing in patients' charts, but it is risky to use abbreviations and acronyms when writing reports, especially if they are not standardised (Durham, 2008).

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study aims to investigate the inconsistencies between English and Arabic acronyms and abbreviations. The data was gathered from medical documents used by medical professionals in clinical settings lead-

*'Abbreviations serve a practical purpose, such as concisely using words in a limited space or avoiding spelling errors. Their use, on the other hand, can come at a high cost. Abbreviations are sometimes misunderstood, misread, or misinterpreted. Their use lengthens the time it takes to train healthcare professionals, wastes time trying to figure out what they mean, occasionally disrupts patient care, and occasionally puts patients at risk'*

ing to the discovery of 18 medical acronyms and abbreviations. Such documents were leveraged as study material to reflect on discussion topics because they are frequently utilized in medical settings. For translators, especially those with a degree in translation and interpretation, translating these items has already proven challenging. All translators who intend to work in the medical field must have background knowledge, have taken a minimum of introductory translation courses, and have a broad understanding of the subject. In addition, they need to have knowledge of translation theory and practice in specialised translation, such as medical translation. The study explored the abbreviations and acronyms in these documents to investigate the possibility of finding the exact equivalent for the multi-meanings of acronyms and abbreviations.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The present study attempts to highlight the possibility of translating multiple abbreviations and acronyms from English into Arabic. It investigates the phenomenon of the inconsistency of abbreviations and acronyms when translating them from English into Arabic. Moreover, the study deals with the expected multiplicity of versions of the meaning of medical terms, abbreviations, and acronyms. The study attributes the inconsistency to the multiple meanings of abbreviations or acronyms in the source and target languages. Due to the inconsistency and multiplicity of the meaning of these medical items, translators may encounter barriers due to multiple equivalents in the source and target languages.

Table 2 demonstrates the multiplicity and inconsistency which may result in erroneous translation to the medical, pharmaceutical, and healthcare abbreviations and acronyms.

Table 2  
 Multiple meanings of medical abbreviations/acronyms and translation

ABBREVIATION/ACRONYM	MEANING	TRANSLATION
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging	<i>alrrnin almighantisi</i>
MRI	medical records information	<i>maeakum altibiya</i>
MRI	medical research institute	<i>maeahid albuqhuth altibiya</i>
ECT	electroconvulsive therapy	<i>eilaj bialsadmat alkahrabaiya</i>
ECT	enteric-coated tablet	<i>al'aqras almughalafa</i>
ECT	euglobulin clot test	<i>aikhtibar jaltat al'uwjlubulin</i>
CP	chest pain	<i>'alam sadar</i>
CP	cerebral palsy	<i>alshalal aldimaghiu</i>
HA	headache	<i>sudae</i>
HA	haemolytic anaemia	<i>faqr aldam al'anhilaliu</i>
IRF	impaired renal function	<i>aikhtilal wazayif alkulaa</i>
IRF	improvement in renal function	<i>fi wazayif alkulaa</i>
ABA	ambulatory blood pressure	<i>daght aldam almutanaqil</i>
ABA	arterial blood pressure	<i>daght aldam alshiryanii</i>
LFD	lactose free diet	<i>nizam khali min allaaktuz alghidhayiyi</i>
LFD	low-fat diet	<i>nizam ghidhayiyun munkhafid alduhun</i>
LFD	low-fibre diet	<i>nizam al'alyaf alghidhayiya</i>
D/C	discontinue/discharge	<i>khuruj/tawaqaf</i>

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The list of 18 abbreviations and acronyms discussed in the study demonstrates a multiplicity of meanings in abbreviations and acronyms in both the source and target languages. The multiplicity is due to the abbreviations and acronyms used by practitioners to mean different medical terms and concepts in the source language.

For instance, each abbreviation has three SL and TL versions, which are MRI, ECT, IRF, ABA, and ELFD, respectively. In the TL as well, these could have at least two or more meanings and equivalents. As a result, translators may encounter perplexity which frequently challenges their translation. Because abbreviations are

frequently utilised in multiple medical contexts, it can be arduous to determine the intended meanings. The remaining abbreviations and acronyms, on the other hand, have two designations, resulting in inconsistency. The consequences would be serious if the translator ignored the multiplicity of designations.

In the first group of abbreviations, MRI, has multiple meanings and is frequently translated with multiple versions such as *altaswir bialranin almighnatisii* and sometimes as *alsijilaat altibiya* and *maeahid albuqhuth altibiya*.

In the second group of abbreviations, ECT, has shown multiplicity as it has three meanings – electroconvulsive therapy, enteric-coated tablet and euglobu-

lin clot test – which are translated as *al'aqras almughalafa*, *eilaj bialsadmat alkahrabaiya* and *aikhtibar jaltat al'uwjlubulin*, respectively.

Translators are often expected to experience confusion due to the multiplicity of versions and hence inconsistency. In the medical report, the translators expected to find CP which stands for either chest pain or cerebral palsy which are translated into '*alam bialsadr*' and '*alshalal aldimaghiu*' as practitioners have used it to bear two meanings. If the translator swapped the first meaning for the second, they may have an inaccurate translation.

The abbreviation HA may commonly mean headache (*sudae*), however, it is often confused with hemolytic anemia (*fqr aldam alianhilaliu*).

The abbreviation IRF stands for impaired renal function and improvement in renal function which has to do with kidneys and often translated as *aikhtilal wazayif alkulaa* and *tahasun wazayif alkulaa*. Confusion is expected in case the translator erroneously translated the first meaning by the second one.

In three initial abbreviations, such as ABA, which stands for ambulatory blood pressure and arterial blood pressure, multi-version translation is indispensable. Thus, ABA was translated inconsistently as *daght aldam almutanaqil* and *daght aldam alshiryani*.

LFD has three meanings which include a lactose-free diet, low-fat diet, and low-fibre diet. These meanings can produce diversity of equivalents such as *nizam ghidhayiyun munkhafid alduhun*, *nizam ghidhayiyun khali min allaaktuz*, and *nizam ghidhayiyun munkhafid al'alyaf*, respectively.

Finally, in cases where D/C is rendered as 'discontinue' (*tawaqaf*) when the intended meaning is 'discharge' (*khuruj*), the result will be disastrous. Should D/C (intended to mean 'discharge') be misconstrued as 'discontinue' because it is preceded by a list of prescriptions, the patient's medications can end up prematurely stopped.

In a nutshell, abbreviations and acronyms are expected to have a multiplicity of meaning in the SL and inconsistency of versions in the TL because some are global and official. In contrast, others are local and unofficial and commonly used by local medical practitioners. This may result in inaccuracy of translation, and disastrous consequences can be expected. Therefore, medical translators should have awareness of and training in translating medical abbreviations and acronyms into the TL without distorting it. Moreover, dealing with abbreviations can be problematic if the

target audience requires unofficial rendering because formal abbreviations are complicated and cannot be understood by laypersons. Besides, translators are expected to encounter the untranslatability of medical terms, acronyms, and abbreviations into local ones. Thus, the problem is amalgamated, and a multiplicity of versions for one acronym is expected in the TL. The researcher includes that in the findings of the research.

## 6. FINDINGS

Study results show that consistency is a significant aspect of medical texts. Medical abbreviations and acronyms can be hard to translate when documents show inconsistency and multiplicity of meanings. In the case of inconsistency in the source and target languages, it is not easy to choose the proper and the accurate option in translation. Errors are expected and could be critical if the translator could not produce the correct version. For instance, an inadequate translation of ECT can have severe consequences if the inconsistency of the abbreviation is not considered. The first meaning is the *euglobulin clot test* and the second is *enteric-coated tablet*. Abbreviations with two initials and three initials are too many and can pose inconsistency compared with abbreviations with more initials. Acronyms cause fewer problems compared to abbreviations. Single-initial abbreviations are too many and can be problematic as well. For instance, P can stand for *pulse* or *pressure*. Some abbreviations and acronyms are standardised and are likely to be less problematic. At the same time, unstandardised ones are likely to cause severe problems, and sometimes they are untranslatable because of multiplicity, inconsistency, and even non-existence in the TL. According to the study, the main source of inconsistency of abbreviations and acronyms is non-standardisation of these items in the source and target languages in addition to multiplicity of meanings of abbreviations and acronyms because of different origins of the terms. The inconsistency affects the accuracy of translation in medical settings which may result in serious consequences. The best way to handle the problem of inconsistency is to familiarise the translator through translation training courses to deal with confusing acronyms and abbreviations.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The current study examined the inconsistencies in the translation of medical acronyms and abbreviations from English to Arabic. It focused on the primary difficulties that hampered the accuracy of translating these

abbreviations into Arabic, namely the abbreviations' multiple meanings and inconsistencies. The study focused on 18 medical acronyms and abbreviations to examine the multiplicity, inconsistency, and possibility of translating medical acronyms into Arabic. These medical acronyms and abbreviations were categorised according to their frequency of use in a medical context and examined to assess whether their translation could cause problems.

The study examined the possibility and the ease of converting these elements through the equivalents found in the target language from the available resources in the field of medicine. The study has found that acronyms are hard to translate because of the multiplicity of meanings and inconsistency, and their equivalents for most of them in Arabic are changing and not available due to multi-versions in the source language. The study concluded that inconsistency is one of the barriers impeding translation accuracy and can be solved by standardising medical abbreviations and acronyms in the source and target languages. The

research also stresses the importance of the translator's awareness of acronyms and other medical terminologies commonly used by medical practitioners. It suggests that abbreviations should be rendered in full words instead and according to the intended meaning based on different contexts.

According to the findings of this study, a translator should do the following to reduce the problem of abbreviation multiplicity and inconsistency in medical contexts: (1) create a list of standard abbreviations and acronyms used by medical practitioners in hospitals to be accredited as standardised by medical corps and health organisations; (2) circulate lists of acronyms and abbreviations to the exclusive use to avoid inconsistency; (3) experts should translate documents that include acronyms in hospitals to be a model for translators who intend to render acronyms and abbreviations in other contexts; (4) raise the awareness of practitioners of the proper translation by using a dos and don'ts list; (5) at all times consider the function and context of translation.

## References

- Aarts, B., McMahon, A., & Hinrichs, L. (Eds.). (2020). *The handbook of English linguistics* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Albin, V. (1999). Handling Greek and Latin terms in Spanish medical translation. *Translation Journal*, 3(3). <https://translationjournal.net/journal/09medic.htm>
- Al-Qinai, J. (2006, September). The Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science (ALECSO). In *Proceedings of the 4th International Contrastive Linguistics Conference Studies in Contrastive Linguistics* (pp. 45-50). University of Santiago de Compostela Press.
- Alsulaiman, A., Allaithy, A., & Warburton, K. (2019). *Handbook of terminology: Terminology in the Arab world*. John Benjamin's.
- Appleby, K. S., & Tarver, J. (2006). *Medical records review*. Wolters Kluwer.
- Byrne, J. (2014). *Scientific and technical translation explained: A nuts and bolts guide for beginners*. Routledge.
- Crystal, D. (2004). English word classes. In B. Aarts, D. Denison, E. Keizer, & G. Popova (Eds.), *Fuzzy grammar: A reader* (pp. 191-211). Oxford University Press.
- Davis, N. M. (2020). Medical abbreviations with multiple meanings: A prescription for disaster. *Medical Writing*, 29(4), 16-19.
- Durham, L. (2008). *Administrative medical assisting* (2nd ed.). Wolters Kluwer, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Ehrlich, A., & Schroeder, C. (2009). *Medical terminology for health professions* (6th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Ehrlich, A., & Schroeder, C. L. (2014). *Introduction to medical terminology*. Cengage Learning.
- Farghal, M. (2000). The training of student translators. *Journal of Translation Studies*, 9(1), 39-49.
- Gobet, A., & Rega, P. (2022). Gained in translation. Classical languages: Possible teaching strategies. *Medical Writing*, 31(2), 188-120.
- González-Davies, M. (2014). Towards a plurilingual development paradigm: from spontaneous to informed use of translation in additional language learning. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 8(1), 8-31. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1750399X.2014.908555>
- Herget, K., & Alegre, T. (2009). Translation of medical terms. *Translation Journal*, 13(3). <https://translationjournal.net/journal/49medical1.htm>

- Hlongwani, G. J. (2012). *An analysis of the challenges with respect to attaining equivalence in translation of literature pertaining to sexually transmitted diseases from English into Xitsonga*. University of Cape Town Press.
- Izura, C., & Playfoot, D. (2012). A normative study of acronyms and acronym naming. *Behavior Research Methods*, 44(3), 862-889. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-011-0175-8>
- John, H. (2005). *Greek and Latin in medical terminology*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Kafi, A. (1991). *Abbreviations in Persian*. Danesh Publications.
- Kamil, D. F., & Hazem, A. H. (2019). A Syntactic-semantic study of negative particles in Arabic literary discourse with reference to translation. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 3(10), 327-341. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3881846>
- Kasprovicz, M. (2010). Handling abbreviations and acronyms in medical translation. *Translation Journal*, 14(2). <https://translationjournal.net/journal/52abbreviations.htm>
- Kuzmina, O. D., Fominykh, A. D., & Abrosimova, N. A. (2015). Problems of the English abbreviations in medical translation. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 548-554. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.545>
- Macklovitch, E. (1995). Can terminological consistency be validated automatically? In *Proceedings of the 4th Lexicography and Dictionaries Research Conference* (pp. 28-30). Aupelf-Uref.
- Montalt, V., & González-Davies, M. (2014). *Medical translation step by step: Learning by drafting*. Routledge.
- Moris, D. (2020). Abbreviations in medical writings: Do they also abbreviate our science? *Journal of the Balkan Union of Oncology*, 25(3), 1274-1276.
- Newmark, P. (1981). *Approaches to translation*. Pergamum Press.
- Newmark, P. (1988). Pragmatic translation and literalism. *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 1(2), 133-145. <https://dx.doi.org/10.7202/037027AR>
- Pan, Y. (2021). A corpus-based analysis of trainee translators' performance in medical translation. *Asia Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies*, 8(3), 267-285. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23306343.2021.2004719>
- Peate, I. (2013). *The student nurse toolkit: An essential guide for surviving your course*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Saraireh, M. A. (2001). Inconsistency in technical terminology: A problem for standardization in Arabic. *Babel*, 47(1), 10-21. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1075/babel.47.1.03sar>
- Scarpa, F. (2020). *Research and professional practice in specialised translation*. Springer Nature.
- Shuhan, M., Jabar, M. A. B. A., & Fang, N. C. (2022). semantic challenges caused by abbreviations of arabic economic and business terms for undergraduates in China. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 11(1), 120-133. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v11-i1/11937>
- Spinello, S. (2001). *The history of medical terminology*. Routledge.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The study of language* (4th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

SIDDIG MOHAMMED

College of Science and Arts, Qassim University | 6688 Buraydah, Qassim, Saudi Arabia  
s.mohammed@qu.edu.sa

# Original Research

## Challenging intercultural discomforts: Intercultural communicative competence through digital storytelling

by Monika Hřebacková and Martin Štefl

**Monika Hřebacková** Czech Technical University, Czech Republic [monika.hrebackova@cvut.cz](mailto:monika.hrebackova@cvut.cz)

**Martin Štefl** School of Business, University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, Czech Republic [martin.stefl@cvut.cz](mailto:martin.stefl@cvut.cz)

**Article history** Received May 27, 2022 | Revised August 18, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The authors declared no conflicts of interest

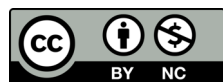
**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-78-88

**For citation** Hřebacková, M., & Štefl, M. (2022). Challenging intercultural discomforts: Intercultural communicative competence through digital storytelling. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 78-88.

*Discomfort perceived by speakers in intercultural situations becomes one of the main psychological factors which makes speakers give up attempts at communication and may result in frustration or inefficient communication. The article discusses the pedagogical potential of digital storytelling, understood as multimodal pedagogy that encourages creative expression and self-representation, as a tool for challenging and mitigating perceived communicational and intercultural discomfort within the context of intercultural competence development and training. The authors argue that collaborative digital storytelling in multicultural teams raises intercultural awareness by creating a safe, structured, and facilitated (virtual) space for students to develop their ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language and represents a viable tool of challenging and overcoming intercultural discomfort by providing an opportunity for repeated intercultural interaction through negotiation of meaning and intersubjective construction of knowledge as well as by providing motivating real-life context for students' work. In supporting dialogic and constructivist approaches to educational practice, digital storytelling is fully equipped to provide a viable alternative to direct instruction and transmissive models of teaching. In addition to this, by providing a digital element, digital storytelling allows students to reflect on the culturally as well as technologically mediated nature of communication.*

**KEYWORDS:** social constructivism, dialogue, digital storytelling, communication, interpretation, hands-on approach



This is an open access article distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Dealing with intercultural discomforts defined as interactions 'in which the individual experiences an inconsistency between the observed behaviour of a particular, culturally different individual and the stereotype held of the latter's cultural group' (Bernstein & Salipante, 2017, p. 3), such as language barriers, inefficient communication system and different norms of familiar and accepted, are widely seen as desirable in the

development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Yet, the pedagogical approaches leading to transformative rather than transmissive education practices fostering motivation and deep learning in ICC development and training are not always fully understood. In this study, we present digital storytelling as an effective and motivating pedagogical tool in higher education intercultural communicative competence courses focusing primarily on socially constructivist, inclusive

*‘Our main argument is that digital storytelling has a strong pedagogical potential to combat intercultural discomfort by providing students with a safe space to experience communication as an activity mediated by culture and technology, while allowing them to reflect on how discomfort, repeated interaction, motivation, and ability shape their intercultural encounters’*

and meaning-based rather than fact-based knowledge and skills. As part of the discussion, we pay attention to shifts in ICC pedagogies as well as some of the recently introduced descriptors of cross-cultural value varieties. Finally, we describe a pedagogical practice of implementing digital storytelling as an effective collaborative and co-creative method multiplying the intercultural learning outcomes. Our main argument is that digital storytelling has a strong pedagogical potential to combat intercultural discomfort by providing students with a safe space to experience communication as an activity mediated by culture and technology, while allowing them to reflect on how ‘discomfort, repeated interaction, motivation, and ability’ (Bernstein & Salipante, 2017, p. 3) shape their intercultural encounters.

## 2. CONCEPTUALISING ICC

As literature and the internet sources show, the notions *intercultural*, *cross-cultural*, *multicultural*, *intercultural competence* and *interculturality* are used in varied and perhaps inaccurate and sometimes even confusing ways. With reference to Byram’s (1997) work and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), effective intercultural communicators have the ability to perform appropriately in various contexts (Byram 1997, p. 71), complementing the competences and skills defined as intercultural communicative competence. Intercultural communicative competence further recognises the influence of the speaker’s own culture and the way they view themselves and others, knowing how to relate and interpret meaning, developing critical awareness, knowing how to discover cultural information and knowing how to relativise the values, attitudes, and beliefs of others (Bilá et al., 2020). Deardorff (2006), for instance, speaks more broadly about intercultural competence (IC) and describes it as ‘possessing the necessary attitudes and reflective and

*behavioural skills and using these to behave effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations’* (Deardorff, 2006, p. 242). Rather than providing a systematic synchronic analysis of existing definitions of and approaches to ICC which were provided elsewhere (see Holmes et al., 2016), and summarising existing criticism of ICC (see Hřebačková & Štefl, 2021) the following section focuses on selected variations of approaches that interconnect theory and pedagogical practices.

## 3. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION MODELS

The aim of this section is to provide a brief outline of the most prominent theoretical as well as educational approaches to ICC. In scientific discourse as well as in education including language learning a number of different descriptive (Hall, 1966; Hofstede, 1980) and performance-oriented (Byram, 1997) models serve mostly as predefined archetypes that enable us to predict a culture’s behaviour, clarify and explain away behavioural preferences and patterns, search for varying degrees of unity, standardise policies, and perceive neatness and order (Lewis, 2002, p. 29). Providing a basis for the treatment of intercultural communication, a brief overview of cultural dimensions used in some of those culture models are provided in Table 1.

Concerning the methods applied for describing cultures, Table 1 overviews the cultural dimensions most often taught in higher education including the predominantly essentialist views of culture which offer training models for business purposes such as those of frequently cited scholars such as Hall (1966), Hofstede (1980), Byram (1997) and Trompenaars (1996). The non-essentialists (Kramsch & Steffensen, 2008; Liddicoat & Scariño, 2013), on the other hand, assume that language users in interaction are in the process of becoming, making, and interpreting meaning (Kecskes, 2013). In addition, the table includes latest results of the less-spread academic World Values Survey (WVS, 2022a) as they also significantly shape the ICC approach by shifting the focus of both students and professionals from the boundaries of national groups that are presumed to be mostly homogenous to fluid dynamic culture zones mirroring pervasive cultural values in cross-national and over-time perspective towards an analysis of the trends of intercultural changes in post-industrial societies. Extending its massive empirical research between 2017-2021, the World Values Study elaborated such new factors as justice, moral principles, corruption, accountability and risk, migration, national security and global governance, organising them within two major

Table 1  
*Cultural models and dimensions overview*

DESCRIPTIVE (Hall, 1966)	EMPIRICAL (Hofstede, 1980)	EMPIRICAL (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997)	INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE (Lewis, 1999)	CULTURE COMPONENTS (Liddicoat, 2009)	DEVELOPMENT STUDY 1981-2021 (WVS, 2022a)
high vs low context		universalism vs particularism	knowledge	action	traditional vs secular-rational
	individualism vs collectivism	individualism vs communitarianism	attitudes	understanding	contrasts societies based on religion, authority, fatherland, family
	power distance	neutral vs emotional	interpretation skills	engagement	survival vs self-expression
	masculinity vs femininity	specific vs diffuse	interaction skills		contrasts societies based on gender roles, experience of poverty, education, health and security, civic activism
monochronic vs polychronic	short-term vs long-term orientation	sequentially vs synchronically organised actions	critical cultural thought		
	uncertainty avoidance	controlling nature vs letting it take its course			
space (proxemics)	indulgence vs restraint	achievement vs ascription			

dimensions: traditional vs secular-rational and survival vs self-expression (Table 1). Visualising the trends of the world’s intercultural evolution in Inglehart–Welzel Cultural maps (WVS, 2022b), the WVS shows the movement as well as the persistence of distinctive cultural traditions in different culture zones, which gives rise to newly shaping cross-cultural variation (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Many controversies with the earlier models of teaching ICC lie in the limited perspectives taken on cultures, which led to a narrow view with limited usefulness for ongoing development of intercultural competence or for communication (see Ferri 2014; Matsuo 2012, 2015; McSweeney, 2002, 2009). Facing this reality, we believe that the higher education ICC pedagogies need to mirror such variations to open space for changes, different perspectives and choices and thus create conditions that have the potential to transform the learner on various levels (e.g., cognitive, intercultural, creative). Moreover, inviting students to become

knowledgeable active authors and participants in a media production culture fosters critical thinking (Anderson & Chua, 2010), while simultaneously fostering the development of collaborative and digital competences and networking with international peers, reflecting the learning process and dialogical relationships help them to discover their full potential as learners.

**4. THE STORY OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING**

The aim of this section is to provide a brief account of digital storytelling and its pedagogic potential in relation to the development and training ICC, in particular to the phenomena of discomfort, repeated interaction, motivation, and ability which play a crucial role in mitigating discomfort created by cross-cultural interactions (Bernstein & Salipante, 2017, p. 3).

Digital storytelling represents a broad set of practices which utilise technologically mediated processes of creating stories for a given purpose. The term was coined and popularised by Joe Lambert, founder of the



*‘Moreover, inviting students to become knowledgeable active authors and participants in a media production culture and foster critical thinking, while simultaneously fostering the development of collaborative and digital competences and networking with international peers, reflecting the learning process and dialogical relationships help them to discover their full potential as learners’*

Centre for Digital Storytelling (now StoryCenter, established in 1994), who in his seminal book *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* defined digital storytelling as the ‘gathering of personal stories into short little nuggets of media called Digital Stories, through a methodology called Digital Storytelling’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 1). Building on a well-established assumption that ‘stories are what we do as humans to make sense of the world’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 6), he introduced an original digital storytelling methodology comprising seven key components of a digital storytelling design. Following this method, digital stories created at the Centre for Digital Storytelling are by definition: (a) self-revelatory, (b) personal or first person voice, (c) focus on a ‘lived experience’, feature (d) ‘photos more than a moving image’ as well as (e) a soundtrack, offer a specific (f) length and design, i.e., a video of two to three minutes with minimum editing and ‘raw form’ achievable for the beginning storytellers, and finally, (g) a specific intention which privileges ‘self-expression and self-awareness over concerns of publication and audience, process over product’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 37-38).

Over time digital storytelling established itself across academic disciplines and areas of knowledge including marketing, tourism, history and heritage preservation (Burgess et al., 2010), community curating (Copeland & De Moor, 2018), or intercultural education and training (Stewart & Gachago, 2016). And as Lambert’s (2013) digital storytelling method pays close attention to providing a sense of ‘agency in life and social interactions’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 134) – including education –, the process of creating and co-creating (digital) stories soon found its way into university curricula as a potent pedagogic tool and training method. This is especially true in ‘integrated constructivist learn-

ing settings’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 134), where digital storytelling soon became a preferred alternative to direct, transmissive instruction in a culturally and linguistically homogeneous class (Kadilina & Ryadchikova, 2018).

Relying on the principles of social constructivism (Akpan et al., 2020), in their approach, both digital storytelling and constructivism fundamentally differ from pedagogical models which rely on a direct transmission of knowledge from an expert to non-expert audiences including students, pupils, trainees, etc. In its emphasis on active participation and sense of agency, Lambert’s (2013) pedagogical philosophy shares a number of key features with the general principles of constructivist pedagogies which, quite similarly to digital storytelling, rely on the process of ‘individuals creating their own new understandings on the basis of an interaction between what they already know and believe and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact’ (Richardson, 2003, p. 1623-1624). As Lambert (2013) himself puts it, ‘young people, despite feeling adept at multimedia tools, long for environments where freedom of expression is possible – where they can choose what story to tell and decide how it should be told. After-school environments are often where effective youth-based projects can best be developed. These efforts give youth a sense of real world consequence that is a critical component of a constructive educational philosophy’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 132).

In this sense, digital storytelling seems fully compatible with ‘a constructivist learning environment based on novel principles of teaching and learning [that] has the potential to enhance student engagement and provide better educational outcomes for learners’ (Barber, 2016, p. 10). Accentuating repeated engagement and interaction, digital storytelling opens up space for motivating ‘student-centred, collaborative approaches to learning where knowledge and understanding are constructed through interaction and negotiation’ (O’Dowd, 2016, p. 292) rather than on abstracted ‘expert’ knowledge; in the area of ICC, such knowledge is typically represented by various cultural dimensions or models (Khukhlaev et al., 2020) as discussed above.

From the point of view of developing intercultural communicative competence, digital storytelling, understood as a ‘multimodal pedagogy that encourages creative expression and self-representation’ (Stewart & Gachago, 2016, p. 529), is consistently described as a viable tool for increasing student engagement, co-creativity, or creativity in general (Schmoelz, 2018, p. 11)

*'In this sense, collaborative digital storytelling, understood both as a process and method, benefits the students in raising their awareness of three key areas, thereby meeting the set pedagogic goals, i.e., by raising their intercultural awareness, technological awareness, and their reflective self-awareness as learners and intercultural speakers'*

and thereby motivation to overcome obstacles in cross-cultural interaction, including culture-related discomfort. This is particularly relevant in multicultural classrooms and teams or online intercultural exchanges (OIEs) online intercultural exchanges which *'develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work'* (O'Dowd, 2013, p. 1) and represent a generally recognised tool for developing ICC (O'Dowd & Waire, 2009; O'Dowd, 2013). In both, cases digital storytelling promises to overcome or at least mitigate perceived student intercultural discomfort associated with the development of ICC by offering a safe and consistent cooperative space for a *'negotiation of meaning'* (O'Dowd & Waire, 2009, p. 174-175) between different linguistic and cultural communities.

This is achieved by the fact that, firstly, *'the medium of story [allows] students to feel empathy for their global partners'* (Stewart & Gachago, 2016, p. 535); secondly, by the emphasis digital storytelling puts on the process rather than a product (Lambert, 2013, p. 37-38), and, finally, by accentuating the constructive and socially embedded nature of (team)work and meaning making. Of considerable importance is also the fact that students working in multicultural teams may rely on the guided process of creating stories, which empowers and provides necessary scaffolding to students of different language and ability levels. In this sense, OIE tasks based on digital storytelling provide a safe-yet-facilitated platform, in which students can work on their projects both synchronously and asynchronously, both outside and inside their classroom, both independently with their team and under the guidance of the teacher whose role is to facilitate the process and allow skills and knowledge to be generated through the process, making *'the storytellers understand that they are making the story with support, not completely do-it-yourself'* (Lambert, 2013, p. 42).

In other words, when working on a digital artefact or story in a multicultural team, students are less likely to reject other cultures thanks experiencing discomfort and repeated interaction (Bernstein & Salipante, 2017, p. 3). At the same time, as these frustrations are experienced under the guidance of the teacher and as part of a structured process of creating a digital story (see below), the discomfort, if carefully reflected, should *'lead to learning and respect rather than tension and retreat into one's own culture'* (Bernstein & Salipante, 2017, p. 3).

In line with these assumptions, collaborative digital storytelling, now defined as an activity which combines cooperation of students from different cultures and backgrounds and a structured, multimodal co-creation process in an online environment, promises to become a linchpin in creating online higher education pedagogies which systematically foster student ability and motivation, co-creation, and multimodal practices, whose *'perceived benefits included engaging and motivating content learning, retaining and deepening knowledge, fostering mutual learning in online community, enhancing digital learning, and fostering motivation to implement multimodal pedagogy'* (Li, 2020, p. 1).

Further, recognising the need to *'support language learners in thinking about their learning [... and in] using their own skills, abilities, and competences to reach a specific learning objective'* (Kleppin & Spänkuch, 2012, p. 42) through supporting collaborative learning and co-creation, as well as the application of multimodal pedagogies, digital storytelling proves an ideal tool for supporting learner autonomy and motivation by its essentially democratic and inclusive character (Lambert, 2013, p. 2), further empowering students to overcome incidental intercultural misunderstandings occurring during the co-creation process. In this sense, collaborative digital storytelling, understood both as a process and method, benefits the students in raising their awareness of three key areas, thereby meeting the set pedagogic goals, i.e., by raising their intercultural awareness, technological awareness, and their reflective self-awareness as learners and intercultural speakers.

Importantly, in such inclusive environments, the development of ICC in students takes place dialogically, through co-creatively working on the given real-life project, rather than monologically, i.e., through a lecture on intercultural skills delivered transmissively by the teacher. This allows students to consider other perceptions and interpretations and raise the awareness of

*‘Finally, collaborative digital storytelling raises autonomous and processual awareness, and self-reflection, encouraging metacognition and taking agency, encouraging metacognitive approaches, and thereby increasing students’ abilities to transfer or adapt their learning to new contexts and tasks by gaining a level of awareness above the subject matter’*

diversity through encouraging self-reflection and the creation of more globally conscious learners, and through empowering the personalised content and interactive learning and increasing motivation.

Collaborative digital storytelling in multicultural teams thus allows knowledge and skills to be constructed dialogically and repeatedly, in-between the students, once again, reducing their reliance on the teacher telling them what to do, and moving towards autonomy which relies on the dialogic nature of language and learning (Little, 2016, p. 51), decentralising learning experience and bringing it out of the class- and lecture rooms. This is crucial considering the current criticism of monologic ICC pedagogies based on essentialist knowledge models such as Byram’s or Hofstede’s (Matsuo, 2012; Ferri, 2014; Hoff, 2014; McSweeney, 2002, 2009; Mustajoki, 2021; Novikova et al., 2017).

Second, given that technologies are not culturally neutral objects (Kern, 2006, p. 189-191) and since technology and the ‘constellation of genres’ (Kern, 2006, p. 193) it brings – including computer-mediated communication – tends to be ‘biased toward information exchange’ (Kern, 2006, p. 193), i.e. towards monologism, both students and educators ‘need to be critically aware of the connections among technology, culture, and ideology, and specifically about the ways in which technology amplifies and constrains aspects of [not only] language learning’ (Kern, 2006, p. 201) but also of technologically mediated communication in general. Through its emphasis on the digital and hence technological aspect of the storytelling process, digital storytelling has the potential to raise awareness of technology as a medium influencing communication and of the specific qualities of online or electronic discourse which ‘takes on additional layers of mediation often without our conscious awareness’ (Kern, 2014, p. 341). This is pertinent not only in OIEs in which technology

plays a crucial role not only in the instrumental sense, i.e., in the faculty of students and teachers to correctly use it (O’Dowd, 2015a; 2015b), but also by raising students’ awareness of the effects technologies have on communication, cognition, and creation of meaning in general. Because digital storytelling draws attention to ‘learning a technique or technology and following the process forward to a completed product’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 42), it allows students to critically reflect on the process and the way it affects themselves both as learners and intercultural speakers.

Finally, collaborative digital storytelling raises autonomous and processual awareness, and self-reflection, encouraging metacognition and taking agency, encouraging metacognitive approaches, and thereby increasing students’ abilities to transfer or adapt their learning to new contexts and tasks by gaining a level of awareness above the subject matter. These skills are directly linked to developing students’ motivation and ability, further mitigating cross-cultural discomforts when working in multicultural teams. In line with this, teachers should encourage students to become ‘perpetual storytellers’ (Lambert, 2013, p. 6) by actively searching for elements and/or methods of (digital) storytelling they would have come across in their other subject, extracurricular subjects and both professional and private lives. This would not only reinforce students’ understanding of digital storytelling and related skills as transversal or transferable skills, i.e., ‘skills that are typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings’ (UNESCO, 2022) and are in high demand by employers, but also develop their learning and metacognitive skills, encouraging them to transfer knowledge and skills from one area of knowledge to another (Vishnyakova & Vishnyakova, 2022).

Examples of such activities might include watching and use of TED talks, public speaking activities and/or networking clubs such as Toastmasters; higher education subjects or areas of knowledge which typically feature elements or practices may include but are not limited to copywriting, marketing, critical thinking, journalism or history. This opens up much needed space for interdisciplinary approaches (Novospasskaya & Zou, 2021). Understood as a transferable skill, digital storytelling and the methods it uses can also find numerous applications in professional or business settings affecting job positions in industries such as engineering, chemical processing and other. To demonstrate further

the interdisciplinarity, creativity and collaborative ideation of digital storytelling that starts in students' teamwork, digital stories such as *Why commercial campaigns may fail in different cultures* (Marketing), *Living with hlobal and local Identities* (Consumer behaviour), *Beer cultures within EU* (Biochemical technology) indicate the intercultural awareness as a good stead for global employability.

Measured through student perspectives, the digital storytelling in intercultural communicative competence courses makes learning motivating and enjoyable and reveals a number of related abilities and skills running from interpersonal to organisational, allowing for an authentic and motivating, student centred approach. Incidentally, bringing in-class the insight on the potential pitfalls of cross-cultural communication, e.g., by exploring online marketing blunders that proved counter-productive due to the language, history ignorance, different beliefs, communication styles serves as a reminder of the importance of good sense of humour that makes learning memorable.

## 5. DIGITAL STORYTELLING: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

The following pedagogical observations play a crucial role in adjusting the digital storytelling process to become a key tool in overcoming intercultural discomfort. To fully utilise the potential of digital storytelling in higher education settings, in particular in OIEs, it seems imperative to favour what O'Dowd and Waire (2009, p. 173-178) refer to as 'collaborative tasks' rather than simple information exchange tasks, as such exchanges offer a safe space for students from different cultural backgrounds to safely co-create within the context of different linguistic and cultural communities. However, such information exchanges may prove successful as 'openers' in the initial stages of the collaboration and co-creation process, e.g., the cultural profiles of multicultural working teams are presented asynchronously in a shared collaborative web platform.

When exposed to the collaborative storytelling process, students are generally aware of storytelling and some of its advantages, and so it is easy for the teacher to build on their existing understanding. Nevertheless, most learners are not aware of the neurological factors involved with the act of telling or listening to a story, nor have they given much thought to how stories are used to create meaning. Therefore, it is important for learners to become aware of how brain activation works and how stories can be structured for maximum

emotional impact. Some basic elements of storytelling impact techniques which are inevitable for crafting stories through DST include the story arch (dramatic question or hook – rising action – crux or climax – falling action – conclusion or resolution) human scale that is memorable and tailoring (language) to listeners.

In line with these observations, digital storytelling with its original 7-step method by Lambert (2013) can be modified for specific situations and, more importantly, adapted to replicate professional digital storytelling practices. This plays a crucial role in providing an objective framework or 'work plan' in multicultural teams, further mitigating the risks of experiencing discomfort in cross-cultural interactions. Previously we considered how the DST facets may vary from the perspective of task categories, below they are analysed from the perspective of a scaffolded co-creation process.

In case of work in multicultural teams in particular, the scaffolded digital storytelling process as demonstrated in Figure 1 enables students to transform their insights and perspectives into a tangible final product, a final digital story, using a rich toolkit of applied managerial methods and techniques for each step; these include an empathy map for audience insights, simple and easy-to-use post-it-voting, grids for ideation to empower collaborative creativity and brainstorming such as the four categories method (realisable and non-realisable, realisable/non-realisable now and realisable/non-realisable later), a six-hat technique or now-wow-how matrix where horizontally, ideas are scaled according to the implementation (from easy to impossible) while vertically according to their originality (from normal to extraordinary) for decision making.

When conducted as a structured activity that optimises the challenge of fuzzy ideas and vague outcome, especially in culturally or otherwise heterogeneous teams, adhering to a predefined digital storytelling process proves more effective and less time consuming while remaining simple enough for both teachers and students to correctly implement and apply. The digital storytelling steps build upon each other, but they can also be used separately, skipped, or flexibly combined. Although each task has its specific features and emphasises different aspects, they all have a time frame for completion with clear deadlines and share a fixed structure of end-of-task summaries or reports, instructions as well as worksheets.

The flow of the tasks as such starts with an in-class introduction of tasks, creating teams, introducing team members' cultural profiles and agreeing on action

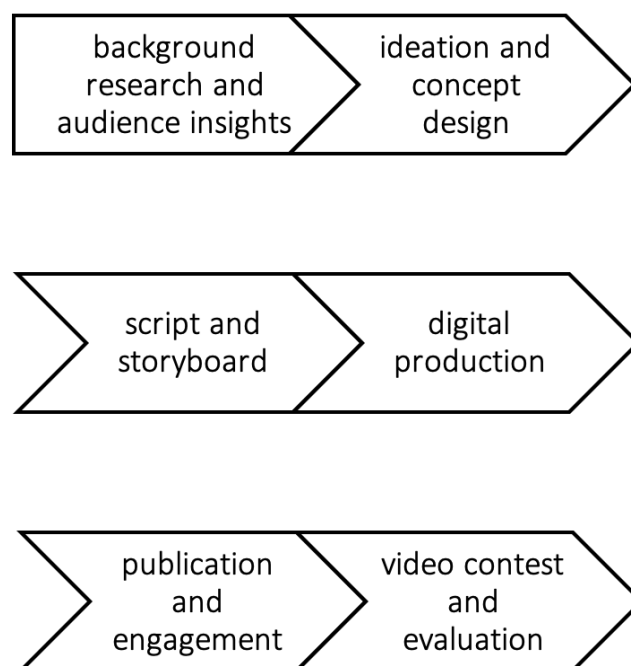


Figure 1. The digital storytelling process

steps, then moves to the semi-autonomous out-of-class work on practical issues scripts and storyboards, and is completed with presenting the digital stories in a students' contest followed by reviewing, feedback, and lessons learnt.

Our observations confirm that the practice-induced development of intercultural skills show the greatest effects at the initial stages, then gradually decrease and finally steeply rise with completing the action and competing with the team's final digital storytelling output. This regularity of the learning curve reflects a fundamental learning mechanism referred to as the 'power law of practice' or 'power law of learning' (Dörnyei, 2019) and the notably most effective method multiplying the higher education learning outcomes is well deployed attention and development of mental task approximation through a combination of verbal and written instruction and explanation as well as modelling the acquired skills through examples or analogy (Carlson, 2003; DeKeyser, 2007).

Applying a thoughtful power-sharing in the assessment process can engender a deeper level of students' commitment in the evaluative part of learning, especially if they take part in co-creating the criteria rubric and, depending on the teacher comfort level, the process of evaluation, e.g., assessing the digital storytelling creation and outputs with peers.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Collaborative digital storytelling in multicultural teams raises intercultural awareness by creating a safe, structured, and facilitated (virtual) space for students to train and develop their intercultural communicative competences. Further, digital storytelling is a viable tool of challenging and overcoming intercultural discomfort by providing an opportunity for repeated intercultural interaction through negotiation of meaning and intersubjective construction of knowledge as well as by providing motivating real-life context for students' work. In addition to this, by providing a digital element, digital storytelling allows students to reflect on the culturally as well as technologically mediated nature of communication. Finally, by accentuating dialogue and student-centred approaches, digital storytelling provides a viable framework within which students might apply, reflect on and critically assess dominant ICC models which remain prevalent in transmissive models of ICC development and training. Combining instructional and procedural techniques and modern technologies, which are part of learners' everyday lives, with learner autonomy proves helpful in all the involved problem-, project- and inquiry-based activities. Through digital storytelling students develop not only a deeper level of engagement with their subject matter, but also a stronger sense of ownership of their academic work.

## References

- Akpan, V. I., Igwe, U. A., Mpamah, I. B. I., & Okoro, C. O. (2020). Social constructivism: Implications on teaching and learning. *British Journal of Education, 8*(8), 49-56.
- Anderson, K. T., & Chua, P. H. (2010). Digital storytelling as an interactive digital media context: Technology in transparent support of creative media production. *Educational Technology, 50*(5), 32-36.
- Barber, J. F. (2016). Digital storytelling: New opportunities for humanities scholarship and pedagogy. *Cogent Arts & Humanities, 3*(1), Article 1181037. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1181037>
- Bernstein R. S., & Salipante, P. (2017). Intercultural comfort through social practices: Exploring conditions for cultural learning. *Frontiers in Education, 2*, Article 31. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2017.00031>
- Bilá, M., Kačmárová, A., & Vaňková, I. (2020). The encounter of two cultural identities: The case of social deixis. *Russian Journal of Linguistics, 24*(2), 344-365. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2020-24-2-344-365>
- Burgess, J., Klaebe, H., & McWilliam, K. (2010). Mediatization and institutions of public memory: Digital storytelling and the apology. *Australian Historical Studies, 41*(2), 149-165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314611003716861>
- Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communication competence*. Multilingual Matters.
- Carlson, R. A. (2003). Skill Learning. In L. Nadel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of cognitive science* (pp. 36-42). Nature Publishing Group.
- Copeland, S., & De Moor, A. (2018). Community digital storytelling for collective intelligence: Towards a storytelling cycle of trust. *AI & Society, 33*(1), 101-111. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s00146-017-0744-1>
- Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10*(3), 241-266.
- DeKeyser, R. M. (2007). Skill acquisition theory. In B. VanPattern (Ed.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp. 97-113), Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2019). Psychology and language learning: The past, the present and the future. *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning, 1*(1), 27-41. <https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/1/1/3>
- Ferri, G. (2014). Ethical communication and intercultural responsibility: A philosophical perspective. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 14*(1), 7-23. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.866121>
- Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. Doubleday.
- Hoff, H. E. (2014). A critical discussion of Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence in the light of Bildung theories. *Intercultural Education, 25*(6), 508-517. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.992112>
- Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Sage Publications.
- Holmes, P., Dooly, M., & O'Regan, J. P. (Eds.). (2016). *Intercultural dialogue: Questions of research, theory, and practice*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637396>
- Hřebačková, M., & Štefl, M. (2021). A useful cliché? Towards a pragmatic interpretation of intercultural communicative competence. *Freeside Europe Online Academic Journal, 12*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.51313/freeside-2021-3>
- Inglehart, R., & Welzel, C. (2005). *Modernization, cultural change and democracy: The human development sequence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kadilina, O. A., & Ryadchikova, E. N. (2018). Strong, weak and average linguistic personality in communicative-pragmatic and linguoculturological aspects. *RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics, 9*(4), 859-882. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2018-9-4-859-882>
- Kecskes, I. (2013). *Intercultural pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Kern, R. (2006). Perspectives on technology in learning and teaching languages. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*(1), 183-210. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2307/40264516>
- Kern, R. (2014). Technology as Pharmakon: The promise and perils of the internet for foreign language education. *The Modern Language Journal, 98*(1), 340-357.

- Khukhlaev, O. E., Gritsenko, V. V., Pavlova, O. S., Tkachenko, N. V., Usuban, S. A., & Shorokhova, V. A. (2020). Comprehensive model of intercultural competence: Theoretical substantiation. *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics*, 17(1), 13-28. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2020-17-1-13-28>
- Kleppin, K., & Spänkuch, E. (2012). Sprachlern-Coaching. Reflexionsangebote für das eigene Fremdsprachenlernen. *Fremdsprache Deutsch*, 46, 41-49.
- Kramsch, C., & Steffensen, S. V. (2008). Ecological perspectives on second language acquisition and socialization. In P. A. Duff & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Language socialization* (pp. 17-28). Springer Verlag.
- Lambert, J. (2013). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203102329>
- Lewis, R. D. (1999). *Cross cultural communication: A visual approach*. Transcreen Publications.
- Lewis, R. D. (2002). *Communications national cultural profiles and cultural assessment*. Culture Active.
- Li, M. (2020). Multimodal pedagogy in TESOL teacher education: Students' perspectives. *System*, 94, Article 102337. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102337>
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2009). Communication as culturally contexted practice: A view from intercultural communication. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 29(1), 115-133. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07268600802516400>
- Liddicoat, A. J., & Scarino, A. (2013). *Intercultural language teaching and learning*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Little, D. (2016, April). Learner autonomy and telecollaborative language learning. In S. Jager, M. Kurek & B. O'Rourke (Eds.), *New directions in telecollaborative research and practice: Selected papers from the second conference on telecollaboration in higher education* (pp. 45-55). Research Publishing. <https://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.telecollab2016.489>
- Matsuo, C. (2012). A critique of Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model from the perspective of model type and conceptualization of culture. *Fukuoka University Review of Literature & Humanities*, 44(2), 347-380.
- Matsuo, C. (2015). A dialogic critique of Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence Model: Proposal for a dialogic pedagogy. In N. Tomimori (Ed.), *Comprehensive study on language education methods and cross-linguistic proficiency evaluation methods for Asian languages: Final report* (pp. 3-22). Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.
- McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith-a failure of analysis. *Human Relations*, 55(1), 89-118. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726702551004>
- McSweeney, B. (2009). Dynamic diversity: Variety and variation within countries. *Organization Studies*, 30(9), 933-957. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0170840609338983>
- Mustajoki, A. (2021). A multidimensional model of interaction as a framework for a phenomenon-driven approach to communication. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 25(2), 369-390. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-2-369-390>
- Novikova, I. A., Novikov, A. L., Gridunova, M. V., & Zamaldinova, G. N. (2017). Intercultural competence profiles in Russian university students. *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics*, 14(3), 326-338. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2017-14-3-326-338>
- Novospasskaya, N. V., & Zou, H. (2021). The formation of polycode text theory. *RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 12(2), 501-513. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2021-12-2-501-513>
- O'Dowd, R. (2015a). Supporting in-service language educators in learning to telecollaborate. *Language Learning & Technology*, 19(1), 63-82. <https://www.lltjournal.org/item/731>
- O'Dowd, R. (2015b). The competences of the telecollaborative teacher. *The Language Learning Journal*, 43(2), 194-207. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2013.853374>
- O'Dowd, R. (2016). Emerging trends and new directions in telecollaborative learning. *Calico Journal*, 33(3), 291-310. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1558/cj.v33i3.30747>
- O'Dowd, R., & Waire, P. (2009). Critical issues in telecollaborative task design. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 22(2), 173-188. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09588220902778369>

- Richardson, V. (2003). Constructivist pedagogy. *Teachers College Record*, 105(9), 1623-1640. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-9620.2003.00303.x>
- Schmoelz, A. (2018). Enabling co-creativity through digital storytelling in education. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 28, 1-13. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2018.02.002>
- Stewart, K., & Gachago, D. (2016). Being human today: A digital storytelling pedagogy for transcontinental border crossing. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 47(3), 528-542. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12450>
- Trompenaars, F. (1996). Resolving international conflict: Culture and business strategy. *Business Strategy Review*, 7(3), 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8616.1996.tb00132.x>
- Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997). *Riding the waves of culture*. McGraw-Hill.
- UNESCO. (2022). *Transferable skills*. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/t-transferable-skills>
- Vishnyakova, O. D., & Vishnyakova, E. A. (2022). Linguistic and cultural knowledge acquisition in terms of the multimodal approach to EIL studies. *Professional Discourse & Communication*, 4(1), 81-92. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24833/2687-0126-2022-4-1-81-92>
- WVS. (2022a). *World Values Survey*. <https://worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>
- WVS. (2022b). *Findings and insights*. <https://worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=Findings>

MONIKA HŘEBAČKOVÁ

Czech Technical University | 1580/3 Jugoslávských partyzánů Str., Prague, Czech Republic  
[monika.hrebackova@cvut.cz](mailto:monika.hrebackova@cvut.cz)

MARTIN ŠTEFL

University of Chemistry and Technology Prague | 1905/5 Technická Str., Prague, Czech Republic  
[martin.stefl@cvut.cz](mailto:martin.stefl@cvut.cz)



# Book Reviews

## Theoretical and applied perspectives on teaching foreign languages in multilingual settings: Pedagogical implications (a review)

Original work by A. Krulatz, G. Neokleous and A. Dahl (Eds.) published by Multilingual Matters, 2022

Reviewed by Maurice Cassidy and Elena I. Madinyan

**Maurice Cassidy** International House London, UK [maurice22grove@icloud.com](mailto:maurice22grove@icloud.com)

**Elena I. Madinyan** Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Russia [madinyan-ei@rudn.ru](mailto:madinyan-ei@rudn.ru)

**Article history** Received August 2, 2022 | Revised September 1, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The authors declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-89-91

**For citation** Cassidy, M., & Madinyan, E. I. (2022). Theoretical and applied perspectives on teaching foreign languages in multilingual settings: Pedagogical implications (a review). *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 89-91.



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

A collection of 19 chapters, the editors of this book aim to 'present new approaches to foreign language (FL) instruction in multilingual settings, many of them forged in collaboration between FL teachers and researchers of multilingualism'. The volume is divided into an introduction, four parts including 19 chapters that constitute the body of the collection, and an afterword chapter. In the introduction, the editors discuss the monolingual bias that has shaped foreign language education as well as the recent paradigm shift that allows for multilingual approaches in language teaching. An important part of the discussed shift in FL pedagogy is the role of teachers, hence the editors include chapters that regard teachers as innovators, able to bridge the gap between current research in multilingualism and classroom practice and extensively discusses – often based on empirical evidence – the possibilities and limitations that they face. Furthermore, the editors feel the need to address the matter of non-uniform terminology regarding the languages learners in multilingual settings acquire and use. Although some chapters use the traditional terms regarding language acquisition and learning (L1, L2, L3, Ln), the editors acknowledge that other distinctions used in the volume are also possible

and, in some cases, essential when it comes to learners with complex linguistic repertoires. In the same light, the editors also deal with differences between other terms used by the authors in the volume, acknowledging that since the phenomenon of multilingualism is dynamic and research is still ongoing, the non-uniform use of related terminology is expected and contributes to the discussion. The editors conclude the introduction with a volume overview. Each part of the volume focuses on one aspect of the main subject matter, and it includes mostly research-based chapters by well-known academics in the field.

Part 1 consists of three chapters and covers the aspect of the multilingual shift in FL education. The editors make the first contribution in the form of an introductory chapter, where they adopt the inclusive term *additional language education*. The authors provide an overview of the change from the monolingual to the multilingual pedagogical paradigm while highlighting the role of teachers as agents of change regarding the implementation of multilingual practices. They address the important issue of teacher preparedness, giving a detailed overview of current research regarding the knowledgeability and skills of teachers working with

*‘Although some chapters use the traditional terms regarding language acquisition and learning (L1, L2, L3, Ln), the editors acknowledge that other distinctions used in the volume are also possible and, in some cases, essential when it comes to learners with complex linguistic repertoire’*

multilingual learners. To help achieve this, the authors propose to actively engage teachers in multilingualism research. The second chapter picks up where the previous one left off. Nayr Ibrahim proposes a holistic framework for approaching all agents involved in and all parameters of multilingual educational contexts, the Eight-Ds framework. Although theoretical, Ibrahim’s work incorporates the modern ecosystemic approach to multilingualism and multilingual education. Further details of Ibrahim’s framework are needed for this approach to prove sustainable in practice. In the third chapter, Ngoc Tai Huynh, Angela Thomas and Vinh To offer an existing framework for putting interpreting cultural meaning to the test, by experimentally analysing a selection of culturally-laden visual cues in a specific Vietnamese picture book and relating their findings to Byram’s (1997) *skill to interpret and relate* as part of intercultural competence. The authors conclude that such a framework analysis of cultural symbols could be of benefit to language teachers and learners alike as a means to promote culturally responsive teaching. Although the authors suggest that the findings of their analysis may be relevant to other objectives for teaching, learning and assessing intercultural competence, as proposed by Byram (1997), such a conclusion would require further replication studies in more languages, also taking in account semiotic parameters in those languages.

Part 2 draws readers’ attention to *‘the relevance of previously learned languages to subsequent language acquisition’*. Tanja Angelovska in the fourth chapter deals with cross-linguistic influence on the example of adult English language learning (as L3) in a multilingual context, with the medium of instruction being German. Angelovska critically focuses on the limited knowledge, training, and resources that teachers have in handling multilingual classrooms. The fifth chapter empirically examines the implementation of specific multilingual activities *‘based on a holistic model for multilingualism in education’*. Based on their former work, Mirjam Günther-van der Meij and Joana Duarte show hands-on that

multilingual activities offer opportunities for translanguaging and thus directly and positively impact the fostering of multilingualism. In the sixth chapter, Spyros Armostis and Dina Tsagari report on the findings of an ethnolinguistic study regarding diglossic English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Cyprus, where Cypriot Greek, Modern Greek, and English form the linguistic landscape both within and outside the classroom. Their findings prove that each language or variety has a specific performative function that serves the learner in specific situational contexts. The authors suggest that this performative function assigned to each language/variety stems from the L1 Greek classroom. This interpretation provides sufficient evidence that multilingual practices should be implemented horizontally between language classrooms regardless of the language taught to be successful. In the last chapter of Part 2, Rasman and Margana prove that, even when translanguaging practices are encouraged in a language learning classroom, learners are often drawn to the monolingual norm. Although their study is limited to a specific situational and geographical context, the chapter brings the complexity of implementing such practices to the fore. All four chapters in this part utilise evidence-based research to examine multilingualism in the FL classroom.

Part 3 shifts readers’ attention to teachers’ and learners’ attitudes regarding multilingual pedagogy. All chapters employ empirical data based on real-life classroom experience. In the eighth chapter, Georgios Neokleous’ study produced fruitful findings regarding teacher and learner attitudes, the most interesting of which being the importance of incorporating a variety of linguistic repertoires in instruction to promote the learners’ multilingual identities. The ninth chapter focuses on French and German (both as L3 after the introduction of English) teachers’ attitudes in Sweden. Teachers proved to be generally positive towards the use of multiple languages, but sceptical as far as actual implementation goes. This affirms the fact that multilingual teaching is still an elusive concept for teachers. Moreover, the findings of Ylva Falk and Christina Lindqvist show discrepancies in the attitudes of the different groups of teachers (French and German) towards one language or another (English and Swedish). This could mean that transference between certain languages directly influences the teachers’ attitudes regarding the use of a language. In the tenth chapter, Will Travers qualitatively examines the attitudes and beliefs of bilingual university students (Spanish-English) learning

French or Portuguese as L3. Findings suggest that explicit comparison between languages is thought to be beneficial by participants, *'while they also supported the idea of differential learning patterns'*. Based on this, the reader can conclude that mixed-method teaching approaches are in order. The eleventh chapter presents a case study that profiles an English as L3/Ln teacher in Germany. Again, although the chapter is limited to data from one participant, the findings of Romana Kopečková and Gregory Poarch effectively prove that teachers experience a lack of practical implementation strategies regarding multilingual approaches. Chapter twelve is on the same lines as chapter eleven: Yeşim Sevinç, Anna Krulatz, Eivind Torgersen and MaryAnn Christison present the experience of five English as a Foreign Language (EAL) teachers in Norway. The authors believe that teachers' views of multilingualism, although generally positive, may be skewed by other challenges that they face and suggest that a close collaboration between researchers and teachers may be an effective step towards addressing this. In the last chapter of part 3, Mieko Yamada surveys Japanese EFL teachers about their stances regarding English language learning within a multicultural/-lingual Japan. The investigation comes to the surprising conclusion that Japanese EFL teachers are not as aware of the local linguistic context (minority languages within Japan, cultural diversity, etc.) as one would expect. The reader thus can presume that perceived linguistic hegemony may be a hindrance when it comes to adopting multilingual teaching approaches. A running theme in this part is that, although language teachers think rather appreciatively of multilingualism and multilingual approaches, they are somewhat sceptical, reluctant, and unaware of the steps necessary when it comes to adapting their teaching to new principles.

Part 4 focuses on innovative multilingual pedagogies in FL classrooms. This part aims to offer the reader more structured guidelines regarding multilingual pedagogies. In chapter fourteen, Antoinette Camilleri Grima illustrates how the legitimisation and use of the students' plurilingual repertoires strengthen the learning of an additional language. Most importantly, Camilleri

Grima documents objective evidence that a collaborative teacher-researcher model may be the way forward. The next chapter presents two holistic multilingual teaching approaches that are already being put into practice in Austria. Manon Megens and Elisabeth Allgäuer-Hackl insist on the importance of the awareness, especially of multilingual awareness of teachers as a prerequisite for the nurturing of the students' multilingual awareness. MaryAnn Christison and Adrian S. Palmer, in chapter sixteen, investigate how the principles of immersive education in Thailand can be adapted for multilingual contexts, that is, if and how the immersive model can extend to more languages. In the next chapter, Gisela Mayr provides data from the linguistically diverse region of South Tyrol, Italy. Mayr integrated plurilingual task-based activities and concluded that such activities facilitate inclusive learning. Chapter eighteen empirically examines the quality of written productions of EFL students in Norway by the means of English alone in contrast to the quality of written productions using translation and translanguaging strategies. This most interesting study shows that the essays employing translation strategies fulfil the communicative purpose more directly and effectively than the essays employing translanguaging strategies. In the last chapter of this part, Gro-Anita Myklevold implements a multilingual lesson plan that is constructed based on four examples of the operationalisation of multilingualism from the CEFR. Myklevold gives us insights not only from the teaching of German as a foreign language but also from the curricular depiction of multilingualism.

The main advantage of the volume is that it presents real-life examples reductionistically, by breaking down aspects of certain multilingual teaching practices by specific multilingual contexts and levels of education, and then drawing conclusions holistically, that is, conclusions that apply to all examples, such as (1) feasibility of multilingual approaches, (2) effectivity and limitations of translanguaging, (3) teachers' adaptability, (4) provision of implementation guidelines, etc. Overall, the volume succeeds in illustrating hands-on approaches to FL instruction, always respecting the complexities of multilingualism and inclusion.

ELENA I. MADINYAN

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia | 6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., 117198 Moscow, Russia  
[madinyan-ei@rudn.ru](mailto:madinyan-ei@rudn.ru)

MAURICE CASSIDY

International House London | 16 Stukeley Str., WC2B5LQ London, UK  
[maurice22grove@icloud.com](mailto:maurice22grove@icloud.com)

# Book Reviews

## Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume (a review)

Original work by D. Little and N. Figueiras (Eds.) published by Multilingual Matters, 2022

Reviewed by Evelyn Vovou

**Evelyn Vovou** National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece [evovou@gs.uoa.gr](mailto:evovou@gs.uoa.gr)

**Article history** Received July 8, 2022 | Revised July 30, 2022 | Accepted September 9, 2022

**Conflicts of interest** The author declared no conflicts of interest

**Research funding** No funding was reported for this research

**doi** 10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3-92-94

**For citation** Vovou, E. (2022). Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume (a review). *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(3), 92-94.



This is an open access article distributed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) (CC BY-NC 4.0), which allows its unrestricted use for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. The material can be shared/adapted for non-commercial purposes if you give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

This is a book for students and teachers of linguistics but also for language education policy makers, curriculum designers, materials writers and language testing agencies and teachers around the world.

Based on a conference held in London in 2020 hosted by the British Council, the authors present their analyses of the Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), introduced in 2001 and the Common European Framework of Reference – Companion Volume (CEFR-CV), the final version of which was published in 2020. The thirteen chapters present papers by attendees at the conference based on their presentations, edited by David Little and Neus Figueiras, and cover theoretical issues and issues of practical application as well as presentations of how the CEFR and CEFR-CV have been adapted in different countries, notably Greece, Japan, Ireland, Spain and the United States.

The book is divided into five parts, each with an introduction by David Little and preceded by an overall introduction by the editors David Little and Neus Figueiras. Part 1 examines *The CEFR Past, Present and Future*, including a paper on the impact of the CEFR in Japan by Masashi Negishi and an assessment of what

the CEFR has achieved by Brian North. Part 2 explores the *Action-Oriented Approach* and asks if a change of paradigm is needed, with contributions by John H.A.L. de Jong among others. Part 3 deals with *Plurilingualism, Plurilingual Education and Mediation* with papers on a data-driven curriculum and mediation descriptors by Bessie Dendrinou, testing by Peter Lenz and implementation by Deidre Kirwan and David Little based on their research in an Irish primary school. Part 4 examines the CEFR *Descriptors, Scales and Constructive Alignments* with papers on refining the vertical axis for classroom use, a comparison of commonality and localisation in the curriculum and an assessment of the CEFR Companion Volume. Finally, in Part 5, *Afterword*, Barry O'Sullivan of the British Council summarises the discussions and considers how best to make the CEFR work and what the future roadmap might look like.

Introduced almost 50 years ago in 1975, the Council of Europe 'Threshold' level set up the three levels of language proficiency, A, B and C, from elementary to proficient user and indicated what language should be taught at each level. The three levels of the Threshold level were subdivided into six sub levels; A1 Beginner, A2 Elementary, B1 Lower intermediate, B2 Upper inter-

*‘Using an action-oriented approach means focusing communication on students’ practical needs and developing their ability to employ the language they use in concrete situations. This also means mediating with the students and allowing them to express what their language needs are and creating the opportunity for their inclusion’*

mediate, C1 Advanced and C2 Proficiency. In its English version the Threshold level was seen by many English language teachers as meeting the requirements of the Cambridge Exams (now Cambridge English) FCE (First Certificate in English) qualification, now called the B2 Certificate.

In 2001 the Threshold Level was replaced by the Common European Framework of Reference, known as CEFR, and in 2020 by the CEFR Companion Version (CEFR-CV) a revised and updated version, all published by the Council of Europe.

Originally, designed for use in Europe with the aim of making language education clearer and easier to understand it has been translated into 37 languages and is now one of the key references used by language education policy makers, curriculum designers, teacher educators, materials writers and publishers and teachers all over the world.

In his introduction to Part 1, David Little refers to John Trim, one of the creators of the Threshold Level, emphasising how the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project aimed to facilitate the free movement of people and ideas, make the language learning process more democratic and provide a framework for international communication. He also mentions how it moved language teaching from a lexicogrammatical process to a communicative process – how to help people communicate more easily and more effectively. A key to the Threshold Level was the introduction of ‘indicators’, which presented the grammar and vocabulary appropriate at each of the six levels. The Threshold level was the foundation on which language curricula, assessment and as a result, materials development and teaching were built, taking a ‘can do’ approach to language proficiency as opposed to ‘must learn’.

CEFR took the same approach and greatly expanded the ‘indicators’ at each level but failed to emphasise the action-oriented approach, the social agency of language users and learners, plurilingualism and pluricul-

turalism and mediation, all key concepts of the Council of Europe policy on language learning. All these areas are discussed in the book and in particular the role of the CEFR-CV in helping develop and expand their use.

In Part 1, Masashi Negishi shows how CEFR was localised in the CEFR-J (J for Japan) to meet the needs of Japanese communication in English and, in doing so, states how CEFR has centred on levels of proficiency and ‘can do’ descriptors and says it will take time before other principles of CEFR are established in language teaching and learning practice. In his discussion of the role and achievement of CEFR-CV, Brian North explains the key aims of the revised framework; to update the CEFR model and clarify its role; update the descriptors, especially at A and C levels; develop descriptors in areas not dealt with in the CEFR itself and create tangible tools for language teachers to use.

In Part 2, Mark Levy and Neus Figueiras discuss the importance of an action-oriented approach to implementing change by teachers of languages and stress the importance of including the approach in teacher education courses. A survey of teachers in primary and secondary schools and in colleges revealed that few teachers knew of the CEFR and CEFR-CV. Using an action-oriented approach means focusing communication on students’ practical needs and developing their ability to employ the language they use in concrete situations. This also means mediating with the students and allowing them to express what their language needs are and creating the opportunity for their inclusion. Time, the demands of the curriculum, the textbook and exams can make this difficult, but teacher education programmes should definitely include how to use an action-oriented approach and practise mediation in the classroom and with colleagues and students.

In Part 3, Bessie Dendrinos addresses the issue of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in teaching and in educational policy. Despite the 2002 Barcelona Agreement of the EU advocating that that European students should learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue she notes that the language of teaching still tends to be the language or official language of the country. In piloting cross-language test tasks in Greek schools she and her team saw from the results that the most competent students benefited from a pluralistic approach in that they could achieve higher marks in performance and translation. She concludes that plurilingualism and mediation improves overall language and communication ability but that practical research is needed into what language learners actually

use in order to achieve successful mediation. The CEFR is not based on practical language use research and she stresses that it offers a framework for adoption and adaptation and should not be seen as a curriculum.

The papers in Part 4 emphasise that there is more work to be done, including the alignment of curricula with the CEFR and CEFR-CV indicators, managing the large numbers of descriptors included in the CEFR-CV and agreeing procedures and making the complexity of mediation skills described in the Companion Volume adaptable to different systems of assessment, feedback to students and the setting of standards.

Finally, in his Afterword, Barry O'Sullivan reminds us that language learning programmes have tended to 'silo' their components with inadequate communication between testers, curriculum developers, teacher educators and textbook writers, frequently leading to incoherence and failure. He argues for a comprehensive learning system, stating that the CEFR and CEFR-

CV offer a unique opportunity to unite the concepts of curriculum, delivery and assessment in an integrated system. He gives examples of how language policies may not be 'bought into' by teachers or education authorities leading to failure. O'Sullivan stresses that to influence positive change in achieving a comprehensive learning system the CEFR-CV must be operationalised throughout the education system. Its users must have a clear theory of action or delivery and a system of evaluation of its success and make sure that all stakeholders feel equally involved in the rollout of an updated system and their opinions respected. In conclusion he summarises the opinions of many of the contributors to the book that it needs greater focus on plurilingualism, action-oriented learning and mediation. Above all, as users of the indicators as teachers, teacher educators and curriculum designers we should see the framework as just that, a framework of recommendations, and not as a rigid lexicogrammatical syllabus.

EVELYN VOVOU  
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens | 13A Navarinou Str., 10680 Athens, Greece  
[evovou@gs.uoa.gr](mailto:evovou@gs.uoa.gr)

# News & Events

## RUDN University News

### RUDN University – Member of FIT-FIT

The World Statutory Congress of the International Federation of Translators (FIT-IFT) officially approved the membership of RUDN University. This year Cuba hosted the statutory congress of the International Federation of Translators (FIT-IFT). The world community of professional translators holds the congress once every three years. The Covid-19 pandemic adjusted plans, and the congress scheduled for 2020 did not take place until 2022. Membership in FIT-IFT is a recognition of the professional and academic reputation of the organisation indicating that it implements internationally recognised standards for professional translation activities or educational standards in specialist training.

FIT-IFT activities include expert, analytical and project work of committees and working groups on translation issues; research published in the internationally recognised scientific journal, *Babel*; educational events from member organisations; informal professional contacts between members on all possible issues affecting translation practice, examination and scientific analysis.

Membership in FIT-IFT provides teachers and students of RUDN University with the opportunity to participate in profession-oriented events and projects in the field of translation, promotes the expansion of professional contacts, involvement of foreign partners in the scientific and educational environment of RUDN University, ensures awareness of Federation members about key trends, prospects, challenges and ways to overcome them in the professional translation industry.

### RUDN University Wins the Press Service of the Year Competition

The Faculty of Economics at Peoples' Friendship University of Russia is the winner of the Press Service of the Year international competition for public

relations specialists. *'We were awarded a statuette and a diploma for the first place in the Best Student PR Project nomination on May 20, in Moscow, at the ART MOSCOW,'* – said a faculty representative. – *'This is the story of how a team of students and teachers, using the tools of integrated marketing communications, for the first time in four years, successfully addressed the urgent problem of a shortage in the faculty's unfunded openings. We are very pleased that the jury of this prestigious competition gave such a high rating to our work. According to the organisers of the competition, the project offered by RUDN University turned out exceptionally interesting and different from others. We appreciate our friends and mentors who helped us achieve such an impressive victory.'*

### Young Scientist School 2022

May 19-20, 2022 the Young Scientist School 2022 was held at RUDN University. Its goal is to involve young people in the scientific and innovative environment, support young scientists, develop professional competencies in the field of participation in research and publication of articles in high-ranking journals. The school is focused on preparing young scientists and graduate students to participate in competitions for scientific and innovative projects. Organised by the Science Directorate of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia with support from the Council of Young Scientists and faculty administration, the project is intended for graduate students and young scientists.

### Night at Uni

May 20, 2022 RUDN University hosted the Night at Uni event for the first time. In the main building of RUDN University, the guests were welcomed by the communities of Burundi, Mexico, Cuba, Peru, Lebanon and Turkey and introduced to the culture of their countries. In the lobby, school and university students played foosball, mini-golf, cornhole and board games – Jenga, chess and Monopoly.

Next stop – a concert commencing with the performance of the Interclub team to the song 'Unlike'.

The official part of Night at Uni was led off by the

Vice-Rector for Educational Activities Dr Yulia Ebzeeva, who noted that events like these are an opportunity to learn not only about the educational activities offered at the university, but also about its extracurricular life.

*'I usually start with 'good morning', but it is so refreshing to be able to say 'good night' for a change. Clearly, there are a lot of us, and we are all so different. I believe RUDN University is the first one to host an even such as this one. I envy the applicants, for you have so many activities ahead of you. Before midnight you will discover an entire new world, which just might considerably change your plans,'* – said Dr Ebzeeva.

Night at Uni at RUDN University is a VR trip to the Microsoft office and an excursion to Rome or Peru, insights into the presentation of a business idea to investors, the opportunity to try on the role of an investigator, forensic expert, judge, the search for life balance and the development of emotional intelligence.

The Faculty of Economics and the Institute of World Economy and Business held the Bank Robbery immersive action quest based on the Paper House TV series, where applicants could play both the roles of robbers and those of protectors.

Quests were divided into 3 types: economic, logical, and active. The quest welcomed 50 applicants divided into three teams. The winners were given certificates and souvenirs as prizes.

## TLC News

### TLC Upholds New Licensing Terms

TLC has informed its contributors and readers about the new licensing terms introduced for content published starting from the September issue of 2022. Publications from issue no. 3 2022 are licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Public License \(CC BY-NC 4.0\)](#), which allows unrestricted use of works for non-commercial purposes, subject to attribution. This means that people can share the material (copy and redistribute in any medium or format), as well as adapt it (remix, transform, and build upon the material) for non-commercial purposes as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as the license terms are being followed. For more information please read the [summary of the CC BY-NC license](#) summary at Creative Commons.

Content published up to and including Issue no. 2 2022 is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License \(CC BY 4.0\)](#), which allows unrestricted use of works, including for commercial purposes, subject to attribution. This means that people can share the material (copy and redistribute in any medium or format), as well as adapt it (remix, transform, and build upon the material) for any purpose, even commercially, as long as they give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as the license terms are being followed. For more information please read the [summary of the CC BY license](#) at Creative Commons.

### Applying to TLC Review Panel

Authors who have benefited from the peer review process are invited to consider becoming peer reviewers as a part of their professional responsibilities.

Training, Language and Culture requires a semi-formal process of appointment to the review panel, meaning that anyone interested in becoming a reviewer for Training, Language and Culture can do so by sending a request in free form to [tlcjournal@rudn.ru](mailto:tlcjournal@rudn.ru).

Aspiring reviewers need to include in their request the general information about their professional background, affiliation, the scope of their expertise, their recent and/or most notable publications, as well as any personal and professional information that is accurate and a fair representation of their expertise, including verifiable and accurate contact information.

At Training, Language and Culture, we are always looking forward to extend our expert reviewer pool for the benefit of a more expedient, thorough and comprehensive publication process.

### Submitting Book Reviews to TLC

Training, Language and Culture invites contributors to submit book reviews on relevant issues. A book review should present an objective critical assessment of the books revealing their merits and/or drawbacks in terms of their contribution to the relevant field of science within the range of the journal focus areas. Book reviews should follow the same format and style requirements as articles, the length being 1,500 to 2,000 words.

The review should introduce the reader to the book's content and focus on the subject of the book being reviewed. Reviewers need to include an exposition of how the book fits into the current thinking



on the subject (e.g., a novel approach, an introduction, a magisterial review, the finest book on the subject ever written, etc.) and avoid repeating its table of contents; rather, give the reader some idea of the author's thesis and how they develop it.

If the book is an edited collection of essays, or chapters by different individuals, reviewers need to give some idea of the overall theme and content, but be free to focus on specific chapters they consider particularly significant or worthwhile.

A review should inform the reader about what is happening in the area of academic activity the book addresses; what the state of knowledge is in the subject; and how this new book adds, changes, or breaks new ground in our knowledge of this subject. The review should be fair to the author, convey the content of the

book (not chapter by chapter so much as the entire book), include pungent or revealing quotations from the book or notable findings.

Reviewers are expected to establish their authority to write the review, not point out the author's flaws, but display in a detailed and instructive way their expertise on the subject. It is essential to keep in mind the reader of the review or the audience of the book and focus on what this readership might be looking for. Judgments can be made more convincing by quoting examples from the book. It is also imperative for reviewers to be honest while writing a review and whilst concluding it.

Training, Language and Culture encourages the reviewers to acknowledge their work as big responsibility because it can influence a reader's decision of either choosing or rejecting the book.

TRAINING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Published by  
Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education  
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)  
17923, GSP117198, Moscow, Russia, 6 Miklukho-Maklay Str.  
[tlcjournal@rudn.ru](mailto:tlcjournal@rudn.ru)  
<https://rudn.tlcjournal.org>



September 2022

ISSN 2520-2073 (Print)

ISSN 2521-442X (Online)

Volume 6 Issue 3

doi: [10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3](https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-3)

Quarterly journal published by

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)