

# Training LANGUAGE and CULTURE

'By and large, language is a tool  
for concealing the truth'

– George Carlin

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# TRAINING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

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*Training Language and Culture* covers language training, cultural training and linguistic research. The journal aims to enhance the scientific foundation of the teaching process, promote stronger ties between theory and practical training, strengthen mutually enriching international cooperation among educationists and other professionals, as well as to make a contribution to language studies outside the teaching perspective. All articles are peer reviewed. Areas of interest include:

- language and linguistics research
- intercultural research
- language, intercultural and communications training
- language and cultural training technology
- language and cultural assessment

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# Introduction to Issue 2(2)

by Barry Tomalin

Joint Managing Editor TLC

Welcome to Issue 2(2) of Training Language and Culture.

We emerge from two international conferences, one organised by Professor Malyuga at RUDN University in Moscow on new initiatives in business language and communication, and the other by the ICC in Greece on educating migrants. More on that in our September issue.

In such an uncertain world of political tension and complex social relations, how are linguists and cultural specialists to interpret it using language? Do we state the truth as we see it, modify it, avoid it or falsify it? In search for the answer, we have chosen George Carlin as our cover quotation this month, for a lot of language is about manipulating opinion and maybe avoiding the truth. Many of the articles this issue address this area of different uses of language.

Peter McGee investigates vague language and the practice of modifying what one says or writes so as not to cause offence. Sawsan Askoul looks at how the British press interpreted the issue of immigration before the 2016 BREXIT referendum in Britain. We also review Evan Davis's book, *Post*

*Truth*, which helps clarify the issues of 'fake news', 'post-truth' and 'bullshit'.

Ksenia Popova explores how online advertising uses language to persuade, and Olga Beletskaya shows how Spanish business is absorbing British and US Business English to ease international business communication.

At the language methodology level, Zrinka Friganović Sain et al. explain how they teach business language and cultural awareness at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Yuliya Vedeneva et al. explore the use of minitexts in poetry, an interesting advance on a topic already broached by them in Vol. 1 Issue 1, as well as in the review of Engelbert Thaler's book *Shorties*, also in Issue 1(1).

It was my pleasure to meet and listen to Professor Mai Nguyen of Amsterdam Business School when she expounded her radical and far-reaching neurological theory of language and cultural awareness. Her work opens language learning and cultural understanding to the theories of neuroscience in a new and exciting way. Philip Williams, who was also there and is himself a psychological consultant and teacher, reviews her book in which she presents her approach.

TLC Editorial Board welcomes contributions in the form of articles, reviews and correspondence. Detailed information is available online at [rudn.tlcjournal.org](http://rudn.tlcjournal.org). Feel free to contact us at [info@tlcjournal.org](mailto:info@tlcjournal.org) or [info@icc-languages.eu](mailto:info@icc-languages.eu).

# Teaching intercultural competence in undergraduate business and management studies

by <sup>(1)</sup>Zrinka Friganović Sain, <sup>(2)</sup>Milena Kužnin and <sup>(3)</sup>Rebecca Charry Roje

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*In times of overwhelming globalisation, fostering intercultural competence has become one of the most important missions of higher education institutions across the world. This competence has become crucial for those aspiring to work in international environments. Students need to be aware of cultural boundaries and the role of instructors in this process is crucial: to provide cultural information is not enough anymore and they need to guide their students' learning so that learners can competently navigate the L2 culture, knowing which values and behaviour patterns of the target culture will assist them in their future workplaces. This paper introduces a case study of how an international institution of higher education in Croatia teaches this competence in various courses. The paper presents qualitative survey data to measure college students' self-reported competences in four categories: motivation, strategy, knowledge and behaviour. Results show that students report higher competences in the areas of motivation and strategy, compared to knowledge and behaviour. Implications of these findings for future education in intercultural competence in institutions of higher education are discussed.*

**KEYWORDS:** *best practices in higher education; business and management studies; foreign language teaching; intercultural competence; service management*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In times of overwhelming globalisation, intercultural competence has become one of the most important issues in institutions of higher education across the world. In such a context, intercultural competence has clearly become one of the most desirable skills and competences for university graduates who would like to see

themselves working in demanding and highly-challenging international environments. As this process extends and increases, the need for cultural sensitivity and understanding becomes one of utmost importance both to institutions of higher education and to companies seeking to hire competent individuals. It is evident that such a situation also generates a corresponding need for



*‘Among cognitive skills one can easily recognise cultural self-awareness and the knowledge of a particular culture, while affective skills include curiosity and open-mindedness’*

cross-cultural and trans-national educational partnerships, and it is imperative not only to analyse intercultural competence in those partnerships, but also to analyse them in teaching situations, where crossing cultural boundaries is grounded in the ideals of the core meaning of intercultural competence. Any organisation that wants to be culturally responsive needs to cultivate these skills to be successful in today’s world. This paper explores both the theoretical background and the actual experiences of a multicultural institution of higher education in Dubrovnik, the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Croatia. The level of intercultural competence of students is measured using a scientifically validated instrument.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

According to Bennett and Hammer (2011), intercultural competence is seen as a set of cognitive, affective and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. Among cognitive skills one can easily

recognise cultural self-awareness and the knowledge of a particular culture, while affective skills include curiosity and open-mindedness. In order to teach students behavioural skills, instructors are encouraged to emphasise the importance of empathy and forming relationships. Intercultural competence clearly also includes an understanding of (and an adaptation to) culturally-based norms and values. Bennett’s well-known scale, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), measures reactions to cultural differences, and divides these reactions into six stages, from more ethno-centric to more ethno-relative: denial of difference, defence against difference, minimisation of difference, acceptance of difference, adaptation to difference, and integration of difference (Hammer et al., 2003).

Experts have used a number of constructions and phrases in their attempts to define and fully understand intercultural competence, such as ‘world-mindedness’ (Sampson & Smith, 1957), ‘global centrism’ (McCabe, 1994), ‘global understanding’ (Kitsantas, 2004), ‘global competence’ (Sindt & Pachmayer, 2007), to name only a few.

Nonetheless, it seems that there is a lack of a unified conceptualisation and assessment of the goals that the process of learning of such a competence requires. The need to acquire this competence is also portrayed in the statistics that

show a continual increase in the number of international students as well as of those who express interest in studying abroad. According to the latest annual report on international educational exchange, the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States has increased by 8% to a record high of 886,052 students in the 2013/14 academic year. This report drafted by the Institute of International Education has confirmed that the United States remains the destination of choice for higher education. The United States hosts more of the world's 4.5 million globally mobile college and university students than any other country in the world, with almost double the number hosted by the United Kingdom, the second leading host country.

The same report also revealed an increase of 2% (in comparison with the last academic year) of study abroad students, stating that a total of 289,408 American students studied abroad to earn academic credit from their U.S. colleges and universities.

Even though this number has more than doubled in the past 15 years, from about 130,000 students in the academic year 1998/99, it is evident that fewer than 10% of all U.S. undergraduate students (including community college students) will have studied abroad by the time they graduate. The fact that the vast majority of American undergraduate

students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education graduate without international experience was recognised as a possible problem as early as 2001, when a group of eight faculty members from four American universities formed a partnership with the goal of finding ways to better prepare American business students for intercultural communication in the global economy (Durocher, 2009). The assumption of this consortium was that business students, while receiving excellent training in the business component of international business, are poorly prepared for face-to-face communication with members of other cultures. This was seen as a potential risk for global American interests since it could quite possibly weaken American business endeavours abroad (Durocher, 2009).

On the other hand, the European Union also has an ambitious agenda to modernise and internationalise higher education in Europe, increasing mobility among both students and faculty. According to the latest programme Erasmus+, it has also been recognised that education, training and intercultural experience are essential for creating jobs and improving Europe's competitiveness (European Commission, 2015).

Due to the immense impact of globalisation on the world's economy, there is a clear need to create quality programmes in higher education that will

offer innovative intercultural communication curricula precisely for those who seek the knowledge that is relevant for such a world. What also seems to be of importance in this matter is the difference between traditional, mono-cultural teaching methods and a newer, intercultural approach to teaching.

Traditional teaching is more analytical, grounded in western-oriented values, and its key terms for the learning process are abstraction, reflection and precision. In this paradigm, communication between teacher and student is linear and one-way (i.e. the teacher is seen as a repository or custodian of knowledge which is passed to the student).

On the other hand, an intercultural approach to teaching is more holistic and thus eastern-oriented. With this approach students learn by example, practice and often by metaphors, while the communication between a teacher and a student may be circular. Students are seen as co-creators of knowledge along with their teachers and are encouraged to play an active role in shaping classroom activities (Hager, 2010).

Pink (2006) argues that the future belongs to a different kind of person with a different kind of mind; artists, inventors, storytellers: creative and holistic 'right-brain' thinkers whose abilities mark the fault line between who gets ahead and who does not. He believes that the Information Age,

characterised by left-brain capabilities (such as number crunching and computer-code creation) is giving way to a new age, the so-called *Conceptual Age*, which is characterised by right-brain capabilities, such as design and creativity.

In order to be successful in today (and tomorrow's) economy, Pink states, people who crave success must therefore adopt a whole new mindset. He explains what kind of an impact this premise will have for outsourcing retailers, the field of his research. What he discovered was that many of the new highly successful business people of today had their educational background in the fine arts rather than in a traditional business discipline.

The six senses that he focuses on – design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning – are applicable to retail and retail design.

The first sense, of *design*, is described through examples and practices that explore the need to move beyond function to design. Through design, we are able to create solutions that connect with our true nature, being economical but with personal reward.

The second sense, of *story*, is defined by Pink (2006) as crucial to connecting and engaging others in ways that pure argument and fact typically fall short of. Story has been a part of humanity since the beginning of time and enables a deeper emotional connection and a way of

communication that changes us, and thus the world around us as well.

*Symphony*, the third sense, emphasises the need to synthesise across industries and archive to see the bigger picture and create a new whole. This requires us to be like nurses, to ensure that we continue to provide the art of nursing or the holistic care for individuals in health care systems and societies. Pink reminds us of the current trend to automate almost everything; nursing is in a unique position as an art and a science that cannot be automated but which is also in increasing demand in broader society.

Pink (2006) describes *empathy*, the fourth sense, as a needed addition to human logic in a time in which complex issues and abundant amounts of information are the norm. Although the wonderful sense of play, the fifth sense, is often frowned upon in the current culture, in which we often take things – especially work matters – very seriously, Pink reassures us that play is essential in both our professional and personal lives in order to produce health and well-being, as well as great results.

The sixth and final sense Pink identifies as essential is *meaning*. Because we live in a time in which material things are overwhelming the western world, increasing numbers of people are searching for meaning in their work and at home. Pink sees an increasing desire for '*purpose*,

*transcendence, and spiritual fulfilment*' (Pink, 2006, p. 67).

When success in one's professional life depends on whether one is able to communicate effectively in intercultural contexts, then there is a clear need for a greater self-insight about the true, hidden force of culture.

Hall (1959) described culture as an unseen but powerful force that holds everyone captive. In his book *The Silent Language* he reveals how '*culture is not an exotic notion studied by a selected group of anthropologists, but a mould in which we are all cast, and it controls our lives in many unsuspected ways*' (Hall, 1959, p. 53).

Hall himself conducted a research study in anthropology in Micronesia and recognised that culture influenced his own life as much as the life of people he studied there.

It is evident that since Hall described this phenomenon the world has changed a lot and international business has grown to an extent that is hard even to compare with the one in the period he was writing.

There are some things that have not changed, though. People still find themselves in difficulties when they need to do business with overseas clients, when they need to manage an ethnically



diverse workforce, negotiate their business deals in another language or get a job in a company that has a completely different corporate culture.

In order to communicate more successfully in intercultural contexts, the field of intercultural business communication should more strongly emphasise the need to understand one's own individual cultural identity. It should recognise knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life that define that sense of identity because by doing so it will be shown that culture not only connects people but helps to define them as entirely unique individuals.

Jameson (2007) defines the need to re-conceptualise cultural identity and its role in intercultural business communication. While Hall's work helped connect the field of intercultural communication in various settings such as business, technical, and other professional settings, she envisages that a much broader and more balanced concept of cultural identity would help people not only to gain better self-insight but would also improve the analysis of business problems. In her paper, she identifies six commonalities that define membership in a group of people that share the same cultural identity. They are vocation, class, geography, philosophy, language, and biology. What seems to be the most important thing is that when people are conscious of their cultural identities and they willingly

choose to talk about them to others they may negotiate to some extent even their cultural identities in a discourse, which ultimately proves the importance of this concept in measuring overall intercultural competence.

### **3. THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT**

#### **3.1 Institutions, students and instructors**

The purpose of this research is to provide insight into how intercultural competence can be taught in an international institution of higher education that offers a degree in business and management studies. Students of those programmes need to be aware of cultural boundaries and be prepared to cross them successfully. The role of instructors in the learning process is crucial. Providing the necessary cultural information and language skills are not enough. Instructors need to guide their students so that their learners can competently navigate cultures other than their own, knowing which values and behaviour patterns will assist them in their future workplaces. By doing so, students are also enabled to understand better their own cultural viewpoints as well as those of their counterparts.

#### **3.2 Rochester Institute of Technology**

RIT Croatia in Dubrovnik is a global campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology, a private research university in Rochester, New York. The Dubrovnik campus was founded in 1997, and offers 4-year undergraduate degrees in

*‘Since 2001, hundreds of students from the Rochester campus have spent an academic quarter or semester in Dubrovnik, adding to the diversity of cultures’*

International Hospitality and Service Management and Information Technology. While the student body is primarily local (from Croatia and neighbouring countries), the American curriculum (provided by RIT in Rochester) is taught entirely in English. Students receive both Croatian and American diplomas upon graduation, recognised by the Croatian Ministry of Education, European nations according to the Bologna agreement and American institutions.

Professor-student relationships, academic policies, extra-curricular activities and classroom activities are, in general, based on American educational cultural norms and traditions.

Although English is the official language of classroom instruction and official college communication, and American college culture forms the basis for student life in many ways, the college community functions in practice as a multilingual and multicultural environment. Currently, over 15% of students enrolled at the Dubrovnik campus come from countries other

than Croatia, including Australia, Canada, Germany, Albania, Hungary, Russia, Norway, Peru and Bolivia. In addition, through RIT’s study abroad programme, nations as diverse as Vietnam and China are represented. In 2014, 6% of incoming first-year students came from outside Croatia. In 2015, this percentage increased to 18%.

With a current overall enrolment of about 230 students, RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus is a relatively small and close-knit community in which students are exposed daily to new languages, customs and cultures both through classroom experiences and through social contact with professors, guest speakers and fellow students. Connections to RIT’s sister campuses in Dubai, UAE, and Kosovo enrich the multicultural atmosphere.

Study abroad experiences are also an integral part of the multicultural atmosphere of the college. Since 2001, hundreds of students from the Rochester campus have spent an academic quarter or semester in Dubrovnik, adding to the diversity of cultures. Meanwhile, nearly 20 students from the Dubrovnik campus have studied at the Rochester, New York, campus. Participation in Europe’s Erasmus exchange programme has also brought students and faculty from Turkey, France and Mexico to the campus in recent years. Thus, students at RIT Croatia in Dubrovnik are exposed

on a daily basis to values, behaviours, expectations and traditions that are different from their home cultures. This is true not only for Croatian students and faculty studying or working in an American environment, but is also true of American and international students and faculty who study and work with Croatian colleagues and experience daily life in Dubrovnik.

### 3.3 Extra-curricular activities

In addition to the daily experience of studying and living in a multicultural community, a variety of extra-curricular activities and college events are designed to expose students to new cultural values. The annual International Dinner, for example, encourages students to experience and share the cultures of the foreign languages they study (French, German, Spanish and Italian) through cooking and tasting various dishes representing those nations. The annual Community Service Day introduces students to the concept of service learning, and emphasises the importance of humanitarian contributions to the local community, and a variety of humanitarian events throughout the year encourage students to donate their time and efforts to assisting local charitable causes.

### 3.4 Intercultural awareness activities

Many faculty members have also designed their course curricula to include intercultural awareness activities as part of the academic programme. In

the Meeting and Events Management Course, second-year students learn that multicultural awareness is a necessary skill if they want to work in an industry such as tourism, which deals with guests coming from all over the globe. In this course, students learn how to improve communication by recognising different ways people understand cultures. Through role-playing skills and situational analysis, students portray different perceptions of time, space, individualism, power and thinking from one culture to another. Through small group activities students identify and implement strategies to avoid miscommunication due to cultural unawareness.

In the Literary and Cultural Studies course, offered to third-year students, students approach a variety of cultures through modern and contemporary poetry and short stories. The course particularly encourages reflection on the experience of black Americans, through reading and discussing the works of several renowned black writers. In addition, at the end of the semester, students take an active role in shaping the content of the course, by choosing the stories to be read and discussed by the class as a whole. Working in pairs, students are responsible for choosing contemporary short stories (by any author and on any topic, but published not more than 10 years ago) which become required reading for the class. The students who chose the story are responsible for leading a discussion on it facilitated by the

instructor. However, the traditional roles of instructors as leaders and students as passive followers are reversed.

The Intermediate Italian course, offered to students in the third year, is designed to help them improve their vocabulary and learn how to apply this language in their professional careers. Culture awareness has become a crucial element of modern language education, and there is evidently a greater awareness of the inseparability of language and culture with the ultimate goal to prepare students for intercultural communication. While the primary goal of this course is to enable students to feel free to discuss various subjects and topics, the secondary goal is to acquaint students with contemporary culture and life in the Italian-speaking countries. The course combines traditional methods of language teaching and more recent communicative approaches.

All communicative activities, contemporary texts, and the study of vocabulary and grammar are used to expand all students' communication skills, especially their oral proficiency. The topic of each lesson is connected to one sociological and/or cultural situation of everyday life in Italy. Students are asked to make a comparison between different realities: Italian, their own view of it and their perspective of that situation in their own country. By doing so, they learn not only how to converse in Italian, but also how to become more

comfortable exchanging ideas freely in a foreign language. By the end of the course students gain an appreciation of the varied aspects of culture in Italian speaking countries.

In the fourth year of the programme, in the Negotiation and Conflict Resolution course, the focus is on developing students as effective negotiators by stressing the importance of reaching integrative solutions in a conflict situation. Often students recognise that they did not achieve a win-win resolution because they failed to identify different cultural values and norms.

This class uses role plays as an effective teaching tool to engage students in exploring three dimensions of culture (individualism versus collectivism; egalitarianism versus hierarchy and direct versus indirect communication). Students learn how to avoid stereotyping and misperceptions and how to be open to a more accepting view of global negotiations at an interpersonal level. It is suggested that both parties in conflict need cultural intelligence in order to reach a resolution.

Thus, RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus provides both students and faculty with a rich, intercultural environment, both in and out of the classroom, in a variety of academic and social situations. Knowledge of, and adaptation to, new cultural norms and values is an integral part of the college



experience, although this learning is not always explicitly taught or discussed but sometimes occurs spontaneously or indirectly.

#### 4. AIM OF RESEARCH

While many previous studies have measured the effects of teaching intercultural competence directly, through special curricula and study abroad programmes, this research aims to measure the degree and type of intercultural competence 'absorbed' through these holistic, atmospheric, ambient experiences in an intercultural institution as a whole. We hypothesise that gender does not play a significant role in levels of self-reported intercultural competence. The degree of self-reported intercultural competence does not correlate with gender. Furthermore, because intercultural competence is taught indirectly in this institution and specific cultural knowledge is not explicitly taught, we hypothesise that students in a holistic international environment report greater acquired competences in motivation and strategy than in behaviour and knowledge.

#### 5. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the survey was to measure the self-reported level of intercultural competence among the students of RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus. The research conducted was quantitative in nature. The authors used the Cultural Intelligence Scale to measure intercultural competence on four

cultural intelligence dimensions: metacognitive (strategy), cognitive (knowledge), motivational and behavioural (Ang et al., 2007).

The metacognitive/strategy category deals with participants' awareness of their own knowledge and ability to adapt appropriately to intercultural situations. For example, participants were asked to agree or disagree on a scale with the following statement: *I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.*

The cognitive/knowledge category deals with participants' level of concrete knowledge of specific cultural norms and expectations in various cultures. For example, participants were asked to agree or disagree on a scale with the following statement: *I know the marriage systems of other cultures.*

The motivation category deals with participant's level of confidence and enjoyment in intercultural interactions. For example, participants were asked to agree or disagree on a scale with the following statement: *I am sure that I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.*

The behavioural category deals with participants' use of verbal and nonverbal cues in intercultural interactions. For example, participants were asked to agree or disagree on a scale with the following statement: *I use pause and silence differently to*

*suit different cross-cultural situations.*

The survey consisted of 20 statements (4-6 in each category) with which students were asked to agree or disagree on a 5-point Likert scale (Appendix A). The survey was created using the Clipboard online tool from Rochester Institute of Technology and the participants were invited to log in and fill in the questionnaire online. The students were asked to select the answer that best described their capabilities using the Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

Participants in the study were RIT Croatia Dubrovnik students enrolled in the Spring Semester of the academic year 2014/2015. The authors used their own classes to access the population. An email was sent to students in the last week of instruction of the Spring Semester. Prior to sending the email, the professors also announced the research in their classes and invited students to participate on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The total of 160 students was reached and 53 students (33% of the enrolled student body) responded to the survey.

Out of 53 students who took the survey, 16.98% were freshmen (first year students), 24.53% were sophomores (second year students), 22.64% were juniors (third year students) and 35.85% were seniors (fourth year students). Gender was equally represented (49.06% female and 50.94% male students). A few students did not answer some of

### *'The cognitive/knowledge category deals with participants' level of concrete knowledge of specific cultural norms and expectations in various cultures'*

the questions, or chose 'not applicable'. These answers have been disregarded, therefore the cumulative average does not always add to 100%.

## **6. STUDY AND RESULTS**

Overall, respondents showed a high level of agreement with most of the statements in the survey. The highest level of agreement was reported with statements in the motivational dimension of the cultural intelligence index, comprising five statements. Results show that 72.07% of the students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed in their answers. The undecided category was chosen by 12.45% and 12.45% answered that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements offered. Therefore, the mean value for this category, overall, was  $M=3.97$  ( $SD=0.829$ ).

The next highest level of agreement was reported in the metacognitive dimension of cultural intelligence (strategy category, comprising four of the total 20 statements). Results show that 72.64% of the surveyed students agreed or strongly agreed in their answers. The 'undecided' category was

chosen by 18.39% and 8.49% answered disagree or strongly disagree. Therefore, the mean value for this category, overall, was  $M=3.87$  ( $SD=0.656$ ).

Compared to the first two categories, the level of agreement with the statements in the behavioural dimension of the cultural intelligence, comprising five statements, were somewhat lower, although still showing general agreement. Results show that 51.70% of the surveyed students agreed or strongly agreed in their answers. The 'undecided' category was chosen by 28.30%, and 18.12% of respondents answered disagree or strongly disagree. Therefore, the mean value for this category, overall, was  $M=3.44$  ( $SD=0.76$ ).

Finally, the lowest level of agreement was found in

the cognitive dimension of the cultural intelligence scale (knowledge category, comprising six out of 20 questions) showing that 38.68% of the surveyed students agreed or strongly agreed in their answers.

The undecided category averaged out at 34.27% while 25.15% of respondents answered disagree or strongly disagree. Therefore, the mean value for this category, overall, was  $M=3.17$  ( $SD=0.774$ ).

Table 1 contains the mean and standard deviation results confirming the above statements.

Table 2 reveals a strong positive relationship between strategy and motivation, and a weak one between knowledge and behaviour.

Table 1

*Four categories of intercultural competence*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motivation	47	1.00	5.00	3.9702	.82985
Strategy	49	1.50	5.00	3.8776	.65575
Behaviour	48	1.40	5.00	3.4417	.76069
Knowledge	48	1.00	5.00	3.1771	.77445
Valid N (listwise)	41				

Table 2 explains correlations between the four categories.

Table 2

*Correlations between four categories*

		Strategy	Knowledge	Behaviour	Motivation
Strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.658"	.519"	.756"
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	49	46	47	45
Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.658**	1	.498**	.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	46	48	45	45
Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	.519**	.498**	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	47	45	48	44
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.756**	.553**	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	45	45	44	47

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Levene's and t-tests were performed (Tables 3a and 3b) and equal variances are assumed without Type I error in effect.

Table 3a

*Levene's test performed*

Strategy	F	Sig.
Equal variances assumed	2.559	.116
Equal variances not assumed		



Table 3b

*T-test performed*

Strategy	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	-2,693	47	.010	-.47458	.17627	-.82920	-.11997
Equal variances not assumed	-2,673	40,909	.011	-.47458	.18855	-.83318	-.11599

Regarding gender differences, statistically significant differences were noted only in the metacognitive/strategy category. Table 4 shows that female students reported higher scores for the importance of metacognitive skills/strategy category ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=0.50$ ) than male students ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ).

Table 4

*Gender differences*

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Strategy	Male	24 3.6354	.71846	.50042
	Female	25 4.1100	.14666	.10008

## 7. DISCUSSION

Building on these findings, our results clearly indicate that RIT Croatia Dubrovnik students believe they possess strong metacognitive

strategies for successful management of intercultural situations. Furthermore, the students are capable of adjusting their cultural knowledge when the situation so requires. Students believe

they are highly motivated to succeed in intercultural interactions. They enjoy interacting and socialising in intercultural situations, and feel confident crossing cultural boundaries at the same time being aware of the cultural knowledge they possess. However, students' responses indicate they are less confident in their own abilities when it comes to controlling and using specific behaviours appropriately in an intercultural context, for example, adjusting verbal and nonverbal signals in conversation.

Finally, students feel least competent in the area of specific intercultural knowledge, or the cognitive domain. When asked about their knowledge of other cultures' legal or marriage systems and rules, for example, most students admitted to their lack of knowledge.

These results are encouraging for educators who wish to foster intercultural skills in students. It shows that students do not overestimate their own competences and do not confuse motivation with actual cultural specific knowledge.

Gender may, in fact, play a role in intercultural competence. Results show that female students reported slightly higher levels of competence in the strategy category. This result should be interpreted further in light of additional research into the role of gender in empathy and emotional intelligence. It is possible that particular

educational attention needs to be paid to male students in order to ensure that they also achieve similar levels of competence in this area.

The results seem consistent with RIT Croatia's institutional approach to teaching and learning intercultural competence through a holistic experience in an intercultural community. Exposure to and participation in a variety of intercultural experiences evidently increases students' motivation, openness and overall attitudes towards other cultures. Students feel confident in their own abilities to successfully navigate these situations in general. However, since the institution is focused primarily on the teaching of business and management practice, direct teaching of specific factual cultural knowledge is a lower priority, which is reflected in students' scores.

The creators of the Cultural Intelligence Scale instrument suggest that the results can be used to predict various competences in an intercultural situation. Ang et al. (2007) argue that high scores in the cognitive and metacognitive categories can predict the subject's skill in cultural judgment and decision. Meanwhile, high scores in the motivational and behavioural categories correlate with the cultural adaptation skill. Finally, high scores in metacognitive and behavioural categories suggest success in the performance of specific tasks.

Applying this model of interpretation to our results, we predict that our students' high scores in metacognitive and motivational categories will compensate for lower scores in behavioural and knowledge categories. Looking at these results we feel confident in hypothesising that our students will welcome and seek out intercultural experiences as a source of personal growth and even enjoyment.

## 7. CONCLUSION

These results suggest that a holistic approach to teaching intercultural competence through the experience in an active learning community through both academic and social activities inside and outside of the classroom can be an effective tool for the education of young people, which can ultimately successfully prepare them for their professional careers and help them face a globalised future. The authors of this paper do not find the lower scores in the areas of cognitive and behavioural competence discouraging since, as Ang et al. (2007) noted, competence in strategy and motivation form the prerequisite foundation for successful intercultural adaptation. Specific knowledge of customs, norms and traditions as well as the accompanying behaviours necessary to respect the same, can be readily learned when the foundation of motivation and self-awareness is high.

It still remains to be said that in order to equip

students even more fully for the challenges awaiting them in a rapidly changing global environment, future educational practices should aim to introduce them to a wider range of specific cultural knowledge and appropriate behaviour and customs, such as legal or marriage systems in particular countries as well as verbal and non-verbal behavioural customs. Further research is necessary and recommended to confirm these initial results, and to test whether self-reported levels of competence can serve as an accurate predictor of actual behaviour in intercultural situations. This research was limited by a relatively small sample size, and an inability to purchase other recognised instruments for measuring intercultural competence. For example, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) or Global Mindset Inventory (GMI) would be excellent instruments for measuring these competences in more depth. In addition, more research is necessary to determine the effect of students' ages on their levels of competence. This research found no significant differences between year levels. However, future research should take into account students' ages on enrolment, country of origin, as well as the degree of previous familiarity with various cultures in their personal and educational experiences.

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### Appendix A. Cultural Intelligence Scale

The Cultural Intelligences (CIs) Scale measures the capability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings. This research developed and tested a model that posited differential relationships between the four cultural intelligence dimensions (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural) and three intercultural effectiveness outcomes (cultural judgment and decision making, cultural adaptation and task performance in culturally diverse settings). The results demonstrate a consistent pattern of relationships where metacognitive and cognitive CIs predicted cultural judgment and decision making; motivational and behavioural CIs predicted cultural adaptation; and metacognitive and behavioural CIs predicted task performance. Source: <http://www.linnvandyne.com/shortmeasure.html>.

### Appendix B. The 20-item, Four Factor Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)

Instructions: Select the response that best describes your capabilities. Select the answer that BEST describes you AS YOU REALLY ARE (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).

#### CQ Questionnaire Items

##### CQ-Strategy:

1. MC1 I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.
2. MC2 I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
3. MC3 I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.
4. MC4 I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.

##### CQ-Knowledge:

1. COG1 I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.
2. COG2 I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar)

of other languages.

3. COG3 I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.
4. COG4 I know the marriage systems of other cultures.
5. COG5 I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.
6. COG6 I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviours in other cultures.

**CQ-Motivation:**

1. MOT1 I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
2. MOT2 I am confident that I can socialise with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.
3. MOT3 I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.
4. MOT4 I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.
5. MOT5 I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture.

**CQ-Behaviour:**

1. BEH1 I change my verbal behaviour (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
2. BEH2 I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.
3. BEH3 I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.
4. BEH4 I change my non-verbal behaviour when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.
5. BEH5 I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.

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Note. Use of this scale granted to academic researchers for research purposes only. For information on using the scale for purposes other than academic research (e.g., consultants and non-academic organisations), please send an email to [cquery@culturalq.com](mailto:cquery@culturalq.com).

# Minitexts of poetic titles as markers of the English cognitive paradigma

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*Minitexts are of interest to scholars due to the ‘shrinking’ trend in communication which affects not only language products but also the human mental structures generating them. The correlation of these two planes of human interaction as reflected in minitexts presents a challenge for linguistics. A minitext is viewed as a text of limited length (up to 600 words). The present paper reveals cognitive, pragmasemantic and discursive aspects of minitexts, exemplified by the titles of children’s poems. The authors characterise the basic features of such texts (cohesion, coherence, wholeness, intentionality, etc.) and present their thematic typology. The analysis shows that adequate assessment of the identifying markers within poetic minitexts depends on the interaction of text discursive parameters, on the one hand, and their location in the hierarchy of other signs or markers, on the other. Choosing titles for English poems addressed to children, the authors focus on the unusual linguistic units involved in the creation of the titles’ artistic imagery and aesthetic effect. One of the evident advantages of the cognitive and pragmatic approach is that it illustrates how minitexts can be useful in developing children’s world perception, as well as their artistic tastes.*

**KEYWORDS:** *cognitive-pragmatic approach, discourse analysis, poetic titles, minitexts, children’s literature*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern paradigm of linguistic knowledge, minitexts have become a focus of interest for researchers since today’s communicative trends largely derive from the accelerating pace of life of contemporary society (sometimes referred to as ‘the global speed tendency’ or ‘the shrinking of the present’) (Malinowska, 2017; Rosa, 2013), hence allowing less time, space and effort to be spent on

verbal interaction. Thus the ‘shrinking’ effect is inevitable not only in verbal products, but also in mental structures generating them. The correlation of these two planes of human interaction as reflected in minitexts is what presents a challenge for linguistic analysis.

A minitext (or mini-format text) is any text, regardless of genre and content, which meets the



*‘A minitext (or mini-format text) is any text, regardless of genre and content, which meets the main demand – briefness’*

main demand of brevity. It is the criterion of length that distinguishes the prototypical form of a minitext, which specificity is reflected in structural, semantic, pragmatic, and conceptual characteristics (Kharkovskaya et al., 2017).

Titles, headings, captions, text messages, Internet slang and the like present vivid examples of the accessible ways of wrapping our messages in tight concise forms. This has become a habitual and convenient practice that to some extent shapes people’s linguistic consciousness.

While the pros and cons of this trend are not a priority for the present research, the paper is aimed at revealing and describing both verbal and non-verbal aspects of children’s poetic titles from the angle of the valid combination of their obligatory and optional features, as well as their ability to shape a true-to-life perception of the world.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study of minitexts of the titles of English poems for children (hereinafter referred to as MTPCs) appears quite promising from the

standpoint of the currently popular cognitive-discursive approach.

Thus, Stockwell (2009; 2015) elaborates on the cognitive paradigm related to the main trends in literature such as the cognitive aesthetics of reading and cognitive stylistics, stating that familiar concepts, such as characterisation, tone, empathy and identification, can be useful in describing the natural experience of literary reading. His publications cover issues of stylistics, psycholinguistics, critical theory and neurology to explore the nature of reading as an art.

The development of cognitive ideas in reference to literary resonance can also be seen in Coats’ (2013) claim stating that *‘the crucial role children’s poetry plays in creating a holding environment in language to help children manage their sensory environments, map and regulate their neurological functions, contain their existential anxieties, and participate in communal life’* (Coats, 2013, p. 132).

Brandt (2005) who authors works dealing with cognitive poetics and imagery in the framework of cognitive semantics and semiotics, pays special attention to interrelating literary reading and cognitive research as directly as possible and thus exploring meaning production as it occurs in poetic texts, rather than using poetry only to illustrate certain notions in cognitive semantics.

Therefore, the inner mechanisms of poetic textual structure are to be analysed based on the conceptual network actualised in the format of linguistic markers and interacting with both English poetic discourse and the titles' contexts of poems intended for children.

The discursive interpretation of text characteristics is another issue to be considered. While some scholars tend to equate the concepts of text and discourse, we rather oppose the idea of their outright similarity.

The term 'text' denotes a completed construct, built up as a holistic verbal entity, while 'discourse' refers to such a construct in the process of its immediate functioning, enriched with a whole lot of sense accretions and pragmatic meanings due to various situational factors, especially those connected with the recipient (Van Dijk, 1992).

Naturally, the same speech addressed to children and adults will be perceived differently and has to be pragmatically recipient-orientated to avoid communicative failures (Malyuga & Orlova, 2018; Ponomarenko, 2016).

These theoretical issues on cognitive studies, discourse analysis and pragmalinguistics applied in the classification of MTPCs contribute to the methodological background of the present

paper.

### 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Minitexts – notions and characteristics

Typical textual features are generally peculiar to both large and mini-format texts. Minitexts are of special interest for researchers as their limited structure provides an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive in-depth analysis (text mining) of their inherent basic characteristics. In *Minitexts in Modern Educational Discourse: Functions and Trends*, Kharkovskaya et al. (2017) point out that the main difference between the phenomenon of minitexts and the traditional understanding of a text is the volume parameter, and emphasise that a mini-format text in fact differs from the generally accepted meaning of 'text' only because it contains a limited number of elements (up to 600 words), 'otherwise bearing typical features of all the classical standards of textuality (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality)' (Kharkovskaya et al., 2017, p. 67).

Minitexts have certain systemic properties in terms of their formal structure, the main being stereotyped compositional model, uncomplicated syntax, and brevity of language units constituting the text.

Moreover, some types of minitexts are characterised by certain conventionality, i.e. by

*‘The study of the variation of different split-level language means within minitexts helps to clarify the concept of a communicative and pragmatic norm applied thereto’*

some prescribed rules or traditions of style and layout and slight variability in their structural formation (business letters, legislative acts, official autobiographies, references, leaflets, etc.). The study of the variation of different split-level language devices within minitexts helps clarify the concept of a communicative and pragmatic norm applied thereto.

Also, the notion of the communicative and pragmatic norm includes the use of extralinguistic devices (fonts, interspace, colour, text arrangement, capital letters) that define particular types of minitexts. Thus, each type of minitext conforms to a particular communicative and pragmatic norm, which presents a combination of obligatory (primary) and optional (secondary) characteristics of the text.

Prototypical minitexts that demonstrate genre specificity, as well as features of the compositional structure and semantic organisation, can be found in various discursive formations, since text exists as a result of a person’s discursive activity, as a

complex marker in the unity of its three sides: semantics, pragmatics and syntax. In discursive space, a person’s speech activity reflects various types of knowledge about the surrounding world and its mental representations.

As noted by Alexandrova et al. (2017), an individual’s cognitive activity is always conjugated with the linguistic reflection of reality due to the systemic perception of the world which is *‘organically connected with the indissolubility of knowledge through discourse – a dynamic process by which the predicative connection between the phenomena of the world and a direct expression of this connection through the language is made’* (Aleksandrova et al., 2017, p. 104).

### **3.2 Cognitive paradigm markers in the titles of English poems for children**

The study of any type of discourse supposes its segmentation and traditionally focuses on highlighting linguistic features of texts, representing the analysed discourse at the verbal level. The analysis of minitexts of titles, which are relatively completed elements of English literary poetic discourse, objectified in writing and possessing a structural and semantic unity and special functional purpose, shows that the adequate evaluation of identifying attributes of the type of the discursive space in question depends on the interaction of discursive parameters, as well as their place in the hierarchy of other markers.

### 3.3 Cohesion, coherence and wholeness as text constructive features

As the basic constructive features of any text applicable to titles, *cohesion*, *coherence* and *wholeness* need to be indicated because they reflect the structural, semantic and discursive essence of the text, respectively. These properties imply the link between text elements, their unity as a whole, and embrace different aspects of speech products organisation.

Cohesion is traditionally treated as the use of explicit linguistic devices (phrases or words) signalling relations between parts of texts and text units that help the reader associate previous statements with subsequent ones.

Connor (1996) supports the idea of cohesion being determined by lexically and grammatically overt inter-sentence relationships, and coherence being based on semantic relationships. While text cohesion is manifested through external structural markers and the formal dependence of the text components, its coherence reflects its thematic, conceptual organisation. While the concept of coherence governs thematic and communicative construction of a text, the concept of cohesion administers its form, i.e. its structural organisation (Bublitz, 2011).

Cohesion and coherence are inseparable and overlap; the presence of only one of them cannot

attest to an appropriately constructed text. Thus, a coherent text will always be cohesive. Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify five general categories of cohesive devices that signal coherence in texts, which are reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion, and conjunction.

Speaking of titles, their small volume hardly allows for a simultaneous occurrence of all or several of these devices, yet at least one of them is a must. For example, the famous poem *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* by Edward Lear illustrates that the conjunction *and* in the title functions at both structural (as a linking element drawing homogeneous parts of the phrase to each other thus providing for cohesion) and semantic levels (as a linking element coordinating names of the participants belonging to the same class of objects – animals – thus ensuring coherence).

Being inalienable from each other, these two planes underlie the *wholeness* of the text via their interaction. Text wholeness implies situationality, i.e. the factors that make the text relevant to the situation, be it specific or abstract, real or imaginary. The text always reflects the circumstances in which it is constructed and used. Being a category of content, wholeness is orientated towards the general sense, which the text generates in accordance with the prevailing situation (Khranchenko & Radyuk, 2014; Malyuga & Tomalin, 2017).

*‘A holistic text is usually monothematic: the transition from one topic to another serves as a boundary signal that marks the end of one text and the beginning of another’*

A holistic text is usually monothematic. The transition from one topic to another serves as a boundary signal that marks the end of one text and the beginning of another. Thematic cohesion is the basic characteristic of a title, which is interpreted as a kind of multidimensional formation constructed as a result of compression of the main content of a work. Therefore, it can be argued that the title of a fictional work is inherently always coherent. In MTPCs, cohesion is manifested in the reflection of referential objects of extralinguistic reality refracted through the author’s and reader’s subjectivism.

### **3.4 Constructive markers of mini-texts of headings of English poems for children**

Content cohesion and structural coherence of minitexts actualise the category of *informativity*, which manifests itself in the nominative function of MTPCs (Van Dijk, 1992). It should be stressed that the analysed texts have different extents of informative potential and can present the information to the recipient in the most general way, as in:

*Geography Lesson* (Cookson, 2006, p. 22).

*Snow* (Morgan, 2003, p. 469).

*Summer Storm* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 39).

Sometimes, on the contrary, they are focused on a diverse and explicit palette of the poem’s thematic content, when the text specifies the smallest details, as in:

*How to Turn a Class Hamster into a Dinosaur* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 83).

*Lost Kitty in New York City, \$ 500 Reward* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 416).

*The Day I Got My Finger Stuck Up in My Nose* (Morgan, 2003, p. 24).

The informative self-sufficiency of MTPCs defines their *separability*, i.e. the possibility of distinguishing one text from another relying on the difference in their denotative unities (Geeraerts & Cuyckens, 2007). If in the course of verbal communication the referent remains the same in the communicators’ understanding, the unit of writing is viewed as a single, separate text.

Each separate MTPC also has logical *maturity*, since it gives the description of an object, which is exhaustive from the perspective of the goals and tasks set by communicating parties, as well as their awareness of this object. The focus on the recipient of the information plays an important role in composing any speech message. As stated

above, the addressee factor is a system-forming category of children's literature, which largely determines the nature and the verbal actualisation of the communicative act.

Based on the addressee parameter, two types of texts are typically distinguished – texts targeting an undifferentiated mass audience, and texts targeting a specific addressee, i.e. a group of people of certain educational, professional, cultural, aesthetic, social and age-specific background.

Children's literary poetic discourse is orientated towards a designated addressee, a child reader, whose perception of reality is qualitatively different from that of an adult. Children's readership is specialised, as it has particular age, educational and cultural parameters. Such 'limitation' of addressees is reflected initially in the theme of English poems intended for children, and allows authors to make their texts more comprehensible to their audience.

Secondly, the category of *intentionality* within the discourse under study determines the specific choice of structural and linguistic elements that constitute the text library of the titles in question and form the notion of a special 'child' language. In other words, titles of English children's poems are characterised by a direct correlation of the message with the addressee.

The specific nature of children's perception stems from the peculiarity of the anthropological forms of infantile cognition, which depends not only on psychophysiological factors but also on the social characteristics of childhood (Coats, 2013). The fact is that while both children and adults observe the same objects, children's approach to reality appears selective due to the peculiarities of their worldview. What is closest to the child's inner world is seen by them as a close-up, while what is less close to the child's inner world appears secondary.

Poems intended for children have the same reality as a creative product addressed to an adult audience, however what the child sees and perceives on a large scale, taking into account his/her child's worldview, comes to the forefront. A change in the perspective of understanding reality leads to a shift in emphasis in the content of the work, which creates objective prerequisites for the use of special stylistic devices (Brandt, 2005; Geeraerts & Cuyckens, 2007). Thus, an author, referring to the young reader, is called upon to fulfil the most difficult task – namely, to take into account the peculiarities of the child's worldview while showing high literary skill. Exhibiting deep awareness of the world, a poet is expected to share his/her own outlook refracted through the prism of childhood, while at the same time remaining a kind of compass guiding the reader along the route.



*‘The focus on the recipient of the information plays an important role in the formation of any speech message’*

The peculiarities of children’s comprehension of reality are the main reason for the specificity of knowledge, which is presented in English literary poetic discourse intended for the infantile audience. While these poems deal with the realities of the surrounding world, they also transform the information turning mundane statement of facts into an exciting process promoting the expansion of a child’s cognition. According to Gibbs & Gibbs (1994), this determines the increased imagery and expressiveness of English literary poetic discourse intended for children, since *they ‘think metaphorically about their own experiences, elaborating on the comparison between a physical object and the poet’s psychological experience’* (Gibbs & Gibbs, 1994, p. 400).

#### 4. STUDY AND RESULTS

Children’s poetry aims to tell readers about what they really know, about what is really interesting and understandable for them. So, the main theme that has found its vivid reflection in MTPCs that make up the body of our sample is the world of the child and everything that has to do with it directly. Of course, any poet should be cautious in

choosing the theme of their work. The ability to find a field of human knowledge, the boundaries of which are determined by the child’s interest, partly determines a poem’s success.

In children’s poetic discourse, it is fundamental for an author to look at the world from a very specific perspective, to see the most ordinary things from the point of view of an adult person, yet through the eyes of a child. It is rare for children to think globally: they prefer to ask questions, the answers to which are sometimes hard to find. They simply explore the world around them, study life in all its diverse manifestations, including verbal. However, children do it in such a concentrated and enthusiastic way that the very process of a child’s perception of reality deserves close attention, which is directly reflected in poetic titles, as in:

*Five Ways of Looking at a Lemon* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 430).

*How Teachers Leave School Each Evening* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 385).

*Ode to My Nose* (Cookson, 2007, p. 197).

Notably, in children’s English poetic discourse there is traditionally no place for despotic adults with their admonitions and ready-made guidelines for action. In the poetic texts, children prefer to find issues taken from the lives of their peers. Some kind of partnership and trusting relationships with peers sharing similar interests are more

*‘A poet not for a moment forgets that child impressionability is very high and therefore deliberately chooses some bright situation or image, which is not banal, to make a lasting impression on a child’*

important here. A certain image of the child, created by a poet, is of universal significance, since the figurative essence, i.e. associative and creative reinterpretation of objective meanings, is an integral part of literary poetic discourse.

Analysing the term ‘literary image’ presented in contemporary literary criticism and linguistics, Borisova (2009) defines it as *‘a specific and at the same time generalised picture of existence created via verbal means and literary and compositional techniques and having an aesthetic meaning’* (Borisova, 2009, p. 25).

Consequently, the nature of figurative thinking lies in the specific usage of the word as a method of making an aesthetic and emotional impact on the addressee. The role of literary image within the framework of children’s poetic discourse cannot be over-emphasised, for in this particular age group eye-mindedness, along with the emotional component, are of paramount importance.

Imagery as a way of thinking and the category of cognition has verbal and conceptual aspects. Therefore, the figurative word can serve as a source of various subjective-associative representations of the addressee and contributes to his/her inclusion in the process of comprehension of the poem’s entire structure.

Thus, Gibbs & Gibbs (1994) notes that *‘part of the delight children take in hearing certain stories stems not only from the enchantment they have as works of art but also from the psychological meaning children will continue to extract at different points in their lives, depending on their individual needs and interests’* (Gibbs & Gibbs, 1994, p. 402).

Appreciating the impressionable nature of a child’s cognition, a good author will intentionally choose a vivid image to make a lasting impression, backing it up by a non-trivial choice of language tools:

*The Teachers Jumped Out of the Windows* (Nesbitt, 2009, p. 131).

*Aliens Stole My Underpants* (Cookson, 2006, p. 134).

*The Dream of the Plastic Bag* (Cookson, 2007, p. 143).

Literary poetic discourse represented by MTPCs is naturally emotional since they appeal to children’s

*‘The choice of an interesting topic that can grab a child’s attention contributes to a large extent to the author’s success’*

feelings and experiences characterised by immediacy, sincerity and reliability. The peculiarity of perception of the surrounding reality by a young reader, as a rule, is reflected in every work.

However, when the author sets a goal of making an emotional impact on a child, he/she cannot ignore the fact that the child’s values system is not fully developed yet. Children are by nature oriented towards the perception of beauty and subconsciously reject everything that has elements of aggression and disharmony, which is why a good poet tries to avoid topics which can have a negative effect on a child, keeping in mind that a sense of satisfaction is a guarantee of younger generation’s favourable mental development and social comfort.

MTPCs have certain distinctive features whereby they can be considered as a particular type of minitext with length as their main prototypical marker. The study shows that the number of components in MTPCs varies from 1 to 18 lexical units. The composite elements of MTPCs include isolated language units represented by both content words and auxiliary parts of speech, as in:

*Sun* (Cookson, 2006, p. 10).

*Thanksgiving* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 62).

*Why Old People Say the Things They Do When Young People Ask Them How They Are* (Cookson, 2007, p. 191).

*Secret Diary of The Girl We All Want to Sit Next to When Her Best Friend is Absent* (Cookson, 2007, p. 52).

At the same time, the group of MTPCs comprising 3 to 7 lexical units is the most numerous:

*The Rainmaker Danced* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 171).

*Magic Me This* (Cookson, 2006, p. 512).

*The Way I Am* (Cookson, 2007, p. 229).

*A Minute to Midnight* (Cookson, 2006, p. 316).

*Today I Wrote This Poem* (Nesbitt, 2009, p. 74).

*My Mother Saw a Dancing Bear* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 336).

*Who left Grandad at the chip shop?* (Morgan, 2003, p. 77).

MTPCs can be explained by the peculiarities of the reader’s perception in this age group. Turning to mono-component titles, authors should not forget the threat of the discrepancy between theirs and the reader’s cognitive base stemming from figurative-associative cognition. On the other hand, too long a title, which, as a rule, has a complex syntactic structure, can make it difficult for children to perceive the information offered.

Thus, MTPCs consisting of 3 to 7 linguistic elements is optimal, since it can be considered quite sufficient for the adequate interpretation of the fundamentally important text categories.

The thematic focus of MTPCs can be recognised rather easily, which is due to the extreme importance, in the semantic sense, of the role of the title and its place. We know that the title of a poem is intended to attract the attention of a young reader and motivate him/her to read the whole text of the poem. The choice of an interesting topic that can grab a child's attention contributes to a large extent to the author's success.

For instance, *At the End of a School Day* (Morgan, 2003, p. 435) focuses on a topic having to do with school life. Any child wonders what events the described school day is filled with and wants to share the narrator's joy at the end of the lessons. The title *First Appearance of a Superhero in a Book* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 57) promises the reader a fascinating story about the life of a superhero, full of adventures and heroic deeds in the name of saving mankind.

Authors refer to topics readily understandable by children and prompting an immediate emotional response and a keen interest, as in:

***Fantasy Christmas List*** (Morgan, 2003, p. 46).

*The Kitten at Play* (Cookson, 2006, p. 307).

*I Cloned Myself on Friday Night* (Nesbitt, 2009, p. 88).

Poets use positive emotional attitude as a sure way to draw young readers' attention to objects of everyday reality so that they can find something special in them. For instance, in *Isn't My Name Magical?* (Cookson, 2006, p. 206), the author asks a question about the magical origin of his own name, and a young reader, driven by endless curiosity, cannot resist the temptation to read the poem in order to reveal the secret.

To create thematic clarity and maturity, one will have to take into consideration the psychological factor as well. The fact is that children perceive the world not through abstract concepts but rather through specific objects surrounding them.

Hence, poetic discourse is often about concretising the phenomena, characters and events described, as in:

*I Tried to Ride a Skateboard* (Nesbitt, 2009, p. 51).

*The Oldest Girl in the World* (Morgan, 2003, p. 166-168).

*One Moment in Summer* (Cookson, 2006, p. 287-288).

The main characters often receive personal names and in the course of the narration are endowed

*‘Distinctive features of minitexts of titles of English children’s poems include general accessibility of the vocabulary and simplicity of the syntax’*

with certain abilities, skills and behaviour:

*Playing Tennis with Justin* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 292-294).

*Betsy Burped the ABC* (Nesbitt, 2009, p. 44).

*Waltzing Matilda* (Cookson, 2007, p. 224).

Distinctive features of English MTPCs include general accessibility of the vocabulary and the simplicity of the syntax. In this respect, the lexical form of MTPCs radically differs from the same for adult readers.

Thus, the vocabulary used in children’s poetry is practically devoid of terms, abstract concepts or complex words, as they can lead to misunderstanding or incorrect comprehension of the information.

Not to overload MTPCs with unnecessary meanings, authors use a language that reflects the peculiarities of everyday communication between readers of a certain age group. Poets use lexical units denoting objects and phenomena that are well known to children. Simple syntactic

constructions, used in English MTPCs, also contribute to understanding, as in:

*Our Tree* (Corbett & Morgan, 2006, p. 348).

*Uncle and Auntie* (Cookson, 2006, p. 520).

*Have a Nice Day* (Morgan, 2003, p. 246).

*I Bit an Apple* (Cookson, 2006, p. 96).

*Gran Can You Rap?* (Cookson, 2007, p. 216).

Thus, English MTPCs have special semantic and syntactic characteristics, since in conjunction with one another they create a momentary effect that attracts children’s attention.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The present study suggests that components of English literary poetic discourse are interrelated and interdependent, and it is this interaction that determines the specificity of this type of person-centred discourse endowed with two anthropocentric elements – the author and the recipient – determining its very nature.

The distinctive features of literary poetic discourse considered in the present work are its subjectivism and creative nature. Special mention in this regard should be made of the specific role of the individual reader’s reception in the process of understanding the discursive space of a work of art. In cases where children are the target audience, the dialogue in the poetic discourse is particularly evident.

However, this dialogue is specific as it appeals to emotions, and not on rationality. The reader's personality acts as the leading factor in organising

the space of children's poetic discourse in English, in which minitexts of titles of poetic works serve as the main reference point.

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# Vague language as a means of avoiding controversy

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*Vague language describes the use of linguistic items including grammar and particularly lexis to modify and make the meaning of a communication less precise and less clear. While scientific and much academic language prides itself on rigour, precision and clarity, vague language, or VL, as it is known, is a linguistic device used in politics, reporting and everyday conversation to avoid over-declaratory statements and assertions and to build or protect relationships. This paper analyses the various definitions and theories of vague language and examines its use in the English language in discourse management and politeness in gender relations, politics, culture and news reporting. It examines the ways in which vague language is used to convey subtle meanings and identifies it as a huge area of ongoing linguistic research.*

**KEYWORDS:** *vague language, pragmatics, corpus-based language, politeness, inexplicit language, discourse genre, discourse analysis*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper considers research that has been done into the phenomenon of vague language (VL). This phenomenon is undoubtedly as old as language itself but it has recently come to the attention of scholars because there has been growing dissatisfaction with other approaches and terminologies which have been used in the past to describe and analyse various kinds of meaning in language. In fact, one of the major issues when considering this topic is the confusion of different terms and approaches that underpin the whole field of semantics in general, and the phenomenon

of vague language in particular.

For the purposes of this paper, the approach that is taken is to review the main theories on vague language that were advanced before the middle of the twentieth century. This provides some theoretical groundwork and clarifies the evolution of ideas in this area and the emergence of today's focus on vague language. This is followed by a series of thematic sections which focus on relatively recent scholarship (post 1990) and empirical studies to illustrate how and why vague language is commonly used today. A broad range

*‘A positivist view of the world emphasises accuracy, clarity and definiteness, and this is a feature of most discourses in science and technology’*

of contexts is cited, to give an overview of vague language forms and functions in the world today and different investigation methods are critiqued. Finally, it must be recognised that it would be impossible to cover every possible angle in the space available, and so the aim in this literature is to outline and analyse some of the most fundamental theories involved in this topic and then, by way of illustration, discuss how vague language has been studied in action in a broad range of realistic situations. This is why the focus of the main body of the work is on empirical studies. The discussion considers several theoretical and practical implications of the most recent work on vague language and the conclusion sums up the main findings and identifies areas where further research is still needed.

## 2. VAGUE LANGUAGE THEORY

### 2.1 The problem of definition

Somewhat paradoxically, the term ‘vague language’ is itself a rather broad one, and there are different ways of defining it. It is often assumed that vagueness in language is something negative,

or in other words ‘a deplorable deviation from precision and clarity’ (Jucker et al., 2003, p. 1737).

It is certainly true that there are some instances, such as writing up scientific experiments for example, where precision and clarity are necessary. The negative associations of vagueness could be ascribed to the influence of Western philosophy and logic that are concerned with defining truth (Kenney & Smith, 2010). A positivist view of the world emphasises accuracy, clarity and definiteness and this is a feature of most discourses in science and technology. Most human language takes place in much less rigorous settings, however, and a certain amount of vagueness is normal and acceptable in everyday life, or even highly prized in areas where creativity has a prominent role to play, such as in the arts and literature.

An important introductory study of vague language was published by Channell in 1994, and this book suggests that vague language should be defined as language which is ‘*purposely and unabashedly vague*’ (Channell, 1994, p. 20). This definition is somewhat tautological, however, and although this work is widely regarded as an important starting point, it is by no means accepted as a final authority on what vague language is and how it should be defined and studied.

An alternative definition is suggested by Drave (2001) as ‘*that which modifies a linguistic item,*

*phrase or utterance to make its meaning less precise*' (Drave, 2001, p. 25). The latter definition is preferable, because a person may sometimes be aware that they are using vague language and they may have some idea about why they are doing so but they might also sometimes be unaware of the vagueness in their language and there may be no conscious purpose behind it. Even this second definition is still quite broad, since the term that which does not specify exactly which part of speech or linguistic element is used to make something less precise. Macaulay (2005) shows that vagueness can be indicated by words and body language.

Words would include lexis, phraseology, the use of a question rather than a statement and intonation, voice tone and pitch. Body language includes expressions in the eyes or a shrug of the shoulders or a wave of the hand. This is not a perfect definition, but it is an acceptable starting point, and the one that is used to underpin the research presented in this paper.

For reasons connected to these problems of definition vague language is also difficult to categorise in any one academic discipline or methodological approach. It involves areas of linguistics such as semantics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics, but also touches on psychology and cognition and language processing as well (Cutting, 2007). Theoretical and applied linguistics

and rhetorical analysis can be used to study it but methods such as discourse analysis are also very useful for teasing out the context-specific aspects of vague language. It can be studied bottom up, on the basis of actual language usage, or top down, on the basis of the deep structure of language or semantic and discourse rules. In short, vague language is a very large area of study, and there is a vast wealth of scholarly material that is quite difficult to sort into any logical order.

## 2.2 Early theories on vagueness in language

One of the earliest studies on vagueness was that of Peirce (1902), who stated that, '*a proposition is vague where there are possible states of things concerning which it is intrinsically uncertain whether, had they been contemplated by the speaker, he would have regarded them as excluded or allowed by the proposition*' (Peirce, 1902, p. 748).

This rather dense description is quite difficult to decipher and wrapped up in philosophical ideas regarding logical inferences. Later scholars in linguistics have taken this as a starting point to look more closely at the language that is used to convey vagueness, as a way of understanding what it means.

This line of thinking started off the debate on the extent to which vagueness is present in language, and the question of how vague language can or

*‘Both the speaker and addressee have a role to play in the creating of vagueness and dealing with its effects in language’*

should be defined and used. A key contribution was made by Grice on the meanings and intentions that lie behind a speaker’s words. The somewhat contentious term ‘implicature’ was coined by Grice (1989) to signify the whole range of meanings that are contained in language, but not explicitly stated. Even more contentious was Grice’s suggestion that human conversation always follows a set of norms, which he calls maxims, which are supposedly designed to create cooperation between speakers.

This work was very influential, but there have been many debates about how appropriate these maxims are and considerable work has been done to refine and also challenge this early work (Neale, 1992; Carston, 2005).

What is called the Gricean approach has been modified by Horn (2005) to acknowledge the importance of the speaker’s intended meaning, but also take account of the addressee’s contribution in deciding which meanings are relevant and can be contributed to the conversation. This creates a bridge between the study of meaning (semantics)

and the study of function (pragmatics) in the context of cooperative dialogue between speaker and addressee. Both the speaker and addressee have a role to play in the creating of vagueness and dealing with its effects in language. So, it cannot be assumed that the speaker defines the extent of vagueness that is contained in any expression or type of language use.

The field of pragmatics is also a very broad area and one which is quite difficult to define (Levinson, 1983). This field focuses on the functions of language use and the meanings that are constructed by language users in social settings. An understanding of pragmatics requires consideration of both explicit and implicit meanings and, perhaps most significantly of all, the context in which communication takes place. Many kinds of vagueness relate directly to the context.

For example, Crystal and Davy (1975) explain that the use of vague terms for numbers and quantities such as *bags of* and *about 30* are characteristic of informal conversations that take place in relaxed situations. Speakers who know each other well can interpret vague words like *stuff* and *gear* very accurately because of the shared knowledge that they have about each other’s life and habits. The friendly and informal context makes such vague language an entirely natural and expected part of a conversation.

On the other hand, there are some occasions, for example in a court of law, where precision is the norm, and vague language may be interpreted as evasiveness, deception or even guilt (Cotterill, 2007). A witness giving evidence who uses vague language will cause confusion and exasperation in a setting which is designed to eliminate all possible doubt and establish the truth of an event or a situation which in turn will form the basis of some moral or legal judgement with potentially very serious consequences. In a conversation between friends, on the other hand, vagueness is commonly used, and generally welcomed as a demonstration of trust and familiarity. This insight is very important when discussing vague language, because it shows that the same grammatical or lexical feature can have very different implied meanings in different contexts.

### **2.3 Vague language as a politeness strategy in spoken conversation**

Following on from Gricean theory and pragmatics, there has been considerable research into the use of vague language as a way of being polite. It has been linked with the idea of maintaining harmony and cooperation within a social group, avoiding any threat to the face of another member of that group (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The idea here is that precise language gives too much information or information that is not welcome or wanted by the addressee. So, speakers who follow the Gricean norm of cooperation in dialogue avoid

anything too explicit and resort to vague language instead. Everyone has been in a situation where they have been asked a direct question and have chosen to give a non-committal and vague answer simply because they wish to avoid the consequences of giving a full and accurate answer, whether this be in the context of expressing opinions about someone's choice of clothing or the taste of a meal that has just been cooked by someone present in the room. Precision and accuracy are generally laudable concepts but in these specific social contexts they can be offensive because they threaten the standing of an individual in the group and could hurt their feelings.

There are also certain advantages in the use of fuzzy concepts and vague boundaries, because they extend the range of options open to a speaker, offering a chance to express many grades of truth and many different attitudes towards propositions without the speaker having to be pinned down to just one position (Lakoff, 1972). The metaphor of the slingshot is used by Zhang (2011) to describe the elasticity that is inherent in vague language '*stretching on a continuum of polarities, between soft or tough, firm or flexible, cooperative or uncooperative*' (Zhang, 2011, p. 571). Some people like to make statements that they can later interpret in different ways, as for example in the case of politicians who may have one message for one group of people (e.g.



supporters) and another message for a different group (for example critics).

### 3. VAGUE LANGUAGE AS A DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT DEVICE

21st century linguistic research has taken these ideas further and examined how vagueness functions in spoken conversations to manage the cooperation between speakers. According to Jucker et al. (2003), vague expressions in everyday conversations ‘*may carry more relevant contextual implications than would a precise expression*’ (Jucker et al., 2003, p. 1737), and the following common functions of such language were identified:

- to serve as a focusing device, helping the addressee determine how much processing effort to devote to a given referent;
- to show looser assignment of a characteristic to a conceptual category;
- to express a speaker’s attitude towards a quantity, or take account of the speaker’s assumptions about the addressee’s beliefs;
- to express a speaker’s degree of commitment to a proposition;
- to engender camaraderie or soften implicit criticisms.

What is noticeable about this list is the wide range of subtle meanings that can be conveyed through vague language, and the fact that these functions

can overlap and be used individually or in a merged way with several operating at the same time. It is therefore quite tricky to work out which functions are being intended by the speaker and which are being picked up or inserted by the addressee at any one time.

One study found that vague category markers such as *and that sort of thing*, *and everything*, *and stuff*, and *all the rest of it* were used by learners of English differently than native speakers of English, and called for more research into the way both categories of speaker process these instances of vague language and decode what they are referring to (Evison et al., 2007). There may be a gap between intention and reception, and this could be quite critical for learners of a second language.

Another study compared the use of placeholder words such as *thing*, *thingy*, *stuff*, *thingummybob*, *thingybob* and *whatsit* by British adults and teenagers and found that these were not used more frequently by teenagers than adults but range of contexts in teenage use was wider than by adults (Palacios Martinez & Paloma, 2015). The authors draw the important conclusion stating that ‘*these lexical items show properties typical of pragmatic markers, since they help in the organisation of discourse, they are sometimes used as devices to hold or cede the floor and they also function interpersonally by promoting cooperation*

*‘The idea here is that precise language gives too much information, or information that is not welcome or wanted by the addressee’*

*between the participants in the conversation’* (Palacios Martinez & Paloma, 2015, p. 425).

The reason for wide and varied use of vague language by teenagers may well be connected to group dynamics since *‘for these subjects it is important to belong to a closed group and community in order to reaffirm themselves, and this use of language clearly helps them in that direction’* (Palacios Martinez, 2011, p. 119).

This line of investigation confirms earlier research by Ariel (2002) and Ball and Ariel (1978) into the use of vague language to create a privileged in-group which communicates their own restricted meanings between themselves to help them bond together. Interestingly, this line of research also raises the possibility that vague language can be used to exclude people from the group, for example, by using a vague expression instead of a person’s name, or omitting details that the group knows, but the outsider does not. According to Overstreet and Yule (1997), instances of vague language in conversation is neither sloppy nor

rude but is used in both informal conversations between people who know each other well, and in semi-formal contexts such as telephone conversations between strangers, or broadcasts over television and radio to build relationships because *‘they represent a kind of implicit communication whereby speakers indicate an assumption of shared experience and hence closeness or common ground’* (Overstreet & Yule, 1997, p. 256). This closeness does not have to exist in reality, but it can be an aspiration, or an expectation that the vagueness helps to turn in to a reality.

#### **4. VAGUE LANGUAGE IN GENDER, CULTURE, POLITICS AND MEDIA**

##### **4.1 Vague language in gender**

It has been suggested in some studies that vagueness is more commonly used by women due to the stereotypical roles that men and women are expected to play in most human societies. Men are generally expected to be bold and definite, for example, while women are expected to be timid and vague in deference to the supposed superiority of the male. This cliché is changing rapidly, especially with the importance of movements such as ME TOO and other initiatives for change. Scholars in this field have pointed out that the patriarchal bias in most societies dictates such unfair prejudices, and have highlighted the way in which both gender and politeness are socially constructed, rather than absolute norms

*‘It has been suggested in some studies that vagueness is more commonly used by women due to the stereotypical roles that men and women are expected to play in most human societies’*

(Mills, 2003). In the days before tape recorders and computers, it was difficult to counter such theories, especially since men dominated the research sector until the middle of the twentieth century. More recently, however, the involvement of feminists in research, and the availability of new technologies have allowed much more rigorous and evidence-based testing of these ideas.

So far, however, when these theories have been tested against actual data, the results have been far from conclusive. Holmes (1988) analysed the use of *sort of* in the speech of men and women in New Zealand, for example, and found that it was used as ‘*a device facilitating the smooth flow of the discourse, providing the speaker with verbal planning time [... and] as an imprecision or approximation signal (epistemic modal meaning) and as an informality or solidarity marker (affective meaning)*’ (Holmes, 1988, p. 85). This study did not find much difference between women’s and men’s use of *sort of* but noted that ‘*in semi-formal contexts it was addressed more to women than men*’ (Holmes, 1988, p. 85). In another study,

Holmes (1995) highlighted the different standards of behaviour that are expected of men and of women, such as for example the supposedly caring and nurturing role of women and their lower status in society, which encourages them to use vague formulation in an effort to support others and avoid conflicts where they might stand to lose more than men.

The evolving study of language and gender increasingly challenges any easy equation of gender with language use and suggests instead that complex interactions between gender, register and relationships and expectations between speakers and addressees are at work. Moreover, in contemporary societies where binary distinctions of gender are outdated, and complexity is more appropriate as a model than male/female contrasts, the whole field of language and gender has to be approached in a different way (Talbot, 2010). Variety and complexity are now features of the way language and gender are viewed, with much more leeway for choices to be made to suit different contexts.

## 4.2 Vague language and culture

Studies of intercultural communication have revealed that people in all cultures use vague language from time to time, but there are some differences between linguistic and cultural groups (Alkhatnai, 2017). A typical method that is used to explore this and many other types of variation in

language is corpus linguistics (McEnery et al., 2006). This simply means the use of collected data, usually transcribed from audio or video recordings of naturally occurring conversations, to identify, categorise and analyse instances of the linguistic phenomenon that is being studied, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

### 4.3 Vague language in English language learning

Another area that is worthy of further investigation is that of English language pedagogy, both for those learning to speak, listen, read and write in English as their native language and for those adults and children learning English as a second or foreign language. It is relatively easy to learn the formulaic expanders and tags that indicate vagueness in language but the use of these features of discourse in a natural way with no failures of communication is quite a sophisticated skill. The asymmetry between native speakers and teenage or adult learners of a second language means that the use of vague language always carries some risk of misinterpretation or pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983; Drew, 1991).

One study based in Hong Kong compared the forms and functions of vague language used by a) native English speakers and b) native Cantonese speakers and found that although both groups used a similar range of vague language types, native English speakers used vague language more than native Cantonese speakers and that the native

English speakers displayed a greater tendency to use vague language more '*for affective and interpersonal purposes*' (Drave, 2001, p. 25).

Using a close analysis of the word *stuff*, Drave explored the epistemic (propositional) and affective meta-functions of the degree of specificity in the discourse and noted that '*it is very difficult to determine which of the functions (or motives) is in evidence for any single VL [= vague language] item, but this list of functions is nevertheless a necessary, preliminary heuristic for approaching the study of VL*' (Drave, 2001, p. 27).

These methodological difficulties are due partly to the lack of consensus on how to define and categorise vague language and partly to the practical challenge of understanding what meanings are actually or potentially encoded into or interpreted out of any individual instance of vague language. Each conversation relies on a whole raft of contextual factors, including the personalities and past history of the speakers, as well as various details such as the time, place, topic and purpose of the conversation.

Some rather different results were found in a more recent, comparative study of British and Taiwanese students' use of three types of vague expressions: a) vague categories, b) approximations and c) hedging (Lin, 2013). This study found substantial differences in the frequency of use of these categories and in the way in which they were used. It seems that more

*‘Following on from all of these interesting studies on vague language, albeit in mostly informal spoken contexts, there has been recent interest in more formal situations and written texts’*

research, ideally across different cultural groupings, will be needed to explore this issue of vague language usage by different cultural groups.

#### 4.4 Vague language in politics

In addition to these studies of vague language use, mainly in informal spoken contexts, there has been recent interest in more formal situations and written texts. An interesting investigation into a corpus of Parliamentary debate texts from the EU identified a list of general extenders that were commonly used by native English speakers and non-native English speakers alike, and then subsequently published in written form. Cucchi (2007) provides a number of examples:

*and/or [something/anything/everything] (like that)*  
*(and/or) X stuff (like that/X)*  
*and (all) (of) that*  
*(all) [this/that/these/those] kind(s)/sort(s) of X*  
*(or) whatever*  
*and so on (and so forth)*  
*et cetera (et cetera) (etc.)*

*Xs like that*  
*and all the rest of it*  
*and this that and the other* (Cucchi, 2007, p. 5).

The placeholder *X* in these examples refers to the subject matter that the speaker is talking about, usually a noun or noun phrase. The term *general extender* is used in preference to other terminology such as *set marking tags* (Dines, 1980, p. 23) which has previously been used to signify the way speakers cue the listener to see an example as an illustration of more a general case. In this study of vague language in European Union transcripts Cucchi (2007) concluded that both native and non-native speakers of English use these general extenders for similar purposes, such as iconicity, where the speakers want to suggest that much more could be said. He also concluded by far the most common forms were *and so on* and *et cetera*. Interestingly, there was a difference between categories used by speakers in that native speakers of English preferred *and so on* while non-native speakers of English preferred the Latinate form *et cetera*. Greater command of a language may mean that a speaker has more choices available but the point worthy of note is that these general extenders are a very common part of formal language in political contexts. The examples show it is not true to say that vague language is only a feature of informal speech. It clearly has a role to play in formal contexts as well.

#### 4.5 Vague language in news reporting

'Hedging' according to Milanović and Milanović (2010) is a way of making a general statement to avoid commitment to one point of view and to show balance. As such it is another example of vague language, frequently used in journalism.

One empirical study on economics-related news reporting at the time of the world financial crisis in 2008 found that *'hedges are extensively used to limit commitment to what is proposed, instantaneously offering error avoidance'* (Milanović & Milanović, 2010, p. 128). Economists discussing crisis situations understand that their work may be controversial and it may cause worry and stress to readers. So, they exercise caution to mitigate these negative reactions by moderating their writing style with hedges. An example of such writing is cited as follows: *'Nouriel Roubini, the famously glum economist who predicted the financial crisis, said that while the recession in the United States **may** well be over at the end of the year, another dip was still **possible** next year'* (Milanović & Milanović, 2010, p. 125).

This example shows the use of the modal verb *may* to cast doubt on the likelihood of the economist's predicted course of events ever happening and the use of the adjective *possible* to qualify another of his predictions. The tension between having an obligation to explain emerging

trends and thus predict the future and at the same to avoid making mistakes or upsetting people is the reason why the economist resorts to vagueness techniques.

Another study, based on intercultural reporting of English language news in China, noted that in both languages news items regularly violated all of the Gricean maxims mentioned above and the authors of news stories used vague language in a variety of ways and for a range of different purposes, mostly related to the creation of artistic effect or the management of reader understanding and emotions. The aim was to make readers think about the news while avoiding extreme or offensive statements that might upset them (Pan, 2012). Here, too, is a demonstration of vague language being used in relatively formal, written texts for a variety of purposes.

Further topics could be added to the list discussed above, such as the use of vague language in healthcare (Adolphs et al., 2007) or any number of other settings but space is limited

#### 5. DISCUSSION

It is clear that vague language is relevant to both formal and informal registers, and it is both context-governed and culture-dependent (Zhang, 2011). This is fundamental to understanding how vague language must be investigated – using primary data gathering methods that capture more



*‘The tension between having an obligation to explain what trends are showing and thus predict the future and at the same to avoid making mistakes or upsetting people is the reason why the economist resorts to vagueness techniques’*

than just grammatical and lexical items, but also include data about the speakers/writers and the target and actual audiences in their respective contexts, and ideally with a multi-disciplinary focus and range of methods. There is no single correct way of researching this topic and incorporating multiple theories and approaches offers the best opportunity to produce reliable findings and formulate new theories.

One of the most interesting aspects of vague language is the way in which speakers and addressees co-construct meaning in communication and the space that vague language leaves for both speaker and addressee to insert their own interpretations. An understanding of the many and various ways in which vague language can be used highlights the complexity of spoken and written genres and underlines the fact that vague language is in fact a very sophisticated feature that is not used randomly, or just out of laziness or inattention, but in fact serves some very

sophisticated purposes both at the level of semantics and at the level of discourse management (Wierzbicka, 1986).

The proliferation of different media in the contemporary world, and their associated genres such as discussion boards, blogs, home-made texts and videos and all kinds of social media suggests that the traditional boundary between spoken and written language is being blurred. This raises interesting questions about the potential forms and purposes of vague language today. Also, some new constraints such as the character limit in text messaging and Twitter impose very strict limits on the amount of explicit meaning that can be conveyed in a single utterance, and there is now a growing range of conventions, such as abbreviations, creative uses of punctuation and additional visual items such as emoji and moving gif images that can be used in digital communication. More research is needed to investigate these new dimensions and the role that vague language plays in digitally enabled communication.

Finally, all the empirical studies mentioned above struggle to use the unwieldy range of existing terminology around vagueness and language and there seems to be a need for some kind of definitive categorisation that could be used for comparison purposes across studies in different countries, contexts and themes. One article by

Zhang (1998) has sparked renewed debates over this point and his proposal of four terms *generality*, *vagueness*, *fuzziness* and *ambiguity* might be a helpful starting point for building consensus in arriving at a common categorisation of examples. The concept of fuzziness, with its recognition that some expressions do not have clear-cut referential boundaries, is an important innovation in this field that is worthy of more research.

Generality, vagueness and ambiguity can be resolved with knowledge of the details surrounding language use but no amount of background knowledge about the speakers and the context can pin down deliberately fuzzy language. The human condition is open-ended and uncertain, and so it is entirely appropriate that there are dimensions of vagueness in language that cannot be fully determined. There may be psychological reasons why language that is fuzzy is used when perfectly clear alternatives exist and are readily available and indeed some of the most influential texts in the world today, such as sacred religious texts, myths, poetry and ideological treatises, would be wonderful sources for a closer study of fuzziness and other types of vague language and their ongoing impact on both individual and collective human consciousness.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The evidence reviewed above demonstrates that vague language is a huge topic and one which is

likely to be the subject of research for many years to come. Wherever and whenever vague language is used, it provides an astonishing variety of options for varying the subtle meanings that can be exchanged in all kinds of discourse genres and contexts. Far from being a negative feature of language it is a very great strength and scholars are still exploring the potential that lies within it for subtle variations in its use.

The implications of this growing body of work on vague language are immense. There are practical applications, such as, for example, in teaching advanced literacy skills and the creation and interpretation of a huge range of different text types. There is scope for new theory formation in the analysis of digitally enabled language use and plenty of ongoing discussion about the extent to which previous terms and theories still apply to this type of language.

Above all, studying vague language as it is actually being used today, by politicians or diplomats, in news bulletins and in conversations with friends, colleagues and strangers, helps us to understand human psychology and the process of forming and maintaining group identity and coherence. Mastering the skill of the appropriate use of vague language is a fundamental prerequisite for peaceful and harmonious social interaction, even in the face of different perspectives and conflicting views of the world.

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# Persuasion strategy in online social advertising

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*Advertising is in constant development, and the language of advertising is adapting on an ongoing basis. Linguists all over the world have attempted to classify and analyse speech strategies used to create the most persuasive advertising text. The present article focuses on the linguistic strategies applied in online social advertising, such as strategies of warning and argumentation in general and the strategy of persuasion in particular. The study identifies the strategy of persuasion as the most popular in online social advertising. The author identifies the tactics instrumental in achieving the main goal of social advertising – encouraging action to the advantage of the advertiser – as well as a wide range of advertising avenues. The article analyses online advertisements using the methods of quantitative, cognitive and discursive analysis and drawing on the data retrieved from British and American website offering online promotional materials.*

**KEYWORDS:** *speech strategy, social advertising, Internet advertising, persuasion strategy, speech tactic, advertising discourse*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has given a major boost to the development of advertising. Today, advertising is viewed as one of the most efficient instruments for opinion manipulation. Regardless of the advertising medium, its aim is to encourage people to 'buy'. Over the years, scholars have singled out different types of advertising, such as TV, radio, print, online advertising, etc. However, due to the emergence of ICT, Internet advertising has come under scrutiny, so that today, online

advertising is probably the most rewarding area of study. Advertising discourse, particularly its online variety, is of great interest to linguists all over the world. The aim of the present article is to analyse the most frequently used speech strategies in online social advertising in general and the strategy of persuasion in particular as well as the most frequently occurring tactics of their implementation.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The author identifies the tactics instrumental in

achieving the main goal of social advertising – encouraging action to the advantage of the advertiser – as well as a wide range of advertising avenues, such as billboards, leaflets and handouts, online advertising, etc. The article analyses online advertisements using the methods of quantitative, cognitive and discursive analysis and drawing on the data retrieved from British and American website offering online promotional materials.

### 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 Discourse

The development of the cognitive approach commenced in the twentieth century. Dabrowska and Divjak (1996) assume that the main aim of cognitive linguistics is to consider a language as a cognitive mechanism that participates in the coding and transformation of information (Dabrowska & Divjak, 2015). Cognitive linguistics is based on the examination of two fundamental concepts: language and thought.

The establishment of cognitive linguistics is closely connected with the work of George Lakoff (1999), Henry Thompson (1983), Anna Wierzbicka (1990), Elena Kubryakova (1997), Andrei Kibrik (1999), Nina Arutyunova (1999) and other prominent researchers.

The basic notion of cognitive linguistics is 'cognition' meaning 'internal, mental, and interiorised'. Special attention in cognitive

linguistics is paid to the emergence of the new functional paradigm of linguistic knowledge – the cognitive and discursive paradigm. That is why it is necessary to take into account two main functions – namely, the cognitive function realised out of participation in the cognitive process, and the communicative function realised out of participation in acts of intercommunication. In its turn, the cognitive and discursive paradigm is closely related to one of the most fundamental notions of linguistic studies – discourse. Harris (1981) introduced the term 'discourse analysis' in 1952 stating the need to analyse the features of a connected text rather than the structure of an individual sentence. The present research considers the means of implementation of cognitive and discursive analysis in online advertising.

The examination of advertising text and advertising discourse from the point of view of cognitive and discursive analysis is impossible without the identification of the meaning of 'discourse'. One of the most common definitions of this term is '*speech that is wrapped up in life*' (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 103). Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) considered discourse as (in a general sense) a communicative event that takes place between a speaker and a listener (observer) in the process of communication at a certain period of time, and (in a narrow sense), as a complete or continuous 'product' of a communicative act which is



*‘Despite the fact that a large number of linguists devote their studies to advertising discourse, it is still quite a topical issue’*

interpreted by the recipient (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, p. 418). Another popular definition of discourse was suggested by Arutyunova (1990) who defined it as *‘a textual unity in combination with extra-linguistic, pragmatic, sociocultural, psycholinguistic and other factors’* (Arutyunova, 1990, p. 136-137). In this research, we consider discourse as a dynamic cognitive process closely related to the production of real speech, the creation of a speech act.

The key objective of discourse is the production of a speech act (text) together with the support of the perception of this text by the recipient. Thus, understanding discourse involves certain mental processes that are aimed at influencing opinion concerning specific events or situations.

In addition, it is necessary to distinguish such notions as ‘discourse’ and ‘text’. One of the main differences between text and discourse is that text is static while discourse is a dynamic phenomenon. Traditionally, linguists classify the term ‘discourse’ with the help of the notion of ‘text’. Text, here, can be considered as a fragment or a component of discourse.

According to the Russian school of linguistics, discourse is a cognitive process which results in the creation of a speech act. At the same time, text is a final result of discourse. That is why discourse is related to speech, and text is related to the language system (Malyuga & Bantshikova, 2011, p. 122-134).

### 3.2 Advertising discourse

As concerns advertising discourse, special attention is given to the text and its description from the point of view of the most basic ‘text-discourse’ paradigm. Advertising text undergoes changes just as discourse does. Although a large number of linguists devote their studies to advertising discourse, it is still quite a topical issue that changes according to the development of the advertising services market.

Advertising is a special type of communication designed to provide information about a product or a particular group of products or services (in case of commercial advertising) or persuade people to take certain action (in case of social advertising). The growing number of Internet users, the development of means of wireless communication and various technological gadgets made it possible to distribute advertisements immediately to the end customer and a particular target audience.

Advertising discourse is a type of institutional

discourse. Karasik (2000) defines institutional discourse as a *'special clichéd variation of communication between people who may not know each other but are supposed to communicate in accordance with norms and rules of a certain society'* (Karasik, 2000, p. 5-6).

Communication in institutional discourse is based on the hierarchical relations between individuals, their role in the society and the status of each particular participant in the discourse. Advertising is involved in all spheres of social life. Usually, the people involved in advertising discourse are advertisers (agents creating the advertising text) and the target audience (recipients of the advertising message).

Advertising texts normally use diverse functional styles – both colloquial (informal) and business (formal) – and often deploy professional terms and professional jargon.

There are several approaches to the definition of advertising discourse. One of them interprets it as a combination of an advertising text and extra-linguistic factors. Among the supporters of this approach are Bovee and Arens (1995), who define advertising discourse as *'a complete message which contains a strictly oriented pragmatic goal that, in its turn, combines distinctive features of oral speech and written text with a complex of semiotic (paralinguistic and extra-linguistic)*

*means'* (Bovee & Arens, 1995, p. 704).

According to the definition proposed by Miroshnichenko (2009), advertising text is *'a prosaic or poetic text that contains an implicit or explicit wake-up call, usually aimed at increasing demand'* (Miroshnichenko, 2009, p. 224).

Advertising text is viewed as an extremely useful tool attracting the target audience's attention. In order to make advertising texts more powerful and successful, advertisers use linguistic and speech strategies. As a result, much attention is paid to the study of this notion.

In order to be successful and influential, an advertising text has to be laconic, brief, clear and accurate, thus delivering the most significant information in a few words.

Advertising discourse and advertising text are intended to have an impact on diverse social groups of people as they appeal to a specific frame of mind.

Due to their laconic nature, advertising texts are particularly instrumental in implementing various linguistic strategies. This, in particular, can help make the connection with pragmalinguistics as it identifies which grammatical and lexical units, stylistic devices or syntactic means will be used.

In the majority of cases, advertising is created not only to provide people with information, but to

*‘Due to its laconic nature, advertising text is an example of the most efficient way to implement various linguistic means’*

stimulate imagination. In order to achieve this goal, advertising texts use various stylistic devices, such as irony and metaphor.

The expansion of the Internet has also influenced the development of advertising texts. A single online advertisement may contain different styles and devices – graphic (capital letters, italics), phonetic (alliteration, repetition, rhyme, contrast), lexical (personal pronouns) and syntactic (questions, imperative constructions). In addition, there are extra-linguistic features that characterise advertising messages. According to a study by Liu (2012), the two main groups of extra-linguistic features are primary and secondary. Primary features include subject of an advertisement, its aims and objectives, author identity and recipient identity. Secondary features include distribution channels and conditions of communication.

Focusing on online advertising, we identify other extra-linguistic features that play a significant role in persuading people to adopt a particular attitude or course of action. As online advertising is one-sided communication, advertisers need to use

more tools of persuasion. Both the target audience and the producer will influence the way an advertising text is created and presented.

Let us consider the influence of the target audience, for instance, on the choice of language. If one produces advertisements for children, it is necessary to implement simple words in order for children to understand the advertising message. Advertisements for adults, on the other hand, can use more complicated grammatical constructions as well as some common specialised terms.

### 3.3 Discourse strategies

Another way to make advertising texts more persuasive is to implement a number of speech strategies. There are many definitions of a speech strategy. In this study, speech strategy is interpreted as a combination of speech acts which purpose is to achieve the communicative goal of the speech process. A person manages their speech behaviour in compliance with several important characteristics, such as cognitive plan, the role and personal qualities of participants of the communication process, communication traditions and so on.

As mentioned before, the choice of speech strategies as well as other linguistic and extra-linguistic factors depends on the target of the advertisement. Issers (2006) defines speech strategies as a combination of speech actions

designed to address the general communicative aim of the speaker. However, it is important not to confuse speech strategies and communicative strategies. Though these two notions are closely interrelated, they need to be accurately differentiated. Speech strategies are used to implement communicative strategies, while communicative strategies consist of speech strategies and extra-linguistic features (Issers, 2006, p. 284). Implementing speech strategies helps potential recipients change their point of view, tune in to public opinion and make a decision, hopefully in favour of the advertiser.

It is a wide-spread belief that people have a negative attitude towards advertising. However, exposed to the same advertisement on a regular basis, one will inevitably think about its message whether one likes its content or not.

### 3.4 Social vs commercial advertising

The main difference between social and commercial advertising is that social advertising is not aimed at selling some specific range of products. The role of social advertising is to change the model of human behaviour and bring into the public eye the most significant phenomena and global issues. Therefore, social

advertising is able to develop new social values.

The target audience here is not a particular social class but the society at large. This is because social issues, as a rule, are related to people all over the world as they tend to have similar problems and concerns. Social advertising is of great interest to public organisations and charities as well as to governments.

Legal definition of the term 'social advertising' is suggested in Article 3 of the Federal Law of the Russian Federation 'On advertising' dated March 13, 2006 No. 38-ФЗ: *'Social advertising is information distributed by any ways and in any form using any means and addressed to uncertain scope of people and aimed at achieving charity and any other publicly useful goals as well as provision of government interests.'*<sup>1</sup>

Currently, there are several targets of social advertising campaigns, including family (child protection, family values, etc.), society (social development, social rights, discrimination, etc.), health care (standard of living, population, lifestyle, disease prevention, smoking, etc.), and ecology (deforestation, pollution, environmental protection, animals and plants extinction, etc.).

The language used in social advertising makes

<sup>1</sup> The Federal Law of the Russian Federation 'On advertising' dated March 13, 2006 No. 38-ФЗ. Retrieved from [http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=LAW&n=304150&fld=134&dst=1000000001\\_0&rnd=0.2691413210415823#044094315889519264](http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=LAW&n=304150&fld=134&dst=1000000001_0&rnd=0.2691413210415823#044094315889519264)

abundant use of imperative constructions. The particle 'not' is also used rather frequently in social advertising as a way of attracting attention to what not to do. The goal of social advertising in such cases is not only to warn people, but to prohibit certain action.

#### 4. STUDY AND RESULTS

Having analysed over a thousand advertising texts used in social advertisements, we find three common speech strategies used in social advertising discourse – namely, warning, persuasion and argumentation strategies (Fig. 1).

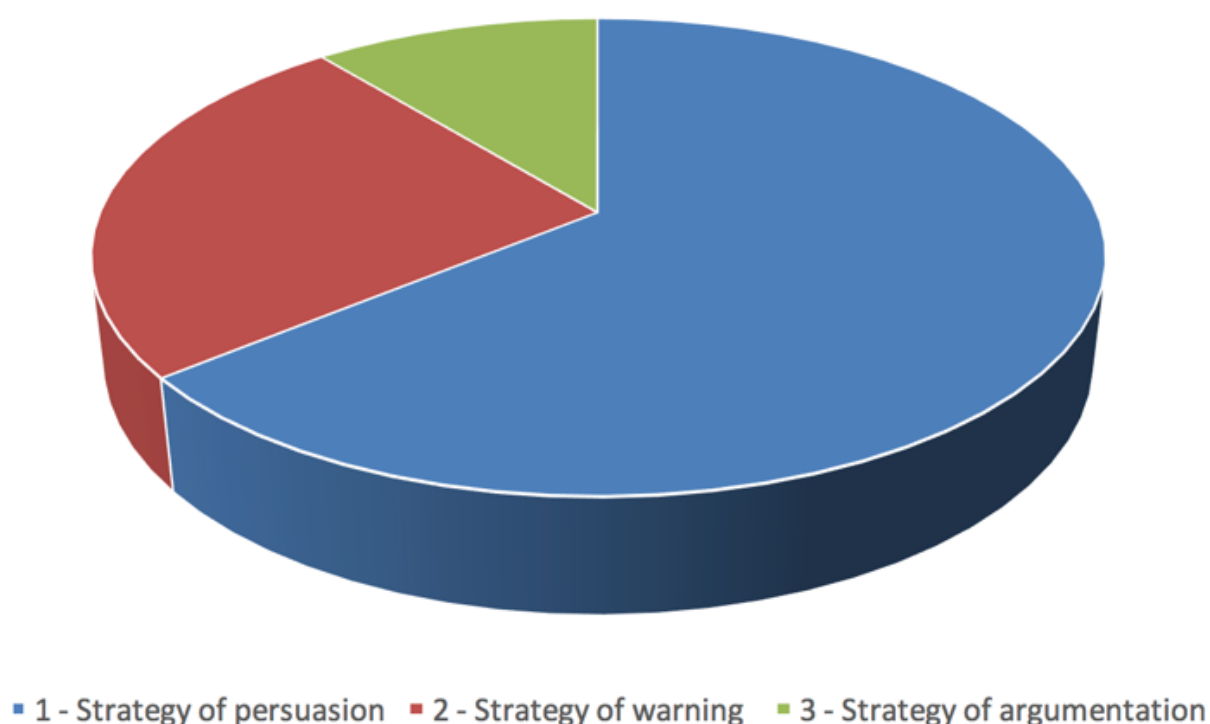


Figure 1. Frequency of occurrence of persuasion, warning and argumentation strategies in online social advertising

The strategy of warning is realised using the tactics of showing ways of problem solving. Such types of advertisements suggest what can be done to address the current issue and/or offer ways to avoid its negative consequences. Thus, the following example shows that careless driving may have certain consequences, often tragic and dramatic (Fig. 2):

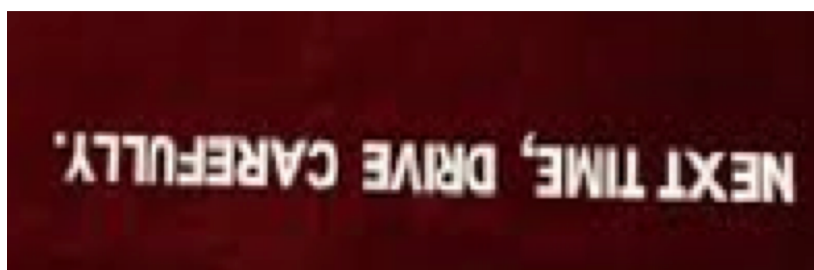


Figure 2. Example the strategy of warning realised in online social advertisement

It is not accidental that the text of the advertisement is turned upside down, as it targets those who prefer not to abide by the rules and are thus more likely to end up in a car accident. This category of people needs to be reminded that they are responsible for the lives of others – be it passengers or pedestrians.

*'HE SEES A LOT MORE OF HIS MOM  
NOW THAT HE'S LOST HIS LICENCE.  
MAYBE SHE'LL GIVE HIM DATING ADVICE.  
DRINKING & DRIVING  
IS IT REALLY EVEN WORTH IT?'*

In this case the tactics of showing ways of problem solving is used to highlight the impropriety of certain decisions and thus serves as a reminder that before doing something one should think whether it is really worth it. This particular advertisement is telling a story of a man who has decided to drink before driving. The consequences of this decision are rather predictable – he loses his licence. That is why, now if he wants to go on a date, he needs to ask his mom to give them a lift.

The warning strategy in this particular example also relies on sarcasm and a rhetorical question as 'backup' tools in making the point. Thus, sarcasm appeals to the sense of shame, reminding the irresponsible driver that he might at some point have to rely on his mother in intimate matters and listen to her advice on how to handle his love life. Rhetorical questions are also frequently used to make people think about their behaviour and possible responsibility. In this advertisement, the rhetorical question is introduced by 'maybe'.

*'Maybe you will be lucky enough and you will just lose your licence. However, there is a possibility that you will injure or even kill somebody. So, should you think twice before getting behind a wheel drunk?'* The answer is, obviously, yes.

Another strategy which is also used in social advertising is the strategy of argumentation that is implemented by the use of emphasis. Such advertisements commonly appeal to facts and statistics, as in: *'Over 20% of all deaths in the US are from TOBACCO.'*



The last strategy – the strategy of persuasion – is admittedly the most popular among advertisers. Its primary tactic is associated with an appeal to emotions and is implemented through linguistic devices, such as the present continuous tense, imperative constructions, modal verbs, the passive voice and impersonal sentences.

*‘Without a plan, it’s like you’re leading them to disaster. Your family’s safety is in your hands.’*

The advertiser appeals to emotions, addressing one of the most important of human interests – family. The picture that accompanies the words is an image of a child caught in the middle of a natural disaster. This advertisement is designed to remind the parents that bringing a child to this world is a responsible endeavour. If one decides to have a baby, one should prepare for it, giving consideration to a variety of issues involved.

Making a decision to have children is supposed to turn a person into a responsible individual, who will be expected to always have a plan. Bringing up a child is not an easy task at all, and if one doesn’t take care of all the aspects the bringing up process, nobody will do it for them. This is why advertisers use a well-known idiom ‘in your hands’ meaning ‘accepting responsibility’.

*‘GLOBAL WARMING IS LEAVING MANY HOMELESS’*

This social ad once again appeals to emotions, making the target audience stop and think about the environment, the planet, and its inhabitants. The problem of global warming is extremely urgent nowadays. The climate is changing, the glaciers are melting, and the average temperature is rising. All these factors influence not only human life but also the lives of animals, such as, for example, polar bears who cannot stand a hot climate and are now registered as an endangered species.

The advertisement calls on us to pay attention to this problem because one of the major reasons for global warming according to scientists is the human impact on the environment. The climate is changing in response to external man-made forces causing both drops and rises in temperatures.

One of the examples of such impact is the growing greenhouse gas emissions. The key message of the advertisement thus has to do with reminding people that they are to be held accountable for the unfortunate environmental changes taking place across the globe.

Therewith, the present continuous form of the verb shows that the existing problem is really dangerous, because the process of global warming is accelerating. This means that every hour, minute and second a certain number of animals lose their homes.

*women need to*

*women need to be put in their place*

*women need to know their place*

*women need to be controlled*

*women need to be disciplined*

***women need to be seen as equal***

Today the question of gender equality is broadly discussed everywhere as feminists struggle for the right to be treated equal to men. The advertisers highlight this problem by using the strategy of persuasion in order to appeal to target audience's emotions. In fact, the issue is rather pressing.

According to the UN reports, we are currently far away from a world where men and women are treated equally. This is especially true in terms of employment, responsibilities and salaries. Many educated women cannot find an adequate job, and even if they do, it is quite possible that they will earn less money than a man in the same position.

For example, in countries such as Sweden and France women can earn 31% less than men, and in emerging countries – 75% less than men.

In addition, the advertisers use bold and cursive types in order to attract attention, and make use of passive constructions and impersonal sentences to show that it is appealing not just to women but to a general audience.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Online advertising is viewed as one of the major channels used to persuade people to take certain action, which is why the majority of advertising agencies prefer to use this medium as is a quick way to reach the target audience.

Social advertising differs from commercial advertising in that it isn't intended to make people purchase a product, and it isn't about gaining profit. On the contrary, its key goal is to advise on difficult situations or modify social norms and behavioural patterns within the society. People usually take notice of such advertisements as they can sometimes help them find a solution to their problems.

The key aim of this article was to classify the most frequently used speech strategies in online social advertising. Having analysed a large number of online social advertisements, we find that the key strategies involved include warning, argumentation and persuasion. These strategies are implemented by means of such tactics as problem solving advice, appeal to emotions and emphasis.

In addition to these speech strategies, advertisers involved in social advertising use a wide range of linguistic devices, including graphic (capital letters, italics, and bold type,) lexical (personal pronouns), syntactical (rhetorical questions, the imperative and the present continuous tense), and

stylistic devices (irony and sarcasm).

The study highlights that speech strategies implemented in online advertising are yet to be thoroughly investigated. Our hope is it will be of

value to advertisers whose aim is to create the most influential and persuasive advertising and to researchers and teachers seeking to deconstruct the language of advertising and raise their students' critical awareness.

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# EU immigration in the British press: How was immigration reported immediately prior to the EU referendum?

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*This study examines the way in which European Union (EU) immigration was portrayed in the British press during the week immediately prior to the EU referendum of 23rd June, 2016. The research method is based on a combination of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, with the aim of providing both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the issue. It begins by establishing the rationale behind the proposed topic, before outlining the theoretical and methodological framework of this corpus-based approach to investigating news discourse, which includes the analysis of frequency, concordances and collocates as they occur in three national-wide, online newspapers, namely the Daily Mail, the Guardian and the BBC. Further findings in relation to DA are then discussed, followed by concluding remarks and observations concerning the limitations of this approach and the tool utilised within it.*

**KEYWORDS:** *corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, immigration, European Union, media, collocates, concordances*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is a truism to say that immigration has been one of the most prominent topics in UK public debate over the past decade (Allen & Blinder, 2016). This reached its peak during the period of 'Brexit' – a journalese contraction of Britain exits the EU.

Although Britain had been a member state since 1973, the British public had to decide on whether to leave or remain in the EU through voting in the EU referendum which took place on 23 June 2016. With a brief search of the internet, one can find numerous online news reports, articles and

editorials from around this time, justifying the various reasons why the British people were for or against their country being part of the EU. Among those who were in support of leaving, EU immigration was one of the most cited justifications.

In accordance with 'the right of free movement', EU member states must allow all EU citizens to enter their countries and work without any restrictions. As such, hundreds of thousands of Europeans have been permitted to live and work in

*‘The BBC is very popular among British people, although it has been criticised for pro-government bias’*

Britain. The Office for National Statistics estimates that there are more than 2 million EU nationals working in the UK.

Due to the increasing arrival and potential impact of EU immigrants to the UK as new states joined the Union, in particular those from ‘A8’ countries, the mass media has been covering this issue intently. The coverage has ranged from welcoming to fearful, with immigrants generally being viewed either as a much-needed workforce or a ‘flood’ of cheap labour, taking jobs away from the British population and causing an enormous strain on schools, health and housing services (Semotam, 2012, p. 2). Accordingly, this study aims to examine the discursive portrayal of EU immigration in the British press during the course of the week immediately prior to the EU referendum – from 16 to 22 June 2016.

The saliency and highly-contemporary nature of this issue lies at the heart of this study’s rationale, which adopts elements of corpus linguistics in its approach. Indeed, as Stubbs (2004) observes, much of corpus linguistic research is motivated purely by curiosity. However, such research still

has a significant role to play within linguistics, even though it is aimed at description and interpretation of its findings, rather than critical evaluation (Baker & McEnery, 2015, p. 3).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Corpus comes from a Latin term meaning ‘body’ (Baker & McEnery, 2015, p. 1). In its more modern sense, it can refer to a collection of texts of written or spoken language stored in electronic forms (O’Keeffe et al., 2007, p. 1). Corpus linguistics is a way of using computers to assist the study of language, since the sheer size of the corpus defies manual human analysis within any sensible timeframe (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 2). However, this study of the language goes beyond traditional approaches to analysis, which might focus on linguistic units and structures such as morphemes, words, phrases, and grammatical classes, etc. (Biber et al., 1998, p. 2). With corpus linguistics, the focus is on ‘real’ language use of naturally occurring texts (Vessey, 2015, p. 1). As such, Baker and Gabrielatos (2008) believe that corpus linguistics is more a methodological than a theoretical approach, yet there is consensus that it provides both quantitative and qualitative analysis of actual patterns in use in naturally-occurring, authentic texts (Biber et al., 1998, p. 4).

As regards this study, the corpus was developed by adopting many of Sinclair’s (2005) Basic Principles to provide a good practice framework. Firstly, the

criterion of this corpus was set to include written, rather than spoken texts. Since written corpus can be gathered quickly using the internet (O’Keeffe et al., 2007, p. 5), news articles published on websites were compiled.

Secondly, balance was ensured by varying the selection to give a breadth of opinions, diverse political views, differing ideological positions and different target groups. Accordingly, the Daily Mail, the Guardian and the BBC were selected to ensure such range. According to a survey run by the internet-based market research firm, YouGov UK, the Daily Mail is seen as Britain’s most right-wing newspaper. Statistics show its print title and its website reached an average 18.4 million individuals a month, through both its print and digital formats, from July 2015 to June 2016.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Guardian is seen as Britain’s most left-wing newspaper. The BBC is very popular among British people, although it has been criticised for pro-government bias. Nonetheless, it is still a source of news being read world-wide.

Thirdly, the size of the corpus was carefully considered. Size is usually operationalised by the number of running words or ‘tokens’.

Heterogeneity is also important – essentially, it is how large the corpus is measured as ‘word-types’ or different parts of speech such as nouns, verbs,

adjectives, etc. (Stubbs, 2004, p. 113). This study is based on a corpus of nearly 20,000 words formed from 20 texts. O’Keeffe et al. (2007) consider any corpus below five million words as small, and certainly, when comparing it to other corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC) – a 100-million-word collection of samples, this corpus is indeed small.

Yet, an additional measure of size should be considered, that of ‘linguistic influence’ or the size of the audience of the texts comprising the corpus. Since this corpus is based on online news articles, which tend to be freely accessible to a vast number of national and international readers, as the aforementioned Daily Mail stats affirm, this corpus can, therefore, be considered substantial in size.

Consequently, the corpus was built by searching each of the newspapers’ online archives between the dates of 16 to 22 June 2016, using the search terms ‘EU immigration’. So as to avoid any subjective selection and to present a systematic analysis, rather than presenting a covert polemic, all the articles containing ‘EU immigration’ in the titles only were chosen, instead of ‘cherry-picking’ the texts which could be seen as proving a preconceived point (Baker & McEnery, 2015, p. 5).

In order to make the corpus manageable, articles that contained ‘EU immigration’ in the body but



not in title were discarded. The timeframe of the week immediately prior to the referendum was selected based on the thinking that news coverage would be at its peak during this time, and would potentially yield greater contributions and ultimately clearer findings concerning the topic of EU immigration with which to answer the question posed by this study.

### 3. STUDY AND RESULTS

#### 3.1 Frequency

The data was stored in plain text format, comprising a single corpus of 20 separate files or sub-corpus consisting of 20 064 words in total. By using the developed version of AntConc 3.4.4m (Macintosh OSX)2014 and referring to the work of Baker (2006), the analysis of the news discourse has been carried out to explore frequency, concordances and collocates.

Frequency is one of the most basic tools of the corpus linguistics. It is used to illuminate interesting findings and provide users with greater understanding of the use of a given word in certain contexts (Baker, 2006, p. 47). In this study, frequency analysis was used to investigate whether there was any variation in the news discourse or it was comparatively homogenous, whilst bearing in mind the different political orientations of each newspaper that comprised the data.

Although many corpus studies discard individual

*‘Although many corpus studies discard individual words as units of meaning, and instead investigate them as a part of phrasal units, words are still a good starting point, since the more frequent a word is, the more important it is to investigate’*

words as units of meaning, and instead investigate them as a part of phrasal units, words are still a good starting point, since *‘the more frequent a word is, the more important it is to investigate’* (Stubbs, 2004, p. 115-116). This was achieved by obtaining the Word List or a list of all tokens and types, alongside their rank and frequency in the corpus. The initial results show that the corpus consists of 20064 tokens and 3099 types.

However, this raw frequency list reveals that the most frequent words in the corpus are ‘functional words’ – pronouns and determiners, rather than ‘content words’ – nouns, adjectives or verbs (Baker, 2006, p. 53). Usually, functional words are not subject to any further analysis. However, the abbreviation ‘EU’ (rank: 9, frequency: 217) and the content word ‘immigration’ (rank: 12, frequency: 165) appeared amongst the highest frequent words in the list (Table 1):

Table 1

*List of raw frequency*

Rank	Frequency	Word
1	1299	the
2	661	to
3	528	of
4	453	in
5	432	and
6	395	a
7	311	that
8	281	is
9	217	EU
10	209	for
11	174	it
12	165	immigration
13	164	on
14	159	from
15	157	are
16	148	we

By clicking on 'Lemmas Word Form(s)' heading to the right of the word list in Table 1, other 'lexical lemmatised forms' that are directly connected to immigration were obtained. Lemmatised forms are defined as '*a set of lexical forms having the same stem and belonging to the same major word class*' (Baker, 2006, p. 55). These included:

- migration (frequency: 83)
- immigrant (frequency: 9)
- immigrants (frequency: 53)
- migrant (frequency: 8)
- migrants (frequency: 54)

The high frequency of the abbreviation 'EU', 'immigration' and its lemmatised forms helps to give us a clearer idea about the main focus of the data.

A further consideration of the analysis was 'clusters'. The study of clusters can be understood as '*considering frequency beyond a single word*' (Baker, 2006, p. 56). As such, it is useful to obtain a general sense of the portrayal of EU immigration in each of the newspaper texts. This was obtained by using the word list to search for 'immigration' in six-word clusters, as three or two

word-clusters did not give any clear idea about the most common patterns in the corpus. The results showed that most clusters occurred with nearly the same frequency. Strikingly, one specific cluster that contains identical words and concentrated on exactly the same idea was common to all three newspapers:

The Daily Main (3 occurrences):

- *immigration to the tens of thousands annually*
- *immigration to the tens of thousands and*
- *immigration to the tens of thousands, which*

The Guardian (3 occurrences):

- *immigration to the tens of thousands of*
- *immigration to the tens of thousands, which*
- *immigration to tens of thousands, featured*

The BBC (1 occurrence):

- *immigration to tens of thousands featured*

Such identical clusters appear to suggest that the number of EU immigrants who have entered or may enter the UK was the one of the main concerns prior the vote. Moreover, other clusters and their repeat occurrences were likewise suggestive of the general attitude of each newspaper. For example, in the Daily Mail clusters such as: *'immigration system is a social disaster'*, *'immigration, alongside the threat of Islamic terror'*, *'immigration and the migration crisis'* were found. While the BBC: *'immigration threat or*

*opportunity?'*, and the Guardian: *'immigration should be controlled'*, *'immigration has hijacked the debate'*, *'immigration. People are scared'*.

As it can be seen, immigration was evaluated negatively in those newspapers, although the negative evaluation tends to be more intensive in the Daily Mail in comparison to the other two newspapers. As such, readers are presented with the disadvantages of immigration and encouraged to make negative associations, especially were the word 'immigration' is clustered with words and phrases such as 'Islamic terror', 'crisis', 'threat', rather than say 'much-needed workforce', which actually does not appear in the corpus at all. Admittedly, the BBC appears to be more balanced by questioning whether immigration is 'threat or opportunity'.

The final stage in frequency analysis involves carrying out a dispersion plot. This provides visual representations of where 'immigration' is located in each text and, in turn, it allows us to compare the occurrences across multiple texts (Baker, 2006, p. 60.). 'Immigration' occurs at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of most texts. The most occurrences appeared throughout the Daily Mail text of 20 June with 29 occurrences, whilst it was only mentioned once in the middle of the Guardian text of 22 June, even though the article was published one day before the referendum. This pointed to the possibility that the Daily Mail had

used the repetition as a technique to reinforce the notion that there was no possible way to reduce the immigration number without actually leaving the EU. This was then verified using the 'View File' feature to extract corresponding sentences from the Daily Mail text of 20 June, such as:

*You may be surprised to read that I believe the Prime Minister has done everything in his power to control immigration. The problem is that as the leader of an EU member state, he does not have enough power to control immigration.*

*On many occasions, in public and private, I heard David Cameron set out his belief that precisely to protect this proud British heritage of welcoming people to our shores, immigration had to be controlled.*

### 3.2 Concordances

Concordances are central to a corpus-based approach (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 1). They are useful in conducting more qualitative forms of analysis than simply looking at frequent words/phrases (Baker, 2006, p. 77). A concordance analysis is the most effective technique with which to carry out a close examination of the key words in the corpus.

By using the concordance function, concordance lines of the search word obtained. Each line contains the search word alongside a number of

context words which appear on either side of it in a word string. With the hope of obtaining different sorts of results, the separate searches were carried out for 'EU' in the Daily Mail, then the BBC, and finally the Guardian. By looking at the two words/phrases occurring to the left of 'EU' in the 224 concordance lines, the results were as following:

The Daily Mail:

- number of EU
- Colchester, 77,000 EU
- as 270,000 EU
- were 178,000 EU
- at 188,000 EU
- three million EU
- two million EU

The BBC:

- at 188,000 EU
- three million EU
- number of EU
- figure for EU

The Guardian:

- number of EU

Predictably, the main focus of most articles is still on the number of immigrants that clusters analysis showed previously. This gives further indication that the number of EU immigrants was the main source of concern of all the articles. Furthermore, concordances give a deeper insight into how

*‘This pointed to the possibility that the Daily Mail had used the repetition as a technique to reinforce the notion that there was no possible way to reduce the immigration number without actually leaving the EU’*

immigrants were measured, with the exact numbers in most cases, in an attempt to provoke alarm over their growing number.

AntConc has a function called ‘wildcard’ which enables searching more than one word at a time (Baker, 2006, p. 75). For example, when adding an asterisk symbol (\*) at the beginning or at the end of ‘migrate’, one can retrieve words such as migrants, migrant, migration etc. As for this analysis, \*migrate and migrate\* were fed into the search bar separately. Examples of concordance lines taken from the Daily Mail text of 22 June are as follows:

*We control our OWN immigration: **Soaring** migrant numbers but independent Norway say*

*of independence saying it can cope with its **soaring** migration and run its own industries*

*when the situation is safer. It has seen **soaring** migration it is a member of the European*  
Nevertheless, in order to understand the

effectiveness of such concordances in news discourse analysis, it is essential to understand the ‘semantic prosody’ they reveal. ‘Semantic prosody’ is a term used by Louw (1993) to mean a word that tends to collocate with certain other words, phrases or constructions in a particular environment, in a way that they render specific connotative and attitudinal meanings. Stubbs (1995) gives an example of the word ‘cause’ which tends to collocate with ‘accident’, ‘cancer’ and so on, and therefore is associated with negative semantic prosody. While ‘provide’ tends to collocate with ‘food’, ‘help’ and ‘support’, and is thus associated with positive semantic prosody (O’Keeffe et al., 2007, p. 14-15). Accordingly, the concordance lines of this corpus reveal that ‘immigration’ and its lemmatised forms co-occurred repeatedly with certain words and phrases, to give negative semantic prosody. They include:

- ‘*migrant crisis*’
- ‘*wave of immigration*’ and ‘*flood of immigrants*’
- ‘*soaring immigrant number*’, ‘*load of migrants*’ and ‘*increasing number of migrants*’ ‘*migrant influx*’ and ‘*queues of immigrants*’
- ‘*EU immigrants were convicted of 700 crimes a week*’
- ‘*undesirable migrants*’ and ‘*anti-immigrant*’
- ‘*swarm of immigrants*’ and ‘*jungle, the migrant camp*’

On the other hand, ‘skilled immigrants’ was found

*‘The results show that ‘cut’ and ‘control’ are the strongest collocates associated with ‘immigration’ while ‘future’ and ‘reducing’ are the strongest collocates modifying ‘immigration’ in the whole corpus’*

in the Guardian text of 20 June, which is an instance of positive sematic prosody, referring to EU immigrants through their contributions to the British society. However, the overarching context negates such positivity, and generates negative prosody overall, as shown in the extract below:

*Not that the thorny issue of immigration was one that Cox ever sought to dodge. As recently as last week, she wrote a piece for the website Politics Home arguing that Britain had reaped many benefits from welcoming skilled immigrants. But she also acknowledged that, across the country, people faced everyday worries about job security, school places and GP appointments.*

### 3.3 Collocates

Baker (2006) distinguishes between collocates – ‘when a word regularly appears near another word, and the relationship is statistically significant in some way’; and collocations – ‘the phenomena

of certain words frequently occurring next to or near each other’ (Baker, 2006, p. 95-96).

In the present discussion, this corpus study shall focus primarily on collocates. Echoing Allen and Blinder (2016), the collocates analysis focuses on verbs and modifiers that closely associate with ‘immigration’. As the authors explain, ‘modifiers are words that describe, characterise or intensify something’ (Allen & Blinder, 2016, p. 7).

On AntConc, one can set ‘collocates span’ which determines how many words to the left or to the right of the search word to look at. For this analysis, it was set to one word to the left and then two words to the left. That made it possible to find phrasal verbs which could collocate with ‘immigration’. AntConc also has a statistical measure which calculates how strong or weak a word collocates with the search word. The search was sorted by ‘Stat’, the collocation strength measure, that is based on ‘Mutual Information’ (MI), and the results show that ‘cut’ and ‘control’ are the strongest collocates associated with ‘immigration’ while ‘future’ and ‘reducing’ are the strongest collocates modifying ‘immigration’ in the whole corpus (Table 2).

Looking down the list, one can see that most of the collocates tend to produce negative semantic prosody, apart from a few exceptions such as ‘defended immigration’ and ‘fairer immigration’.



Table 2

*The strongest collocates associated with 'immigration'*

Rank	Freq	Freq(L)	Freq(R)	Stat	Collocate
1	17	17	0	9.28823	about
2	4	4	0	9.20076	cut
3	2	2	0	8.20076	his
4	2	2	0	8.20076	future
5	11	11	0	8.07523	control
6	3	3	0	7.78572	reducing
7	3	3	0	7.78572	mass
8	1	1	0	7.20076	wider

*'Looking down the list, one can see that most of the collocates tend to produce negative semantic prosody, apart from a few exceptions such as 'defended immigration' and 'fairer immigration'*

In order to explore any possible day-to-day variation, a detailed analysis was carried out to search for all the verbs and modifiers which collocate with 'immigration', as they occurred in every article published on each day of the week immediately prior to the EU referendum. The findings were very interesting, revealing that the

Daily Mail tended to use collocates every day, but intensified such use just three days prior to the date of referendum, most of which conveyed negative evaluation.

The Guardian published an article on 22 June, containing no collocates, aside from functional words which have not been subject of any analysis.

The BBC, on the other hand, seemed to present more balanced arguments over the week, given that some of the occurring collocates were neutral-evaluative verbs such as 'comment on immigration', 'know about immigration' 'debate about immigration' and 'focus on immigration' (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Collocates having occurred in each article over the week*

The BBC			The Daily Mail		The Guardian	
Days	Verbs	Adjectives	Verbs	Adjectives	Verbs	Adjectives
16 June	Control end	fairer	Covered Could cut Decline in	Net	Control	Pro-
17 June	No article	–	Want lower Fuelled by Increase	–	No article	–
18 June	Control Debate about	–	Control Cut Solve	More Net	Control	Pro-
19 June	Worry about Comment on	Reducing	Push Increase Comment on Focus on	Mass Increasing	Debate on Relate	wider
20 June	Control Defended	Controlling	Meet Control Solve Curb Bring down Decline in	Broken Net High	Control Talk about Increase Think	Low Public
21 June	Lower Control	Mass	Cut Rise in Control Relate increase	Controlling Reducing Mass high	Control Focus on Know about	Controlling
22 June	Control	Mass Controlling	Reduce end Cut Lower Clamp down limit Fuelled by	Mass Net Tough Firm Reducing Soaring	–	–

### 3.4 Concluding analysis

The use of techniques associated with CL in carrying out DA is becoming increasingly popular (Baker et al., 2008, p. 275). DA is well-defined as the observations of the language patterns in use, as well as the context and circumstances associated with it, such as participants, situations, purposes and outcomes. Accordingly, discourse analysts tend to notice patterns systematically and to objectively produce, as far as possible, description, interpretations, explanations of their investigations (Trappes-Lomax, 2004, p. 133). The effectiveness of the synergy between CL and DA has been summed-up by Partington (2003), who explains that *'it helps to reveal examples of the phenomena that one has already noted. At the other extreme, it reveals patterns of use previously un-thought of. It can reinforce, refute or revise a researcher's intuition and show them why and how much their suspicions were grounded'* (Partington, 2003, p. 85).

As for this study, the overall impression was that a negative portrayal of EU immigration is common to all three news sites – the Daily Mail, the Guardian and the BBC News. Immigrants were frequently quantified and referred to in terms of numbers, which has a rather dehumanising effect. Even the Guardian, which is seen as being a liberal broadsheet reflective of left-wing public opinion, tended to portray immigrants in this manner.

This study likewise found there to be a marked tendency towards immigrants being reported using metaphors of racist discourse. For instance, words such as 'jungle' were used to describe immigration camps, and immigrants themselves were referred to as a 'swarm' – words usually associated with animals and insects.

Van Dijk (1987) identifies four classes of topics within the racist discourse, and one of these can be observed in the news coverage which reported that immigrants are involved in negative acts that threatens the British society: *'EU immigrants were convicted in 700 crimes a week'*.

As for 'wave of immigrants' and 'flood of immigrants', Van der Valk (2003) believes such metaphors symbolise the loss of control over immigration, and thus they can be seen to infer that the only way to control the process is to leave the EU. Other representations refer to the EU immigrants as 'queues' or 'influx', essentially, indistinguishable masses with no identity (Baker, 2006, p. 88). They are also labelled as 'undesired' and appear alongside words such as 'crisis', in a way that dehumanises them (Baker et al., 2008, p. 287).

Given these findings, it is worth considering how such negative representations of EU immigration in the press might actually translate into British public opinion.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

It is repeatedly quoted that media plays an essential role in our lives. The availability and popularity of social media and online news websites mean that press articles can be easily shared, reaching an enormous number of people. However, despite such wide availability, ordinary people generally have no direct effect on news content and they are not the major actors of news reports, rather this is the domain of the 'elite' such as journalists, scholars, writers and politicians, who have access to public discourses and communicative events (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 12). According to Baker and Gabrielatos (2008), these elites exercise their power by selection, acceptance or rejection of news content according to their agenda.

Consequently, they play an essential role in the reproduction of dominant knowledge and ideologies in society. However, newspapers also seek financial interests through sales, which are based on market forces. Therefore, they tend to report issues within the readers' concerns and aim to reflect their views. Readers usually pick up the newspapers that are in accordance with their perceptions and attitudes. Rejection, disbelief or criticism may be '*obstacles to the elites' access to the minds of the public through media*' (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 13). For that reason, media tends to employ 'us and them' ideology, which Van Dijk (2006) refers to as '*an ideological square*' which

*focuses on the representations of two groups: ingroup's positive evaluation and outgroup's negative evaluations, emphasising 'our good things' and 'their bad things' and de-emphasising 'our bad things' and 'their good things'* (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 734).

This model clearly demonstrates that media discourse has the ability to exert influence over the opinions and actions of its readership, who construct mental representations of the information they digest from new stories. In turn, these representations are influenced by what Van Dijk (1995) terms 'socially shared knowledge' or knowledge composed of prevailing beliefs and attitudes shared by the readers' social networks. When encountering news items, readers make use of this shared knowledge along with their own mental constructions in order to digest and make sense of what they are reading. Accordingly, Van Dijk observes that the media has a tendency to manipulate the structure of new items and their content so as to encourage particular mental representations and understandings among their readership.

Such manipulation might involve playing down or playing up the significance of certain information or individuals, giving greater or less coverage to particular people or particular topics, and of course deciding who or what makes it into the headlines.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Although Corpus Linguistics helps to enable an understanding of complex and often ambiguous media representations (Baker & Gabrielatos, 2008, p. 33), it is not without its criticism. Whilst it employs computers to objectively count and reveal linguistic patterns, human input is still necessary to interpret those patterns. Such interpretations have the potential to be biased and subjective (Baker et al., 2008, p. 275), especially since analysis of CL tends to focus on specific words or phrases and disregard their context, which can give a distorted image of the truth.

Analysing the corpus of this study has not been conducted without limitations. The analysis is based on searching for certain content words and ignored functional words such as 'they', 'it' and 'this' that were repeatedly used to refer to immigrants and immigration. Expanding the search to include these pronouns and determiners may produce additional supportive findings or provide completely different results (Baker, 2006, p. 90). Moreover, unlike many other programs such as WordSmith, AntConc is lacking some tools that produce more thorough analysis. For example, it does not provide 'type/token ratio', which is useful in showing the complexity or specificity of corpus. Also, it does not have a frequency percentage column, which gives the overall proportion of how a particular word contributes to the whole corpus. Finally, due to the small size of the corpus, the

frequency and concordances of most key words/phrases were very low.

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# Classification of English loanwords in Business Spanish

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*The article deals with the phenomenon of linguistic borrowing from English into Business Spanish. The author offers a classification of loanwords supported by examples from Spanish business media, identifies different groups of loanwords depending on the degree of their assimilation, analyses their role in Spanish economic discourse, and explores the use of some of the loanwords in the Spanish business press. The article also focuses on the link between globalisation and the spread of Anglicisms in the Spanish language, and studies the significance of linguistic borrowing in the field of translation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *linguistic borrowing, loanword, neologism, Anglicism, Spanglish, assimilation, xenisme, calque, false loan, business discourse*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Languages are dynamic, which means they change and grow continuously, and linguistic borrowing is a clear evidence of this change. Linguists acknowledge that change is one of the most important demonstrations of the vitality of a language because it proves its evolution and specific features, as well as the state of its technical, cultural and emotive development. Today, English is the main linguistic donor worldwide, and Spanish is obviously one of the many languages on the receiving end.

The influence of the English language on Spanish, as in many other languages, is profound because

English is a global language today and influences the lexicon of international business and economics, scientific and technical discourse and dominates international communication across the world. No doubt it will continue to do so for some time to come. Business language is a good example of this influence, proving that English has become the working linguistic tool of the business world. Business Spanish, for instance, presents a remarkable example of an ongoing English-to-Spanish linguistic borrowing. This is in part due to the fact that in early 2000 Spain managed to achieve a rapid increase in wealth among the countries of the Eurozone, thus producing a new generation of bankers and financial officers who

*‘The RAE acts as a linguistic referee for the Spanish language, monitoring and updating standardised words and usages with some degree of regularity’*

spoke fluent English and achieved financial and technological advances while aiming at expansion into global markets. While specialised Spanish associations have attempted to regulate the use of foreign words in Business Spanish by promoting the use of Spanish equivalents, Spanish-speaking business people still tend to prefer loanwords for practical reasons.

The excessive usage of loanwords creates a range of problems because, unlike English, Spanish has an international language standard, regulated by the Real Academia Española (RAE), a legislative body with a remarkable status within the Spanish-speaking community. The RAE acts as a linguistic referee for the Spanish language, monitoring and updating standardised words and usages with some degree of regularity. Despite the efforts of translators to find equivalent translation in Spanish, in the areas of finance and business most of the neologisms are actually in English.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The theoretical research was based on previous studies of the subject, such as those by Newmark

(1988), Baker (1992), Diéguez (2004), Lázaro-Carreter (1988), García-Yebra (2003) and Alcaraz (2000). Another source is one of the basic works of Chris Pratt, *Anglicisms in the Spanish language*, published in 1980. A number of issues of the *Emprendedores* business magazine were also studied in search of up-to-date examples.

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Linguistic borrowing can be narrowed down to the introduction of phonological, morphological, lexical and syntactic items from one language or variety into another. Borrowing occurs when two languages are in contact. While the so-called language contact is commonly observed between two linguistic communities of close geographical association, territorial proximity has come to play a much lesser role today, as the society has become media-based. Language change makes use of virtual space to affect the way language speakers use foreign terms in their speech or writing. In this linguistic interaction, the language providing the term is called ‘the donor’, while the language acquiring the item is called ‘the receptor’ (Bickerton, 2016).

Although most linguists use the term *borrowing* to describe the incorporation of terms from one language into another, some Spanish linguists consider borrowing an inappropriate term to describe a linguistic transaction in which the receptor language does not return the term to the

donor language. Rodríguez in his book *Functions of Anglicisms in contemporary Spanish* suggested using terms like *foreign word* or *alienism* when referring to borrowings (Rodríguez, 1996). However, despite the inappropriate semantic connotation, *borrowing* seems to be the term most used in the literature to refer to this linguistic act (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Borrowings from English have also been described as Anglicisms, neologisms, calque, and barbarisms.

Pennycook (2017) defines Anglicisms as items taken from English without any modification and specifies that calques appear when the term taken from the donor language is translated into the receptor language partially or completely (e.g. *lista de correo* – mailing list). Neologisms are lexical or semantic items created to name new inventions or concepts (e.g. *fax*, *módem*, *aplicación*). Barbarisms are foreign items written or pronounced inappropriately by speakers of the receptor language in their attempts to incorporate them into their language (e.g. *savear*). However, barbarisms can be replaced by translations that have already been proposed as ‘correct usage’ for the foreign items.

The difference in terminology is reflected in the first classification describing the form taken by foreign words adapted in Spanish. Hickey (2012) describes borrowings at the morphological, syntactic and lexical-semantic level.

### *‘In Spain, towards the end of the 20th century, several linguists studied the phenomenon of Anglicisms in peninsular Spanish’*

Morphological Anglicisms are borrowings adapting the morphological features of Spanish and eliminating the ones in the source language (e.g. *clubes*). Syntactic adaptations copy the word order, mode or aspect used in the source language, English (e.g. *López Editores*). Lexical-semantic borrowings are said to be the most frequent ones and consist of vocabulary items adopted in meaning or form by the receptor language (e.g. *correo-electronico*).

Montes (1993) presents categories like complete lexical borrowing, translation, semantic transfer or calque, morphosyntactic transfer and phonological transfer. The complete lexical borrowing reflects the adoption of the term in form and meaning (e.g. *internet*). Translation provides a term that imitates the source word in form and keeps the meaning (e.g. *computadora*). Calque refers to the semantic adoption of a term (e.g. *aplicación*).

Morphosyntactic transfer consists of copying the syntax or morphology of the source language (e.g. *el correo es enviado – se envía el correo*), and the phonological transfer copies the pronunciation of

the foreign word (e.g. *pc* – /pi-si/).

A famous Spanish lexicographer Maria Moliner defines Anglicism as ‘*an English word or expression used in another language*’ (Moliner, 1999). A more specific definition is offered by the Dictionary of Royal Academy of Spanish Language: ‘(1) *Manner of speaking in English.* (2) *Own language. Word or turn of the language used in another language.* (3) *Using English words or expressions in different languages*’ (DRAE, 2001, p. 32).

In Spain, towards the end of the 20th century, several linguists studied the phenomenon of Anglicisms in peninsular Spanish. The pioneer in this field was Emilio Lorenzo Criado, who published several pieces of research into the topic in the 1950s and continued doing so until the end of the 20th century (Criado, 1996; 1999). In classifying Anglicisms, Criado (1996) follows the linguistic criteria and examines Anglicisms by their degree of integration into Spanish.

1. Non-adapted Anglicisms – borrowed English words which keep their original orthography and pronunciation (e.g. *babysitter*, *sandwich*, *club*, *shorts*).

2. Adapted Anglicisms – borrowed English words which have been adapted to the Spanish language either in their orthography or in their pronunciation (e.g. *boxer*, *futbol*, *filme*, *folklore*).

3. Fully integrated Anglicisms – borrowed English words which have been fully integrated into the Spanish language (e.g. *turista*, *rosbif*, *sueter*).

4. Calques – literal translations from English of concepts unknown to the Spanish speaker (e.g. *rascacielos* – *skyscraper*, *perrito caliente* – *hot dog*).

5. Semantic calques – Spanish words that due to their close similarity with a corresponding English word receive a semantic meaning that they didn’t have before (e.g. *romance* – *amorios* from *romance*, *habilidad* – *competencia* from *ability*, *heroe* – *protagonista* from *hero*).

6. False Anglicisms – adaptations of English words that do not exist as such in the English language. There is an alteration from the original English form. Thus, nouns like *parking* are used in Spanish for *parking lot* or the mingling of a Spanish etyma with an English suffix, as can be seen in *puenting*, from ‘*punte*’ (*bridge*) plus the *-ing* suffix, to designate the activity of jumping from a bridge, as in bungee jumping.

7. Acronyms and abbreviations, such as e.g. *B2B* – *Business to Business*; *CFO* – *Chief Financial Officer*; *CMO* – *Chief Marketing Officer*; *GAAP* – *Generally Accepted Accounting Principles*; *LLC* – *Limited Liability Company*; *SOHO* – *Small Office / Home Office*).

Another significant figure is Chris Pratt, who took the decisive step towards understanding the modern concept of Anglicisms when he published his innovative work in the 1980s. Pratt shared many of Lorenzo's views and, like him, concentrated mainly on lexical Anglicisms establishing a solid categorisation of English borrowings. Chris Pratt defines a borrowing as '*a linguistic element or group thereof which is used in the peninsular Castilian contemporary and whose etymon has an English model*' (Pratt, 1980, p. 21).

Pratt also distinguishes between *the last etyma* and *the immediate etyma* explaining that the last etyma is the one that originally supplies a language. For example, in the case of the Spanish language, Anglicisms have been adapted from the English language but at the same time English has taken words from other languages. By contrast, the immediate etyma refers to the language that supplies the borrowing directly to the other language. Pratt (1980) writes that sometimes the linguistic facts are not enough to determine an etyma, so the external explanation is the answer to the source of borrowings. According to him, '*lexical Anglicisms are subdivided in univerbal lexical Anglicisms, and at the same time these Anglicisms are subdivided into patent Anglicisms which are those that are formed by just one word and the patent can be distinguished; and into non-patent Anglicisms which are divided in two groups*' (Pratt, 1980, p. 59). These are traditional

words or semantic calques which treat the Anglicism as a translation of the English term without any etymological relationship between the English word and its Spanish translation (e.g. *channel*). The author cites neologisms that are compound structures which have suffered a minimum orthographic adaptation.

Finally, lexical Anglicisms are subdivided into multiverbal and univerbal subtypes. Multiverbal Anglicisms are formed by more than one word and can be divided into two groups – complex binouns and collocations. Examples of complex binouns are *razcacielos* (skyscraper), *momento clave* (key moment), *coche bomba* (car bomb), *hora punta* (rush hour), *fecha limite* (limit date), etc. Examples of collocations are verb + noun type constructions (*lanzacohetes*), noun + adjective type constructions (*aire acondicionado*), adjective + noun type constructions (*proximo oriente*), and constructions with prepositions *de*, *en* (*campo de concentracion*).

Univerbal lexical Anglicisms are adapted (e.g. *boicot* – *boycott*, *boxear* – *to box*, *travelin* – *travelling*) or non-evident Anglicisms (e.g. *agresivo* instead of *activo*, *dramatico* instead of *sensacional*).

Stone (2007) introduces the diachronic aspect of incorporation of Anglicisms into the Spanish language with the following definition: '*Anglicisms*

are words used in its English form or derived from English; words that came from other languages into English, and this, in Spanish; or English to Spanish through French; terms and words created by English-speaking people and introduced into Spanish; uniquely Latin words used in an English meaning (semantic loans or contamination); and translations of tropes, complex and English idioms' (Stone, 2007, p. 85-86).

#### 4. STUDY AND RESULTS

The influence of Anglicisms in the Spanish language has been especially noted at the end of the twentieth century as they gained popularity in daily conversation. Anglicisms are used in different areas, such as politics, film, gastronomy, education, sports, music, fashion, and entertainment. For example, in politics, the word *lobby* (a group which tries to influence legislation and policy decisions), *NAFTA* (*North Atlantic Free Trade Area*), *mitin* (from *meeting*). In film, there are Anglicisms like *casting* (the selection process of actors in a play or film), *remake* (updated version of a movie), and *western* (movie set in the American West at the time of colonisation). In gastronomy, *rosbif* (comes from *roast beef*), *texmex* (a fusion of Texan and Mexican food), *fast food* (pre-cooked food prepared quickly), *snack* (small quick bite to eat outside), *picnic* (outdoor meal), *pudding* (English dessert made from flour, milk, eggs and fruit), etc. In education, *test* (exam), *mid-term* (the middle of an academic year), *campus*

*'In the 1980s Spain joins international organisations such as CEE, NATO making the country more influenced by external cultures'*

(the area where the buildings of a school or college are located) are common. In sports, *basket* (from *basketball*), *penalty* (punishment imposed for breaking team rules), etc. In music, *folk music* (traditional music), *New Age* (Electronic music style that induces calm and peace and *heavy metal* (hard rock music with a rhythm that is played with very high amplification). In entertainment, *performance* (presentation or public display in theatre, film, or music), *late show* (entertainment TV shows or movies usually beginning after midnight).

Concentrating more on the Anglicisms which are present in modern Business Spanish, one can observe the appearance of a large number of economic loanwords dating from the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. In the 1970s (later époque of Falangism), Spain started to collaborate with the USA. New processes of industrialisation imported from the USA started and a new middle class appeared. Following a number of educational advances, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) appeared. In the 1980s, Spain joined international



organisations such as the EEC (European Economic Community) and NATO, which increased the influence of foreign cultures. Finally, the 1990s opened up the principles of democratic freedom and the process of globalisation in the then-developing market economy.

This was reflected in changes in the Spanish language. In the 1980s, the beginning of the consumerism revolution, Anglicisms, such as *supermarket*, *second hand*, *self-service*, gained popularity. The Olympic Games in Barcelona and the International Exposition in Seville in 1992 gave Spain prestigious international recognition. At the same time, English began to 'invade' Spain after the technological revolution introduced by the Internet.

The language of economics serves many diverse purposes. It provides the members of an economic community – customers, investors or bankers – with the tools needed to discuss various business issues. Moreover, this sublanguage is not only used by specialists who belong to a restricted and linguistically homogeneous group, since each particular individual takes part in economic relations in one way or another. This is why the language of economics is closely related to general language use, which feature is stressed by Katamba (2004) who states that sometimes the jargon of a specialist group seeps into the common language of the wider community. This is

particularly likely to happen where the activities of that sub-group are fashionable or impinge directly on the life of the wider community.

Goods, techniques or fashions, although very important in intercultural exchange, do not govern the structure of these cultures. It is the language itself which influences not only other tongues but also the way a given populace speaks. The most remarkable sources of these influences are loanwords. This is why so many loanwords appear in the language of economics, which is determined by intercultural contacts as well as by intra-communication within a given community.

Also, Spanish business language makes abundant use of abbreviations, new terms, neologisms, Anglicisms and impersonal constructions. The following features are typical of Business Spanish: (1) as a denotative language, it avoids polysemy (multiple meanings of one word) to avoid translation issues; (2) as a functional language, it tends to be neutral and devoid of metaphorical expressions; (3) it doesn't use subjunctive mood; (4) it prefers impersonal constructions; and (5) it tends to deploy verbs such as *ser*, *estar*, *haber*, *existir*, *darse*, *esperar*, *exigir*, etc.

Thus, economic Anglicisms are economic terms coming directly from English. The following terms were listed in the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language:

*‘One of the best-known loan areas is the phenomenon we refer to as a xenisme, a term for borrowings incorporated into the target language by means of no phonological or morphological transformation’*

- *boicot, devaluación, planta* (1970);
- *auditar, balance, bluff, boom, brainstorming, centro comercial, centro editorial, centro industrial, clearing, consultoría, dumping, ejecutivo, establishment, especulaciones, especular, holding, leasing, marketing, máster, staff, stock, trust, trustee* (1984);
- *analista, consumismo, corporación, crack, deflación, devaluar, inc., lobby, marketing, merchandising, self-made man* (1992);
- *crac, deflactar, taylorismo, cheque, dólar* (2001) (DRAE, 2001).

In the area of economics and finance, types of borrowings such as *necessary neologisms* and *luxury neologisms* can be found, depending on the reasons for their incorporation. *Necessary neologisms* are installed in the language out of a need for a new word which has no corresponding term in the target language, as is the case with *joint venture* or *dumping*. There is no easy translation for this term, so it has to be glossed and

explained in Spanish. *Luxury neologisms* are incorporated for prestige reasons, as, in the area of economics, for example, is the case with *cash flow*, *hedge fund* and *call money* (*money loan repayable on demand*), all of which have an equivalent in Spanish (*flujo de caja*, *fondo de cobertura o de inversión libre* and *dividendo pasivo*, respectively). The original term is considered more technical or influential.

In the specific case of economic discourse, the incorporation of new words is swift and immediate, even more than in other ‘loan-prone’ areas like journalism or even politics, due to the ever-changing, neological character of this type of discourse. That is why, and due to the phenomenal influence of English as the language of international communication, as well as the exceptional mobility of the language of commerce, four types of Anglicisms can be defined in the area of business, the result of a loan process from the source language.

One of the best-known loan areas is the phenomenon we refer to as a *xenisme*, a term given for the borrowings that are incorporated into the target language with no phonological or morphological transformation. *Xenismes* show the respect of translators towards the source language culture, but in some cases, they may become unnecessary, as the translator’s task is to translate and, therefore, to explain (Newmark, 1988).

Examples of xenismes include *boom*, *CDs*, *credit default swaps*, *credit crunch*, *dealer*, *dumping*, *green shoe* and *insider trading*.

The next phenomenon is called *adapted loans* or *calques*. An adapted loan, or morphological calque, is a very common phenomenon in the realm of Spanish business and economics, for example with the words *suap* for *swap*, *reitin* for *rating*, *securitización* for *securitisation*. It happens when xenismes are consolidated and made easier to use, an alien graphism has been transformed into a pronounceable one. Common collocations, names of organisations and the components of compounds like *salto del gato muerto* for *dead cat's bounce*, *FMI* for *IMF*, or *mercado oso* for *bear market*, can be viewed as vivid examples.

*Semantic calques* describe a word or expression in one language which semantic components are translations from another language.

**Nouns:** *Posición* (puesto de trabajo) > *position*; *firma* (empresa) > *firm*; *planta* (fabrica) > *plant*; *canal* (cadena) > *channel*; *editor* (director) > *editor*; *encuesta* (investigación) > *inquest*; *corporación* (empresa privada) > *corporation*; *bancarización* > *banking*; *regularización* > *regularisation*; *sesión* (pase) > *session*; *sociedad* (gente conocida) > *society*; *company* > *tópico* (asunto, tema) > *topic*.

**Verbs:** *Posicionar* (colocar) > *to position*; *navegar*

(guiar en Internet) > *to navigate*; *reportar* (depender de alguien) > *to report*; *asumir* (suponer) > *to assume*; *aplicar* (solicitar) > *to apply*; *rentar* (alquilar, arrender) > *to rent*; *contemplar* (tener en cuenta, considerar) > *to contemplate*; *explotar* (estallar) > *to explode*; *acceder* (tener acceso) > *to access*; *impactar* (influenciar) > *to impact*; *publicitar* (divulgar, anunciar) > *to publicise*.

**Adjectives:** *agresivo* (intenso, activo, dinamico) > *aggressive*; *crucial* (decisivo) > *crucial*; *exclusivo* (especial, selecto) > *exclusive*; *serio* (importante) > *serious*; *sofisticado* (elaborado) > *sophisticated*; *tráfico* (tránsito) > *traffic*; *prospecto* (perspectivo, de futuro) > *prospective*.

The original use of *agenda* in Spanish is *diario* (diary). Nevertheless, this word is used in many articles with the meaning 'order of the day' in business meetings. This term was categorised by DRAE as an incorporated loanword bearing both meanings:

*En esa reunión, el jefe de la diplomacia chilena presentará a sus socios diversas iniciativas 'para desarrollar una agenda de diálogo de la Alianza con los demás Estados de la región', anunció hoy la Cancillería.*

The term *doméstico* is widely used in collocations like *domestic flights*, *domestic commerce*, *domestic communications* (*vuelos domésticos*,

*comercio doméstico, comunicaciones domesticas).*

In such cases, they just follow English examples, though in English the adjective *domestic* refers to something related to the home, family, or internal issues of a country. In this case, it's better to translate the word *domestic* as *nacional* (national) or *interior* (interior):

*Según destacó el Banco Central en su informe de Cuentas Nacionales, se evidenció una 'recomposición' entre ambos factores por una 'desaceleración' del **consumo doméstico**.*

Other examples of calques are *bancarotta* (bankruptcy), *Mercado bajista* (bear market), *burbuja* (bubble), *Mercado alcista* (bull market), *OPA oferta publica de adquisicion* (IPO, initial public offering), *OPV oferta publica de venta* (IPO initial public offering), *OPS oferta publica de subscription* (IPO initial public offering), *linea de credito* (line of credit), *activo toxico* (toxic asset) and *bono/hipoteca basura* (junk bond, mortgage).

As a general rule, if the Anglicism conforms to the morphological standards of Spanish, the user may decide to translate it literally. This particular case is an example of false transposition of a loanword, also known as a 'false friend'. Semi-technical terms in both Business Spanish and English are often cognate terms, with a common Latin origin with, in some cases, totally different meanings in each language.

This is a rather dangerous area in the translation of business English into Spanish. The difficulty with these words does not lie in identifying equivalent business/linguistic phenomena, but rather in misidentifying some words with formal similarity but conceptual difference. For such words, their Latin source would certainly convey an erroneous interpretation. When it comes to false cognates, we distinguish the words which are dangerous for the unwary speaker or translator, terms like guarantee (*aval*, not *garantía*), bonus (*retribución*, not *bono*) or corporation (*sociedad anónima*, not *corporación*) and numerous others, especially in the area of corporate and contract language, which have a similar morphology in both languages, but convey different meanings.

Such terms pose problems for Spanish speakers with little proficiency in English, or those with knowledge of English but little training in specialised business discourse.

The last area is that of *false loans*. This is a phenomenon that occurs occasionally, but relevantly, in Business Spanish, and needs to be identified as such by both the linguists and translators that move within the boundaries of business discourse in Spanish and English.

Previously, xenismes were identified as loanwords from the source language, including words like *broker* for the Spanish *comisionista*, or *dealer* for

*agente por cuenta propia*, where a minimum adaptation of graphetics (the way it is written) or pronunciation takes place.

On the contrary, false loans are not really borrowings, but are a consequence of the status and prestige of an international language such as English. They consist of an erroneous assimilation into the target language of a term that does not exist as such in the source language but has its morphological and phonetic origins in it as a *lingua franca*.

False loans are words commonly well settled in

the target language, as their original or translation equivalent into Spanish have long been forgotten. In opposition to false friends, a false xenisme does not come from a paronym (a word derived from the same root as another word) or a common root in both languages, but its etymology belongs entirely to the source language. Indeed, terms like *leasing*, *trust* or *holding*, are used in the English version both in oral and written Spanish, both by specialists and non-professionals.

Nevertheless, all of these terms have a common feature, the fact that they seldom reflect their true meaning in the source language (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Some false loanwords and their correct translation into Spanish*

False loan	English origin	Spanish translation
actual	real	real, efectivo
agenda	agenda	orden el día
anotar	to annotate	comentar
aplicar	(to) apply	solicitar
argumento	argument	discusión
asistir	(to) assist	ayudar
asumir	(to) assume	suponer
aviso	advice	consejo
botar	(to) boot	autoarrancar
calificación	qualification	título
candido	candid	franco
capturar	(to) capture	captar

clarificar	(to) clarify	aclarar
comando	command	orden
conferencia	conference	congreso
constricción	constraint	restricción
conveniente	convenient	oportuno
correctitud	correctness	corrección
cubrir	cover	Informar
cuestión	question	pregunta
decepción	deception	engaño
(por) defecto	(by) default	por omisión
desorden	disorder	alteración
destinación	destination	destino
editor	editor	redactor jefe
enfaticar	(to) emphasise	recalcar
evento	event	suceso
evidencia	evidence	prueba
extravagante	extravagant	derrochador
falta	fault	defecto
fuelle	font	tipo
gracioso	gracious	cortés
honesto	honest	honrado
ignorar	(to) ignore	no hacer caso
ilusión	illusion	irreal
instancia	instance	ejemplar
intentar	(to) intend	proponerse
largo	large	grande
lectura	lecture	conferencia
localización	location	lugar
media	media	medios

It is important to note that incorporations are, to a large extent, conditioned by discursive and contextual factors. Nevertheless, the analysis will have to take into account a relevant issue of the

context in which incorporations take place. Our focus has been based upon a sample of the specialised financial digital press, addressed mainly to financial users. We can observe that the



purest incorporations, xenismes, appear in the most specialised press, while combinations of pure loans + equivalence / adaptation coexistences and calques, are found in less-specialised sources.

Although there are many cases when Spanish equivalents can be found, Spanish professionals prefer to use loanwords with no change.

Nevertheless, there are cases where Anglicisms cannot be avoided, as Business English has spread rapidly all over the world and often there is no time to find equivalents in other languages.

Regarding the morphological analysis of the adapted Anglicisms, the following adaptations can be observed. In most cases, a change of accent takes place together with the change in some letters and the addition of the letter *e* at the beginning of the word.

The largest number of Anglicisms in Business Spanish are nouns. Regarding the type of Anglicisms adaptation in the majority of cases there are non-adapted Anglicisms (e.g. *business*, *background*, *leasing*), phonetically adapted Anglicisms (e.g. *ranking*, *marketing*, *parking*), semantic calques (e.g. *agenda*, *doméstico*, *firma*) and translated calques (e.g. *rascacielos*, *supermercado*, *videoconferencia*).

The peculiarity of the Spanish business language is that the incorporation of new words coming from

English is swift and immediate, even more so than in other 'loan-prone' areas like journalism or even politics, due to the ever-changing, neological character of this type of discourse. Also, due to the phenomenal influence of English as the language of international communication, there is usually no time to adapt these loanwords, so that they are widely used without any adaptation, which represents quite a serious problem for the adherents of the 'pure' Spanish language.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Using English borrowings implies redundancy, as they coexist with native terms. Spanish business language is marked with frequently occurring English economic terms.

In fact, Anglicisms really shape the current economic lexicon in Spanish, and mass media in general also contributes to this phenomenon. While the underlying reason for the dominant status of Anglicisms is the need to lexicalise new objects, techniques and concepts, it also has a lot to do with the perceived prestige in using foreign terms.

On the other hand, there are situations where rapid growth of economic development makes borrowings necessary just because there are no semantic equivalences in Spanish. Although Anglicisms are part of almost every type of discourse, business, commerce and marketing

discourses do tend to take on the greatest share of English borrowings. At the same time, the presence of Anglicisms in Business Spanish can be observed from two philological perspectives, the natural process of contact and dialogue between two linguistic codes and the necessity to enrich the Spanish language where necessary. In fact, this argument has a positive and a negative side. The positive argument is that Anglicisms are a good influence on the Spanish language as they help people communicate, especially when used in fields such as technology, music, travel, education,

etc., and are useful where there is no equivalent in Spanish. Sometimes, as in the sphere of marketing, finance and commerce, the use of economic English loanwords is really inevitable. Translators working in this sphere intentionally opt for loanwords or calques for practical reasons, to make the terms understandable for specialists.

On the other hand, if a word exists in the Spanish language and is not particular to any field, it should be considered preferable for language preservation reasons.

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# Review

## **Intercultural Communication: An Interdisciplinary Approach. When Neurons, Genes and Evolution Joined the Discourse**

by Dr Mai Nguyen-Phuong-Mai

Creative Language Coaching Limited 2017

Reviewed by <sup>(1)</sup>Philip Williams

<sup>(1)</sup> Creative Language Coaching Ltd.

In the preface to this book, Dr Mai Nguyen-Phuong-Mai describes how as a journalist she was always struck by the emphasis people put on cultural difference and, on entering the field of intercultural communications as an academic, she felt this was repeated in her new field of study. Indeed, she points out later on in the book how the discipline of intercultural communications was founded in the context of the Cold War and an environment of conflict, which led to a focus on difference and obstacles between cultures rather than similarities. Driven by a desire to find what different cultures could share rather than stress their differences, Dr Mai explains how she went on a journey to explore the subjects of biological evolution and cultural neuroscience – neurons, genes and evolution. This book is her summary of

that journey. The book is a penetrating and wide-ranging tour of intercultural communications through the prism of these new disciplines.

The book is written in a style that will appeal to both academic readers but also practitioners. Each chapter highlights at the beginning the objective of the chapter and then concludes with a summary not just of the theoretical points made but also practical action steps, which will be of great help to readers and students to come to terms with her wide-ranging arguments and concepts that may well be new to many.

As well as introducing new disciplines to the study of intercultural communications, Dr Mai's book is characterised by her promoting non-mainstream

cultures in order to counter what she sees as the dominance of US and European views in intercultural communications.

She achieves this through her use of extensive case studies taken from non-mainstream cultures, her wide-ranging citations and marvellous use of compelling visuals to support her arguments. A list of where her visuals come from illustrates this point well. It includes: Papua New Guinea, India, Mexico, Tunisia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Norway, Tunisia, Japan, Libya, Yemeni, European Union, Egypt, Dubai, Lebanon, Oman, Sri Lanka, Malawi, Malaysia, N Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, Bhutan, Pacific Islands, Finland, South Africa and Pakistan.

Dr Mai opens her book with a chapter which acts as the foundation stone for the rest of the book. The author gives the reader a whistle stop tour through the role genes, neurons and evolution have in determining culture and behaviour. Drawing on her extensive research of these subjects and citing a wide range of sources including the highly influential *Wired for Culture* by Mark Pagel, Dr Mai explains how humans evolved from surviving through genetic evolution like other animals to short-cutting this process by developing social learning or culture and that culture should, therefore, be defined as a strategy for survival that is unique to humans and that with our capacity for social learning we no longer have to rely on very slow moving genetic improvement

like the rest of the animal kingdom.

Having defined culture thus, Dr Mai then asks a key question – why then do we have cultural diversity? I.e. why is there not just one culture but instead a huge number?

First, Dr Mai looks at the relation between environment and culture and the argument that environment is the main cause of there being different cultures. Citing Aristotle, Darwin's environmental determinism, Jared Diamond and others, she settles on the work of Julian Steward and his theory that the relationship between environment and culture is a dynamic one and that culture is not a consequence of nature but rather a 'strategy to interact with nature'.

Dr Mai then goes on to explain the existence of different cultures where the environment is identical. To address this question, Dr Mai quotes Pagel's argument that in essence the cause of diversity is a result of cultures seeking to protect themselves from having their ideas and knowledge stolen, i.e. that by creating a distinctive culture, knowledge could be safeguarded and that cultural barriers allowed knowledge to be shared in a more regulated and controlled way with groups that were not part of a given cultural group. Above all, language is the barrier that was created to create this regulation and control. Dr Mai argues that the complexity of our culture must be seen from a bigger angle, one that involves the physical and

genetic make-up of our body as well as the interaction between environment and culture. Building what she calls 'diversity pathways', i.e. the factors other than environment that contribute to cultural diversity, she looks in turn at the role of genes, brain and behaviour.

First, genes. Dr Mai argues that the power transition that has taken place in humans from genes to culture described above is not one-way, i.e. just as genes are crucial mechanisms for turning useful cultural values into genetic traits, so the opposite is the case, and that this is crucial to understanding human diversity. She illustrates this with a fascinating case study of the relationship between the so-called 'depression gene' and East Asian cultures.

Next, Dr Mai turns from looking at genes to looking how the brain creates diversity pathways, introducing the key notion of brain plasticity, i.e. that our neural machinery system is intrinsically malleable. She concludes from this – and this is critical to the rest of the book – that the plasticity of the brain and the idea that the brain recreates itself and that there is no fundamental core identity in the brain means that we can train the brain and learn new tricks, adapt to new environments, adopt new cultures and reshape and discover many different aspects of our identities and personalities. It is this argument that underpins Dr Mai's faith in humans' ability to adapt and

embrace cultural difference.

Finally, Dr Mai introduces the notion of behaviour as an influencer of cultural diversity. She points out that we now know that behaviour can help shape the brain and that repeated behaviours reinforce specific neural pathways. She shows through case studies that behaviours by groups or individuals can influence and change cultural systems.

Dr Mai concludes this chapter with what in some ways seems to be a contradiction to her arguments to date. She argues that as well as creating cultural and linguistic diversity as a tool to create regulation between groups, humans also are the only animal that can extend care beyond kinship to unrelated individuals. She points to research in the neurosciences, biology and psychology as challenging the self-interested model of *homo economicus* and argues that humans are naturally cooperative. It is this impulse, she argues, that leads to human beings evolving into larger groups and communities and the phenomenon of globalisation.

Turning to neuroscience, she argues that as humans are exposed to different cultures, our brains can become culturally tuned with new neural activities which enables us to adapt to different cultures. She concludes with the view that 'if culture is a strategy, then it will be the survival of the most cultured.'

Having established her foundations in chapter one, Dr Mai goes on in subsequent chapters to look at a number of wide-ranging issues relating to intercultural communications. In chapter two, she looks at the issue of how culture evolves; in chapter three she covers stereotyping; chapter four – non-verbal communication; chapter five – a taxonomy of diversity; chapter six – intercultural competence; and chapter seven – diversity management. The remainder of this review will focus on chapters three, five and six to attempt to give the reader a broader understanding of the book's main arguments.

*The Evolving Culture.* In chapter two, Dr Mai turns her attention to how culture can evolve, continuing to lay theoretical ground for her arguments. She posits that since culture is such a dynamic force, in order to analyse different cultures effectively, we need first to agree on some generic frameworks that will help answer how to deal with the complexity and dynamics of culture. To do this, Dr Mai chooses a framework expressed as the metaphor of a tree to reflect what she sees as the three major components of culture: the roots of a tree, representing the fundamental concerns and evolutionary root of a culture, i.e. the universal elements of a culture such as politics, art, religion; second, the branches of a tree representing values which she defines as '*our attitudinal positions on the fundamental concerns of a culture*'; thirdly, the leaves of a tree

representing outward expression, i.e. the objects, symbols and behaviours that are the outward expressions of fundamental concerns and values.

Using this model, and the perspective of evolutionary biology and neuroscience, Dr Mai then looks at the varying schools of thought with regard to the important issue of the speed and nature of change within cultures, arguing that fundamental values are stable, values are dynamic and outward expressions change fastest of all. She argues above all that neuroscience tells us to adopt a non-binary, dynamic view of cultural change and one that can embrace paradox as normal.

Introducing a second framework, which she calls 'The Inverted Pyramid Model', Dr Mai also challenges what she calls the '*skewed focus on culture as a purely group phenomenon*.' She uses her inverted pyramid model to look at culture at three levels of analysis: universal, collective and individual.

*Stereotype: A Necessary Evil.* The third chapter is one of the most detailed with regard to looking at how our brains affect us and, in this case, cause us to stereotype. Dr Mai describes clearly how our brains are wired to stereotype – our evolution means that stereotyping has evolved as a survival mechanism that allows our brains to make snap judgments – particularly useful when our habitat

was that of the bush and all its accompanying external threats. However, this threat detection mechanism is carried out by the amygdala and does not allow the split second slower neo-cortex to provide a more nuanced picture. Hence, we tend to being naturally biased and tend to categorisation and worse, prejudice and discrimination.

Having explained this, Dr Mai goes on to outline practical strategies for living with stereotypes and reducing prejudice. She points out that most patterns of stereotyping are socially constructed by our cultures, which means that we can change the patterns and train our brain. This chapter is complemented by the last chapter of the book which looks at diversity management and at practical ways to promote diversity.

*A Taxonomy of Diversity.* In chapter five, Dr Mai takes on looking afresh at some of the key taxonomies used historically by intercultural theorists to understand the complexity of culture. In particular, she looks at the taxonomies of group attachment (i.e. individualism v collectivism), hierarchy acceptance, gender association, uncertainty avoidance and time orientation. By drawing on neuroscience and evolutionary biology, but also applying her inverted pyramid lens of the individual, collective and universal perspectives, and rich case study material, she sheds interesting new light on these much-debated

areas, challenging static models, stressing the importance of context and challenging non-binary thinking, arguing in place that it is important to embrace paradox at all times.

*Intercultural Competence: Creating Yourself.* My favourite chapter of the book, personally, and in my opinion, perhaps, the most important is chapter six. For much of this chapter, Dr Mai looks in depth at the different stages of acculturalisation using Milton Bennett's DMIS framework and also highlighting how Cultural Intelligence is not just a matter of cognitive awareness, but is also motivational and behavioural.

However, having done this, she then draws on how the notion of a malleable and evolving sense of self rather than a rigidly set one can help develop cultural intelligence. Referencing post-modern thinking, Buddhism and the writing of Professor Michael Puett and Christine Gross-Loh in *The Path*, she stresses how modern neuroscience favours this more fluid concept of personality, i.e. that it is possible to have multiple selves. However, it requires work and breaking fixed patterns of behaviour that often start very young.

As Agata Szkiela states on the back cover of the book, this book offers a fresh perspective on many well-known models of culture and will no doubt prove invaluable to academics and practitioners alike.



# Review

## Language, Education and Neoliberalism: Critical Studies in Sociolinguistics

by Mi-Cha Flubacher and Alfonso Del Percio (Eds.)

Multilingual Matters 2017

Reviewed by <sup>(1)</sup>Michael Carrier

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Language is an enabling tool. It is what gives you a unique selling point. It puts you ahead of the competition in the search for a job. Depending on the languages you speak, you can have a place in the globalised market place or stay in the backwaters. Education helps you get the diplomas you need to be recognised as a qualified language user. It is these diplomas that make you more attractive to the market. Therefore, education is a service industry that sets people on the road in their careers.

These are some of the notions that form the received wisdom explored in this work.

The book provides a wide ranging and, possibly to some eyes, eclectic mix of scenarios that consider and critique the view that the market place and

attendant neoliberal ideologies have become the driving force behind education in general and language education as the specific focus of this volume. The collection covers a range of contexts from higher education institutes to secondary education, migrant programmes and the work of volunteers. Perhaps fittingly for a book that explores neoliberal ideologies and their impact, the studies are truly international, ranging from the US to China via Mexico, Korea, the Philippines and Switzerland.

There are recurring themes: the commoditisation of education; language as product; language hierarchy. Similar impacts are described: the devaluing of plurilingual competence because it is not in the right language; a sense of shame among plurilingual speakers; the increasing

precariousness of employment for those in education. For those of us working in education (the reviewer is a university lecturer in London) much of this feels very familiar. It is not just that the systems established in the international market place have altered how education is structured, it is that the discourse has been changed to reflect this, which in turn reflects the beliefs that are held by many and reinforces neoliberal ideology. This is set out in the first chapter with three areas of resignification: education, language and the self. The current discourse places value on measurable results that can be put to use in the market place. We all are or have capital (human, social, linguistic). We therefore should invest in ourselves in order to remain competitive. To do so we need to capitalise on the resources we have at our disposal.

Each chapter offers insightful commentary on their particular scenario. What makes these commentaries perhaps more illuminating is the use of ethnographic methodologies. Extracts of first hand interviews with those involved – from company CEOs to the victims of language policy decisions – gives a clear idea of the attitudes that shape the debate and brings the challenges and problems into sharp relief.

The book comprises 12 chapters. Clearly readers can focus on scenarios and themes that are of greater interest to them, but there is value to be

gained by taking the book in its entirety. All chapters are equally accessible.

Chapter 1 defines and discusses the concepts in the title and serves as an introduction to the studies that follow.

Chapter 2 chronicles the rise of private English language tuition in China since the 1990s and compares this to the expansion of the teaching of Mandarin and the strategy of establishing Confucius centres. Both of these are presented as part of a neoliberalist marketisation in the country.

Chapter 3 takes us to Mexico and the challenges faced by a particular minority language community. Here the issues of language hierarchy are raised: the lack of value placed on bilingual competence when the competence is not between two ‘important’ languages; the impact on education policy; the appropriation of cultural symbols.

Chapter 4 Talks about the coke-i-fication of bilingual education – taking the US as the context – where bilingual competence has been embraced as a commodity in itself and has been appropriated by the dominant groups in society to the exclusion of minority, often immigrant communities.

Chapter 5 Describes the situation of EMI in South

Korean higher education. Once again, the question of language hierarchy is raised; the need to speak English well; the massive investment on a national scale to achieve this; the increase in EMI as part of an internationalisation strategy. Yet at the same time there is a national anxiety about never being good enough.

Chapter 6 takes the case study of Brazilian university students sponsored to attend English medium instruction in STEM subjects in Canada. Once more we see national investment in equipping future generations with competences for the global market place. Students' responses to the experience is documented to show that what was learned was not necessarily what was intended. The hurdle of second language mastery had not been fully understood by the policy makers.

Chapter 7 Looks at the NGO sector and what is described as ELT aid. It takes the case study of the US Job Enabling English Proficiency project in the Philippines, where task based learning using CALL (on an annual renewable license) either replace or supplement existing language training. The validity of the system itself and the wider question of return on investment are questioned.

Chapter 8 takes the notion of the individual learner investing in their own human capital and examines the context of migrants in Italy through an EU funded project designed to train

entrepreneurship. Migrants are trained to become self-starting farmers. However, access to the course is determined by language ability rather than farming experience and no participants set up their own business as a direct result of the course.

Chapter 9 stays with migrant communities and considers how refugee children are evaluated in a US school. This is set against the wider context of the No-Child-Left-Behind Policy and the need for schools to hit annual yearly performance targets which are measured by success in tests, with the possible sanction of closure of the school if targets are missed over a number of years. How one school chose to respond by outsourcing its English language training and the impact of this on the refugee children is detailed.

Chapter 10 returns to universities and the way resources are used in the provision of EAP programmes, specifically the growing tendency to reduce costs, resulting in what are termed blended professionals who are required both to manage and to teach and whose job security is constantly under threat.

Chapter 11 examines two institutions in the Swiss higher education sector, again looking at language hierarchy – this time with German as the high-status language – and the experiences of Italian speakers studying Law at a German speaking

university. The mechanisms to attract students (language courses, conditions for examinations) are set against the challenges they report. Chapter 12 draws threads together, summarises the discussions and raises questions.

Although the studies cover a broad spectrum, there is much agreement and commonality. Neoliberalism is described as slippery and difficult to pin down, but Brown's (2015) statement that it extends a specific formulation of economic values, practices and metrics into every sphere of human life, cited by Tabiola and Lorente, resonates through all the studies. Issues of language hegemony and its consequences find echoes in the work on English imperialism (Phillipson, et al.). The notion of human capital and the individual investing in themselves through learning a language resonates with work on learner autonomy (Benson, Dickinson, Nunan, etc.) as well as with the idea that individual progress can be seen differently in different cultures. Language policy is rightly described as an assemblage where consequences are not always foreseen. Perhaps

more importantly the notion that we have all bought into the same myth is amply demonstrated in all scenarios, policy makers, providers and learners alike.

In common with many works from a critical perspective, this collection does not offer many solutions. Those that are documented are at the level of local resistance to marginalisation as a consequence of policy decisions. However, this is an important collection in that it shows the interconnectedness of all aspects of language education. It shows how any new pedagogical development can be turned into a market, and how the discourse surrounding that market creates illusions for us to consume.

It is a thought-provoking cry for an alternative discourse where the values of language as a vehicle for social cohesion, as a means of preserving heritage and identity reclaim ground usurped by a mantra of market forces. Perhaps, as the book suggests, this has to start at the local level.

# Review

## Post-Truth

by Evan Davis

Little Brown 2017

Reviewed by <sup>(1)</sup>Barry Tomalin

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In an age of ‘fake news’ and ‘post-facts’, Evan Davis’s *Post-Truth* is a useful guide for teachers and researchers in language media analysis, discourse analysis, developing critical awareness and critical thinking skills.

Evan Davis is a leading British broadcaster and presenter of current affairs programmes on TV and radio and is an experienced and informed interpreter of ‘fake news’. In his introduction, he writes that post-truth is ‘*an expression of frustration and anguish from a liberal class discombobulated by the political disruptions of 2016*’, referring to the Trump presidency and the British BREXIT vote.

The book is divided into three sections. Section 1 usefully defines the key terms of fake news, post-truth, alternative facts and ‘bullshit’. He identifies five types of ‘bullshit’, explains each type and gives examples. In Section 2 he asks how it

happens. A key issue in reporting is time. It may be possible to fool people in the short or even medium term but in the long term, the truth normally comes out. Section 3, the final section, discusses the culture of ‘fake news’ and how it can become the norm and also how we can improve our response to it. As Davis explains, ‘*Communication can be informative even if is not true; it can be persuasive even if it is not informative; it can be effective in the short term even if it is not persuasive in the long term. And, if everyone is doing it, it can be irresistible, even if it is not effective.*’ The final chapter of the book, entitled ‘The Discerning Listener’ explores what we can do about it and how to develop our own critical analysis skills.

The book is in the same group of recent media analyses including Harold Evans, former Editor of the Sunday Times’ *Do I make myself clear?*

reviewed in TLC Issue 4, and Mark Thompson, former Director General of the BBC's *Enough Said* reviewed in TLC Issue 3.

So, what do we mean by 'bullshit', now translated into 'fake news', 'post-truth' and 'counter facts'? In fact, the term itself is quite old but was given respectability in Harry Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*, published in 2005. The term means to talk nonsense, typically with intent to deceive. In the first section of the book Davis identifies five forms of bullshit: lies, near lies, selective facts, spin and self-deception leading to delusion. Lies is simply untruth, opposed to the facts. What makes it bullshit is that telling a complete lie can create publicity and, as we know, there is no such thing as bad publicity. However, lies are dangerous if found out they can lead to legal consequences.

More common are what Davis describes as 'near lies', using the right words to convey a false impression. Davis quotes the famous British Brexiteers' claim that leaving the EU would release £350 million a week for Britain's National Health Service. Not an outright lie but a misleading statement. The figure undoubtedly existed as a component in Britain's contribution to the EU budget but it had no specific connection to healthcare.

The third form of bullshit, described by Davis, involves leaving out relevant information. The

term, first used by British philosopher Edmund Burke in 1776, means being 'an economy of the truth', purposely ignoring facts that might damage your argument. The term has now transformed into 'being economical with the truth'. Advertising and politics are two professions notorious for misleading the public by quoting only facts that support their case and ignoring others that might give a fairer basis for decisions. Spin is the art of manipulating information to the advantage of the organisation putting it out. After an interview or a press conference politicians will often go into the 'spin room', where their advisers discuss the best way to 'spin' what they have said to get best press and media coverage. Finally, says Davis, there is self-deception through self-delusion. This is a situation where someone actually believes something is the case although he or she is actually wrong. Many argue, for example, that former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's accusation that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, leading to Britain's participation in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was not based in fact but Blair wanted to believe it and went ahead anyway. No weapons of mass destruction were discovered after the invasion.

The question is how do we delude ourselves into accepting information which is partial or not true? That's what Davis addresses in the second part of *Post-Truth*. We are impressed by empty assertions about events designed to make an impression on



us rather than convey facts of what actually happened. We allow ourselves to be confused by obfuscation, too many words. Using flowery language or gibberish, nonsense language. Davis gives the example of former Italian President Matteo Renzi's address to the World Trade Organisation at Davos. He said, *'I am not here to present a future of tomorrow. For my country, the future is today not tomorrow.'* What? That's nonsense! But it's also emotionally very powerful and carries meaning and is intended to inspire and motivate the audience.

But it's not just words that matter. How you look, what you do, your facial expressions and your gestures also influence how your message is received and whether or not you are believed. For example, movie stars are often used to sell products in TV advertising and on posters. We like the movie star so we buy the product. If they say it's good, it must be good, whether it is or not. Language also influences what we decide to believe. This is a hidden message. Is a company that issues Parking Solutions better than one that issues Parking Fines? The language used seems to suggest it is. Positive 'solutions' is better than negative 'fines' but that's not how the people paying the parking fines necessarily see it.

Another example of misleading information is what Davis calls 'psychological pricing'. The commonest in British stores is £5.99. Realistically,

the product costs about £6 but psychologically £5.99 sounds more like £5.00 plus a few pence. It sounds cheaper but it isn't really.

Davis goes on to discuss why we are so easily persuaded. It's psychology really. The way a message is framed, a story is told, a phrased is used, the culture that you appeal to, a 'bandwagon' effect as employed in 'Everyone else is doing it, why not you?' all appeal to the emotions and reduce rational thought. It is these techniques that politicians like Donald Trump, though not only him, use with effect to label what they don't like as 'fake news' and post-corrections to their own statements as 'post-truth' or 'counter facts' and many accept it because it appeals to their emotional needs.

So, what can we do about it, if anything? In the opinion of Evan Davis, fake news is greater now than it has ever been although it has always existed. In particular he cites 2016, the year of the US presidential election and the British Brexit referendum as the beginning of a peak bullshit period. It was also when the Oxford Dictionary of English selected post-truth as its 'word of the year'. Davis identifies two key factors in restoring more balanced and honest representation of facts and issues. One is media the other is what Davis calls 'the discerning listener.'

In Davis's opinion, the media's job is to keep on

doing its job. To do so it needs to do three things. One is to distinguish clearly between news and comment. Comment disguised as news does no one any favours in the short term and can be damaging to reputation and editorial integrity in the long term. Secondly, it is important to have a diversity of media outlets ranging across the political spectrum and reaching different parts of the population. Thirdly, he thinks national media platforms recognised by everyone as a national focus for news is important. In the UK, he says, the BBC still fulfils this function.

What about the discerning listener? We are in danger of arriving at a point where we believe nothing; institutionalised cynicism, as it were, always looking for the 'real' motive behind a story, event or political utterance. Instead we can be more positively discerning, able to see through the hype and be more aware of the role our own emotions in deciding what we accept and reject. Foreign language teachers have a key role here.

We can use authentic texts, articles, headlines and illustrations to analyse more critically what we read in a foreign language, compare different versions of the same story and discuss in class. Students can be invited to compile their own stories using the sources they have studied and review their efforts for the inclusion of 'fake news' and emotionally charged language. This can be done at simple levels from Council of Europe CEFR level B1 and upwards. Teachers can also use tweets and Facebook and Instagram messages to analyse the way in which bandwagons are created through repeated messaging. In this way, we can encourage greater discrimination in our students, better critical analysis and critical thinking skills and a more objective approach to what they read and spread on social media. Although I personally would have liked more examples of how 'post-truth' influences our thinking, Evan Davis has provided some really useful frameworks to help us understand different forms of fake news and how it can affect us.

# Review

## Taking Chinese to the World: Language, Culture and Identity in Confucius Institute Teachers

by Wei Ye

Multilingual Matters 2017

Reviewed by <sup>(1)</sup>Barry Tomalin

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This is a very useful piece of research conducted by Wei Ye, which will be very helpful to teachers and students of international culture and to those interested in the use of education as a tool of soft power, particularly in the context of the Chinese Confucius Institutes and the Confucius classrooms movement. Above all, however, it will be of value to teachers and administrators in schools and colleges and HR and development managers in companies and corporations, concerned to help overseas students and workers acclimatise to conditions in a new country.

Wei Ye was a Confucius Institute teacher in the US and also in the UK and this book is a study of Confucius institutes and Confucius classroom teachers in the UK. The book divides into 8 chapters, beginning with an explanation of the Confucius Institute and Confucius classrooms

initiative, going on to examining the theory and practice of 'cultural sojourning', using particularly the three-fold principle of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Habitus, capital and field, and continuing with a number of group and personal case studies before drawing detailed conclusions and recommendations for host country organisations to ease acclimatisation.

First, for those who aren't familiar with it, what is the Confucius Institute?

Inspired by the language and culture teaching institutions of Britain, Europe and the United States, such as Aliance Francaise, Goethe Institute, Cervantes Institute, USIA and, above all, the British Council, the Confucius Institutes were instituted by Hanban, a not-for-profit agency of the Chinese Ministry of Education. They are named after the

famed Chinese philosopher and teacher, Confucius (551-479 BCE) and the first one was established in Seoul in 2004. Between 2004 and 2015, China established over 500 Confucius Institutes, mainly in universities and colleges and over 1000 Confucius classrooms in primary and secondary schools. To do the teaching they employed 44,000 teachers in 134 countries. The aim by 2020 is to expand to over 1000 Confucius Institutes in 500 cities around the world.

Wei goes into detail about how institutes are organised and what they teach; language, landmarks, folklore, music, dance, festivals and food but no politics, and also discusses some of the earliest challenges. These included lack of knowledge required for teaching overseas, inadequate materials and lack of adaptation to local needs.

In addition, she points out, Chinese education is very exam-oriented and values memorisation and rote learning rather than reasoning, imagination and group work, which tend to be encouraged in the west. This point was brilliantly made by Patricia Williams-Boyd in *Training Language and Culture* Vol. 1 Issue 2 in her article entitled, *Teaching English in China: Changing self-perceptions*.

Wei discusses different approaches to cultural identity and assimilation to new environments but

focuses principally on the ideas of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu in his 1977 chapter *Structures and the habitus* in *Outline of a theory of practice*, identified 3 key areas of cultural identity: habitus, capital and field.

Habitus is our habitual unthinking selves formed by our background, personality and our culture. It incorporates both ways of behaving and ways of thinking and can change over time and in different circumstances. Capital also covers a range of personal assets and characteristics including physical resources, symbolic capital (personal status and position), cultural capital, which covers tastes, consumption patterns, personal attributes, skills and awards (qualifications). It also includes social capital, our social network and linguistic capital and mastery of languages, our own and others. Social capital describes the contexts in which we live and work. All these go to build up our sense of identity, which may be enhanced or restrained by the field we are in. Wei identifies two ways of adapting to new conditions and environments. One is the 'cultural mediator', based on Michael Byram's INCA project, which identifies the positive characteristics of good adaptors to new cultural influences and how to adapt to new cultures and environments. The other is Claire Krampsch's 'symbolic competence', which addresses the 'third space' between our own culture and the culture that we are adapting to and what we learn and how we change in the

process. Bourdieu, Byram and Kramsch are the lynchpins of Wei's analysis of the process of acculturation (adapting to a new cultural environment) and identity and agency (the changes we undergo in our view of ourselves).

So, what conclusions does Wei come to? The study identifies a number of constraints in professional acculturation. The first is linguistic. Many teachers experienced difficulties understanding and adapting to slang, youth culture and accent. Interestingly, observes Wei, the teachers interviewed made no reference to nuances of meaning caused by cultural appropriateness or indirect ways of expression, which many foreigners report as a major challenge in adapting to British English communication. (See Peter McGee's article on Vague Language in this issue.)

The second constraint was physical. Teachers were faced with long hours, heavy timetables and often the need to deliver classes in different teaching sites weekly or even daily. Many were exhausted and weren't able to focus on more positive extra-curricular activities like improving their English.

The third area of constraint was the differences in professional cultures. Chinese teachers noticed a culture of 'positive encouragement' of students among their British colleagues reflected in more positive assessments than they themselves might give. They also felt a loss of social status in being

expected to 'muck in' and do jobs which in China they would expect their secretaries to do.

One incident, described in Chapter 4, explained how two teachers extended their holiday in China, meaning they would miss one week of the new school term. The host school reacted strongly, wanting to fine the teachers. For the Chinese project director, this posed a big problem. Left to herself she would have negotiated with the teachers, probably arranging for extra hours to make up the lost time. However, the host school felt the rules of the contract were being broken and were not prepared to be flexible. Wei describes the conflict of a Chinese 'people first' concern and what the Chinese director saw as a British 'rules over people' priority. It is true that Britain is very much a rule-based society but the spirit of compromise is very strong as well. But for Wei, such conflicts pose problems of identity. Are the Chinese teachers fully fledged members of the British education system or effectively visiting scholars? This affected teachers' confidence and levels of commitment.

Chinese teachers also felt under pressure from their classes, especially when teaching young children. Used to a homogeneous and obedient class, they found diversity and the inclusion of special needs children a challenge. Also, they keenly felt their change of status. In China, their authority was endorsed by the state. In Britain,

they had to earn the respect of their students.

The fourth constraint was lack of support from their own sending institutions. Some were still carrying out responsibilities from their home institutes and many reported problems with housing, banking and visas.

Many complained about the inadequacy or lack of appropriate teaching materials, as reported above but most important was the feeling that their work was not valued by the sending authorities when they returned home. This is a not uncommon complaint by repatriates on return from assignments overseas.

These are the negative issues raised by Wei's interviewees. What were the positives?

Observation of British teaching colleagues was very helpful, as was co-teaching and teaching assistantships. These helped them get used to classroom management organisation and teaching methods. Chinese teachers felt they had learned new skills in both areas.

Many appreciated the support from their host schools and local colleagues with encouragement, emotional advice and support and sharing ideas and teaching materials. Others, faced with indifference by the host school leaders, depended on the local Chinese community for support.

A key advantage for the Chinese teachers was the opportunity to learn about how British education and classrooms work. Many were impressed by the inclusive style of education and one teacher expressed her wish to contribute to its development in China. Although working with children with special needs was stressful and demanding at first, many grew to appreciate the philosophy of special education and developed more positive attitudes.

At the end of the study, Wei Ye lists some key outcomes and recommendations in the context of globalisation and internationalism.

First, she says, participants understood their own culture better and also were able to overcome stereotypes about British culture. In the process, they felt they had become calmer, more direct, optimistic, efficient, rational and independent. Above all, they had become more aware of their own cultural identity and not to judge other cultures. Wei writes, *'They realised that every country has its strengths and weaknesses and no one culture is better than another.'* The teachers also learned new ways of interacting and opened up new ways of working when they returned home.

As to organisational lessons learned, Wei advocates a stay of two years minimum rather than one and stresses the importance of pre-departure

training and repatriation training, a lesson corporations sending assignees abroad could also learn. She also emphasises the value of using the talents and experience of teachers in other areas of school life. For example, a geography major, employed to teach Chinese, was also able to work with Geography teachers to develop new online graphical imaging techniques based on his experience in China.

To conclude, Wei puts the language and cultural

experience of Chinese Confucius Institute and Confucius classroom teachers in the context of a globalising economy. *'Teaching abroad,'* she writes, *'provides real world experience and opens a door to discovery; it requires reconsideration of the culturally rooted beliefs concerning teaching and learning and offers a valuable opportunity for teacher education and professional development.'*

As someone who has spent much of his life teaching abroad, I couldn't agree more.



# ICC News

by Robert Williams

ICC Board Member

## 25th Annual ICC Conference 4-6th May

This year's annual conference was held in the surroundings of Santorini, glorious for many reasons. Not only is the island stunning, but the actual conference setting was spectacular and was the perfect backdrop to two days of thought-provoking presentation and debate. The conference brought out the best in the ICC – blending of political, academic and practical discussion to give us all a more complete picture of the challenges for language education when faced with teaching refugees and migrants.

## Challenges and Solutions

We were honoured by the presence of Dr Asaf Hajiev, whose intervention about the problems in the Black Sea region showed how geographical position and wider political and economic considerations affect migration. Bessie Dendrinos argued passionately for a change in the way we teach. Tuncer Can and Irfan Simsek told us about the difficulties of inclusion beyond refugee camps. But challenges went hand in hand with possible solutions. Michael Carrier spoke of low-cost technical innovations that are being successfully used across the world. Elizabeth Mickiewicz presented a range of support initiatives currently used in the UK that could inspire some ideas elsewhere. Kostas Korozis and Michaelis

Karakontantis illustrated how classroom activities could engage students. Myriam Fischer explained how EUROLTA teacher training could be adapted to suit the needs of volunteer teachers.

One of the highlights of the conference was the presentation by Luke Prodromou and Vicky Sarantidou, whose enactment of their teaching journey with a group of refugee learners and in particular their presentation of the learners' own voices, moved some of the audience to tears.

But on the up side, we had songs in English and Greek, music and dancing and much joy and laughter over dinners, round the hotel pool and on the bus transits from place to place. Perhaps, it was this mix of emotions that helped make the conference special.

## Farewell, Mr Fitz

This was also the occasion where our founder, Tony Fitzpatrick, decided to take a back seat from the ICC. As was only normal for the person who founded the ICC and spent a large part of his working life running it, this was a moment of mixed emotions. Rob Williams led the tributes, including messages from those who were not able to attend, and gained a standing ovation. We now look forward to next year's conference and to continuing the spirit of the association that Tony Fitzpatrick created.

## Conference Feedback

'The ICC Conference 2018 in Santorini was brilliant. Was it because of the volcano? First,

thanks to Ozlem Yuges and Ifigenia Georgiadou for organising the logistics. The location (Butari) and excursions could not have been better chosen. Thanks to Myriam Fischer and Ellinor Haase and to all the members from the board, especially to Tony Fitzpatrick.

The exchange of experiences and knowledge during the conference was amazing. Every plenary speaker, every presentation showed new aspects and highlighted different challenges for language teaching.

The discussion was always lively and creative, major issues were handled carefully, sharing not only knowledge, but friendship as well. The variety of the participants made the conference a success. We had many interesting conversations, from the first moments at the airport in Athens till the end of the conference. Even during lunchtime, the discussion did not stop.

The conference was very inspiring. I was left with the impression that everybody was highly interested, engaged and eager to spread the knowledge. These contacts were more than business exchanges.

Special thanks to the Greek colleges working on the camps: Michael, Kostas, Ifigenia, Vicky and Luke. I will not forget your essential work, and I will not forget the song we sang together.'

– Elke Bissinger  
Teacher Trainer, Basel (CH)

# EUROLTA News

by Myriam Fischer Callus

EUROLTA Co-ordinator

The theme of this year's ICC 25th annual conference was *Migration, Communication and Culture: The Great Migration Debate*. The conference this year was held on the beautiful island of Santorini in Greece, hosted by the EUROLTA Hellenic Culture Centre.

Myriam Fischer Callus, EUROLTA Project Manager, presented a concept based on EUROLTA, for the training of volunteer language teachers in Germany. With the first major wave of asylum seekers in 2016, over one million refugees crossed the border into Germany. The government realised that the first step toward integration was learning German. The German Ministry set up the so-called integration courses for refugees and asylum seekers offering 700 teaching hours. The classes prepared the refugees for the German exam at B1 level.

There has been unfortunately a lack of qualified teachers, so that some refugees have to wait for over two years before they can attend these classes. To help fill this void, a huge number of volunteer teachers started 'Help' programmes. They organised encounters, opened clothes bazaars, accompanied the refugees to the authorities, organised sporting events, sewing classes, cookery classes, bike repair instruction,

but they also wanted to teach German. With the help of EUROLTA, 223 volunteer teachers were trained. The courses took place in 20 adult education centres in Bavaria and consisted of 24 teaching units in three days.

The ICC conference has raised much interest in teacher training programmes, especially in Greece and Crete. It was clear to the conference participants that the key to integration is first and foremost educating the migrants. Teaching languages to refugees and migrants is a huge challenge for language teachers. EUROLTA could be the solution.

## RUDN University News

by Elena Malyuga

Joint Managing Editor TLC

### **8th International Research Conference 'Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication'**

April 19-20, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia hosted the 8th International Research Conference *Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication*.

The conference was organised by the Foreign Languages Department of the Faculty of Economics with contributions from both Russian

and international participants representing various universities all over the world. The conference was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research and was attended by the representatives of the Mexican Embassy in Moscow, Cambridge University Press, the French Institute in Moscow, CampusFrance, the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), London Metropolitan University, University College London, Rezekne Academy of Technologies, the University of León, the University of Rome Tor Vergata, The Moscow-Taipei Coordination Commission on Economic and Cultural Cooperation, and Language.Prosveshcheniye Ltd.

The researchers and practising professors had an opportunity to exchange views on a number of issues concerned with applied linguistics, profession-oriented translation, integration of emerging information technology into the educational process, intercultural communication, and the methodology of teaching foreign languages at a non-linguistic university. The meeting revealed the scope of work accomplished since the previous conference in the context of business and professional communication. The plenary sessions and seminars held in the course of the conference provided an excellent platform for productive suggestions, which can later on be implemented through the assistance of the entire linguistic community.

Various issues of professional communication and specialised translation warranted in-depth

discussion that proved extremely productive and far-reaching. Conference participants noted the emerging need to develop innovative pedagogical ICT and emphasised the persistent importance of cultivating the research and practical component of profession-oriented teaching. The issues having to do with the strategy-based teaching of specialised translation at non-linguistic universities also ranked high on the agenda. The trends and problems discussed at the conference aroused keen interest on the part of researchers and teachers at Russian universities and obviously call for further theoretical and practical reflection and justification. We greatly appreciate the productive contribution of all participants over the two-day conference and are looking forward to fruitful cooperation in the future. More information is available at [lspconference.ru](http://lspconference.ru).

### **RUDN University Rector Vladimir Filippov Met the Distinguished Graduates of the University of 2018**

Out of 57 young specialists – doctors, agronomists, lawyers, environmental experts, programmers, linguists, engineers – 32% are foreigners representing 18 countries. The Rector's meeting with the best graduates of the year is a tradition of RUDN University. This is an illustration of the informal slogan of the University, *'We are different! We are equal! We are leaders!'* Geologists, philologists, dentists, journalists and pharmacists, no matter what country they come from, all have a record of excellent performance and an active social position. Many of them have already started their professional or research

careers. Most of them are presidents and chairpersons of student associations, athletes and performers.

The multidisciplinary approach is not the only value underlying the principles of RUDN University. The multidisciplinary approach and international cooperation are what RUDN University has been famous for since 1960. It is crucial not to lose contact and keep in touch with classmates and friends. Among the best graduates of 2018 are students from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Latvia, Mali, Nigeria, Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Chad, Sri Lanka, Ecuador and Ethiopia. An informal conversation with the Rector is an opportunity to ask daring questions concerning internships, financial support for students' scientific achievements, the residence permit procedure, preferential terms for educational loans and, of course, career prospects.

### **RUDN University and University of Applied Sciences FH Joanneum Sign Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Science and Education**

The agreement was signed in April in Austria (Graz) and extends to exchange of students and graduate students; exchange of research and pedagogical staff; joint research projects conducted by researchers from both universities; exchange of information and publications; organisation of conferences and seminars. RUDN University was represented by CSc in Economics, Associate Professor of the Department of National Economics Maxim Chernaev.


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