Studies in Linguistics, Culture and FLT

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* The Editorial Board bear no responsibility for the content or accuracy of the articles.

Contents

PREFACE

The third issue of volume 8 of *SILC* "Exploring English Studies: Aspects of Language, Culture and the Media" features six papers dealing with different aspects of literature, applied linguistics, as well as contrastive studies and FLT.

The opening paper "Remaking Worlds: The Urban Landscape of *Dombey and Son*" by Belgin Elbir explores Dickens's presentation of the changing urban landscape and is both a response and a critique of the processes and impact of industrialisation, urbanisation and commercialization. The main argument put forward by the author is that Dickens's engagement with the scientific culture of the time "informs, the novel's portrayal of the processes of change and transformation, intended to reveal, to the novel's readers and characters alike, a historical and expanding vision of the social and natural environment that draws attention, as the plot advances, to the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life, human and non-human" (ibid.).

The issue continues with two papers providing analysis in the broader field of Pragmatics, and more specifically speech acts. The first one, "The Communicative Acts of Sympathy and Condolence in English and Bulgarian – Pragmalinguistic Aspects", written by Deyana Peneva, dwells on the differences in the syntactic, grammatical and pragmatic structures of two particular phrases expressing condolences. The corpus for the study comprises manually collected phrases used in two sets of modern TV series, two Bulgarian and two British. The focus is on the differences in the illocutionary nature of the utterances used in Bulgarian and English.

The other paper in the same field, "Refusal Strategies Employed by Bulgarian and English Native Speakers with Higher Status Interlocutors", is by Polina Mitkova, a PhD student at the University of Shumen, and compares the refusal strategies employed by English and Bulgarian native speakers in business settings with interlocutors of a higher status. The author analyses different formulas used in the realization of said acts and finds that refusals towards representatives of a higher status are most frequently realized through the semantic formula Reason/ Explanation, followed by Regret/Apology and Negation of the proposition for English native speakers or Statement of fact for Bulgarians.

This third issue of *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT* continues with three papers in the field of education. Irina Ivanova and Gergana Gerova's article "Bulgarian Students' Perceptions of Issues and Challenges in Preparing for the English Language Maturity Exam" is based on a survey which provides some insights into students' reasons for choosing the exam, their preparation, and the difficulties they experience in the language areas and skills tested in the exam.

The authors believe that identified issues should be taken into consideration by those responsible for the compilation and validation of exam papers.

Dealing with the challenges experienced by teachers in their work, in "Teaching Language and Culture with the Consideration of Ethno-Psychological Aspects of Communication", Tatiana Pochinok, Dana Bartosh and Elena Stoyanova claim that the ethno-psychological aspects of communication (made evident through "different values, perceptions and norms of behaviour of the speakers") are of paramount importance when teaching language. Therefore, they consider it important that Value and Language capsules be provided, i.e. culture-related texts. The authors present an overview of the research on the topic and also share some of their own observations.

The issue finishes with a paper by Olga Kryuchkova, a post-graduate student at Moscow City Pedagogical University titled "Some Aspects of Multimedia Technology as a Means of Improving the Quality of Foreign Language Teaching". The focus of the paper is on one particular program – *iSping* and the way it is employed in the teaching of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary. The author discusses some possibilities for the application of the program in the development of e-textbooks.

REMAKING WORLDS: THE URBAN LANDSCAPE OF *DOMBEY AND SON*

N. Belgin Elbir[1]

Abstract: *This article examines Charles Dickens's depiction of the changing urban landscape of London in his novel Dombey and Son (1848), as an environmentally aware response to, and a powerful critique of, the processes and impact of industrialisation, urbanisation and commercialisation. The argument is inspired by Adelene Buckland's (2013) study on the significance of the science of geology in Victorian literature that regards Dombey and Son as a novel representing the author's engagement with the scientific culture of his time. I argue that this engagement informs, the novel's portrayal of the processes of change and transformation, intended to reveal, to the novel's readers and characters alike, a historical and expanding vision of the social and natural environment that draws attention, as the plot advances, to the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life, human and non-human. The urban landscape thus becomes a means of describing and exploring characters' moral perspective that Dickens presents as an essential feature of their sense of identity, and their relationship with the physical environment as well as one another.*

Key words: *Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, urbanization, industrialization, the science of geology.*

In Chapter Forty-seven of *Dombey and Son*, the narrator, reflecting on the barrier between Mr Dombey and his wife, refers to their pride as the cause of their unhappiness. He goes on to ask, "Was Mr Dombey's master vice, that ruled him so inexorably, an unnatural characteristic? It might be worthwhile, sometimes, to inquire what Nature is, and how men work to change her, and whether, in the enforced distortions so produced, it is not natural to be unnatural" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 755-756). He then urges his readers to

"look round upon the world of odious sights – millions of immortal creatures have no other world on earth – at the lightest mention of which humanity revolts, and dainty delicacy living in the next street, stops her ears and lisps, 'I don't believe it!' Breathe the polluted air, foul with every impurity that is poisonous to health and life; and have every sense, conferred upon our race for its delight and happiness, offended, sickened and disgusted, and made a channel by which misery and death alone can enter. Vainly attempt to think of any simple plant, or flower, or wholesome

1. Professor, Ph.D., Department of English Language and Literature, Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey, e-mail: belgin.elbir@atilim.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-2506-9819

weed, that, set in this foetid bed, could have its natural growth, or put its little leaves forth to the sun as GOD designed it…

"Those who study the physical sciences, and bring them to bear upon the health of Man, tell us that if the noxious particles that rise from vitiated air, were palpable to the sight, we should see them lowering in a dense black cloud above such haunts, and rolling slowly on to corrupt the better portions of a town. But if the moral pestilence that rises with them, and, in the eternal laws of outraged Nature, is inseparable from them could be made discernible too, how terrible the revelation!...

"Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amongst their homes, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them!...(Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 756-757)

Such a view would, the narrator says, rouse these people whom he addresses as "unnatural humanity" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p.757) to "a knowledge of their own relation" to the "world of human life around them"; it would show them that they are "creatures of one common origin, owning one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to one common end, to make the world a better place!" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 757-758).

The "potent and benignant hand" is, as Williams in his *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970/1984) remarks, the hand of Dickens, who makes the physical and moral pestilence discernible (p. 34). The passage can be regarded as an artistic manifesto, a statement of Dickens's aim and duty as an artist. It also indicates his sense of the interconnectedness of all life, human and nonhuman, and emphasizes human agency and responsibility in making the world a better place. It locates human life in its physical and natural environment within the context of the passing of time, governed by the laws of "GOD" and "the eternal laws of Nature" that rule both human life and the natural world. The setting is an urban landscape; in *Dombey and Son*, specifically London. The "first major creative writer in the English language to explore the full repertoire of modern urban "problems" (p. 131), as Buell, in *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001) describes him, Dickens creates a consciousness that discovers and recognises interconnections in the new social system. In this particular passage he expresses the great need for this kind of consciousness. The passage is also a remarkable instance of how the scientific culture of his time provided Dickens with a means of articulating imaginatively, for the purposes of his social critique, this sense of interconnectedness. For it is through the narrator's reference to physical scientists to draw attention to the effects of the "noxious particles that rise from vitiated air" on health, and the connection he establishes

between the environmental hazards and the "moral pestilence that rises with them" that Dickens arrives at his vision of "common humanity".

My aim in this article is to examine the terms and implications of Dickens's engagement with science and new scientific ideas out of which he shapes, in the words of Williams, "a dramatic method which is uniquely capable of expressing the experience of living in cities" (1970/1984, p.32), at a time of unprecedented environmental and social change as a consequence of rapid industrialization, urbanization and commercialization. The ultimate goal of this dramatic method is to present a vision and social critique of the new conditions, that would help his readers and fictional characters reach an awareness of their common humanity. I will argue that this vision embodies Dickens's environmental consciousness and the terms of his social critique, and as such determines the form and content of the narrative. An important aspect of Dickens's depictions of both the physical and the human landscape is that they are informed by ideas and concepts derived from science, in other words the scientific culture of the nineteenth-century, in particular, the studies and discoveries in biological science, geology, medicine, energy physics. In fact, as Parkins and Adkins (2018) assert, "the changeable relation between humans, other species, and their environments was a central insight of nineteenth-century science" (p. 5), an insight that led to a "growing sense of life as an entanglement" (p. 1). *Dombey and Son* is a novel that dramatizes this insight.

My argument is inspired by Adelene Buckland's discussion on the significance of Dickens's interest in geology in her *Novel Science* (2013) as an example of his application of contemporary scientific concepts in his novels to present his vision of the changing physical and social urban landscape. Buckland maintains that "Dickens finds in geology a form for the chaos of modernization and urbanization: like the fragmented strata it too needs reorganization" (2013, p. 261-262). This is a form that enables him to show not only the destructive process of urbanization and industrialization and its consequences, but also possibilities for the emergence of a new social order that could make the world a better place. Buckland cites the following passage from Dickens's "Review of Robert Hunt's *The Poetry of Science*" (1848), where, she writes, Dickens "sets out enthusiastically his ideal version of science and its relatedness to artistic and creative endeavour" (2013, p. 254):

> Science has gone down into the mines and coal-pits, and before the safety-lamp the Gnomes and Genii of those dark regions have disappeared… Sirens, mermaids, shining cities glittering at the bottom of quiet seas and in deep lakes, exist no longer; but in their place, Science, their destroyer, shows us whole coasts of coral reef constructed by the labours of minute creatures; points to our own chalk cliffs and limestone rocks as made of the dust of myriads of generations of infinitesimal beings that have

passed away; reduces the very element of water into its constituent airs, and recreates it at her pleasure. Caverns in rocks, choked with treasures shut up from all but the enchanted hand, Science has blown to atoms, as she can rend and rive in the rocks themselves; but in those rocks she has found, and read aloud, the great stone book which is the history of the earth, even when darkness sat upon the face of the deep. Along their craggy sides she has traced the footprints of birds and beasts, whose shapes were never seen by man. From within them she has brought the bones, and pieced together the skeletons, of monsters that would have crushed the noted dragons of the fables at a blow. (qtd. in Buckland, 2013, p. 254-255).

As Buckland asserts, Dickens is saying that science "does not merely 'destroy' fantastical and aesthetic elements of mythology but converts them into newer understandings, replete with that older sense of wonder and awe" (2013, p. 255). The poetry of science, in other words, can stimulate the imagination, and "read the great stone book which is the history of the earth". Science can show ways of reorganizing the fragments she has discovered. This capacity of science corresponds to Dickens's goal of "making discernible", to the "unnatural humanity", the connections that exist between themselves and the world around them, so that they could work towards making the world a better place for all. As Buckland puts it, "the remaking of worlds that characterizes the narrative of *Dombey and Son*" is the form that Dickens finds in geology (2013, p. 267). In the novel, this "remaking" takes the form of portrayals of moments of crisis, loss and disorientation in the lives of the community and individuals, whereby their world is destroyed, and needs to be "remade". The perception of, and the response to, the urban environment are essential aspects of this experience of crisis and the act of "remaking" that follows it.

Dickens organizes his fictional world in such a way that the mentality and attitude that alienated people from their environment and one another can be demonstrated and identified as inseparable from the forces at work in the new social and physical urban landscape. At the very beginning of the novel, in the chapter about the birth of Paul and the death of Mrs Dombey at childbirth, the narrator describes Mr Dombey, the wealthy merchant and owner of "the famous House of Dombey and Son" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 945), as a man obsessed with one idea: "The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises, stars and planets circled in their orbits, to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the centre." (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 2). Mr Dombey is presented as a man unable to see himself and his superior position in the world as belonging to a common humanity that is a part of a vast universe, "tending to one common end": "Common abbreviations took new meanings in his eyes, and

had sole reference to them. A. D. had no concern with anno Domini, but stood for anno Dombei – and Son" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 2). Mr Dombey's pride is, as Hardy (1983) observes, "shown as capitalistic pride, the paternal pride acting in the interest of transactional possessiveness and expansion (p. 59). Thus, Mr Dombey's moral world and "master-vice" are related to his social position as a representative of the newly-affluent class that has become powerful through their commercial activities that were made possible by the processes of change, and that, in their turn, contributed to these processes.

Dickens extends this mentality to the way the educational system works, when little Paul is sent to school. Dr Blimber's Academy is described by the narrator as completely indifferent to children's needs:

> Dr Blimber's establishment was a great hot-house, in which there was a forcing apparatus incessantly at work. All the boys blew before their time. Mental green-peas were produced at Christmas, and intellectual asparagus all the year around. Mathematical gooseberries (very sour ones too) were common at untimely seasons, and from mere sprouts of bushes, under Doctor Blimber's cultivation. Every description of Greek and Latin vegetable was got off the driest twigs of boys, under the frostiest circumstances. Nature was of no consequence. No matter what a young gentleman was intended to bear, Dr Blimber made him bear to pattern, somehow or other. (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 168)

The artificiality of the system is contrasted with Nature, and is shown to be a "natural" outcome of the mentality represented by Mr Dombey. Blimber's Academy is, therefore, as Gilmour (1986) states, "integral to the novel's vision, providing a comic educational version of Dombeyism and its violation of 'Nature'" (p. 91). There is no place in this system for imagination.

Dickens registers Dombey's character through his relation both to the natural world and to the physical environment. *Dombey and Son*, like other novels by Dickens, establishes connections between persons, the natural environment and physical places such as buildings, offices and rooms they inhabit. The conditions of these places are shown to indicate the characters' state of mind, and their mental and physical health. The description of the room where Mr Dombey, his family and guests gather on the occasion of little Paul's christening underlines this connection: The "iron-grey autumnal day, with a shrewd east wind blowing – a day in keeping with the proceedings" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 63), is immediately connected with Mr Dombey, who "represented in himself the wind, the shade, and autumn of the christening. He stood in his library to receive the company, as hard and cold as the weather; and when he looked out through the glass room, at the trees in the little garden, their brown and yellow leaves came fluttering down, as if he blighted them" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 63). The physical environment is "in keeping with the proceedings" as well:

"Ugh! They were black, cold rooms; and seemed to be in mourning, like the inmates of the house" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 63). The room is cold and reflects the mood and cold nature of Mr Dombey, but it is also a physical effect, itself the consequence of his mentality. It is the chill of the house, because after his wife's funeral Mr Dombey decides to occupy only a few of the rooms and orders the rest to be shut up, "perhaps to preserve it for the son with whom his plans were associated" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 27). He has no plans for making his house a warm home for himself and his two children, his loving but neglected daughter Florence and little Paul. The entire scene is a striking example of what Williams regards as "the power of dramatizing a moral world in physical terms" (1970/1984, p. 40), and supports Williams's observation that "the physical world is never in Dickens unconnected with man" (1970/1984, p. 40).

"Dombeyism" is shown to be a violation of nature, and thus, inimical to a healthy and fulfilling life. The narrator comments, "the chill of Paul's christening had struck home, perhaps to some sensitive part of his nature, which could not recover itself in the cold shade of his father, but he was an unfortunate child from that day" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 108). Paul cannot thrive at Doctor Blimber's Academy either, and dies after he goes home at the end of his first term.

Against the "unnatural" frigidity of the Dombey mansion and Dombey temperament, Dickens presents the warmth, kindness, generosity and spontaneity of characters who are capable of responding to their environment and acknowledging their ties to common humanity. One of the major characters, Florence Dombey is one such person, and the narrator shows her hoping and striving patiently to gain her father's love. In Mr Dombey's "great dreary house" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 374), she is able to develop a healthy sense of identity. After she loses her little brother with whom she was very close, she lives without a family, for her father is entirely indifferent to her. In "her wilderness of a home" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 376), whose "blank walls looked down upon her with a vacant stare, as if they had a Gorgon-like mind to stare her youth and beauty into stone" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 374), Florence blooms, "like the king's fair daughter in the story" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 376). She believes her father does not know how much she loves him, and decides to be patient, and try to win his heart: "Always: at her books, her music, and her work: in her morning walks, and in her nightly prayers: she had her engrossing aim in view" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 379). Her only companions, excepting the servants, are her maid, Susan Nipper, and her dog Diogenes. Her moral integrity is established in relation to her emotional connection to the world, to other human beings, and also to other species. In the early chapters of the novel, the plot develops to introduce her to people with whom she can establish warm relations. Her first meeting with Walter Gay, who would later become her husband, occurs at a moment of crisis, when she is accidentally lost and then kidnapped in a working class district of London, where she was taken with her baby brother by his nurse

Polly Toodle and Susan to visit Polly's family, a visit that later leads to Polly's dismissal from the Dombey household, for Mr Dombey had required Polly not to see her family while she was engaged as his son's nurse. The old woman who kidnaps Florence robs her of her expensive clothes and then, conducting her through a "labyrinth of narrow streets and lanes and alleys" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 87), tells her to find her friends. This particular description of the city is, as Carroll (2001) states, a common feature of Dickens's work, since "his stories most often and memorably lodge themselves within the labyrinthine and historically layered topography of London" (p. 95). For Dickens's protagonists, moreover, in Carroll's words, "London is often a dangerous and bewildering wilderness" (2001, p. 95). Florence is terrified by the "bustle in the street, and more and more bewildered by it" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 88). She wants to find the way to her father's offices, but all she knows of them is that "they belonged to Dombey and Son, and that that was a great power belonging to the city" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 88). While inquiring about the way to Dombey and Son, she meets young Walter, whose uncle Mr Sol Gills, a ships' instrument maker is known to Mr Dombey. In fact, Walter has just become employed at the firm, as a favour to his uncle. Walter is moved to "speechless admiration and commiseration" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 90) at the sight of helpless Florence, who asks him to take care of her. They are both very happy, and go arm in arm along the streets of London:

> It was growing dark and foggy and beginning to rain too; but they cared nothing for this: being both wholly absorbed in the late adventures of Florence, which she related with the innocent good faith and confidence of her years, while Walter listened as if, far from the mud and grease of Thames street, they were rambling alone among the broad leaves and tall trees of some desert island in the tropics – as he very likely fancied, for the time, they were. (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 91)

Walter takes Florence to his home, where she is treated very kindly by his uncle, before she is taken to her father's mansion. This coincidental meeting with Walter and Mr Gills later leads to Florence's acquaintance with Mr Gill's close friend Captain Cuttle, another character whose warm feelings and capacity for attachment contrasts sharply with Dombeyism, especially when he provides a warm and safe shelter to Florence when she runs away from her father's home later in the novel. In this sense, this "adventure" of getting lost in the streets of London is a minor crisis compared with the one that leaves her homeless, but important within the entire design of the novel since these secondary characters will have an important role in revealing the possibility of a way of life that can make the world a better place.

Before the scene of Florence getting lost, while the visiting party are making their way to Staggs's Gardens, in a suburb where Polly's home is located,

Dickens shows the neighbourhood as it was being destroyed for the building of the railroad:

> The first shock of a great earthquake had, just at that period, rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre. Traces of its course were visible on every side. Houses were knocked down; streets broken through and stopped; deep pits and trenches dug in the ground; enormous heaps of earth and clay thrown up; buildings that were undermined and shaking, propped by great beams of wood. Here, a chaos of carts, overthrown and jumbled together, lay topsy-turvy at the bottom of a steep unnatural hill; there, confused treasures of iron soaked and rusted in something that had accidentally become a pond. Everywhere were bridges that led nowhere, thoroughfares that were wholly impassable; Babel towers of chimneys, wanting half their height; temporary wooden houses and enclosures, in the most unlikely situations, carcases of ragged tenements, and fragments of unfinished walls and arches, and piles of scaffolding, and wildernesses of bricks, and giant forms of cranes, and tripods straddling above nothing. There were a hundred thousand shapes and substances of incompleteness, wildly mingled out of their places, upside down, burrowing in the earth, aspiring in the air, mouldering in the water, and unintelligible as any dream. Hot springs and fiery eruptions, the usual attendants upon earthquakes, lent their contributions of confusion to the scene. Boiling water hissed and heaved within dilapidated walls; whence, also, the glare and roar of flames came issuing forth: and mounds of ashes blocked up rights of way, and wholly changed the law and custom of the neighbourhood.
>
> In short, the yet unfinished and unopened Railroad was in progress; and from the very core of all this dire disorder, trailed smoothly away, upon its mighty course of civilisation and improvement. (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 75-76)

The railroad is connected with the industrialized urban landscape, and it is seen as an indication of the transforming energy of science and technology. This is the process by which, as Taylor writes in *The Sky of Our Manufacture* (2016), "London became the capital of the first human society to pass into industrial modernity" (p. 4). Dickens presents it as a transformation for the better, for the power of technology can, the narrator implies, manifest itself in improvement. The passage is significant in terms of the structure of the plot, in other words, the form that illustrates the need to remake the world after the destruction caused by industrialization and all the attendant changes in the social and physical landscape. The railway in this scene, "encompasses the creative destruction of the modern city, its capacity to produce new forms of technologized vision amidst scenes of spectacular ruination" (Moore, 2017, p. 36). In her discussion

of the scene as a central image in the novel, Buckland draws attention to Dickens's use of "geological language" while the narrator "closely observes 'traces,' 'fragments,' and 'treasures' in disarray, 'wildly mingled out of their places,' like fossils scattered in a moment of geological upheaval" (2013, p. 261). She adds that "Dickens taps into the realms of popular mythology and the pleasures of the scientific spectacle familiar to his readers through periodical articles, the 'dioramic' writings of geological writers, and several interlocking forms of urban display" (2013, p. 261). His language reveals that "the railroad connects the city with geographically distant places and the temporally distant monsters that lurk beneath its soils", allowing his readers and characters to travel imaginatively, suggesting his "broader social purpose" (Buckland, 2013, p. 261) of creating a sense of common humanity.

A similar scene of destruction and construction, this time in the life of the Dombey family occurs half way through the novel, when Florence, returning home with Susan after a visit to the home of Sir Barnet Skettles who kindly invited her to stay with them after the death of little Paul, is confronted with an unexpected sight:

> There was a labyrinth of scaffolding raised all round the house, from the basement to the roof. Loads of bricks and stones, and heaps of mortar, and piles of wood, blocked up half the width and length of the broad street at the side. Ladders were raised against the walls; labourers were at work upon the stages of the scaffolding, painters and decorators were busy inside; great rolls of ornamental paper were being delivered from a cart at the door; an upholsterer's waggon also stopped the way; no furniture was to be seen through the gaping and broken windows in any of the rooms; nothing but workmen, and the implements of their several trades, swarming from the kitchens to the garrets. (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 473)

The resemblance to the earlier description of Staggs's Gardens also lies in the dream-like quality of the whole scene. When Florence enters the building, she feels "as if she were in a dream" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 474). This recalls the construction of the railroad that the narrator had described as being "unintelligible as any dream" to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. In the lives of both the Staggs's Gardens community and Florence, these are unsettling events that mark moments of encounters with change and crisis, that are difficult to comprehend. The Dombey mansion is, as Florence finds out later, being remade to welcome the new Mrs Dombey. However, it turns out that, contrary to Florence's hopes and expectations, this is no happy marriage that would transform the house into a happy family home.

Whereas Mr Dombey is unable, in his frigidity and selfishness, to remake the Dombey world for the better, the Staggs's Gardens community chooses to

welcome the change: "the neighbourhood which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad", now "boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 259). Staggs's Gardens is no longer "unintelligible as any dream"; for the area has become a Railway world. The narrator describes the change as an improvement: "There was no such place as Staggs's Gardens. It had vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer-houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 259). The railroad has brought prosperity to the members of the community, expanding their vision of the world. The changes in the physical landscape are also symbolic of social and economic change: "To and from the heart of this great change, all day and night, throbbing currents rushed and returned incessantly like its life's blood. Crowds of people and mountains of goods, departing and arriving scores upon scores of times in every four-and-twenty hours, produced a fermentation in the place that was always in action" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 260). The improvement is manifested in the lives of the novel's characters as well, for instance when Polly's husband Mr Toodle becomes employed, as he was hoping to, as an engine driver on the train.

Mr Dombey responds differently to the broadened vision of the world brought about by the train. After Paul dies, he travels by train to Birmingham with a friend, to spend some time at Leamington, a holiday resort. The account of his journey reveals his inability to see beyond his own world, and to feel part of the wider world that the journey opens up to his view. He is portrayed as caught up within his grief for his loss; he feels offended when Mr Toodle, whose wife was Paul's nurse for a short while, recognises and approaches him to offer his condolences. Mr Dombey sees on Toodle's cap "a piece of new crape" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 331), and realizes that he is wearing it as a sign of mourning for Paul. He is enraged: "To think of this presumptuous raker among coals and ashes going on before there, with his sign of mourning! To think that he dared to enter, even by a common show like that, into the trial and disappointment of a proud gentleman's secret heart (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 331)! In this state of mind, he finds no comfort or relief in his journey:

> Tortured by these thoughts he carried monotony with him, through the rushing landscape, and hurried headlong, not through a rich and varied country, but a wilderness of blighted plans and gnawing jealousies. The very speed at which the train was whirled along, mocked the swift course of the young life that been borne away so steadily and inexorably to its fore-doomed end. The power that forced itself upon its iron way – its own – defiant of all paths and roads, piercing through the heart of every obstacle, and dragging living creatures of all classes, ages, and degrees behind it, was a type of the triumphant monster, Death.

Away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, from the town, burrowing among the dwellings of men and making the streets hum, flashing out into the meadows for a moment, mining in through the damp earth, booming on in darkness and heavy air, bursting out again into the sunny day so bright and wide; away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, through the fields, through the woods, through the corn, through the hay, through the chalk, through the mould, through the clay, through the rock, among objects close at hand and almost in the grasp, ever flying from the traveller, and a deceitful distance ever moving slowly with him: like as in the track of the remorseless monster, Death! (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 331-332)

This passage presents, in the rapidly shifting scenes that collapse time in space, the vividness of the character's experience. The landscape becomes a mental, psychological landscape that is connected to the character's mood. It is made clear that Dombey's glimpses through the window of the train cannot notice the "rich and varied country"; to his gloomy mind, the speed at which the train travels, is a reminder of the passing of his son, which all his wealth and power were unable to prevent. His response to what the journey reveals is presented as a question of choice; there is "darkness and heavy air", but also "the sunny day so bright and wide" that Mr Dombey chooses not to notice.

The narrator makes it evident that the railway line had provided a new perspective on the landscape, making visible the slums which the middle and upper-class travellers in the days before the coming of the train had been able to ignore. The railway which brought cities closer together travelled through both wealthy neighbourhoods and areas of poverty. The glimpses from the window serve to connect different parts of society; travellers see humble dwellings as well as expensive mansions. Towards the end of the journey, as the train approaches Birmingham, an industrial world of darkness, poverty and misery becomes discernible:

Louder and louder yet, it shrieks and cries as it comes tearing on resistless to the goal: and now its way, still like the way of Death, is strewn with ashes thickly. Everything around is blackened. There are dark pools of water, muddy lanes, and miserable habitations far below. There are jagged walls and falling houses close at hand, and through the battered roofs and broken windows, wretched rooms are seen, where want and fever hide themselves in many wretched shapes, while smoke, and crowded gables, and distorted chimneys, and deformity of brick and mortar penning up deformity of mind and body, choke the murky distance. (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 333)

Poverty is shown as inseparable from environmental degradation. In the passage above Dickens is alluding to developments in physical and medical

sciences, and to the studies on public health reform movements of his time. As Buell observes, "in the first half of the nineteenth century, a key catalyst was systematization of public health theory thanks to the emerging field of statistics and the "sanitarian" theory that epidemic disease was caused by dirt and bad housing" (2001, p. 131). Mr Dombey has no awareness of how the upper classes, of which he is a respectable and prominent member, are responsible for this "deformity of mind and body".

Dickens presents a view of the slums of Birmingham, a growing industrial city, but his focus is on the great metropolis, London. As Taylor notes, "London was not one coherent whole but a conglomeration of multiple municipalities, an emerging and unstable metropolis, constantly coming into and going out of being, devouring the surrounding countryside and its own shantytowns and charting a course for the rampant urbanization that continues around the globe" (2016, p. 40). In *Dombey and Son*, this "rampant urbanization" is illustrated through a description of the neighbourhood where one of the simple, kind and warm-hearted minor characters, Harriet Carker, lives with his brother John, who is guilty of stealing money from the firm of Dombey and Son. John is truly repentant, and forgiven by Mr Dombey's father, who was the head of the firm at the time, was allowed to continue to work there as a clerk. In order to make a home for John, Harriet has left the comfortable home of his other brother, Mr James Carker, the capable manager of the firm, who has broken all his relationship with his brother, and also with his sister. The neighbourhood belongs neither to the town nor country: "The former, like the giant in his travelling boots, has made a stride and passed it, and has set his brick-and-mortar heel a long way in advance; but the intermediate space between the giant's feet, as yet, is only blighted country, and not town" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 553). On windy and rainy days, Harriet looks with compassion upon the people who come wandering into the metropolis. These people, "foot-sore and weary, and gazing fearfully at the huge town before them, as if foreboding that their misery there would be but as a drop of water in the sea, or as a grain of sea-sand on the shore, went shrinking on, cowering before the angry weather, and looking as if the very elements rejected them" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 561). Harriet observes that they never returned: "Food for hospitals, the churchyards, the prisons, the river, fever, madness, vice, and death, - they passed on to the monster, roaring in the distance, and were lost" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 561). This is a generalising view, but Dickens presents, towards the end of the novel, a scene where, experienced by one of the major characters and as an important part of plot development, the "roaring" city becomes a felt experience for the character and reader. Florence's flight from her home takes her into the streets of the city in the early hours of the morning, when her father hits her and unjustly accuses her of being an accomplice to his second wife who has eloped with Mr Carker. In that scene, Florence is exposed to the bewildering confusion of the

city. Her response to this bewildering urban environment enacts, in a sense, the shock and the feeling of alienation created by her father's blow that puts an end to her dream of a loving relationship with him. She feels lost and frightened, and tries to think of what she can do: "Where to go? Still somewhere, anywhere! She thought of the only other time she had been lost in the wide wilderness of London – though not lost as now – and went that way. To the home of Walter's uncle" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 779). Her faithful dog, Diogenes, follows and catches up with her, and they go on together:

> With this last adherent, Florence hurried away in the advancing morning, and the strengthening sunshine, to the city. The roar soon grew more loud, the passengers more numerous, the shops more busy, until she was carried onward in a stream of life setting that way, and flowing, indifferently, past marts and mansions, prisons, churches, market-places, wealth, poverty, good and evil, like the broad river, side by side with it, awakened from its dreams of rushes, willows, and green moss, and rolling on, turbid and troubled, among the works and cares of men, to the deep sea. (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 780)

Dickens places this particular moment of crisis in Florence's life within the context of the "wide wilderness of London" and the life of the city, and then connects this life to the flow of the river Thames rolling on, through the streets of London, to the vast sea. These symbols of the flow of time and eternity which frame the action have the effect of enforcing a sense of the vastness and interconnectedness of all life. Throughout the novel, Dickens emphasizes that the river connects all humanity, carrying all into the vast sea that surrounds the earth and into which all human life is bound to drift. At the end of the first chapter, the dead mother drifts out upon "the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 12), at Dr Blimber's Academy, little Paul continually hears the waves speaking to him and asks Florence what it is the sea keeps on saying (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 130). Later, when he goes home and is too ill to rise from his bed, Dickens shows Paul's consciousness in interaction with his environment. It is as if he is trying to compensate for his sense of loss and loneliness. He not only hears the river speaking, which is metaphoric, but he actually responds to his surroundings, the noise in the street, the sun, the arrival of the night, and the river flowing through London (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 263). His fancy has "a strange tendency to wander to the river, which he knew was flowing through the great city; and now he thought how black it was, and how deep it would look, reflecting the hosts of stars – and more than all, how steadily it rolled away to meet the sea" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 263). Always a very perceptive and fanciful child, he seems to have a powerful sense of the interrelatedness of life. In the scene of Paul's death, Dickens makes use of religious language and attributes meaning to the vast, inhuman expanse of which human life is only a small part:

The golden ripple on the wall came back again, and nothing else stirred in the room. The old, old, fashion! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion – Death!

Oh thank GOD, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of immortality! And look upon us, angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean! (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 268-269)

According to Picker (2002), the use of "speaking waves" in the novel demonstrates Dickens's interest in the scientific culture of his time (p. 92). The image of the sea and the waves speaking, the roaring sound of the train and the roaring streets derive from these ideas. Picker cites the passage in the novel where the narrator describes Sir Barnet Skettles, as "like a sound in the air, the vibration of which, according to the speculation of an ingenious modern philosopher, may go travelling for ever through the interminable fields of space" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 401 qtd. in Picker, 2002, p. 90), and writes that this philosopher was Charles Babbage, a friend of Dickens and the inventor of the Difference Engine, which was considered the first computer (Picker, 2002, p. 91). Picker identifies the passage describing Sir Barnet as referring to the ninth chapter of Babbage's *The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise: A Fragment* (1837), entitled "On the Permanent Impression of Our Words and Actions on the Globe We Inhabit", and adds that for Babbage, the air and the ocean waves act as a kind of giant phonograph and keep records of all vibrations that pass over them in such a way so as to bear, in the words of Babbage, "enduring testimony of the acts we have committed" (2002, p. 91). I would argue that these images are also embodiments of Dickens's desire to impart to his readers the poetry of science which could help make the world a better place, by showing them and the characters of the novel, their common humanity and common fate. The sound of the wind and rain in the passage "Let him remember it in that room, years to come. The rain that falls upon the roof, the wind that mourns outside the door, may have fore-knowledge in their melancholy sound. Let him remember it in that room" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 974) that occurs as a refrain in the chapter describing Mr Dombey at home after the loss of his firm and fortune, realizing gradually and with great sadness, that it is the loss of his daughter that only matters, is a striking instance that gains significance in relation to a much earlier passage. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator's description of Mr Dombey's pride was meant to show that he thought himself master of these natural elements, but it is proved that he is not; the wind and rain know more than he does. It is the knowledge of the wind and rain that bears testimony to how the natural feelings he destroyed in his young daughter's innocent heart were "snowing down on him in ashes" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 974). In the implications of this use of

not only the wind and rain, but the river and the waves of the sea, Dickens can be regarded as challenging the claims of humanity's power to control nature. Thus, while affirming the significance of human agency, he also restricts it in his attempt to reconcile science with religion.

The sea, a symbol of eternity, figures at the end of the novel as well. The closing chapter presents an image of life remade for the better for Mr Dombey and Florence: "Autumn days are shining, and on the sea-beach there are often a young lady, and a white-haired gentleman. With them, or near them are two children: boy and girl. And an old dog is generally in their company" (Dickens, 1848/2012, p. 1021). It is through Florence and Walter, two people whose imaginative capacity and ability to relate to other people transformed the muddy streets of London into the pleasant image of "the tropics" during their first meeting, and their children, that Mr Dombey can finally arrive at the awareness of his need for genuine, warm relations with human beings. *Dombey and Son* is, indeed, a novel that demonstrates how the novelist's "potent and benignant hand" that the narrator asked for in Chapter Forty-seven can, after all, remake the world.

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THE COMMUNICATIVE ACTS OF SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCE IN ENGLISH AND BULGARIAN– PRAGMALINGUISTIC ASPECTS

Deyana Peneva[1]

Abstract: *The present paper dwells on the speech acts of sympathy and condolence in English and Bulgarian and more precisely, on a set of certain phrases typical for both languages which reveal disparities in their grammatical, semantic and pragmatic structures. In particular, a distinction is made between two main phrases, namely,* **My sympathies** *[+/- complement] and* **My condolences** *[+/- complement] in two sets of modern TV series (Bulgarian and British). It investigates the communicative acts into the group of expressive speech acts which can manifest a specific psychological state and attitude on the part of the speaker. The article also sheds light on the way native speakers of English use sympathy and condolence in utterances in comparison with their counterparts in Bulgarian with regards to their illocutionary nature. A further point of examination and speculation is the context of the speech situation, which in turn, may reveal cultural and psychological distinctions in a cross-linguistic study.*

Key words: *condolence, pragmatics, illocutionary force, speech act, sympathy*

Introduction

In the sphere of speech act manifestations and events there are two basic features, the propositional attitude and illocutionary character, which are of crucial importance for the proper comprehension and digestion of the communicative force of the utterance. As the main function of each utterance is to serve as communication medium and convey certain goals related to communicative needs, in interaction patterns the participants in the speech situation make use of language variation in order to achieve certain purposes. In that respect, utterances which express sympathy or condolence may elicit a number of semantic meanings and pragmatic uses which could be socially and culturally bound to a definite language environment.

The present paper is an attempt to make a linguistic presentation to the concept of sympathies and condolences in English and Bulgarian with regard to both

1. Assistant Prof., Ph.D., Department of English Studies, Shumen University, Bulgaria, e-mail: d.peneva@shu.bg, ORCID: 0000-0002-5321-0787

phrases. It further dwells on the propositional and pragmatic aspects in the specific grammatical structures within the two languages.

Previous Research In The Field

Though the number of speech act research works is quite huge in the area of cross-cultural semantics and pragmatics, the linguistic resources in sympathy and condolence speech acts are limited as they illustrate social phenomena and psychological states which are culturally and ethnically oriented. On the other hand, both phrases exist in most languages which can make them comparable and are susceptible to parallel analysis. The paper sheds light on the way native speakers of English use sympathy and condolence utterances in comparison with their counterparts in Bulgarian. The importance of this study is crucial since there are few papers on the topic published by Bulgarian scholars (Slavyanova, 2017), which do not cover the academic aspect of the given paper.

In general, the speech acts of sympathy and condolence fall into the group of expressives (Searle, 1975, p. 59-78) (behabitives by Austin, 1962) which manifest a specific mental condition on behalf of the interlocutor /speaker, addresser/. Additionally, as behabitives they refer to the adoption of an attitude towards particular behavioral model that can be observed in society. Though both sets of communicative acts /of sympathy and condolence/ can be classified as expressive in view of their illocutionary force, this classification actually confines the utterances in question to a limited number of speech situations and investigates them separately instead of viewing them as an integral part of a bigger picture, that is, the context of the speech situation, which in turn, may reveal cultural and psychological distinctions in a cross-linguistic study.

Semantically, sympathies and condolences share similar meanings in that they refer to expressions illustrating a feeling of support for something or regret, or empathy to someone's pain, sorrow or grief (Muhammed, 2013). It could also be a case of showing compassion towards the addressee's misfortune or sadness (Zunin & Zunin, 2007). On the other hand, though overlapping semantically to a great extent, the two sets of expressions reveal certain deviations in their uses as the first /sympathies/ can be viewed as a broader term while condolences mainly refer to acts of conscious support and active encouragement to the bereaved /the hearer/ concerning someone's death or adversity.

Both phrases also have a social function which is usually put down to their emotive character. Therefore, sympathy and condolence utterances use a specific type of language which is typical to phatic communication (Makice, 2009), less informative, more routinized and conventional, common in conversational exchanges, though possessing the essential condition (Yule, 2006, p. 45-49) of preserving politeness models in social discourse.

In view of their communicative function, Austin attaches them to the class of expressives, later Searle to the group of behahitives, while Bach (2012) argues that they are related to "acknowledgments" in that, they may express attitudes which are considered convenient to the particular sort of occasion. Common to the three mentioned divisions is the expressive purpose of the acts and the sincerity condition (Turnbull, 2003, p. 56-57) that is illustrated. Additionally, it could hardly be a case of unsuccessful speech act, as the perlocutionary act that is expected on behalf of the addresser is supposed to be a speech act of acknowledgment as well (Bach & Harnisch, 1979), being acknowledged, often "in satisfaction of a social expectation". For example:

"My most sincere sympathies to you and your family" – "I appreciate that."

Though both utterances are to be considered expressive acknowledgments if following the Bach and Harnisch's perspective the sincerity condition aspect could not be guaranteed fully as it mostly reflects the addresser's concerns than the addressee's. Interestingly enough, however, in the case of sympathies and condolences there could be two sincerity conditions, the first one associated with the feeling of sympathy for someone, while the second one is related to the social expectation that the addresser /the speaker/ is supposed to express that feeling for the hearer (Vanderveken, 1990).

As the present paper focuses on explicit performative utterances, that is, ones used in the first person singular, the expressions in question consist of two elements: a possessive adjective in the first person singular (*my*) and the respective noun in plural /the latter are derivative forms of the verbs *sympathise* and *condole*, accordingly/ and definitely bear a performative character.

Research Questions

A distinction is made between two main utterances, namely **My sympathies** [+/- complement] and **My condolences** [+/- complement] in two sets of examples taken from modern drama and action TV series /Bulgarian: *Dyavolskoto garlo /The devil's throat/*, *Patyat na chesta /The way of honour/*, *Pod prikritie /Under cover* – 34 episodes – 2014-2019/; British: *The Capture*, *Fleabag*, *Killing Eve* – 34 episodes – 2013-2019/. For this paper the scenes that contain sympathy and condolence speech acts were excerpted and then analyzed focusing primarily on the respective expressions in question. A database of speech acts was compiled based on manual reading of the monologue and dialogue interactions and transcripts taken from both sets of data.

It should be taken into account that the processed data include only these two phrases and their syntactic combinations, i.e. the number of complements they could be coupled with. They are direct/explicit speech acts of either sympathy or condolence. All other grammatical structures which could precede the two

utterances are not subject to discussion in the present paper, nor are any indirect communicative acts.

There are several questions which the paper tries to find answers to or at least makes an attempt to shed light on focusing on certain comparative and contrastive markers from semantic and pragmatic perspective:

- Are there any grammatical distinctions in complement patterning in the given phrases in English and Bulgarian;
- Are there any traces of semantic discrepancies in sympathy and condolence expressions identified in the comparative analysis;
- Are the respective expressions in Bulgarian show any shifts in pragmatic usage.

Methods

The elicited linguistic material was classified and examined on the basis of QQCA (quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis) (Biber & Conrad, 2001, p. 331-336) (of sympathies and condolences in English and Bulgarian along with some ambiguities inherent in the respective languages. This analysis in turn may provide reflections on the behavior of both languages in their contextual, syntactic and pragmatic usages. In this regard, quantitative research findings can be generalized in a comparative mode, between two corpora, providing relatively reliable results based on statistical information confined to the parameters of the excerpted material. Though the abovementioned method has its limitations, it could serve as a springboard to a more detailed investigation as it is often a precursor to a multi-method research (Schmied, 1993, p. 85-96).

A number of symbolic devices and abbreviations are used in the paper:

CL – clause; **VP** – verb phrase; **NP** – noun phrase ; **PP** – prepositional phrase ; **P** – pattern

Data Analysis

- The expression "my sympathies" in English and Bulgarian

The expression *My sympathies* in the English language is composed of two lexical elements, the possessive adjective *my* in the first person singular coupled with a NP in plural - *sympathies*, which holds the semantic features [-animate], [+abstract], [+concrete], [+number] which in fact lacks the feature [+animate], consequently [+human]. However, the aspect of animate presence and attitude in the phrase can be felt, though implicitly, due to the influence of the adjacent possessive determiner which reveals a human interference due to contextual factors. For example:

ex. *My sympathies to you, Maya, for the anguish you went through. /Fleabag - Br/*

To this end, 73 examples were extracted from the British movies compared to 24 translation instances from the Bulgarian set of data. The respective word-for-word translations equivalent to the English expression in Bulgarian is: *Moite sachuvstviya or Moite saboleznovaniya.* In the following two examples, though, only the first meaning is explicated:

ex. *Moite sachuvstviya kum bednoto dete. /The way of Honour – Bg/*

ex. *Moite sachuvstviya za prezhivyanoto. /The way of Honour – Bg/*

As a point of orientation, all of the respective sympathy expressions were collected, then grouped together and divided into grammatical patterns in view of their complementary endings. Three basic syntactic formats become explicit in English comprising a number of complement elements which further subdivide the basic patterns:

P1$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + zero complement

   ex. *My sympathies. I'm sorry, the meeting took much longer than expected. /Killing Eve-Br/*

P2$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + PP

P2a$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + prep (*for*) + NP:

   ex. *My sympathies for your loss, Brian. /The Capture-Br/*

P2b$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + prep (*for*) + what +CL:

   ex. *My sympathies for what you have experienced. /Fleabag – Br/*

P2c$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + prep (*to*) + NP (*person*) + [Prep (*for*) + what-CL]:

ex. *My sympathies to you and your partner for what the company had to get over. /Fleabag - Br/*

P3$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + VP

P3a$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + VP (*be*) + prep (*with*) + NP (*person*):

   ex. *My sympathies are with you and the bereaved. /The Capture – Br/*

P3b$_{ms}$:   my sympathies + VP (*other*) + prep (*to*) + NP (*person*)

   ex. *My sympathies go out to you and your son. /Killing Eve – Br/*

The following table illustrates the distribution of cases in the pattern subdivisions and the respective percent values:

pattern	number of cases	percent value
P1 MS + zero complement	16	21.9
P2a MS + *for* + NP	2	2.73
P2b MS + *for* + what +CL	10	13.7
P2c MS+ *to* + NPp + [*other*]	11 + 2	17.8
P3a MS + *be* + *with* + NPp	2	2.73
P3b MS + VP + *to* + NPp	30	41.09
Total	73	100%

It becomes clear that P3b$_{ms}$ pattern occupies the leading position with 30 out of 73 cases, followed by P1$_{ms}$ with 16 utterances and P2c$_{ms}$ with 13 while P2b$_{ms}$ ranks fourth in the table with 10 cases. At the bottom of the scale are P2a$_{ms}$ and P3a$_{ms}$ sharing equal numbers of utterances, only 2.

In general, pattern 1 (P1$_{ms}$) stays isolated from the other two patterns as it does not take any complement forms whereas the two other groupings are actually grouped between a complement clause starting with a preposition and a verbal phrase succeeded by a complement structure. Interestingly enough, all six grammatical formats show deviations in the standard SVO syntactic sentence structure. Indeed, some of the sub-patterns do not possess a verb phrase (P2a$_{ms}$, P2c$_{ms}$) succeeding the subject of the sentence.

With respect to P1$_{ms}$ first, it is obvious that the syntactic structure of the sentence: NP + Ø VP cannot actually refer to a complete full-clause format, though, it can still be considered a valid sentence, namely, a nominal sentence, which is verbless. Such sentences are typical in speech act communication. In 7 out of 16 cases the phrase refers to someone's death.

In terms of P2$_{ms}$, in all three syntactic formats the complement element begins with a preposition, either *for* or *to*. While in P2a$_{ms}$ and P2b$_{ms}$ the preposition is *for*, in P2c$_{ms}$, it is *to,* which in turn shows that in P2a$_{ms}$ and P2b$_{ms}$ cases the speaker by expressing a certain feeling of sympathy would rather report first the tragic or unfortunate event rather than address first the person who is experiencing it, which is the case in P2c$_{ms}$. Another point of concern is that whereas in P2a$_{ms}$ both examples refer to someone's death, in P2b$_{ms}$ all extracts mainly depict the emotive aspect of compassion, pity/sorrow or pain about someone's tribulations or adversity in life, but not someone's bereavement. As for pattern P2c$_{ms}$, it becomes explicit with 11 cases in MS + to +NP (person) sentence structure and 2 utterances following the same sentence format succeeded by a prep (*for*) + *what*-clause in which the person affected and the negative event are mentioned. In all, 6 out of 13 P2c$_{ms}$ utterances are associated with the feeling of sympathy to a bereaved while the other examples are mostly related to one's misfortune and bad lack and can be linked to the feelings of sorry or pity.

Taking P3$_{ms}$ next, it reveals two complement extensions and is present in the corpus database with 2 cases in the grammatical structure: P3a: MS + the link verb *be* added to a prepositional phrase (PP), namely, the preposition *with* in combination with an object pronoun *you*. The latter bears the grammatical characteristics of a declarative sentence format alongside a declarative plus expressive speech act illocutionary force in that the speaker wants the propositional content of the act to induce a certain /psychological/ effect on the hearer. Actually, by expressing sympathies, in P3a$_{ms}$ pattern, the speaker aims to show compassion and empathy to the hearer's grief /both examples refer to someone's death/, although they sound a bit ritualized and formal. However, they are not common among British speakers and can be considered single isolated cases of sympathy expressions. A similar syntactic structure is observed in P3b$_{ms}$ which occupies the leading position and gains prominence over the other syntactic structures. It, in fact, comprises the same grammatical constituents arranged in the same order as in P2a$_{ms}$: MS + VP + PP, however the verb phrase becomes explicit in the phrasal verb *go out* /in all cases/ linked to the preposition *with* and *you* as the object pronoun. P3b$_{ms}$ pattern further shares the same structural specificities of a declarative sentence and propositional attitude. Pragmatically, though, it is widely used and exploited in cases of showing sympathies to the bereaved.

In general, there are 47 examples in the English corpus which mean commiserating with someone who has experienced the death of a very close person whereas there are 26 cases illustrating compassion or sympathy to other misfortune acts.

With regard to the Bulgarian equivalent of the English My sympathies – *Moite sachustviya/ saboleznovaniya,* the latter *(saboleznovaniya)* depicts two grammatical formats in Bulgarian which copy P1 (15 cases out of 24) and P2a (1 case) and P2b (8 out of 24) complement structures in English. There are no cases illustrating P3 structures. Obviously, the expression in that form is not so popular among Bulgarian speakers. The table below shows the distribution of cases and the respective percent values of the identified patterns:

pattern	number of cases	percent value
P1 MS + zero complement	15	62.5
P2a MS + *za* + NP	1	4.2
P2b MS + *za* + *tova, koeto* +CL	8	33.3
Total	24	100%

Pattern 1 becomes explicit with 15 examples, 7 of which are related to the act of showing sympathy to someone who has experienced the death of a loved one. The phrase is routinized and clichéd and as there is no complement tailing, the expressive mood and the particular personal attitude towards the hearer are

not that noticeable. It sounds more distant and socially detached, although the contextual surrounding may change that emotive power.

The following sentences are examples of P2a and P2b patterns:

> ex. *Moite sachuvstviya za tezhkata zaguba. /My sympathies for your terrible loss.//Under cover – Bg/*, where the Bulgarian sentence is a word-for-word translation equivalent of the English one, in that all syntactic constituents are identical (P2a).

> ex. *Moite sachuvstviya za tova, koeto si prezhivyal. /My sympathies for what you have lived through.//The devil's throat – Bg/* (P3a)

In the latter case there are certain aberrations in the grammatical transfer as well as in the lexical equivalence, namely, in the prepositional complement clause after the   performative utterance: the phrase *za tova, koeto* is translated in English *for what*, though the literal translation should be *for that, what*. While in Bulgarian there are two elements, *tova* and *koeto*, which apply to one and the same entity in the world and propositional content, giving explanation for the act of sympathy and its reference with regard to the hearer's grief/pain, the English translation comprises only one such lexical element which also serves as an explanatory account for the act of showing sympathy. Nevertheless, that disparity cannot be considered a marked one but could contribute to the overall picture of grammatically correct strategies where the purely routinized formulas /as in English/ would sound more distant to the hearer. Additionally, though the declarative nature of the sentence is obvious, the expressive aspect prevails. While there are 7 cases of P1 pattern which refer to a bereaved person, all other 17 utterances refer to someone's misfortune or tragic ordeal, but not to someone's death. Interestingly enough, however, the Bulgarian expressions of that syntax and lexical content are not typical as a whole. They are more common in other grammatical structures preceding the performative parts.

- The expression "my condolences" in English and Bulgarian

The discussion and analysis of the second phrase in question is limited pragmatically as it can only be used in cases when the addresser's communicative goals refer to someone suffering from the loss of a dear person. All other contextual options, either of illustrating compassion or sympathy cannot be traced in the expression. That is valid for both languages.

In terms of semantic content, the translation equivalent of the expression *My condolences* is *Moite saboleznovaniya* in Bulgarian, the latter bearing the same propositional content as in its English counterpart phrase. The nouns *condolence* and *saboleznovanie* contain the prefixes (*con-*) (Baerman, 2015, p. 34) and (*sa-*) (Nitsolova, 2008) (with the meaning "joined to something") which appended to the root morpheme (*-dol-En; -bol-Bg*) with the meaning "pain", become identifiable as linguistic entities possessing certain propositional attitude as

emotional expressions Consequently, the two nouns apart from expressing sympathy or compassion, also imply the idea of empathy that involves the speaker emotionally into the pain of the sufferer /addressee/ (Jadhav, 2013). Taken in isolation, both expressions sound trivial, commonplace, customary, though contextually, they may display a stronger emotional contour and emotive power as the contextual factors such as social distance and relationship to the bereaved or the deceased may be quite determinative.

Syntactically, the English expression falls into two main complement structures:

P1$_{mc}$: My condolences + zero complement

P2$_{mc}$: My condolences + PP [*to/on/for* + NP$_{person/other}$]

> ex. *My condolences on the death of your father. /The Capture – Br/*

The overall number of examples is 42 with P1$_{mc}$ indicating 5 cases whereas the other 37 utterances are distributed among the P2$_{mc}$ subpatterns.

In the event of P1$_{mc}$ pattern, the performative entity does not take any complement markers which on its part does not show any further expressive emphasis implied by the communicative act. That is considered to be a pure form of declarative self-evident form of a standard expression. The emotional aspect can only become explicit if the utterance is followed by additional communicative acts as it is the case in the following example:

> ex. *My condolences. Accept my heartfelt sympathies. You know, my heart goes out to you. I promise I will not let you be alone with your pain. /Killing Eve – Br/*

Indeed, the performative phrase is succeeded by three other utterances: a direct act of sympathy; an implicit act of sympathy/condolence and a promise /which is a commissive speech act/, adding a more personal attitude and illustrating limited social distance to the hearer.

Regarding P2$_{mc}$ next, *my condolences* plus a prepositional phrase, the pattern falls into three possible sub-structures. It keeps its syntactic format but replaces one lexical item with another one which belongs to the same part of speech. In that case, the item that is to be replaced is the preposition of the prepositional phrase which as a function word cannot change the grammatical structure of the utterance but may cause propositional deviations. In that respect, the three P2 sub-branches are as follows:

P2a$_{mc}$: MC + **to**-NP$_{person}$ + [for + NP$_{other}$]   :
>   ex. *My condolences **to** you and your son. /The Capture – Br/*

P2b$_{mc}$: MC + **on**-NP$_{other}$
>   ex. *My condolences **on** your friend's passing. I vividly remember every time. /Fleabag – Br/*

P2c$_{mc}$:   MC + **for**-NP$_{other}$
ex. *My condolences **for** his terrible sorrow.*   /*The Capture – Br*/

The number of cases and their respective percent rates are presented in the table below:

pattern	number of cases	percent value
P1a$_{mc}$ MC + zero complement	5	11.9
P2a$_{mc}$ MC + to-NP$_{person}$	6	14.3
P2b$_{mc}$ MC + on-NP$_{other}$	28	66.7
P2c$_{mc}$ MC + for-NP$_{other}$	3	7.1
Total	42	100%

The most common expression, obviously, is the P2b$_{mc}$ with 28 out of 47 cases. With respect to its semantic attitude, it actually copies the pattern *My sympathies + for +NP$_{other}$* as the propositional content addresses not directly the addressee, but his/her suffering. The interesting thing here is that while *my sympathies* expression is common with the preposition *for*, *my condolences* mostly goes with *on*, which in itself could hardly reveal any pragmalinguistic discrepancies. Relevantly, the P2c$_{mc}$ pattern reveals a similar semantic aspect to P2b$_{mc}$ with the preposition *for* succeeded by a nominal phrase lacking the semantic feature [+ animate] by referring to an event.

During the process of analysis, it became evident that the difference between using *on* or *for* refers to certain contextual determinants, in that, in a face-to-face communication when the speaker refers directly to the misfortunate event talking to the hearer, the more preferable preposition is *on*, while *for* is more favoured as a second-hand reported phrase. For instance:

ex. *My condolences on your recent loss.* /*The Capture – Br*/

ex. *My condolences for her family in this awful situation.* /*The Fleabag*/

Personally, since the *for* expressions extracted from the movies were uttered by non-native speakers of English /an Italian and two Indian employees/, it could be assumed that there is either an incorrectly used lexical item, or an adopted piece of lexical knowledge typical to American English. It should also be mentioned that the performative phrase also collocates with the prepositions *over* and *upon* which are mainly recognizable if the expression is preceded by a verb phrase / *offer, accept*/.

In terms of the Bulgarian equivalent of "my condolences", that is, *Moite saboleznovaniya*, the expression becomes explicit with the same complement structures: 1. MS + zero complement; 2. MS + *na*-NP*person*; 3. MS + *za-*

NP*other*. The number of cases and their distribution percent values are given in the following table:

pattern	number of cases	percent value
1. MS + zero complement	14	77.2
2. MS + *na* + NP*person*	2	11.1
3. MS + *za* + NP*other*	2	11.1
Total	18	100%

The zero-complement pattern gains prominence over the other mono-valent prepositional noun phrases in the Bulgarian language. Essentially, both the prepositions *na* (followed by a [+animate, +human] NP) and *za* (succeeded by a NP*event*) are not conventional in a face-to-face interaction. As contextually the expression is used mainly when showing sympathies to someone's death. The phrase is routinized and stable with relevance to the socially accepted set of expressions in such pragmatic environment. The emotive contour and the expressive aspect are less distinct. Another aspect is that one of the issues which could make a condolence utterance more complicated is the relationships between the interlocutors. In order to report a meaningful sentiment showing a personal regard to the bereaved, further utterances should be added. That is not the case in the Bulgarian set of data. Similarly, English data illustrate also less expressive personal attitude. Characteristically, other forms or expressions of sympathy are needed to enhance the emotional content of an expression.

Results/ Key Findings

After investigating the two sets of data in a comparative mode the following results were found out:

With respect to the expression *My sympathies*:

- in general, English speakers outperformed Bulgarian speakers into a ratio roughly three to one /73 compared to 24 cases/, which makes the phrase more common in British language surrounding limited to the corpus data;

- nearly two thirds of English utterances express sympathies to a bereaved (47 compared to 26 examples) while the incidence in Bulgarian illustrates an opposite trend (7 utterances referring to someone's loss in contrast to 17 other reason cases);

- semantically, no significant differences were found between the two phrases /English and Bulgarian/;

- the prevalent pattern in English obtained in this research is *My sympathies + verb phrase + prepositional phrase* [to+person], whilst in Bulgarian it is *Moite sachuvstviya + zero complement*.

- pragmatically, the expression is widely used among native speakers

of English to express condolences and compassion, while Bulgarian natives rarely use it to express condolences.

- in both languages the expression has a high degree of expressive power.

With respect to *My condolences* the results from the analysis are the following:

- obviously, the English database outnumbers the Bulgarian set of condolence utterances significantly /42 compared to 18 examples/ in the analyzed corpus;

- English speakers when expressing condolences seem to emphasize on the event while Bulgarians tend to exploit the expression neutrally without any complements addressing the event or the bereaved;

Conclusion and Implications

The elicitations of this article, though limited in scope, may contribute to:

- both teachers and learners to distinguish the semantic and syntactic nuances of sympathies and condolences separately and relate them to a specific emotional state /anger, pain, pity, sorrow, sympathy/;

- learners' linguistic awareness of the foreign language with respect to given syntactic structures of specific speech acts, which in turn could be essential for students in mastering pragmatic competence.

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REFUSAL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY BULGARIAN AND ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKERS WITH HIGHER STATUS INTERLOCUTORS

Polina Mitkova[1]

Abstract: This paper compares the refusal strategies employed by English and Bulgarian native speakers in business settings with interlocutors of a higher status. The data collecting tool is a discourse - completion task (DCT). The refusals are compared in terms of frequency of the semantic formulas and adjuncts. The findings indicate that refusals towards representatives of a higher status are most frequently realized through the semantic formula Reason/Explanation, followed by Regret/ Apology and Negation of the proposition for English native speakers or Statement of fact for Bulgarians. Some of the short patterns of strategies observed for Bulgarians are the combinations: Negation of the proposition and Statement of fact, Statement of fact and Warning, Statement of fact and Statement of limit and Statement of fact and Redirecting. These findings should benefit researchers, business people and negotiators who are to overcome intercultural, communicational and linguistic challenges in a globalized world.

Key words: business communication, negotiations, refusals, discourse - completion task, Bulgarian and English native respondents

Introduction

This study is part of a more comprehensive project on refusals in business communication. It presents data of Bulgarians' refusals in Bulgarian and English native speakers' refusals in English. Its main purpose is to discover the most frequently used refusal strategies by both groups in the communication with individuals of a higher status. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that it focuses on a little researched Slavic group as well as in the business setting of the scenarios administered to the respondents.

The importance of fields in linguistics such as interlanguage pragmatics is felt stronger nowadays among people engaged in international business communication. This has triggered interest in comparative studies in pragmatics dealing mostly with face-threatening speech acts, the refusal being one of them.

1. Ph.D Student, Department of English Studies, Shumen University, e-mail: polinamitkova@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-0802–1546

Not giving the answers expected or preferred by the hearer may have greater implications in business settings than it does in casual conversations.

Authors who have published extensively on the subject and proposed a taxonomy of their own are Takahashi, Beebe and Uliss-Weltz (1990), followed by another team of researchers Salazar, Safont and Codina (2009). Some Chinese authors work on refusals – Liao and Bresnahan (1996) compare American and Chinese refusal realizations with peers and higher status individuals; Jiayu (2004) compares Chinese and English speech acts of refusals in shopping activities and Honglin (2007) focuses on the directness aspect in refusals. Kádár (2012) investigated the epistolary corpus of the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasties. A brilliant epistolary sample is the marriage refusal written by an aristocrat lady to the widowed Chinese emperor. Ren (2016) focuses on date refusals in Chinese TV reality shows. Hong and Chen (2011) work on refusal realization in the context of press conference releases.

Al-Issa (2003), Al-Kahtani (2005), Al-Eryani (2007), Aliakbari and Changizi (2012) studied refusal realizations in Arabic languages. Lauper (1997) and Siebold and Busch (2015) elaborated on refusal realizations in the European language group. Lauper (1997) compares refusal realizations of English and Spanish speakers, while Siebold and Busch (2015) – of Spanish and German speakers.

Up to the present there are few studies dedicated to the performance of refusals in Slavic languages and in business communication. Nixdorf (2002) compares Russian with English and German speakers in their production of refusal speech acts. Comparative studies in the field of pragmatics are typically triggered by the geopolitical realities of a certain period, which at the time were marked by the return of many German expatriates to their homeland from Russia.

The questions we intend to answer in this paper are what the differences, similarities or the overlapping features in refusal performance are when they are carried out by Bulgarian and English native speakers with individuals of higher status i.e. in a business interaction between an employee and an employer (see scenario #2 from Appendix A – when a boss asks an employee to stay late at work the day before their birthday, or scenario #5 – an employee to give a boss a lift back home).

Materials and Methods

The aim of this comparative study is to look into the refusal strategies employed by English and Bulgarian native speakers in business settings and to report on the most frequently used strategies by both groups with respect to status. Both groups' participants were given a tailor-made discourse-completion task (DCT) in their native language in the form of a quiz titled "Psycholinguistic

experiment". It consists of 12 work-related situations identical for both groups (see Appendix A). Its subtitle "How do you refuse?" steers the participants into ways of realizing refusals. The participants were additionally instructed to use refusals in each of the scenarios in writing as if there were no possibilities for them to accept the suggested ideas.

The quiz was designed to incorporate scenarios with an eliciting act (mostly requests, suggestions, invitations etc.) coming from individuals of the same, higher and lower status. The status of the requestee was identified with an equal sign (=) for a request coming from an equal status individual; a downwards arrow (↓) for a request coming from a higher status individual and an upwards arrow (↑) for a request coming from a lower status individual. The additional feature of status identification was added because some of the scenarios (#8 the client who spills coffee on the floor and asks you to clean up the mess she created) raised the question of how to interpret the status of the client. Depending on what the business tenets in the respective culture are, the client may always come first and be entitled to the best service (that would qualify this elicitation act as one coming from a person of a higher status). The clients can, however, be on an equal footing with the staff or maybe of a lower status, as it was initially implied. Since we are interested in the refusal strategies and not so much in their cultural implications, we left these considerations for future research. Another scenario that received a lot of oral or written comments was scenario #6 concerning donations that are being collected for a badly injured colleague from work. Many of the participants were reluctant to refuse stating that such behavior would be inhumane and they would never act in such a manner were it to happen in real life. The written samples from participants who misunderstood the quiz and answered only with "Yes/ No" (meaning probably that they would refuse or not in the given situations, but not writing how exactly) were excluded from the data that was subsequently analyzed.

The empirical data were obtained mostly via an online DCT quiz. A total of 105 English native speakers (ENS) responded to the English version of the quiz – 75 students from Iowa State University, aged between 18 and 25, majoring in economics. The rest of the informants are aged 23 to 71 with the British being the most numerous group of 20 people, followed by 14 Americans, 4 Australians, 2 Irish, 1 Scottish and 1 British/Australian. They submitted a paper version of the quiz (see the link in the references) directly to the researcher at the BETA – IATEFL Annual International Conference 2017 and at other random locations in Varna, Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian native informants (BNS), who filled in the Bulgarian version of the quiz are 110 – 30 students from the Varna University of Management, aged between 18 and 23, majoring in economics, software sciences or culinary

arts. The majority of the rest of the informants are middle-aged individuals with various professions with the oldest informant being 67 years-old, as can be learned from the demographic information of the quiz.

Data Analysis

A modified version of Salazar, Safont and Codina's classification (2009) was used. It includes some entries from Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz's (1990) taxonomy. Both classifications are "developed for single turn responses" (Gass & Houck, 1999). Instead of looking at the refusal as consisting of a head act and supportive moves (the Blum-Kulka et al.'s approach, 1989), Gass and Houck's approach was followed. They "applied the classification to all the acts that could be … directly involved in negotiating the refusal" which "sometimes resulted in several acts in the same turn being treated as refusal strategies" (Gass & Houck, 1999).

When analyzing the samples, we paid attention to the different kinds of semantic formulas and adjuncts and calculated their frequency for each scenario for both subject groups in order to discover the most prevalent ones. When coding the refusals, we tried to stay within the designated category. If a respondent in scenario #7 refuses saying "It's not my job", this was coded as Statement of fact due to brevity of expression instead of as Reason/ Explanation which tended to be more long-winded. When a refusal consists of several ideas e.g. "How much are most people giving? I'm out of money at the moment." each idea is coded as a separate strategy, here Question and Reason/Explanation, because explanations tend to be personal. It has to be noted that there will always be differences in interpretation of the semantic formulas by different coders. The coding for this research was conducted by a single coder, which guarantees a certain level of consistency. If the study is to be replicated in the future by different researchers, their interpretation of the results may vary from what is being presented here.

Research Findings

Table 1 summarizes the information about the most frequent refusal strategies used by BNSs and ENSs. In scenarios #2, #5 and #7 the requests comes from the boss.[2]

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2. See the whole quiz in Appendix A. at the end.

Table 1. Frequency of Semantic Formulas in Refusal
of Request from a Person of a Higher status

Scena-rios	#2 working late before birthday	#5 a lift back home	#7 taking up the tasks of someone
1st most used	**Reason/Explana-tion** ENS 57% BNS 62 %	**Reason/Explanation** ENS 61% BNS 50 %	ENS Reason/ Explanation 45% BNS Statement of Fact 31%
2nd most used	**Regret/Apology** ENS 27% BNS 37 %	**Regret/ Apology** ENS 35% BNS 41 %	**Negation of Proposi-tion** ENS 13% BNS 25 %
3rd most used	**Negation of Proposition** ENS 19% BNS 25%	ENS Negation of Proposition 17% BNS Statement of Fact 31%	**Regret/ Apology** ENS 12% BNS 21 % Redirecting ENS 12%
4th most used	ENS Questions – 12% BNS Statement of fact 20%	ENS Redirecting 9, 6% BNS Negation of Prop-osition/ Faulty Features 18%	ENS Plain Indirect 11% BNS Reason / Explanation 16%
5th most used	ENS Plain Indirect – 7,7% BNS Willingness/ Postponement – 12%	ENS Statement of Fact, Condition 5,8 % BNS Softeners 8,2%	ENS Statement of Fact, Condition 7, 7% BNS Warning/Willing-ness 13%

When an action is requested by a speaker of a higher status, English native speakers (ENSs) tend to resort to the semantic formula Reason/Explanation as their first choice, followed by Regret/Apology or Negation of the proposition. "Due to the authority aspect in business settings interlocutors opt for safer strategies using Reason/ Explanation and less often and when the degree of imposition changes (as is the case in scenario #7 from the quiz – see Appendix A) either the more direct Statement of fact or Condition or evasive language as with Plain indirect strategy. When the case allows for involvement of the respondents in resolving the request they tend to use the Redirecting or Question strategy" (Mitkova, 2018).

When we compare with the Bulgarian corpus (the BNS figures) we can observe an overlap in scenario #2 about a boss asking an employee to work late before the employee's birthday. The first three most used strategies are identical with those used by ENSs. As for the strategies occupying 4th and 5th positions Bulgarian native speakers (BNSs) show preference for the more direct Statement of fact, while ENSs opt for the noncommittal Question strategy and the Plain indirect strategy. Like Spanish speakers (Siebold & Busch, 2015) BNSs prefer to express Willingness and would rather postpone the activity for a later and

more convenient stage than abandon it completely. In scenarios #5 and #7 we have respectively 2 strategies that are in the identical positions as those in the ENS data (#5 – Reason/ Explanation and Regret/ Apology; #7 – Negation of proposition and Regret/apology) and 1 strategy (#5 – Negation of proposition; #7 – Reason/ Explanation) in a swapped position, which shows that when dealing with higher status individuals both BNSs and ENSs tend to choose very similar strategies.

Discussion of the Differences and Similarities

One can see in Table 1 above that the frequency of the strategy Statement of fact is lower with ENSs than it is with BNSs. The corpus reveals that ENSs refuse by it either standing alone (#7 respondent 77 below) or in combination with maximum one more strategy – usually the direct Flat No strategy (#7 respondent 101) or Regret/ Apology (#7 respondent 52). This is to show that they tend to keep the utterance concise.

> (77) "I will be distracted from my own work." (Statement of fact)

> (101) "No. It's not my job." (Bluntness + Statement of fact)

> (52) "I'm sorry but that's not a part of my job." (Regret/ Apology + Statement of fact)

The BNSs use it also as a stand-alone, but more often in a two-, three- and multiple-strategy combination, which adds a long-winded tone to the refusals. The shorter pattern Statement of fact + Negation of proposition (#7 respondent 86 and Table 2) used by BNSs resembles the ENSs' Bluntness + Statement of fact pattern in terms of abruptness of expression. The development of shorter patterns into longer strategy combinations is visualized in Table 2 below. The most stable strategy combinations are circled in colors for ease of recognition.

> (86) "Тези неща не са в моята сфера, не мога." – These things are not in my competency, I can't. (Statement of fact + Negation of proposition)

The other short patterns Statement of fact + Warning (#7 respondent 41 and Table 2) and Statement of Fact + Redirecting (#7 respondent 53), unique for BNS, give away their tendency to get involved in the problem at hand. What Gass and Houck (1999) notice in their research comparing native speakers' and non-native speakers' refusal realization is that "non-native speakers occasionally involved themselves in the native speaker's problems" and they observed "different degrees of supportive involvement" depending on the concern non-native speakers have for the relationship.

(41) "Поради факта, че самият аз съм натоварен - ще съм в състояние да изпълнявам задачите с голямо закъснение" – Due to the fact that I myself am very busy, I will be able to deliver the tasks with a big delay. (Statement of fact + Warning)

(53) "Моля, да ги разпределите към други колеги; посочвам заетостта си в момента (графика ми обикновено е пълен догоре)" – Could you please delegate them to other colleagues; I am enclosing my schedule, which is completely full. (Statement of fact + Redirecting)

Another short pattern used only by Bulgarians is the outright denial achieved through the combination of Statement of fact and Sarcasm (#7 respondent 23). This set of strategies contrasts sharply with the generally more solution-oriented and face-saving tone of refusals in the BNS corpus.

(23) "Често оставам след работа, за да си изпълня преките задължения, ако взема и тези задачи, трябва да не се прибирам." – I often stay after work to complete my tasks. If I take these tasks on top of mine, I won't make it home at all (Statement of fact + Sarcasm)

Table 2. Short patterns developed
into longer strategy combinations used by BNSs

NP – – – – SF	SF – Warn
NP – – – – RA – SF	NP – SF – Warn
FF–SA– RA – SF	RA – SF – Warn
PI ––––– RA – SF	SF – Warn- Wish/Hope+ Softener
RA – RSE – SF	

The short patterns common for both groups are the face-saving combinations of Regret/ Apology and Statement of fact (#7 respondent 52 above and #2 respondent 81 below) or Statement of fact and Postponement (#2 respondent 54; #7 respondent 94)

(81) "Съжалявам, имам семейни ангажименти." – I'm sorry, I have family appointments. (Regret/ Apology + Statement of fact)

(54) "Шефе, имам личен ангажимент, ако не е критично спешно остава за утре." – Boss, I have personal engagement, if it isn't extremely urgent, I will do it tomorrow. (Statement of fact + Postponement)

(94) I haven't completed my current tasks. Once I have done them I will do the others. (Statement of fact + Postponement)

In contrast to ENSs, Bulgarians tend to extend the short pattern Regret/ Apology – Statement of fact (see Table 2) and add to it Negation of proposition (#7 respondent 33) and more rarely Faulty features paired with a Softener/ Address (#7 respondent 64) or Plain indirect strategy (#7 respondent 75).

(33) "Аз моите задачи не мога да свърша на време. Съжалявам, но няма да мога" – I cannot execute my own tasks on time. I am sorry, but I cannot manage. (Statement of fact + Regret/ Apology +Negation of proposition)

(64) "Съжалявам шефе, моите задължения напълно ми запълват работното време. Нямам свободен капацитет." – I am sorry, boss, my own duties take up completely my work schedule. I have no free capacity. (Regret/ Apology + Softener/ Address + Statement of fact + Faulty features)

(75) "Съжалявам, но нямам възможност. Имам твърде много задачи." – I am sorry, but I won't be able to do it. I have too many tasks. (Regret/ Apology + Plain indirect + Statement of fact)

The use of these additional strategies, although intended to strengthen the validity of the fact mentioned, add a defensive note to the utterance and may be perceived by the interlocutor as a signal that negotiation is possible.

Following these lines, Bulgarians are inclined to incorporate the Statement of fact strategy in up to five – member combinations with Redirecting and Statement of fact (#7 respondent 5, column 1 in Table 3), Statement of fact and Statement of limit (added to enhance the effect of the former – #7 respondent 40, column 2 in Table 3) or Statement of fact and Willingness (#7 respondent 39, column 3 in Table 3) being stable constituents of these multiple strategy combinations.

(5) "Съжалявам, но съм натоварен до краен предел и не бих могъл да го направя без това да повлияе отрицателно на качеството на изпълнение на задачите, по които аз работя. Смятам, че ще бъде по-добре ако някой друг ги поеме или ако ги разпределите между повече хора." – I am sorry, but I am inundated up to my limit and I would not be able to complete it without this affecting negatively the quality of the tasks which I work on. I deem it better if someone else takes them on or if we split them among more people. (Regret/ Apology + Statement of fact +Voicing Fears + Redirecting)

(40) "Имам твърде много задачи и няма да мога да поема и тези. Не мога да осигуря качество на работата си, ако съм претоварена." – I have too many tasks and cannot take these on. I cannot secure quality of my work if I am overwhelmed with work. (Reason/ Explanation + Negation of proposition+ Statement of fact + Statement of limit)

(39) "С удоволствие, но времето и усилието, което ще прекарам, ще се отрази зле на собствениете ми задачи, а еди кой си мой проект има

краен срок утре." – I would love to, but the time and the efforts I will waste will affect negatively my own tasks, besides my project is due tomorrow. (Willingness + Voicing Fears + Statement of fact)

Table 3. Multiple strategy combinations used by BNSs

RA – SF – VF – RSE	RSE – CO – SF – SL	SF – Will – Cond
PI – RE – RSE –SF – Warn	RE – NP – SF – SL	Will – Q – SF
	SF – SL – Will – VF	Will – VF – SF

The current study was designed to complement the existing pragmatics literature on refusals with respect to one little researched linguistic group, namely that of Bulgarian native speakers. A possible explanation for the scarcity of research on the topic of refusals with focus on Slavic languages may be that a pragmatic failure is unlikely to occur in the interaction between the above mentioned cultural groups. This proposition is confirmed by Nixdorf's findings (2002) that there are many similarities in the linguistic resources the three cultural groups she investigated (German, English and Russians) employ. One of the few features in realizing refusals that sets them apart is "the frequent use of the direct "no" in combination with a grateful expression in German (nein, danke) and English (no, thanks), while in Russian the formula most often used is a simple spasibo without any direct "no"" (Nixdorf, 2002, p.124 cited in Siebold & Busch, 2014). Siebold and Busch (2014), however, assert that even "in apparently similar occidental cultures, like the German and Spanish cultures, there also exist considerable differences between the systems of verbal politeness and communicative styles" (p.66).

Conclusion

These results show that there is a close similarity in strategy use between English and Bulgarian native speakers at the higher status level. Due to the significant overlap of strategy use a pragmatic failure is unlikely to occur, but if the interlocutors are to engage in more sophisticated communication, attention needs to be paid to the minute peculiarities. These findings are valuable for anyone engaged in teaching TESOL courses, business communication or negotiations as they show the practice of native English speakers and its implications when it comes to realizing the speech act of refusal.

There are a number of limitations that are to be addressed regarding the present research. First and foremost, the data collection tool, namely DCTs confines the samples only to single-turn refusals, which leaves us with a fragmented picture of what the real, spontaneous and interest-driven exchange between interlocutors

could be. Secondly, the DCTs scenarios although grounded in business settings produce contrived responses and show only probabilistic linguistic behavior. These significant limitations come to show the need for additional research on the topic of refusals in business communication. Our recommendations for subsequent projects focusing on the issue are to aim at collecting naturalistic data. Having mentioned that, we would like to point the challenges that such a project could entail. The very nature of refusals, being a face-threatening speech act, makes the disclosure of information an extremely sensitive subject. This coupled with the secrecy inherent to corporate cultures and prohibition to infringe on corporate secrets and internal rules makes the researcher-outsider into a not very welcome figure.

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The quiz is to be found at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1j3D4868dRa261k28z IGJpDdhnpW3cPwECcLKfaay7R0/edit

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d79dG9iCf1NeAotQDPdpuVlbMix92DoN1SAS wYRIK30/edit

Appendix A. PSYCHOLINGUISTIC EXPERIMENT – How do you refuse?

age: gender: nationality: occupation: education:

1. A colleague invites you to her party. =

2. Your boss asks you to stay late at work the day before your birthday. ↓

3. Your colleague asks you to use your laptop. =

4. The cleaning lady in your office asks you to help her carry a heavy box. ↑

5. Your boss asks you to give him a lift back home. ↓

6. A colleague is badly injured and people from work ask you to donate money. =

7. Your boss asks you to take up the tasks of someone who just quit the job. ↓

8. Your client asks you to clean up the mess she created – spilled coffee on the floor. ↑

9. A colleague asks to use the printer because he is in a hurry. =

10. An employee/student asks you for a day off. ↑

11. The new colleague asks you to turn down the ringing sound of your cell phone as it is disturbing his work. ↓

12. Your assistant asks you to call a taxi for her. ↑

BULGARIAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN PREPARING FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE MATURITY EXAM

Irina Ivanova[1], Gergana Gerova[2]

Abstract: *The article looks into issues related to the maturity exam in English on the basis of a survey conducted with Bulgarian students who intended to sit the exam. The scope of investigation includes students' reasons for choosing the exam, their preparation, and the difficulties they experience in the language areas and skills it covers. The results helped to identify aspects of the exam, which make it students' preferred choice for a second obligatory school-leaving test. Respondents' self-evaluation in the skill and knowledge areas resulted in a comprehensive picture of test-takers' strengths and difficulties, and identified issues, which have to be taken into consideration by teachers and officials responsible for preparing the exam and evaluating its quality.*

Key words: *maturity exam in English, Bulgarian students, perceptions, challenges, language areas and skills*

Introduction

The maturity exam in English as a foreign language is a kind of proficiency exam which Bulgarian students can choose to sit at the end of their 12-year school education. Aimed at testing overall language proficiency at the time of school leaving, the exam is supposed to measure both students' overall achievement over a period of language learning, and their readiness to use the language in real-life situations or for further studies or work. As a rule, in proficiency exams, students' global competence in the language is measured irrespective of their preparation in terms of courses and curricula, and covers all areas of language competence. In Bulgaria, the level of the test difficulty is estimated to match level B2 in the Common European Frame of Reference, and it takes into account the differences in the curricula followed by different types of schools. However, being only written, the maturity exam does not test students' speaking

1. Associate Prof., Ph.D., Department of English Studies, Shumen University, Bulgaria, e-mail: irina.ivanova@shu.bg, ORCID: 0000-0002-0216-7061

2. Ph.D, Department of German Studies, Shumen University, Bulgaria, Faculty of Humanities, e-mail: g.gerova@shu.bg , ORCID: 0000-0003-1934-3882

skills, a fact which raises serious concerns about its validity in assessing overall language ability.

The exam consists of four components: listening, reading, use of English and writing. The first three components include 60 display items with a single or limited number of correct answers and a writing task in which students can choose between two essay topics. The total number of points is 100, 30 of which are assigned for the writing task, and 70 – for the other components. The time for the exam is 4 hours (http://www.zamatura.eu/page/matura-chujd-ezik-programa).

In addition to measuring students' ability or competence in the foreign language, the maturity exam also provides feedback to both educational policy makers and teachers. The significant percentage of students who choose English for their second maturity exam is growing progressively, which might be an indicator for the quality of foreign instruction at school. According to the Assessment Centre for pre-school and school education data, in the last three years there has been a rise in the number of test-takers, as in 2017 there were 11 460 candidates, in 2018 – 13 522, in 2019 – 14 412. In 2020 the maturity exam in English was students' first choice for the second obligatory exam, with 11 884 out of 37116 students. Compared to other foreign languages, English is by far the first preferred language (the exam in German was chosen by 994 students, French – by 373, Russian – by 321, and Spanish – by 319) (https://www.segabg.com/hot/category-education/mon-publikuva-vuprosite-i-otgovorite-na-maturata).

Theoretical background

The fact that language ability is a "complicated, multifaceted construct, consisting of many interdependent or independent subskills, each of which can be operationalised in many different ways" (Schoonen, 2011, p. 702), makes its assessment rather complex. Defined as "the ability to perform language tasks in real life and real time, that is, the ability to convey or understand a content message through the medium of spoken or written language" (ibid.), it entails the successful activation of a range of cognitive processes through a selection of relevant tasks. The main issue debated by researchers in relation to measuring language ability is whether it should be viewed as a monolithic construct, or as consisting of separate constituent abilities with a different weight in assessing the whole (Bachman, 2007,2010; Chalhoub-Deville, 2003; Chapelle, 1998; McNamara, 1996). Another challenge lies in discriminating between students' content knowledge and their language ability, especially in assessing their productive performance in writing and speaking. In addition, there are factors such as handwriting in writing and pronunciation in speaking, which might affect the assessment of students' overall performance.

In measuring language ability, researchers' aim is to assess learners' grammatical and lexical knowledge, usually measured in what is known as Use-of-English section of proficiency exams, now included in the reading section of the Cambridge FCE, CAE and CPE exams, and integrated within the four skills in other exams, such as IELTS and TOEFL.

In assessing learners' skills development, the macro skills are broken down into microskills or micro processes, which have to be executed for the successful completion of the respective macro-skill tasks (Cutler & Clifton, 1999). The time limit which is set for each skills section requires a good level of automaticity, which guarantees the easy retrieval and use of the needed language (Harrington, 2006).

O'Sullivan (2011) emphasizes the fact that tests developed for use in a local context (such as the maturity exam) should be subject to the same requirements of consistency and accuracy as their international counterparts, which leads to diminishing the difference between local and international tests. Therefore, the maturity exam presents a combination of tasks with a narrow focus on skills, subskills and processes, such as multiple-choice listening and reading, gap filling, sentence completion and transformation, as well as text creation. The information about students' language ability is obtained by calculating the number of correct answers and by assigning points to their written text by means of analytic rating scales also known as criteria bands. This combination of approaches to testing receptive and productive skills is thought to be sufficient in providing information about students' language ability. However, in testing language ability, researchers should take into consideration the effect of students' typical behavior, which, according to Cronbach (1961) may not reflect their highest possible performance level.

The importance of test tasks is conceptualized in a framework of three key aspects which test developers take into consideration: the stimulus material that is given to students, the instructions and the constraints they impose, and the way test scores are interpreted (Alderson, 2000; Bachman & Palmer, 1996). In the maturity exam, the stimulus material which is available to test takers and is used for doing the respective tasks has a different form depending on the task. It could be a recorded material for listening or a reading text, which has to be processed top-down and bottom-up in order to elicit the gist or specific information. In the Use-of-English tasks it is the gapped text or sentences, which have to be transformed or completed, and in the writing task it is the instruction for creating a certain type of text. Criteria for test validity should ensure that tasks test what they claim to test and nothing else, e.g. a reading comprehension task should not be complicated by choosing texts on topics which are unfamiliar to students, or which are full of specialized vocabulary from certain areas of knowledge. Similar caution is applied in choosing the stimulus structures in the

Use-of-English part, where the required transformations might test particularly difficult or infrequent structures, usually studied only marginally or superficially in class.

In order to ensure maximum performance, the instructions to the tasks should be clear and straightforward, and should not deviate from the ones given to students throughout their learning and test preparation. Students need to know in advance how many times they will hear the texts and whether they are allowed to take notes during the listening (Buck, 2001; Sherman, 1997). They need to be able to activate and integrate the cognitive and metacognitive strategies acquired previously depending on the reading task (Gerova, 2019). In the writing task, students need to know the purpose of writing a particular type of text and the target audience expectations.

The evaluation of students' performance in the exam results in an estimation of their language proficiency level. Their receptive ability is assessed through the sum of the correct answers in the listening and reading tasks (Berent et al., 2008; Webb, 2008). This 'objective' scoring is combined with the results of the Use-of-English tasks constructed responses, and the students' written texts, which are assessed by means of a criteria band. The scoring of students' production can be additionally complicated by spelling mistakes (Messick, 1989).

In order to reduce subjectivity, the rating criteria in writing should be dominated by the requirement for the relevance of the writer's response to the task (Fulcher, 2003; Weigle, 2002). If the relations between task instructions and scoring criteria are not taken into consideration, the assessment of language ability becomes problematic, as it "does not reflect the underlying cognitive processes and language skills" (Schoonen, 2011, p. 711).

The idea of dividing the areas of language teaching and testing into four skills originally followed the model of the native speaker's competency. Characteristic of pre-communicative methodology, and associated with isolated pattern practice, error avoidance, and native-speaker model, this view contrasts markedly with teaching language as a means of communication (Hinkel, 2010). Most modern communicative and post-communicative approaches advocate an integration of the four skills in both teaching and testing as much as possible, while at the same time building learners' cultural awareness and the qualities they need to deal successfully with people from other cultures. In practice, testing the four skills involves the activation of learners' experiential, cultural, textual, linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. Students' performance in the exam is assessed on the basis of established criteria (cf. criterion vs norm-based assessment); it is summative and external. However, students' preparation for the exam should reflect the principles of ongoing, formative and dynamic assessment, which requires an active teaching approach based on understanding

learners' needs, adapting teaching materials and providing immediate feedback (see Hidri, 2020).

The testing of learners' receptive performance in the maturity exam is carried out by means of different listening and reading tasks. Understanding oral or written discourse involves much more than just knowledge of the language (Harmer, 2001), and without activating pre-existent knowledge of the world (both universal and culture-specific) it is very difficult or even impossible for learners to correctly interpret the received message. In the listening tasks, test takers have to process speech characterized by phonological peculiarities, such as accent and pronunciation, while at the same time attending to the meaning contained in the input by applying segmentation procedures which are different from the ones used in their native language (Cutler, 2001; Vandergrift, 2011). Listening is characterized by simultaneous top-down and bottom-up processing of information, which helps learners to create a mental representation of what they have heard (Hulstijn, 2003). The lack of automaticity typical of L1 listening, and the limited L2 proficiency might make listeners apply conscious control, which in turn limits or prevents their comprehension. However, if learners are trained to use compensatory strategies and contextual cues, their listening comprehension can improve, especially if they are aware of this type of metacognitive knowledge. Research shows that metacognition, and the combined use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies can have a positive impact on learners' achievement, motivation and self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001; Vandergrift, 2005), and that increasing students' awareness of the role of metacognition can positively benefit their performance. The activation of prior knowledge in top-down listening can be another source of difficulty, especially if students over-rely on it in choosing the correct answer, instead of attending to input information.

Understanding learners' difficulties in reading requires a consideration of some distinctive features of written discourse, such as its greater lexical and grammatical complexity in comparison to listening, and conformity to the conventions of formality. Another factor, which affects reading performance, is the effect of students' fluency and automaticity in first language reading (Birch, 2006), which can only be developed with consistent practice. In Bulgaria, a study by the Center for monitoring and evaluating the quality of school education and 'Together in Class' Foundation found out that students' interest in reading is low. According to their data, over 60% of children surveyed read only if they have to. About 40% have difficulty reading a book to the end, and 32% believe that reading is a waste of time. In general, it is children from families with well educated parents who have a greater interest in reading, and school education does not always manage to compensate for these deficiencies in the family environment (http://btvnovinite.bg/article/bulgaria/obshtestvo/dvama-ot-trima-uchenici-chetat-samo-ako-trjabva.html). A report by the European Commission for

Education, Culture and Youth reported that Bulgarian students up to 15 years of age have the worst reading skills compared with their peers in other countries of the European Union (http://www.hermesbg.org/tr/nova-biblioteka/book-30/995-agonizira-li-obrazovatelnata-ni-sistema.html). However, research indicates that proficient readers in L1 are not necessarily as good in L2 reading, and it is not clear whether their difficulties result from a reading or a language problem. Alderson (1984) hypothesized that poor reading is due to either application of inappropriate syntactic, semantic, and discourse comprehension strategies which do not work in a foreign language, or inadequate knowledge of the target language. On the other hand, according to Krashen (1993, p. 84), "students who read frequently acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called language skills". Researchers agree that readers do not decode the text in sequential order, but instead "attack the text with expectations of meaning developed before and during the process, taking in whole chunks of text, … to confirm and extend their expectations (Eskey, 2005, p. 565). Then this new information is mapped against the previous knowledge or schemata they bring into the process in order to construct the meaning of the text that is being read. Successful L2 readers have to have extensive vocabulary which they can recognize automatically (Stanovich, 1991) or safely guess from context, although extensive guessing might be linked to misinterpretation of meaning (Bernhardt, 1991). Knowledge of grammar is also essential for interpreting the meaning correctly, therefore the texts in exam formats are syntactically simplified to enhance language comprehension. Understanding text structure is another important factor in reading, especially in answering questions related to different parts of the texts. To sum up, there are a lot of factors which determine students' success or failure in reading, which means that the assessment of reading requires multiple measures and taking into account a range of learner variables and text features.

Use of English is the section in the exam in which students' success is most dependent on their previous preparation in term of conscious study of grammar and vocabulary. In the maturity exam, the types of tasks or test elicitation techniques (Ur, 1996) involve a cloze test, with four options for each gap, sentence completion with the same number of options for the gaps, and sentence transformations. The cloze in the exam is usually adapted to test specific aspects of vocabulary and grammar, such as collocation, lexical phrases, multi-part verbs, tenses, substitution, discourse markers, etc. The latter two are usually tested in short pieces of discourse, while the first ones can be tested in the minimal context of single sentences. Sentence transformations test students' knowledge of particular grammar structures, however, according to Ur (1996), they are not proper tests of grammar, as testees may perform on them well without knowing the meaning of the target structures or how to use them in context. The teaching and testing of grammar and vocabulary have undergone

an important change from a manipulation of the form, to a focus on meaning and use.

Recent research on developing L2 writing has focused on the organizational and ideational structure of L2 discourse and the morphosyntactic and lexical characteristics of L2 text (Hinkel, 2011). The same aspects of written discourse have been targeted in writing tests, in which students' achievement is measured with the help of assessment bands which are based on a number of criteria, aimed at measuring students' macro and micro-skills of writing. Frequently, underachievement in writing is seen as resulting from differences between L1 and L2 discourse patterns and norms, and discourse paradigms which are "principally, strategically, and globally different from those found in L1 writing" (Hinkel, 2011, p. 528). Therefore, being good at writing in one's L1 does not mean being good at L2 writing. L2 writers tend to have problems with organizing and structuring their ideas; they rely more on unsubstantiated personal opinion or judgment than on evidence; they disregard audience or assume that their readers share the same background knowledge, etc., and even at an advanced level, have a severely limited lexical and syntactic repertoire compared to native speakers (for a detailed list of issues see Hinkel 2011, pp. 527-530). For these reasons, preparing students for the exam should include tasks which teach students how to generate and organize ideas, observe L2 discourse conventions, consider target audience, plan, draft, review and correct mistakes.

The study: Method and participants

Thestudy is based on a questionnaire which consists of items grouped into several parts. The parts reflect different aspects of students' preparation for the maturity exam in English and the perceived difficulties associated with it. The survey contained the following sections: personal information, reasons for choosing this maturity exam, aspects that might cause difficulties, students' perceived evaluation of their competence in the four skills, followed by a detailed reflection on the challenges presented by each section in the exam. The participants had to examine the statements in each section, and indicate the extent to which they agree with them, using a five-point Likert-scale from (1) Don't agree to (5) Strongly agree. Each section allows the option of writing a commentary in addition to the suggested ones.

The aim of the survey was to receive a comprehensive picture of the maturity exam in English from the perspective of the students who prepare for the exam. Students' perceptions of the challenges in test taking, and the awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses in the language are of key importance for informing both test makers and teachers, and improving the quality of teaching and exam preparation.

The survey was created as a Google forms document and sent by class teachers to students who opted for the maturity exam in English at the end of 2019/2020 school year. In Shumen and the region, 73 out of the203 students who registered for the exam volunteered to take part in the survey, which is approximately one third of the total number of graduates. All participants were 12th graders from the four largest schools in Shumen – the Language School, the School of Mathematics and Science, the School of Humanities and the School of Arts.

By the time of completing the survey, 56,2% of the participants were 19 years old and 43,8% were 18 (some students started school a year earlier than their classmates). 60,3% of the respondents were female as opposed to 39,7% male, which might reflect the male – female ratio of students, but might also mean that girls were more willing to respond to the survey. By the time of responding, 57,5% participants had been studying English for more than 11 years, while 42,5% had been studying it for more than 4 years. This might indicate that the number of years spent on studying the language is not the key factor in deciding to sit the exam. It might also mean though that an early start alone is not necessarily a precondition for reaching the required proficiency level for the exam.

Data analysis, results and discussion

The first section of the survey inquires into students' perceived reasons for choosing to sit the maturity exam in English (Table 1) and the people who they believe influenced their choice.

Table 1. Students' reasons for choosing to sit
the maturity exam in English in %

I decided to take the maturity exam in English because...	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is easier than the other subject exams	13,7	6,8	26	34,2	19,02
English is one of my best subjects	1,4	2,8	15,3	25	55,6
I am familiar with the format of the exam	1,4	11	11	39,7	37
I have practised doing similar tasks	1,4	8,2	16,4	35,6	38,4
I am familiar with the assessment criteria	4,1	12,3	26	38,4	19,2
I want to test my English	5,5	4,1	13,7	32,9	43,8
I study English intensively	2,7	8,2	20,5	37	31,5
I want to study abroad	28,8	9,6	21,9	15,1	24,7

I decided to take the maturity exam in English because...	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to study English at university	19,2	13,7	32,9	11	23,3
Other (please specify below)*					

More than half of the respondents think that the maturity exam in English is easier than the other subject exams (54,4%). Moreover, the majority (80,6%) think that English language is one of their best subjects at school. Among the other reasons for choosing the exam are: familiarity with the exam format – 76,7%; doing similar tasks – 74%; and familiarity with assessment criteria – 57,6%. Only about 19% of students strongly agree that they are familiar with criteria, which suggests that students do not tend to rely on self-evaluation, but prefer to be assessed by an external authority (see Ivanova 2020). It might also be due to the fact that exam preparation in school does not involve discussion and practice of using assessment criteria by students. 76,7% of survey takers chose to sit the exam to test their level of English, which might mean that they see the exam as a free-of-charge way of testing their proficiency level before attempting a higher stake paid exam, such as IELTS. 68,5% of the students see intensive study of English as a reason to take this maturity exam, whereas 39,8% chose it because they want to study abroad. Perhaps not surprisingly, in the context of the coronavirus lockdown, studying abroad as a reason for sitting the exam triggered polarized opinions: 28,8% said they do not intend to study abroad, as opposed to 24,7% who strongly agreed to this reason. Seven participants added other reasons, the main of which was that they like the language.

For 97,2% of the respondentschoosing the exam in English was their personal decision. The rest were encouraged by their teachers, or followed their parents' advice. Some students' choice (6,9%) was influenced by other students who took the exam, but not by their classmates, which indicates that by the time students graduate they can make their own decisions and are less dependent on outer influences, including peer pressure.

The next part of the survey looked into aspects of the exam which might create problems for students, such as understanding instructions, doing the test within the time limit, coping with stress, and maintaining focus and concentration. Affective variables, such as anxiety, can have a strong negative effect on students' performance, particularly in the context of evaluation (Mendelsohn, 1994). Motivation and self-efficacy, on the other hand, are thought to be beneficial to learners' performance. Students' answers are given in table 2 below:

Table 2. Aspects which might create problems in the exam in %

| When doing similar tests, I have difficulties in	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Understanding instructions	46,6	32,9	15,1	1,4	4,1
Finishing within time limit	23,3	35,6	28,8	6,8	5,5
Coping with stress	17,8	23,3	27,4	19,2	12,3
Maintaining focus and concentration	9,6	31,5	30,1	23,3	5,5

Figures show that most students do not have problems understanding instructions. However, it is not clear if they refer to similar tests or to previous maturity exam papers, which they access online online, as the latter have regularly been criticized by both teachers and students for having unclear instructions, especially for the listening tasks. In our opinion, the instructions for the listening part are still highly ambiguous. Thus, during the first listening, students are not allowed to take notes, which probably means that they are not allowed to circle the correct answer when they hear it – a requirement which contradicts all known practices in testing listening skills used in exams. Students are instructed to wait till the end of the listening and then transfer the answers to the answer sheet, after which they can hear the text again and check for 1 minute if their answers are correct. There are at least three things that seem highly problematic: first, trying to remember the correct answers without marking them creates a huge overload of the short term memory; second, three minutes for choosing the correct answers without listening to the text might cause confusion, as students will try to compensate for the missed information or add their own interpretation in the lack of input. In this context, the second listening for checking the answers might only add to the confusion, as there is not enough time for more corrections.

Doing the test within the time limit does not seem to be a challenge for 23,3% of the respondents, while the rest admit that it affects their performance, and 12,3% say they have difficulties completing the task within the given time. While time management could be improved with practice, it might also be indicative of problems related to students' proficiency in the language.

Coping with exam-related stress does not seem to be an issue for the students, as most of them were not sure about it, and their answers are more evenly distributed among the response options. An aspect which usually causes more problems is maintaining focus and concentration, usually an issue with the digital-native generation and their multitasking in working and studying. However, there is a very slight difference in percentage between those who consider it a difficulty 30,1% and those who do not see it as a problem.

In addition to these potential areas of difficulty, students were asked to self-assess the knowledge and skill tested in the exam. Practising self-assessment has an important role in improving students' cognitive and meta-cognitive abilities, and helps to correct 'inadequate' self-assessment and ideas about the nature of the study process (see Markova, 2020).

Although speaking is not part of the maturity exam, we included it in the survey as an essential part of the overall language ability. The results are presented in Fig.1 below:
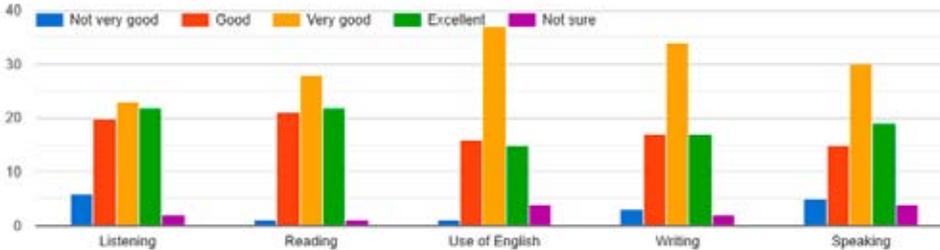
Fig. 1. Students' self-assessment on exam components and speaking

The prevailing option, chosen in all language areas is very good, and the area in which the largest number of students assess their abilities as very good is Use of English, followed by writing and speaking. A possible reason might be that grammar is viewed as an important and difficult part of the language, and students devote a considerable amount of time and effort to learn and practice grammar rules and structures in class or as homework assignments.

In writing, the number of students who consider themselves good or excellent is equal. The students who admit that they are not good at it are more than those who are not sure about it.

In the area of speaking, 30 students rate their abilities as very good. The number of students who do not think they are good is slightly higher compared to the previous two language areas. Speaking and Use of English are the areas in which the largest numbers of students are not sure about their abilities. As for speaking, this is probably due to the fact that it is hardly ever practiced in real-life situations where students can get feedback from real interlocutors, not the teacher, and in classes with a large number of students there is not enough time for each student to speak. What is more, since this skill is not tested in the exam, teachers might not give it due attention. The possible explanation for students' uncertainty in the Use of English section lies in the fact that it is almost always corrected by the teachers, often without detailed feedback.

The margin between very good, good and excellent is smaller in reading, and the smallest in listening. Reading is the skill with the smallest number of students who arenot sure about their abilities or do not think they are good at reading. While reading and listening are the areas in which most students consider themselves excellent, somewhat surprisingly, the number of students who admit to not being good is the highest, compared to all the other exam areas.

The final section of the survey requires the students to give their opinion on issues which might cause difficulties in each of the exam areas.

The survey results provide evidence that learners' performance in listening is influenced by a combination of interacting cognitive, metacognitive and affective factors, which come into play in the process of exam listening. The percentage of respondents who practise extensive listening is significantly high – 64,4% strongly agree, and 23,3% agree that they listen to English a lot outside class. This might suggest that listening for pleasure could lead to a gradual improvement in the skill, a conjecture which contradicts students' self-assessment in the previous section of the survey (see table 3).

Table 3. Students' perceived difficulties in listening in %

Listening	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I listen to English a lot outside class	1,4	2,7	8,2	23,3	64,4
I can't keep up with the speaker	37	32,9	27,4	1,4	1,4
I lose concentration after the first listening	46,6	26	15,1	5,5	6,8
I find it difficult to understand the main ideas in the text	43,8	28,8	26	1,4	0
I find it difficult to understand details in the text	20,5	34,2	30,1	12,3	2,7
I need to take notes and mark the correct answers while listening	15,1	6,8	26	24,7	27,4
I can't remember long bits of information when I listen	23,3	19,2	23,3	26	8,2
I need to hear the exact words, not paraphrased information	30,1	21,9	28,8	6,8	12,3
The option "no information in the text" makes the task difficult and confusing	12,3	15,1	17,8	24,7	30,1
Other (please specify)*					

The majority of the participants (27,4%) share that they need to take notes and mark the correct answers while listening, although, as discussed above, they are not allowed to do it. The vast majority of students do not have difficulties in keeping up with the speed of delivery in the recordings, do not lose concentration and it is not a problem for them to get the gist of the listening text. Understanding paraphrased information in gap-filling or question answering does not seem to pose difficulties either, which means that the listening texts are at the right level of difficulty. However, 26% of students cannot retain long stretches of information in their short term memory, and about 30% are confused by the option "no information in the text". One of the students shared that she cannot clearly hear what the speaker says, which can sometimes be a problem for other students as well, due to external factors such as echo in the classroom or bad quality recordings. One way of improving students' performance is an explicit interconnected strategy instruction (Graham & Macaro, 2008; Vandergrift, 2003), using a task-based pedagogical cycle which reflects real-life listening.

The results for the other receptive skill – reading, reveal a similarity in students' perceived difficulties and in the self-assessing of their abilities (see table 4 below):

Table 4. Students' perceived difficulties in reading in %

Reading	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I read in English outside class	0	2,7	6,8	32,9	57,5
I don't like reading difficult texts	17,8	19,2	32,9	16,4	13,7
I always read the whole text quickly first	16,4	21,9	20,5	19,2	21,9
I try to understand all the unknown words when I read	6,8	17,8	19,2	32,9	23,3
The time for reading is not enough	15,1	23,3	45,2	5,5	11
I understand all the words and still can't find the correct answer	31,5	34,2	23,3	8,2	2,7
It's more difficult when I don't know much about the topic	34,2	23,3	32,9	8,2	1,4
When checking, I often don't understand why this is the correct answer	26	13,7	12,3	21,9	26
The option "no information in the text" makes the task difficult	21,9	11	37	23,3	6,1
Other (please specify)*					

The vast majority of students read extensively outside class, but a lot of them feel uncertain (32,9%) whether they like reading difficult texts, while about 30% admit their aversion to it. This might mean that the amount of reading they do depends on the language difficulty of the texts read at school or at home. In the two extremes with equal percentages are those who always read the whole text quickly first and those who sometimes do it. This is indicative of the lack of appropriate strategy training at school, and of students' lack of awareness of what they actually do in reading tasks. A total of 56,2% agree or strongly agree that they try to understand all the unknown words when they read, which strengthens the arguments of insufficient understanding of the nature of reading and poor instruction. The majority of students (45,2%)are not sure about their time management, and are largely undecided about the importance of previous knowledge of the topic (37%). For most of them reading is linked to deciphering the meaning of individual words and only about 11% agree that meaning making goes beyond understanding the words in a text. While with regard to listening, most students (54,8%) agree that a third option complicates the decision, they were not sure about it in reading. To quote a student, "the main problem with the option 'no information in the text' is that there is a thin line between what is stated in the text and what is in the question. What is more, the exam is done (prepared) by Bulgarians who think like Bulgarians (obviously) but use texts written by British/ Americans so there is often misunderstanding."

There is a noticeable contrast between students' assessment of writing and reading, taking into account that they declare they read a lot outside class and yet they consider their reading abilities not as good as their writing. Presumably, they hardly write as much as they read outside class, which probably creates a false confidence of being better at writing than reading, as writing needs far more practice, feedback, and self-assessment against criteria, while reading, once mastered, is a lifelong, stable and individually sustainable skill.

The analysis of students' answers about Use of English shows that the majority of them find it challenging to decide on the nature of difficulties they face in this section, as they selected the neutral option for more than half of the questions (see table 3).

Table 5. Students' perceived difficulties in Use of English in %

Use of English	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I need to know the meaning of all options to decide which is correct	9,6	21,9	21,9	28,8	17,8
I do it quickly – the answer just comes to me	6,8	12,3	30,1	26	24,7

Use of English	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Phrasal verbs are difficult for me	13,7	23,3	31,5	17,8	13,7
I know the synonyms but don't know which to choose	23,3	21,9	31,5	19,2	4,1
I read the gapped text first and then do the task	20,5	12,3	31,5	21,9	13,7
Sentence transformation is the most difficult part	32,9	19,2	16,4	17,8	13,7
Studying grammar rules and vocabulary is essential	4,1	5,5	32,9	26	31,5
Reading and listening to English is more important than studying grammar	11	8,2	26	24,7	30,1
Other (please specify)*					

This lack of awareness, or strategy training, for example, can be seen in students' reaction to the first two opposing statements referring to the multiple-choice task. Efficient test takers do not need to know the exact meaning of each option, as they should be able to identify the correct item from the distractors immediately. However, most students agree that they need to know the meaning of all options to decide which one is correct. Another evidence of poor strategy awareness is that only 13,7% of all students read the gapped text first and then do the task. Sentence transformation is not difficult for the majority (32,9%) of the students, which might mean that students spend a lot of time practising this type of task. Most respondents seem to believe that exposure to language through listening and reading is more important that studying grammar rules and vocabulary in isolation. The role of exposure and extended practice finds further support in a student's remark that speaking is the most important part of any language: "In fact I didn't even know Bulgarian well (we used to talk in Turkish before) when first I went to school in town. Taking your time around a company that speaks the language is the best way to learn it."

Surprisingly, the majority of the students do not consider writing the most difficult part of the exam and they think they know how to organize their ideas in written form (see table 5):

Table 6. Students' perceived difficulties in writing in %

Writing	Don't agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Writing is the most difficult part of the exam	31,5	21,9	21,9	12,3	12,3
I'm very tired by the time I have to do the writing part	21,9	25	28,8	15,1	13,7
I don't like writing in Bulgarian	32,9	9,6	26	6,8	24,7
We don't do much writing in class	23,3	21,9	28,8	16,4	9,6
I don't have many ideas about the topic	13,7	30,1	20,8	16,4	11
I don't know how to organize my ideas	35,6	21,9	19,2	11	12,3
I always plan and make notes before writing	37	20,5	15,1	15,1	12,3
I am not sure how to express myself in English	38,4	26	15,1	16,4	4,1
When I write I use simpler language	9,6	20,5	32,9	21,9	15,1
I always check and correct my final draft	5,5	15,1	21,9	27,4	30,1
My teacher gives me feedback on writing	1,4	6,8	5,5	16,4	69,9
My teacher mainly corrects my mistakes	2,7	6,8	13,7	31,5	45,2
I am familiar with the assessment criteria	5,5	2,7	31,5	41,1	19,2
Other (please specify)*					

The ambivalent reactions to the statements related to tiredness (writing is the last part of the exam), not liking writing in general, insufficient writing in class, and lack of ideas, eliminate them as potential sources of difficulties for students. A disturbing finding is that more than half of the students do not plan or make notes before writing. A high percentage of students (38,4%) do not seem to have difficulty in expressing themselves in English, but agree that they tend to use simpler language. Resorting to simpler language is one of the main problems all students experience in the productive skills, especially in writing. A positive fact is that most respondents always check and correct their final drafts. Almost 70% state that they receive feedback on writing from their teachers, although this feedback seems to be reduced to mere correction of mistakes. It is worrying that about 40% of students are not familiar or not sure about the assessment criteria for writing. This suggests that they cannot practise self- or peer-assessment effectively in their work, but have to rely on the teachers' assessment instead.

Conclusion and implications

The results of the survey show that students chose the maturity exam in English for a variety of reasons, among which its perceived easiness, compared with other school subjects, and students' good results in the subject. These arguments were strengthened by students' familiarity with the format, intensive study and consistent practice in the exam format. Not necessarily intending to continue their studies abroad, students see the exam as a relatively cheap and safe way to test their language level. A worrying fact is that a large number of test takers are not familiar with the assessment criteria, which makes them dependent on outer assessors. A possible reason for this might be that there is no official information about the format and the assessment criteria for each exam section on the website of the Ministry of Education. However, 97,2% of the respondents took the decision to sit the exam themselves, and only a small number sought the advice of teachers, parents or students who had already taken the exam.

Respondents do not seem to have problems understanding instructions, finishing within time limit, remaining focused throughout the exam and coping with exam-related stress. Having in mind the ambiguous instructions for the listening part in the maturity exam, it is not clear if the students are aware of this ambiguity or not.

Students' self-evaluation in the exam areas showed that the difference between good, very good and excellent is most pronounced in the Use of English and less obvious in the areas of reading and listening, in which the percentage of those who think they are excellent is the highest. The main problems in the listening are related to the need to retain long stretches of information in short term memory, without being allowed to mark the correct answers during listening. In both listening and reading, the option 'no information in the text' causes confusion. Survey data about reading point to a lack of appropriate strategy training at school, and of students' lack of awareness of what they actually do in reading tasks. Two trends drew our attention in the Use of English part. The first one is students' uncertainty about the nature of difficulties, and the other one – poor strategy awareness. Respondents' high self-esteem in writing contradicts some common malpractices, such as not planning or checking final drafts. Feedback on writing in students' preparation seems to be limited to correction of mistakes, and students appear to be incapable of effective self- or peer-assessment, which makes them dependent entirely on their teachers' help.

The main implications for teaching could be summarized as need for constant diagnosing of difficulties, and empowering students through consistent strategy training.

Further research of teachers' attitudes and reflections on the exam and students' performance is needed in order to achieve a more comprehensive picture of

the issues related to the maturity exam. Moreover, teachers', students' and researchers' opinions should be taken into consideration by the officials responsible for preparing the exam and evaluating its quality.

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TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE WITH THE CONSIDERATION OF ETHNO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

Tatiana Pochinok[1], Dana Bartosh[2], Elena Stoyanova[3]

Abstract: The authors support the idea that in teaching language and culture it is necessary to consider the ethno-psychological aspects of communication which are revealed through the different values, perceptions and norms of the communicative behavior of the speakers.

What the authors have in mind by the ethno-psychological aspects of communication are the ethno-psychological peculiarities of the speakers that belong to different cultures. They are connected with their mentality and revealed by it. Ethno-psychological peculiarities can influence the communicative norms and linguistic structures that the speakers use interacting with their foreign partners and thus cause misunderstanding in international communication.

That is why in the process of teaching language and culture the perception of a target culture in comparison with the perception of a native culture should be taken into consideration. The knowledge of the ethno-psychological peculiarities can be provided through culture-related texts called Value and Language Capsules.

Value Capsules present the information about the views and perceptions of a target culture in comparison with a native culture. Assignments connected with the Value Capsule teach the students to identify, analyze and compare the ethno-psychological peculiarities. Language Capsules, on the other hand, are focused on the communicative norms and linguistic structures to realize the ethno-psychological peculiarities of a representative of a target culture. The assignments connected with Language Capsules are directed to predict and plan the possible communicative behavior of international partners in certain intercultural situations.

Key words: intercultural communication, culture, mentality, ethno-phychological peculiarities, cultural texts.

1. Associate Professor, PhD (candidate of pedagogical sciences) at Fransick Scorina Gomel State University, Belarus, e-mail: pochinok@list.ru

2. Professor, Doctor of pedagogical sciences at Moscow State Linguistic University Moscow, Russia, e-mail: d.bartosh@linguanet.ru, SCOPUS ID: 57205527956

3. Professor, PhD at Shumen University, Department of Russian Studies, Shumen, Bulgaria, e-mail: elvikstoyanova@shu.bg, Web of Science Researcher ID: C-5560-2017

Introduction

In the modern world, the dialogue between cultures becomes the fundamental philosophy of life and a form of coexistence. The concept of intercultural dialogue appeared in scientific research at the beginning of the twentieth century in the works of K. Jaspers, O. Spengler, M. Buber, M. Bakhtin and is established in modern science as the interaction, influence, penetration or rejection of cultures. Intercultural communication seems to be a factor in the formation of the dialogue of cultures and the result of its implementation. So, through intercultural communication diverse forms of relations and communication between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures are revealed.

In the applied aspect, intercultural communication is defined as an adequate understanding of two participants in a communicative act belonging to different national cultures (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1990, p. 26). In order to achieve such an understanding, one should form intercultural competence as an important component of the communicative competence in a foreign language.

Previous research in the field

Edward Hall (1987), one of the founders of intercultural communication, considered culture as communication. The works of Edward Hall became the impetus for the development of theories of intercultural communication in the 1950-60s.

Intercultural communication can be defined as an interpersonal communication, which has additional characteristics – similarities and differences in languages, non-verbal means of communication, ways of perception, values and ways of thinking (Prohorov, 1996, p. 104). This definition indicates all the main components that, on the one hand, relate to the phenomena of the national-cultural specificity of verbal communication, and on the other hand, are related to the correlation of levels of "inter-cultural interaction".

The role and place of "cultural sphere" (after Lihachev, 1994) in ensuring communication in target language and clarification of national-cultural features of speech communication is of particular interest in the process of learning a foreign language. "The peculiarity of each language system consists precisely of the peculiarities of the combinations of meanings and linguistic units, resulting one way or another in a common semantic picture of the world" (Kolshanskiy, 1990, p. 61). Further on the same author states that "The so-called linguistic picture of the world is not actually linguistic, it is an expression of cognitive activity due to history, geography, culture and other factors within the framework of a common objective world (but not linguistic)" (Kolshanskiy, 1990, p. 31).

Culture instills in the individual certain patterns of thinking, perception and behavior that are generally accepted among the members of the community to which he/she belongs. Individual cultural models affect the way we think, move, express ourselves verbally and non-verbally (see Kim, 1988).

The cultural model (from lat. modulus – "measure", "sample") is a holistic image of the world, which is formed within the framework of the initial worldviews of a social community. A certain level of "isolation" of the person from the natural environment corresponds to their own forms of experiencing the world, which are fixed by the corresponding model of the world (Ten, 2007, p. 9-10).

The most important components of the cultural model of the world are space, time, reason, fate, the relationship of the part and the whole, sensual and transcendent, etc. Together, these concepts form a kind of a "net of coordinates", through which the bearers of a certain culture perceive and realize the world, thereby create its image. Cultural models are implemented in various semiotic incarnations, coordinated by themselves into a single universal sign-symbolic system of this culture. The cultural model of the world is specific and varies among different peoples.

Belonging to a certain culture is determined by the presence of a basic stereotypical core of knowledge. It is repeated in the process of socialization of an individual in a given society and is fairly stereotyped. The national role is formed during the first stages of socialization and it is common to all representatives of this culture. Cultural knowledge is acquired as part of entering this role, which determines the national specificity of a person. This knowledge can be considered as a "cultural foundation" of a representative of a certain culture. It can be understood as "a certain set of knowledge, a certain outlook in the field of national and world culture, information about the past of the people, etc., possessed by an 'average' (typical) representative of one or another linguocultural community. It is not a question of possession of this knowledge by an average, typical representative of a given culture, but of the availability of this knowledge in the cultural fund" (Prohorov, 1996, p. 14).

The reality of mastering a new culture is due to the fact that the individual originality of ethnic cultures lies in special systematic combinations of the elements of experience that can be repeated in many cultures (Pochinok, 2012). A representative of a different ethnic community recognizes the "familiar" elements in the new one based on his/ her own stereotypes. However, in the new system these elements are organized according to the combinations of different stereotypes, and therefore the "alien" is distinguished. It is a different combination of well-known elements, and not actually new elements. On the one hand, it can be the cause of problems of intercultural communication, and on the other hand, it is the reason for the stereotypes of perception of a foreign culture being fixed in the minds of the representatives of a certain

culture (Prohorov, 1996, p. 18).Communicating with each other and using their own language code, customs, traditions, attitudes and norms of behavior, they try to understand and take into consideration a different linguistic code, other customs, traditions, attitudes, everyday ways of communication that are perceived or defined by them as "alien". In this sense, intercultural are all those human relationships in which a given cultural system can be discovered when it goes beyond its boundaries (Bartosh, 2018, p. 14). Undoubtedly, the necessary element in ensuring intercultural communication is taking into consideration both of "one's own" perception of the elements of native culture, and their "other" perception, which must be included in the process of teaching language and culture (Prohorov, 1996, p. 24).

Data Analysis

Verbal communication in the language being studied is considered within the framework of ethno-psycholinguistics – "a special field of knowledge, the subject of which is the processes of communication in their national-cultural aspect, i.e. structure and characteristics of ethnocultural features that determine the national identity of verbal communication" (Leontev, 1977, p. 5-14).

Difficulties in the ethno-phychological field are associated with the characteristics of ethnic values and stereotypes manifested in communication. These can cause sociocultural errors as the result of differences in the sociocultural perception of the world (Safonova, 1996, p. 105-106). As a rule, communication difficulties caused by the sociocultural characteristics of its subjects are accepted by the participants as a matter of fact. Each communication partner as a representative of a certain culture, as a person whose thinking, as L.V. Shcherba mentioned, is "cast" in the form of a native language, interacts with other people in accordance with the norms, traditions, way of thinking and attitude referred to in his own culture (Baklashkina, 2003, p. 54-55).

The ethnologist G. G. Skvortsov believes that the basis of ethnicity is the psychological basis. Ethnic identity gives rise to a sense of belonging to a community, the members of which can vary in a variety of ways, but at the same time feel their unity for the reason that they are all of "one nationality" (Skvortsov, 1995, p. 11).

Intercultural dialogue is based on a deep dialectic of differences of partners, which can differ from each other in value orientations, way of life and lifestyle, patterns of speech behavior. However, through comparing with another culture in the process of dialogue of cultures, self-assertion and cultural awareness are carried out. In the process of intercultural dialogue, a new act of communication is developed for the participants in the communication of the meaning of the actions performed and perceived and their motives based on the unity of

the participants. According to L.M. Batkin, a feature of dialogue, including intercultural dialogue, is "a clash of different minds, different truths, dissimilar cultural positions that make up a common mind, a common truth and a common culture" (cit. Kagan, 1988, p. 152).

At the same time being a participant of the intercultural dialogue it is very important to keep and value your cultural identity which gives the opportunity to become a participant of a global world staying culturally unique (Bartosh, 2018, p. 19).

The similarity of the traits of national psychology, according to N. Dzhandildin, is an indisputable fact, since without it the national community would be reduced to the sum of external, unifying attributes, and the nation itself would remain internally fragmented in the sense of ethno-psychological disunity (Dzhandildin, 1971, p. 27). This gives us the reason to believe that representatives of different ethnic communities are characterized by ethno-psychological features, which determine the ethnocultural peculiarities of the representative of linguistic culture to the surrounding reality (Kytina, Pochinok & Bartosh, 2020, p. 182).

Using the criteria and through the analyses, it is possible to define ethno-psychological peculiarities of the representative of any culture. The analyses of ethno-psychological peculiarities can be carried out on the basis of scientific and methodological works, audio-visual means, works of authentic fiction. These are the criterion of value contrast and the criterion of the specific manifestation of ethno-psychological peculiarities in the behavior.

The criterion of value contrast suggests the allocation of ethnospecific relations of speakers of a foreign language culture to him/herself, to other representatives, to the surrounding reality, which are caused by different value orientations in comparison with native speakers of linguistic culture. Different value orientations of the speakers of linguistic cultures determine the national-cultural specificity of the views, assessments, relationships, beliefs that are manifested in the national-cultural specificity of verbal behavior.

We define the criterion of the specific manifestation of ethno-psychological peculiarities in the behavior as an ethnospecific attitude of the speakers of a foreign culture to themselves and to other representatives, to the surrounding reality, which are realized in ethnospecific norms of behavior that are different from the norms of behavior of the speakers of a native culture (Pochinok, 2012, p. 22).

According to these criteria while teaching language and culture the information of certain ethno-psychological peculiarities can be presented to the students through cultural texts. These texts provide information about the native speaker of a target language: the ways of its activities, the system of value orientations and attitudes, the norms of speech behavior, behavioral strategies, the speech means

of writing statements. The cultural text, as well as any text, reflects the unity of the external (linguistic) and internal (extralinguistic) aspects of communication. The external side is the linguistic means and ways of expressing thoughts, and the internal side is associated with the information about the culture of the participants in intercultural interaction. In the process of perceiving the linguistic form of the text, the student comprehends its content on the basis of the analysis of cultural information, comparing it with his/ her experience of perceiving him/herself and the surrounding reality, and, as a result, there is an understanding of how culture determines the way of thinking and the behavior of the speaker of the target language.

Cultural texts are not only a source of information about the ethno-psychological peculiarities of a representative of a different linguistic and cultural community, but also a tool for influencing the perception of students, as well as a means for their socio-cultural development. In the process of working with a cultural text, students consistently form stable ideas and perceptions about the representative of the language being studied, their value orientations and attitudes, behavioral strategies. While studying these texts sociocultural abilities and sociocultural qualities are brought up. After acquiring this knowledge through the cultural texts the students can be trained with a set of assignments to realize the intercultural communication taking into consideration the ethno-psychological peculiarities of a foreign speaker (Kytina, Pochinok & Bartosh, 2020, p. 177-181).

Thus, the result of work on culturally rich texts is not only new knowledge and methods of activity, but also a new level of the students' development.

Cultural texts can be called "Value Capsule" (term "Culture Capsule" by H. Taylor and D. Sorens) and "Language Capsule". "Value capsules" and "Language capsules" are cultural texts about the foreign language and culture being studied (Pochinok, 2012, p. 70-72). In the "capsules", the ethno-psychological peculiarities of the speakers of the target language are updated by the examples of their attitude to themselves and their personal space, to other representatives, to the surrounding reality, as well as to national value orientations, norms of foreign-language communicative behavior and linguistic tools for writing speech expressions. Specially selected cultural information is packed/stored in "capsules" under a certain topic and acts as a basis for understanding the ethno-psychological peculiarities of the speakers of the target culture. "Value capsules" get the titles in accordance with the national-specific value orientations of native speakers of a foreign culture, which contrast with the value orientations of native speakers. In "Language capsules", the headings reflect the communicative functions in the context of which the linguistic means presented in the "language capsule" are used. The most important criteria for selecting linguistic tools for "Language capsules" is their authenticity and frequency in real communication of native speakers of the studied language.

The "Value Capsule" focuses students on the perception and understanding of the reality and national value orientations of the representatives of the studied linguistic culture in comparison with the representatives of their native culture. The "Value capsules" show how value orientations determine the attitude of the speakers of the studied language to themselves, to other people/speakers/ cultures and to the surrounding reality. The work of students on "Value capsules" involves the analysis, comprehension and generalization of cultural material using specially designed assignments. "Value capsules" help students understand how the ethno-psychological peculiarities of native speakers of the language being studied are reflected in communicative behavior and define it.

The "Language Capsule" is thematically connected with the "Value Capsule". The "Language capsule" contains information on how the value orientations of the speakers of the studied language described in the "Value capsule" are realized in the strategies of communicative behavior. "Language Capsules" present the norms of communicative behavior, as well as linguistic tools to be used in the intercultural situations with a native speaker of a foreign culture.

We can suggest a set of thematically connected Value and Language Capsules that can be used for acquiring sociocultural knowledge about the representatives of American culture (Pochinok, 2012, p. 152). The topics of Value Capsules are defined according to the key ethno-psychological peculiarities of the representatives of American culture: polite friendliness, preservation of personal space and positive perception (Pochinok, 2012, p. 30). So, the sociocultural knowledge about the polite friendliness of Americans can be acquired through the Value Capsule "Friendliness versus Friendship", Value Capsule "Individual freedom and self-reliance of Americans" can present the information about the preservation of personal space and students can study the information about positive perception of Americans in the Value Capsules "The power of positive thinking", "The American perception of "success" and "Self-presentation on the job-interview". Language Capsules include the information about the communicative norms and linguistic structures by which this peculiarity is revealed in the intercultural communication.

Value Capsule	*Language Capsules:*
"Friendliness versus	1. "Initiating small talk in America";
Friendship"	2. "Keeping the conversation ball going"
	3. "Dealing with personal questions"
	4. "Avoiding silence in American conversation"
	5. "Changing the subject in the talk"
	6. "Let's not chat".
	7. "Sounding clear without words".

Value Capsule "Individual freedom and self-reliance of Americans"	*Language Capsules:* 1. "Making a request" 2. "Reacting to a request" 3. "Giving advice".
Value Capsule "The power of positive thinking"	*Language Capsules:* 1. "Paying a compliment" 2. "Expressing sympathy".
Value Capsule "The American perception of "success"	*Language Capsules:* 1. "Ways of expressing opinions" 2. "If I hesitate".
Value Capsule "Self-presentation on the job-interview"	*Language Capsule* "How to answer a tricky question".

Let us make some examples of assignments to work with Value and Language Capsules. So, to acquire the sociocultural knowledge about the ethno-psychological peculiarity "polite friendliness" the students can study the Value capsule 'Friendliness versus Friendship'. In this Value capsule they should find the information about such notions as 'a friend', 'friendship', 'friendliness', 'privacy in friendship'. Additional assignments to this Value capsule teach to identify, analyze and compare ethno-psychological peculiarities of the representatives of a target culture and a native culture (Pochinok, 2012, p. 177-183):

- Answer the questions to the Value Capsule 'Friendliness versus Friendship'
- Say if the statements from the Value Capsule are true of the people of your country. Prove your opinion with some examples.
- Here are different meanings of the word 'friend'. Choose the meaning of the word 'friend' which is close to you. Explain your choice.
- Here is a questionnaire about your attitude to friendship. Answer the questions.
- Study the situation connected with the topic. Choose the answer you think best explains what is going on in the situation. Explain your choice.
- Study the situation happened with two friends. Identify the reason for misunderstanding between them.

The assignments to work with the Language capsule are directed to predict and plan the possible communicative behavior of international partners in certain intercultural situations. We can give some examples of the assignments to work with the Language Capsule "Dealing with personal questions" (Pochinok, 2012, p. 195-199):

- Study the Language Capsule "Dealing with personal questions". Pay attention to the questions you should avoid in conversations and to the tips how to deal with them. Give the examples of the questions which are considered impolite in your country.
- Choose in the Language Capsule the tip(s) you find the most useful in dealing with personal questions. Did you use it (them)? If yes, how did it (they) work?

- Study the dialogue. Find the questions which are considered personal according to the Language Capsule. Pay attention to the way the speaker dealt with them. Do you consider these questions personal?

- Watch the episode from the film "Up to the sky". Notice the question which was asked and the way the speaker dealt with the question. Come back to the Language Capsule again and say which tip the speaker used. What was the reaction of his partner? Was he offended by such an answer? Why?

- Imagine that someone asked you a personal question. What would you feel? Would you be hurt? Would you feel embarrassed? What are the most embarrassing questions for you? How would you react to them?
- Match the reactions on the left to the personal questions on the right.

Thus, cultural texts can provide the necessary knowledge of the ethno-psychological peculiarities of the representative of a foreign culture to realize the intercultural communication effectively. To understand the communicative behavior of the native speaker of the studied language, it is necessary for students to develop the skills to identify, analyze, evaluate the ethno-psychological peculiarities of the native speaker of the studied language and compare them with the peculiarities of the representative of a native culture. These skills contribute to the development of sociocultural skills and abilities necessary for the effective intercultural communication.

Conclusion

The key result of the study is that while teaching a foreign language and culture it is necessary to take into consideration the ethno-psychological aspects of communication under which the authors also mean the ethno-psychological peculiarities of a representative of a foreign culture which are connected with his/her mentality and revealed in the forms of national values, views, perceptions and the norms of communicative behavior. The knowledge of ethnological peculiarities can be acquired through cultural texts which are defined as Value and Language Capsules. Cultural Capsules and a set of assignments followed them can teach the students to identify, analyze and compare the ethno-

psychological peculiarities of the representatives of a target culture and a native culture and also they help to acquire the knowledge of the communicative norms and linguistic structures of a foreign partner to realize an effective intercultural communication.

Thus, in the process of intercultural communication, a functionally determined communicative interaction of representatives of different cultures is carried out, characterized by certain ethno-psychological peculiarities. The ethno-psychological peculiarities of the representative of some culture are actualized in his behavior, actions, judgments, reactions, speech style, influencing the choice of appropriate language forms. The implementation of verbal behavior in accordance with the norms of native culture, without taking into consideration the ethno-psychological peculiarities of a foreign language interlocutor, can lead to the fact that the behavior of the participants in intercultural communication will reflect their own cultural norms that are different from the norms of foreign communicative behavior of the native speaker of the studied language. That is why the ethnic peculiarities should be considered in the process of teaching intercultural communication. They should be acquired through cultural texts and a set of assignments based on them.

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SOME ASPECTS OF MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Olga Kryuchkova[4]

Abstract: *The article is focused on some of the issues encountered in using multimedia technologies in foreign languages teaching. The process of the advent of ICTs is particularly relevant in the period of rapid informatisation of society. The article presents a review of the findings of some of the Russian scholars engaged in the research on the application of multimedia technologies in foreign language teaching in a non-linguistic environment and covers the way multimedia technologies can be applied in the teaching of phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary. The focus is on one particular program, i.e. iSping.*

Key words: *multimedia technology, e-learning, foreign language, e-textbook, iSping*

Introduction

Rapid informatisation of education is a distinctive feature of today's reality. Computer technologies are being actively developed and introduced into all fields of life, and education is no exception.

It is information and communication technologies that are the optimal means for self-development, individual education, and self-education; they are actively used to attract learners' interest in the educational process.

Recently, the issues of quality of language education have acquired a special urgency, which is explained by profound social, economic, and political changes, increasing scientific knowledge about the regularities of education in general and language education in particular, a change in the conceptual orientation of language education, its objectives, content, and education technology corresponding to the standard established by Federal state educational standards (Bartosh, Galskova, Koptelov & Kharlamova, 2018, p. 71).

4. Post-graduate student, Moscow City Pedagogical University, Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology Education, Russia, e-mail: olja-kr4@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-4737-2982

An overview of the topic

The personality of the student, their communicative and educational activities lie at the heart of the modern system of foreign language teaching. This sets special requirements to the process of teaching foreign languages as it should be aimed at implementing the personal, cognitive, and creative process, at developing individuality and subjectivity, the personality of the student. This explains researchers' interest in new technological solutions in the field of language education.

In recent decades, due to intensive informatisation of the foreign language teaching system, the role of computer technologies has increased. The modern system of foreign language teaching is impossible without the use of information and communication technologies (hereafter referred to as ICTs), which ensure enhanced quality of the educational process and formation of key competences of students using new programs, more efficient forms, methods, means, and technologies of teaching" (Bartosh, Galskova & Kharlamova, 2017, p. 11).

> The modern educational process, which is formed in the context of new values and semantic priorities in Language Pedagogy, does not aim to involve learners not in the process of passive mastery of language knowledge, speech skills and abilities, but create the conditions for the conscious and active use of acquired knowledge, speech skills, communicative and special skills by each of the learners. These conditions should enable learners to work together for solving a variety of problems and freely access the necessary information to use it in their speech. It is obvious that such a process can be implemented if the teacher applies interactive and efficient computer-based learning technology (Bartosh, Galskova, Koptelov & Kharlamova, 2018, p. 71).

The researchers determine that all e-learning tools are based on information and communication technology focused mainly on the transmission of information and the organization of communication with the use of modern computer tools and software based on computer technologies, which can intensify this process significantly. "Using computer-aid learning tools in linguistic education, taking into account their typological characteristics and according to specific educational tasks, allows to implement their specific linguo-didactic functions to the fullest extent" (Bartosh, Galskova, Kharlamova & Stoyanova, 2019, p.50). Besides effective integration of e-learning technologies into foreign language learning the process helps to improve the quality of language education in general and to expand professional competencies in teacher training (Bartosh, Galskova, Petkova-Kaleva & Stoyanova, 2019).

A. V. Soboleva highlights in her article the following key provisions of using information technology:

- The use of multimedia technology in teaching foreign languages is intended to significantly improve the efficiency of teaching, the main purpose of which is to develop the skills of common and professional communication (both directly with native speakers and indirectly through the Internet, the press, etc.);
- Information technology means serve as a tool for education and training the learners, as well as development of their communicative, cognitive, creative abilities and information culture;
- The use of multimedia learning tools makes it possible, in the absence of a natural language environment, to create the conditions that are as close to real speech communication in foreign languages as possible (adapted from Soboleva, 2013).

At the present stage of language education, the following multimedia technologies have become very popular: audio technologies, video technologies, computer technologies, and Internet technologies. The scope of their use in school education is versatile.

Multimedia are computer tools that present the information in various forms (text, audio, graphic, video information) using audio, animated computer graphics, and video and provide a tutor with the ability to interactively work with it.

Multimedia and technologies for teaching the foreign language contribute to the formation of necessary competences, and their application in the process of teaching the foreign language increases the efficiency of teacher and learners' activity and provides them with new opportunities for interaction (Bartosh, Galskova & Kharlamova, 2017, p. 127).

Using multimedia technologies in foreign language lessons, it is possible to solve the key types of linguistic and pedagogical problems, i.e. to use computer-based learning tools for mastering language aspects and forming the skills and abilities in various types of speech activity (Mustafaeva, 2017).

Application of multimedia tools in FLT

The basic aspects of teaching a foreign language are phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. When we talk about teaching aspects of language, we understand teaching three aspects of speech activity: phonetic, lexical, and grammatical, which define the language competence of the student. Next, we will consider some examples of using multimedia tools in teaching some aspects of a foreign language.

Teaching phonetics: it gives the possibility of dubbing, which is important when learning a foreign language outside the language environment. Multimedia resources allow listening to speech in the language being studied, adapting it to level of perception, while adjustment of the audio speed enables breaking up phrases into separate words, simultaneously comparing their pronunciation and spelling. It is also possible to record a word or phrase spoken by a learner for monitoring and self-monitoring purposes.

Grammar teaching: The use of ICT in a grammar lesson is possible when studying almost any topic, for example, when the teacher explains a grammar rule or grammar unit, one can easily demonstrate the formula for its formation and the context of use; when performing lexical-grammatical tasks of interactive character (Bartosh, Galskova, Koptelov & Kharlamova, 2018, p. 110). With the correct arrangement, proper color design, use of schemes and tables, voice accompaniment, the information will be perceived by the learners more easily and faster, as most of the receptors will be involved. It offers the possibility to come back to the rule again if it is not learned. ICT make the process of monitoring the level of grammatical skill formation through test programs much more interesting and enhance the efficiency of reference support.

Teaching vocabulary: The use of ICT is based on test and game computer programs with visual presentation; extension of passive and active learners' vocabulary (Bovtenko, 2005, p. 97). The relevance of vocabulary teaching is determined by the modern processes of globalization and dialogue of cultures, as well as by decline of language culture. ICT are recommended for use in the study of the most complex topics, in particular phraseology, which is the national-cultural basis of the language (Stoyanova, 2015, pp. 13-16). Learning vocabulary in a non-language environment carries certain difficulties due to the specifics of the language system of the language being studied. Features of the lexical system are manifested when comparing languages (Stoyanova, 2015a, pp. 249-253). Linguodidactic problems of paronymy are often complicated by the phenomenon of cross-language homonymy (Stoyanova, 2019, pp. 479–487).

Thus, the positive use of multimedia in the process of teaching a foreign language includes: visibility, vividness, audio support, self-test, enhanced learning quality and individualization of the learning process.

According to S.A. Voitko, the main fields of applying ICT in lessons are as follows:

1. The use of ready-made multimedia products and computer learning systems.
2. Creation of own multimedia and training programs.
3. Creating own multimedia presentations.
4. Using ICT in out-of-class activities.

5. Using the Internet resources (Voitko, 2004, p. 9).

iSpring as a professional tool for creating electronic lessons

Looking at the ready-made multimedia products we can provide some more details on one of them, i.e. **iSpring**, which is a professional tool for creating electronic versions of lessons. With its help, one can create and publish a training course in several stages:

- Forming a training course based on PowerPoint presentation
- Developing audio and video accompaniment
- Interactive test development
- Creating interactive blocks (*Book* – one can quickly create their own three-dimensional interactive book, complement it with images, design the cover, and set the page texture. The effect of flipping the pages makes the book particularly realistic. *WithCatalogue* interactivity, you can create a glossary, a reference book, or a title catalogue. Teachers can add images, audio, and video files. *Timeline* is an interactivity allowing to visualize the chronology of events. Description of periods and events can be accompanied by images, as well as audio and video materials).

According to Kryuchkova (2017, p. 119-120), the main features of using **iSpring Suite** include: variability of forms of teaching; efficient, dynamic, and flexible presentation of material and its adaptation to the level of learners; creative nature of lessons; active involvement of learners in the learning process.

The organization of the learning process using **iSpring** software allows boosting the motivation for learning a foreign language, developing the ability and readiness for independent learning a foreign language. The forms and types of interaction between teacher and learners create a favorable atmosphere in the lesson and the prerequisites for success.

The application of software enables the teacher to avoid addressing the programmers for creating an electronic manual for a certain training package, which is designed for a specific profile or stage of language teaching and implements the ideas of differentiated management of learning activities in order to obtain and apply relevant knowledge in the form of traditional classroom work, as well as in the mode of remote access to information resources and autonomous work with the computer.

The use of **iSpring** enables one to implement a fundamentally new approach to foreign language teaching and create a genuine language environment, promoting the natural need to communicate in a foreign language.

Integration of **iSpring** into full-time learning as a means for increasing the efficiency of the educational process helps select the learning content; introduce and integrate the selected content into the learning process; control the level of learning at various stages and the variability of the organizational forms of learning.

iSpring is a digital lesson builder, whose content the teacher creates independently, focusing on the program, content and individual characteristics of students.

Conclusion

The integration of multimedia technologies in the learning process as a means for increasing the educational process efficiency contributes to improving the quality of knowledge, formation and development of communicative competence and motivation to learn a foreign language, creation of favorable conditions for better understanding between teacher and students, their cooperation in the learning process, and effective mastering of the educational material.

It has been proved that using ICT in the educational process, it is possible to solve a number of didactic tasks in a foreign language lesson more effectively, such as:

a) develop reading skills and skills directly using the network's materials of varying degrees of complexity;

b) improve the ability of listening on the basis of authentic sound texts of a network the Internet, are also respectively prepared by the teacher;

c) improve the skills of monological and dialogical utterance based on the problem discussion presented by the teacher or someone from the students, materials of the network;

d) improve writing skills, individually or in writing, making responses to partners, participating in the preparation of abstracts, essays, and other epistolary products of joint activities of partners;

e) supplement learner's vocabulary, both active and passive, with the vocabulary of a modern foreign language that reflects a certain stage in the development of the culture of the people, the social and political structure of society;

f) resort to background knowledge which is culture bound and includes also aspects, such as speech etiquette, behavior in the communicative situation, influence of the culture and traditions of the country of the language being studied;

g) form a stable motivation for foreign language activities of students in the classroom on the basis of systematic use of "live" materials, discussion of not

only questions to the texts of the textbook, but also topical issues of interest to everyone.

Implications for future work

The study at hand is by no means exhaustive, as it focuses primarily on the theoretical premises of using ICTs and looks at only one program, i.e. **iSpring**. Future work can focus on the direct application of said product along with studies on its efficiency which are accompanied by data from experiments conducted among learners of foreign language. As a next step, further ICTs can be analysed and then their efficiency compared to the findings related to **iSpring**.

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