

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

TRAINING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

*'Absolutely nothing is so important for a
nation's culture as its language'*

- Wilhelm von Humboldt

**Vol. 3
Issue 2
2019**

Issue DOI: 10.29366/2019tlc.3.2
The quarterly journal published by
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)

TRAINING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

ISSN 2520-2073 (print)

ISSN 2521-442X (online)

A quarterly journal published by RUDN University

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr Elena N. Malyuga	Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russian Federation
Barry Tomalin	Glasgow Caledonian University London, London, UK
Dr Michael McCarthy	University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK
Dr Robert O'Dowd	University of León, León, Spain
Dr Elsa Huertas Barros	University of Westminster, London, UK
Dr Olga V. Aleksandrova	Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russian Federation
Dr Lilia K. Raitskaya	Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University), Moscow, Russian Federation
Dr Alex Krouglov	University College London, London, UK
Dr Igor E. Klyukanov	Eastern Washington University, Cheney, USA
Michael Carrier	Highdale Consulting, London, UK
Dr Joongchol Kwak	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea
Dr Chai Mingjiong	Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China
Dr Claudia Schuhbeck	International Certificate Conference – The International Language Association (ICC), Mexico City, Mexico
Dr Enrique F. Quero-Gervilla	University of Granada, Granada, Spain
Dr Iván Vicente Padilla Chasing	National University of Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia

ADVISORY BOARD

Robert Williams	University of Westminster, London, UK
Anthony Fitzpatrick	International Certificate Conference – The International Language Association (ICC), Bochum, Germany
Myriam Fischer-Callus	International Certificate Conference – The International Language Association (ICC), Bochum, Germany

EDITORS

Elena N. Malyuga	Editor-in-Chief (RUDN University) malyuga-en@rudn.ru
Barry Tomalin	Co-Editor (ICC) barytomalin@aol.com
Elizaveta G. Grischechko	Executive Secretary (RUDN University) grishechko-eg@rudn.ru

FOUNDERS

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
117198, 6 Miklukho-Maklay Str., Moscow, Russian Federation <http://eng.rudn.ru/>
International Certificate Conference – The International Language Association (ICC)
Bochum, Germany <https://icc-languages.eu/>

PUBLISHER

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russian Federation

CORPORATE CONTRIBUTORS

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russian Federation
International Certificate Conference – The International Language Association (ICC), Bochum, Germany

Training, Language and Culture is accessible online at <https://rudn.tlcjournal.org/> and <https://icc-languages.eu/tlcjournal/>.

Journal contact email: info@tlcjournal.org.

Publication schedule: four issues per year coming out in March, June, September and December.

Training, Language and Culture (TLC) is a peer-reviewed journal that aims to promote and disseminate research spanning the spectrum of language and linguistics, education and culture studies with a special focus on professional communication and professional discourse. Editorial Board of Training, Language and Culture invites research-based articles, reviews and editorials covering issues of relevance for the scientific and professional communities. TLC covers the following topics of scholarly interest: theoretical and practical perspectives in language and linguistics; culture studies; interpersonal and intercultural professional communication; language and culture teaching and training, including techniques and technology, testing and assessment. The journal is committed to encouraging responsible publication practices honouring the generally accepted ethical principles. This journal adheres to the policies promoted by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), publishes manuscripts following the double-blind peer review procedure, and licenses published material under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

TLC offers Platinum Open Access to its content which means that both readers and authors are granted permanent and 100% free access to the published material – both print and online. All content published in the journal is available immediately upon publication. All and any publication costs associated with journal's operation are covered by the publisher – Peoples' Friendship University of Russia.

Correspondence relating to editorial matters should be addressed to the Editors via journal contact email. Responsibility for opinions expressed in articles and reviews published and the accuracy of statements contained therein rests solely with the individual contributors. Detailed information on the journal's aims and scope, editorial board, publication policy, peer review, publication ethics, author guidelines and latest news and announcements is available on the journal's website at <https://rudn.tlcjournal.org>.

CONTENTS

- 4 **About our contributors**
- 6 **Introduction to Issue 3(2)** by Elena Malyuga
- 8 **NEURAL FOUNDATIONS OF CREATIVITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**
by Heiner Böttger and Deborah Költzsch
- 22 **NARRATIVE AND IDENTITY IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: REFLECTIONS ON
SYMBOLIC COMPETENCE**
by Evelyn Vovou
- 40 **WRITING DIPLOMATICALLY: MANAGING POTENTIAL CONFLICT**
by Barry Tomalin
- 55 **PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES IN ADVERTISING**
by Irina D. Romanova and Irina V. Smirnova
- 71 **SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS OF THE DOUBLE MODAL ‘MIGHT COULD’**
by Irina S. Lebedeva and Svetlana N. Orlova
- 85 **HEDGING IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISCOURSE**
by Tatiana I. Gribanova and Tamara M. Gaidukova
- 100 ***Dreyer’s English: An utterly correct guide to clarity and style (a review)***
original work by Benjamin Dreyer reviewed by Barry Tomalin
- 104 ***Teaching digital literacy (a review)***
original work by Nik Peachey reviewed by Dominique Vouillemin
- 108 **ICC News** by Michael Carrier
- 108 **EUROLTA News** by Myriam Fischer Callus
- 109 **RUDN University News** by Elena Malyuga

About our contributors

Heiner Böttger

Full Professor of English Didactics and EFL at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany. Chairman of the Early Language Learning Advisory Board, founded in Munich. Present research mainly focuses on the preconditions for language learning and the role of memory within the language acquisition process. Explores how children develop communicative competences, which language strategies they use and when, the brain processes underlying language development and the jigsaw pieces for acquiring three or more languages. Has published over 150 papers on English didactics and language research.

Deborah Költzsch

Research assistant and doctoral candidate at Heiner Böttger's LEARLab at Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Currently completing her teacher training as well as her master's thesis on exploring the neural Default Mode Network. Using mobile eyetracking and EEG devices, she also focuses on aspects of synchronisation in communication. Prospectively, will focus on studying bilingualism and multilingualism.

Evelyn Vovou

PhD Candidate in German Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece).

Research interests cover multicultural foreign language teaching, second language acquisition, and language ecology.

Barry Tomalin

Joint Managing Editor of *Training Language and Culture* and a board member of ICC. Regular reviewer for TLC and a specialist in international communication, cultures, soft power and media. Founder and facilitator of the ICC-recognised Business Cultural Trainers Certificate. Teaches at Glasgow Caledonian University London, the Academy of Diplomacy and International Governance at Loughborough University, and International House London. Author and co-author of a number of books on international business culture, including *World Business Cultures – A Handbook* and *Cross-Cultural Communication: Theory and Practice*.

Irina D. Romanova

Teacher in the Dpt of Foreign Languages, Moscow Aviation Institute (Russia). Currently works on her PhD concerned with the persuasion techniques in modern English business communication. Research interests cover communicative persuasion and linguistic and pragmatic aspects of business interaction.

Irina V. Smirnova

CSc in Linguistics, Associate Professor in the Dpt of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Teaches Professional Translation and Interpretation, participates in organising and

conducting research conferences. Research advisor for BA students. Research interests cover intercultural communication, translation and interpretation, and foreign language teaching methodology.

Irina S. Lebedeva

CSc in Linguistics, Dpt of English Language Grammar and History, Moscow State Linguistic University (Russia). Teacher, lecturer, research advisor for PhD, MA and BA students. Coordinates a working group for supplementary educational services, supervises the Persuasion and Politeness Strategies optional programme. Research interests cover politeness strategies, the emotive component of the language, disjunctive questions, distance and online training.

Svetlana N. Orlova

CSc in Linguistics, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor in the Dpt of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Teaches Practical English course. Research interests cover economic terms, euphemisms, language and culture studies, English, Italian and French teaching methodology. Co-author of *Linguistic Pragmatics of Intercultural Professional and Business Communication* – a

monograph published by Springer.

Tatiana I. Gribanova

Associate Professor, University of Northern Iowa, USA. Teaches Practical Grammar, Practical Rhetoric, Profession-Oriented Translation. Research advisor for BA students. Manages the student community of the English Language Faculty. Author of 22 research papers and 6 teaching guides on English grammar. Research interests cover functional learning of English grammar and linguistic pragmatics.

Tamara M. Gaidukova

CSc in Linguistics, Associate Professor in the Dpt of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Economics, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). Teaches Practical English. Research interests cover foreign language teaching methodology, online training, hedging in communication.

Dominique Vouillemin

Teacher and teacher trainer at International House London, specialising in language learning and international communication and cultures. Tutor on the IH Business Cultural Trainers Certificate. Runs Cambridge University Cert IBET courses.

Introduction to Issue 3(2)

by Elena Malyuga

Editor-in-Chief TLC

Welcome to Issue 3(2) of *Training Language and Culture* that will look closely into the intricate nature, pitfalls and difficulties of second language acquisition, as well as address a number of purely linguistic problems within the realm of pragmatics, grammar and discourse studies.

Research on how exactly learners acquire a new language spans a number of different areas. One of the approaches to SLA research – the cognitive one – deals with the processes in the brain that underpin language acquisition, for example how paying attention to language affects the ability to learn it, or how language acquisition is related to short-term and long-term memory. In the context of the cognitive approach, Heiner Böttger and Deborah Költzsch offer their study on *Neural foundations of creativity in foreign language acquisition* to raise a question of where creativity comes from in the neural processes of brain functioning and how the neural origins of creativity fit into the general and specific language didactics. The authors also discuss ‘mind-wandering’ to demystify its largely wrongful perception as a time-wasting neural phenomenon associated with an unproductive unfocused cognitive state.

Sociocultural approaches, on the other hand, reject the notion that SLA is a purely psychological or a purely cognitive phenomenon, and attempt to explain it in a social context. Thus, in *Narrative and identity in the foreign language classroom: Reflections on symbolic competence*, Evelyn Vovou argues that increased social mobility coupled with coerced migration and the technological changes in communication have significantly transformed the linguistic and cultural landscape, which means that we now need to revise our common teaching practices to meet the needs of the learners in multicultural environments. The paper discusses the weaknesses of the communicative and the intercultural approach to language teaching and supports an ecolinguistic turn towards language use. Based on this stance, the paper focuses on a discourse- rather than a user-oriented competence, namely symbolic competence, that is to be considered as a meta-competence, coined for language users in multilingual and multicultural settings.

Another vivid example of the sociocultural approach to SLA is Barry Tomalin’s *Writing diplomatically: Managing potential conflict* that sets out to assess the role of emotional language and neutral language in the preparation and production of formal official documents in English by Arabic students. The paper emphasises the role of a more neutral use of language in both national and international situations, especially where observation, critical analysis and balance are important, and explains how the United Nations approach has established norms for international

language use for the official languages of the UN. The case studies and the methodology to be used in the classroom are a valuable contribution to both diplomacy and SLA research.

One of the linguistic problems addressed in the issue is *Persuasive techniques in advertising* by Irina Romanova and Irina Smirnova. The paper explores the language of advertising as a phenomenon of its own, a unique sub-parlance – that got especially strong in the age of consumerism – designed to make people want to purchase a product or service. The authors look into persuasive techniques in commercial advertising and describe them as features of rhetoric employed to manifest logos, ethos and pathos – the three key components of persuasive argumentation. The classification of persuasive techniques offered in the paper is a useful systemising framework that can bring forward further research on the issue of persuasion based on the logos-ethos-pathos approach.

Further on, Irina Lebedeva and Svetlana Orlova investigate a rare grammatical occurrence found in the English language in their *Semantics and pragmatics of the double modal 'might could'*. Using corpus analysis involving extensive datasets, the authors suggest evidence-based conclusions on the meaning and syntactic distribution of the double modal 'might could' with a notably engaging territorial breakdown to explain how the phenomenon in question is being used in the

conversational practices of the native speakers around the globe.

Closing the original research section is *Hedging in different types of discourse* by Tatiana Gribanova and Tamara Gaidukova offering an insight into one of the most relevant issues in the field of conversation studies. The paper singles out the most common types of hedges in interviews and political public speeches to further identify their pragmatic and structural peculiarities, as well as their discourse-marked specifics. Being a controversial area of modern communication, hedges have always presented opportunities for further linguistic analysis, and this particular study is a useful contribution to the research on this topic.

Finally, the issue includes reviews on *Dreyer's English: An utterly correct guide to clarity and style* (reviewed by Barry Tomalin) and *Teaching digital literacy* (reviewed by Dominique Vouillemin), both of which present strong cases in favour of the original works.

As is customary, the issue also comes with recent news from ICC, EUROLTA and RUDN University.

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

Neural foundations of creativity in foreign language acquisition

by Heiner Böttger and Deborah Költzsch

Heiner Böttger Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt heiner.boettger@ku.de

Deborah Költzsch Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt dkoeltzsch@ku.de

Published in Training, Language and Culture Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 8-21 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.1](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.1)

Recommended citation format: Böttger, H., & Költzsch, D. (2019). Neural foundations of creativity in foreign language acquisition. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 8-21. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.1](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.1)

This article focuses on the subject of several independent sciences, in particular linguistics and language didactics, as well as interdisciplinary research: the acquisition of creative foreign language competences. Whereas creativity is a very complex concept and very difficult to describe, it is most commonly explained with the help of examples. Due to recent technological progress, imaging methods are now able to show where creative activity, especially linguistic creativity, is located in the human brain and where it might possibly originate. The following article presents recently collected data from language acquisition-related neuroscientific studies in contrast to existing findings of language acquisition research as well as implicit language acquisition. Subsequently, all findings are used in order to draw conclusions about general as well as specific language didactics. In addition, a second goal is the demystification of apparently unproductive and unfocused states, which are wrongly stigmatised and unfairly seen as wasted time in institutionalised contexts. The results of this article, therefore, try to make those situations available again for goal-oriented foreign language acquisition.

KEYWORDS: neuroscience, language acquisition, implicit language learning, mind-wandering, Attention Mode Network, Default Mode Network



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the start of this millennium, anecdotal evidence of the onset of creative ideas has shown that problem solving, in other words, finding creative solutions for a specific problem, often takes place after relinquishing the effort to solve them, when the mind is seemingly wandering. This effect is frequently said to be related to implicit and automatic everyday actions, like walking, driving, riding a bike, showering, etc. Even

Einstein and Newton claimed that important moments of their inspiration arose while they were engaged in thoughts and activities that did not consciously aim at solving the problem they had been trying to solve before (Asimov, 1971).

Creativity has to do with the imagination of what will happen in the near future. Even five-year-olds invent imaginary friends, teenagers can imagine being in love, and adults plan career

advancement, home purchase, or a trip around the world. People have this type of imagination and use it constantly in everyday life. However, it is limited: something that is far removed from people's temporal or spatial reality – say, the world in the year 2500, or what it would be like to live on the moon – is often difficult for them to imagine. Interestingly, it seems to be the same for foreign language acquisition in non-instructional contexts or institutionalised language-learning settings where concentration is a necessary mental predisposition to process foreign language material and to know, how and why to say what to whom. In any foreign language, far more words and structures that have been learned implicitly build up a non-testable balance of linguistic, pragmatic and communicative competence.

Sometimes creative language production and performances, unbelievable even for the foreign language learners themselves, occur when concentration fades out and positive psychological conditions like, e.g. non-restriction or lacking time pressure lead to fluency and creative language use. The question is, how can that be, since non-focused mental states are frequently looked upon as dysfunctional ones?

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research is conducted within the framework of neuro-scientific research. It explores the role of AMN (Attention Mode Networks) and DMN

(Default Mode Networks), describes their key features and applies them to the process of implicit language acquisition through 'mind-wandering'. It also uses Bloom's taxonomy, showing a hierarchy of educational objectives. The paper includes diagrams of brain activity and tables of educational objectives and neuronal networks as applied to language learning in the research.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Creativity and foreign language acquisition

Language acquisition is a highly complex and also a creative process. It is affected by social and cultural environment inside and outside the language contexts, by the structure of the native and target languages, by the length of exposure to the target languages, by the regular use of the languages, personal characteristics and experiences, and also the type or method of instruction, when explicitly learned, e.g. form-focused or meaning-focused.

Creating growth in language competences and developing creative skills in foreign languages as well as in the mother tongue requires specific preconditions. In many cases, it is associated with communicative interaction, playing, fantasy, collaboration or experimentation. Bloom's taxonomy provides a helpful and orientating hierarchy of several levels of complexity. Besides all provided definitions and theoretical frameworks of the scientific concept of creativity, it

offers a classification context, specifically locating creativity above all former learning objectives (Figure 1).

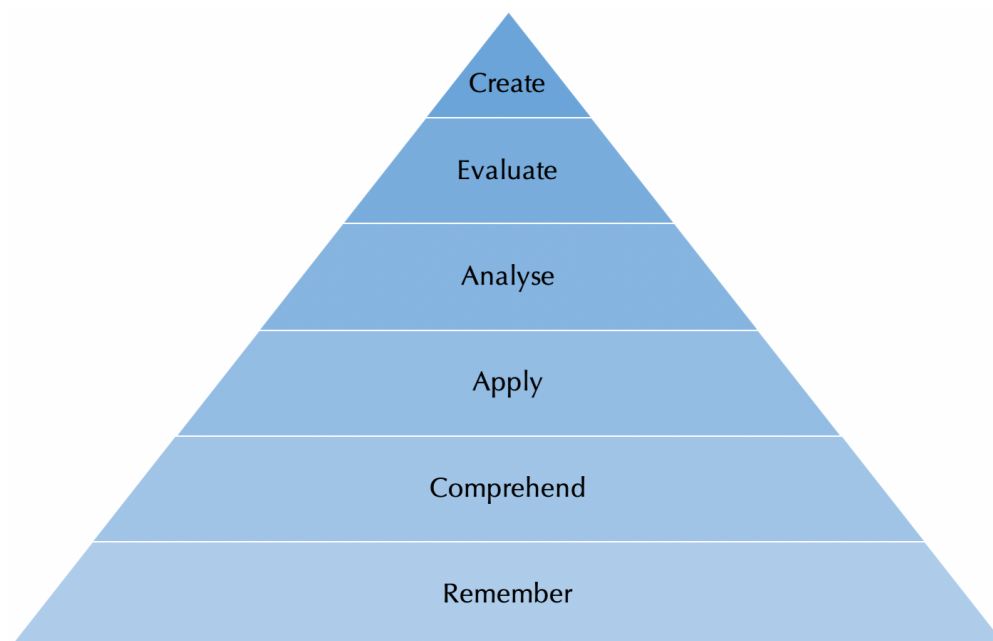


Figure 1. Bloom's taxonomy (adapted and adjusted from Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

For instance, it includes knowledge as the remembering of previously learned language material on the lowest-level of language acquisition. Comprehension on the second level, then, means the ability to grasp the *meaning* of language material. Application, the ability to use learned material in new and concrete situations, follows that. The ability to analyse and break down language material into its components constitutes the fourth place of the hierarchy. Evaluating the compiled language material for a specific purpose forms the fifth stage. Finally, blending that material together to form something new can then be called *creativity* and makes up for the final part of

Bloom's taxonomy. Combining speech parts, producing new sentences, articulating freely and authoring texts are only a few selected examples of creative language competences. Nevertheless, the taxonomy is interdependent, and each stage is necessary for language acquisition to take place. Creativity without knowledge is not possible. With a closer look at language acquisition, this means that creative speech production without knowing words or grammar rules seems to be impossible.

3.2 Dynamic thinking process without a stimulus: Mind-wandering

Mind-wandering is a dynamic process of changes

‘Creativity without knowledge is not possible. With a closer look at language acquisition, this means that creative speech production without knowing words or grammar rules seems to be impossible’

in mental states (Böttger, 2018). This childlike experience, also known as ‘daydreaming’ or, more theoretically, ‘stimulus-independent thoughts’, refers to times when the mind strays from a situation of full concentration, e.g. on solving a problem, in favour of unrelated thoughts. Mind-wandering is more common than probably assumed. It consumes almost half of our waking hours (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010) and happens during nearly every daytime activity. Nevertheless, mind-wandering is different from nocturnal REM sleep, though the formation of associative networks during dreaming can lead to similar associative processes (cf. Smallwood et al., 2003).

Regarding the fact that half a day is spent in a stimulus-free state of mind, a key question is: does mind-wandering increase the frequency of creative solutions? Research on this question suggests that creative processes have long involved mind-wandering (Baird et al., 2012), specially for solving problems that have been previously

encountered. It seems to even be the case that focused deliberation on problems can undermine creativity. However, distractions can enhance creativity, even while being concentrated (Dijksterhuis & Meurs, 2006). A precondition for this is a previously provided problem to solve as well as previous knowledge. The likeliness of a successful disengaging seems to rise. Such incubation intervals are even more effective and successful when supplementary external and simple tasks, not related to the primary task, are given during the breaks (cf. Mason et al., 2007; Sio & Ormerod, 2009; Smallwood et al., 2009). High levels of mind-wandering can then be measured (Baird et al., 2012), far more than during an additional demanding task or no task at all.

3.3 Creativity needs networks in the brain

Measuring concentration with imaging radiology techniques like fMRI, MEG or even EEG, activity in the lateral prefrontal cortex is displayed. This is also relevant when participants carry out language-related tasks such as translation, solving grammar problems or even mathematical actions like mental arithmetic.

That the human brain is active during phases of concentration is no surprise. However, what is interesting is that there are certain neuronal networks in charge of these processes. They all belong to the overall category of resting state networks, as they have all been measured and

therefore discovered during a resting state of the human body (Hasenkamp, 2014; Peters, 2011; Petersen & Sporns, 2015), but also to the subcategory of Attention Mode Networks (AMN), as they are activated through instances of concentration on demanding tasks (Figure 2).

These AMN, consequently, process external information and are triggered during task-focused

activities that demand full attention, such as speaking to somebody else or writing a text, bestowing them with outward cognition. Active brain regions that belong to these kinds of networks are in general parts of the insular cortex, dorsal-lateral parts of the cingulate cortex, dorsal-lateral parts of the prefrontal cortex, as well as dorsal-lateral parts of the parietal lobe (Seeley et al., 2007; Hasenkamp, 2014).

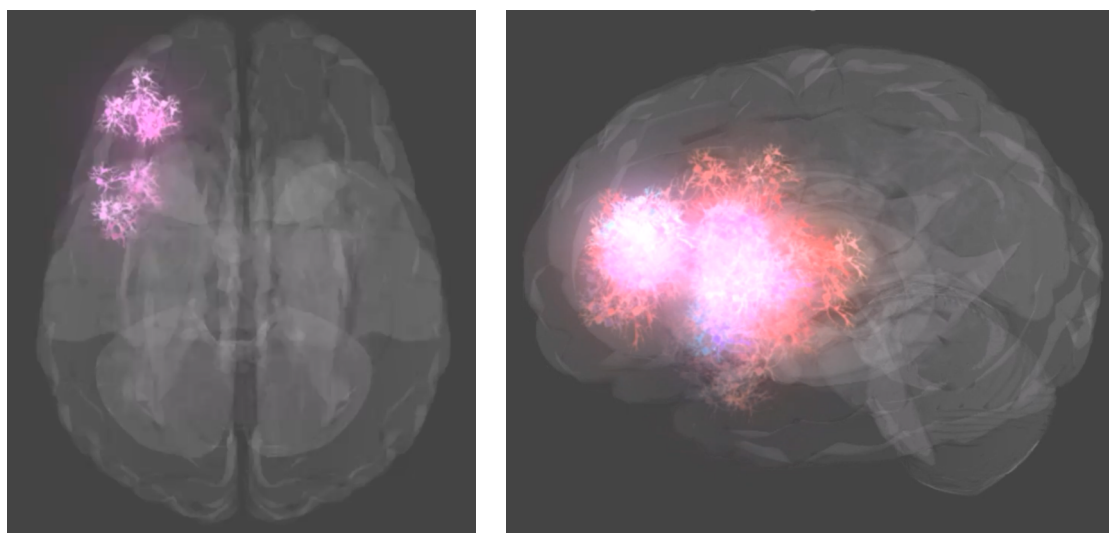


Figure 2. Activation of left lateral prefrontal cortex (LEAR Lab, 2019)

The question is now, what happens in the cortex, if there is no concentration at all. Results are not really new: even when actually 'resting', the human brain is not inactive. On the contrary: it seems that during states, such as mind-wandering and sleep, the brain is even busier. The best way to measure such behavioural states is by letting participants close their eyes or passively observe neutral stimuli, like optical crosses on a wall, and

being advised to try not to think of anything special. Therefore, the mind is able to wander, and the results are fluctuations in neural activity, that can be seen in the EEG or fMRI samples. Close inspection has revealed that these are not entirely random. Instead, various regions of the brain show very similar fluctuation patterns and, hence, belong to another type of neuronal network – the Default Mode Network (DMN). It is active when

people are not task-focused during non-demanding tasks (e.g. listening to music, doodling or going for a walk). Research suggests that the DMN is active during 50% of all waking hours.

It was Raichle et al. (2001) who first described this network within the brain. Interestingly, the DMN is surprisingly cognitive, but imperceptible. The brain areas involved have the following in common and facilitate a 'default' functional state within the brain:

- they need a lot of energy due to a high resting metabolism;
- they deactivate when an external task is executed – specifically, they exhibit decreased activation associated with many goal-oriented or attention-demanding tasks;
- they are counter-correlated with active

networks;

- they provide a high functional and anatomical connectivity among themselves;
- they are highly spontaneously, automatically and very quickly coherent when resting; and
- they include inward cognition.

That last aspect might seem astonishing but is due to the fact that the medial prefrontal cortex is measurably involved. This brain region has been implicated in planning complex cognitive behaviour, personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behaviour. This circumstance raises the network to a higher level and points out why it must be taken seriously as a powerful mental tool, also for acquiring languages (Figure 3).

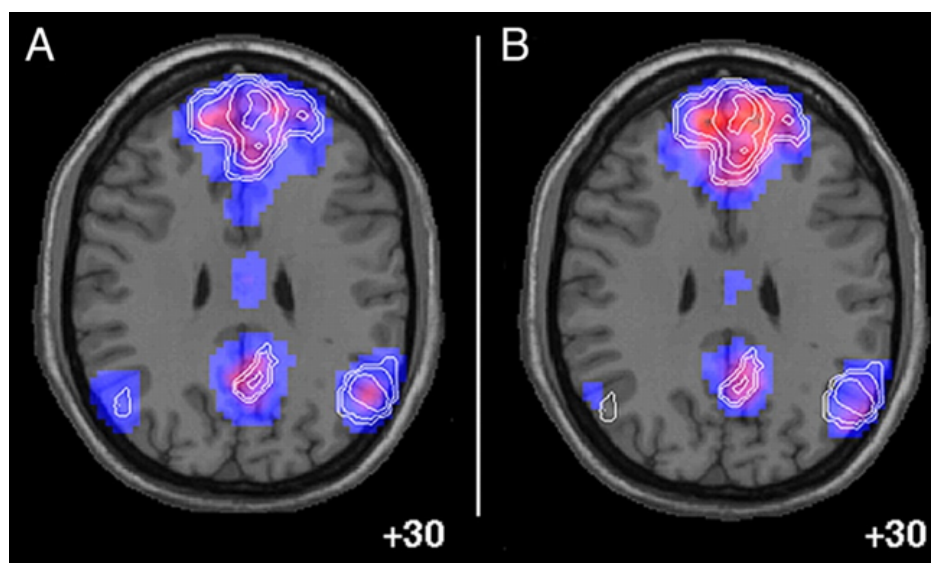


Figure 3. The Default Mode Network (Harrison et al., 2008)

In addition, there are several other brain regions integrated into this neuronal network, such as the posterior cingulum, situated in the medial aspect of the cerebral cortex. It is a central structure of learning, and more specifically of learning to correct mistakes, and is also involved in the appraisal of pain and reinforcement of behaviour. The precuneus, which is involved in visuospatial processing, episodic memory, self-reflections, and other aspects of consciousness, makes up another important part of the network and can be found in

the superior parietal lobe. Another part of the DMN is located in the inferior parietal lobe. This portion of the human brain is associated with navigation, spatial sense, as well as the sense of touch. Lastly, the medial temporal lobe forms an additional relevant component. It is not only in charge of processing sensory input into derived meanings for the appropriate retention of visual memories, but also of emotional association and most importantly language comprehension (Figure 4).

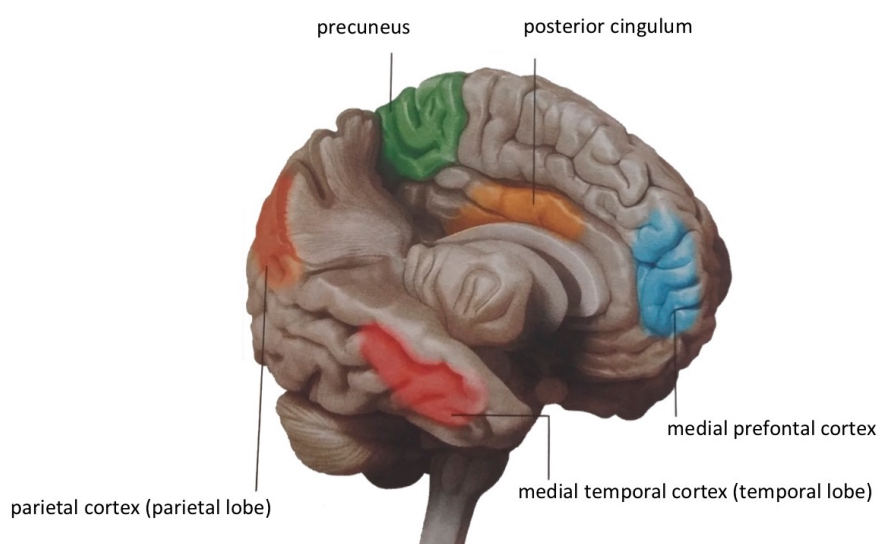


Figure 4. Components of the Default Mode Network (adapted and adjusted from Ricard et al., 2014)

All parts together form the picture of a highly complex entity not only situated on the surface of the brain as well as in younger parts of it, but also touching older parts deep within, e.g. the limbic system.

3.4 Far from being dysfunctional

Various regions of the DMN may be responsible for language acquisition related processes such as introspective or self-referential thought, monitoring of the external environment, e.g. a conversational

context, emotional processing (Broyd et al., 2009), spontaneous cognition, and predicting possible actions (Raichle & Snyder, 2007), e.g. when listening.

Much closer to language acquisition are:

- self-correcting and self-reflecting, e.g. during conversation;
- unconscious planning of speech action, e.g. in oral communication;
- expressing personality, e.g. through a certain choice of words and expressions;
- memorising, e.g. of new words and chunks;
- decision making, e.g. on how to say what to whom;
- reflecting, e.g. one's own speech habits;

and

- language comprehension, e.g. in written and oral conversations (cf. Kuhnert et al., 2013).

All these competences together – and it must be mentioned at this point that the DMN activates all its areas at the same time – provide a powerful, variable and flexible if not highly creative though mostly unconscious connectome.

3.5 The DMN links to implicit learning

A clear link between DMN and implicit learning provides convincing proof of creativity in general and in linguistic performance. Almost all DMN areas of the brain overlap with those of the implicit use of the brain (Figure 5).

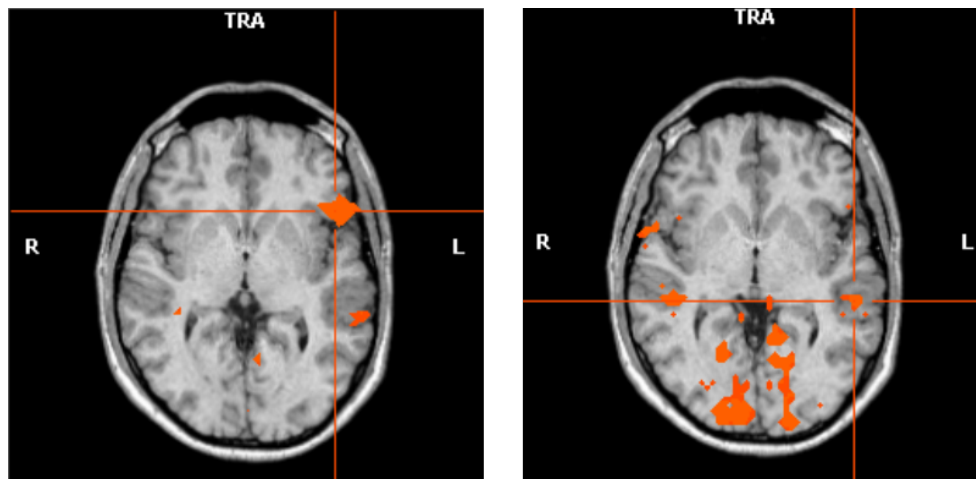


Figure 5. Explicit and implicit language learning (Kuhnert et al., 2013)

The left figure depicts a brain scan of an explicit language learner. The speech-related areas, which

have been activated, are merely in the left hemisphere. To be more precise, they are found in

the Broca area, responsible for processing language information. In contrast, the right figure illustrates an implicit form of language learning. As can be seen in Figure 5, in this case both hemispheres as well as a greater number of brain regions are triggered. Hence, implicit learning seems to be more efficient and in regard to language learning even more creative. This is true

for every first language, which has been naturally acquired.

In order to make clear how deeply this distinction between explicit and implicit learning is linked to the distinction between AMN and DMN, the key features of both neuronal networks are shown in Table 1 with regard to language acquisition:

Table 1

Two main neuronal networks of the human brain related to language acquisition

ATTENTION MODE NETWORKS	DEFAULT MODE NETWORKS
triggers stimulus-dependent thoughts	triggers stimulus-independent thoughts
formal	informal
controlled	uncontrolled
voluntary	involuntary
works explicitly	works implicitly
explanation needed	no explanation needed
remembered	not registered
declarative	procedural
facilitates outward cognition	facilitates inward cognition
conscious	unconscious
attentive	pre-attentive
activated by demanding tasks	activated by non-demanding tasks
deliberate	habitual
perceptual	pre-perceptual

4. ACTIVATING THE DMN

4.1 The importance of timing

As therapists, teachers, and parents who discuss

the benefits of ‘down time’ well know, as does anyone who has had a creative insight in the shower, rest is indeed not idleness, nor is it a

wasted opportunity for productivity. Rather, constructive internal reflection is potentially critical for learning from one's past experiences and appreciating their value for future choices and for understanding and managing ourselves in the social world.

But what steps can we actually take to use this 'down time', or more specifically the DMN, to our advantage? The mind wanders so often anyway, it doesn't need to be encouraged to do so. In order to make mind-wandering beneficial for one's search for a good idea or a solution to a problem, the right technique is necessary.

Generating ideas during a non-optimal time of day can be very rewarding. Therefore, activities must be planned ahead. If performances are much better during morning hours, one should consider thinking about creative solutions in the evening. On the contrary, one should meditate and brainstorm ideas during the first cup of coffee if evening periods tend to be normal working hours. This might sound counterproductive, for people are used to thinking that the brain works far better during optimal times when it seems to be most awake and alert. Nonetheless, this is not always the case. Analytical thinking may be superior during optimal times, but creativity is definitely higher during seemingly non-optimal times. This includes showering, jogging, and any motoric action, which is implicitly carried out.

4.2 The importance of location

Creativity does not exist in only one place. Not in one's office, one's work station, or in one's café. Creative spaces can be made by the creative people themselves. According to research interpretations, creativity needs open spaces and no narrow frameworks. This explicitly supports the DMN brain organisation, spreading over both neural hemispheres. Combined with the finding that seemingly non-optimal times can foster creativity, breaks and pauses, even brief, may be ideal places. Similarly, intersections are supportive, in which two or more unexpected, contradicting or complementary things meet surprisingly, e.g. good and bad, new and old. Also, bits and pieces brought together in new contexts can be beneficial. A last example of good 'places' are questions leading to curiosity and thus creative solutions.

4.3 The importance of technique

The healthiest way to increase mind-wandering is through mindfulness meditation. In open-monitoring meditation, while becoming aware of one's own thoughts and feelings, the meditator turns into a scientific observer of himself. Firstly, one focuses on opening one's breath, then opening the mind to allow any thoughts of sensations to occur. The aim is to allow thoughts and impressions to pass through one's mind without analysing, judgment or distractions from the inner voice. Emotional and creative responses

are strongly fostered in such a state of mind. Another possibly easier way of activating one's DMN is by carrying out familiar and, therefore, automatic behaviour, giving the mind the opportunity to wander freely, while maintaining just enough attention to engage in those kinds of non-demanding tasks (Buckner et al., 2008; Medea et al., 2018).

4.4 The importance of balance

However, it is important to acknowledge that all resting state networks are relevant to boost your creativity. This is due to the fact that these networks are mutually dependent and the quality of each network hinges on one another (Immordino-Yang, 2016; Immordino-Yang et al., 2012). It is, of course, not always wise to interrupt a task-focused activity, simply to let the mind wander and expect tremendous creative benefits. This will most likely only lead to frustration as the task will take much longer to accomplish. On the contrary, it is much more recommendable to apply certain mind-wandering techniques as soon as you notice that plain focus is no longer able to help you overcome the mental block ahead of you.

5. DIDACTIC IMPLEMENTATION REGARDING FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

An essential goal of all foreign language didactics must be to make use of the DMN regarding foreign language acquisition. However, one must always treat neuroscientific findings like these with

caution. They cannot simply be generalised and should not lead to hasty and erroneous conclusions. Having said this, the following four fields of action, nonetheless, can be identified as appropriate forms of didactic implementations.

Narrative comprehension. Narrative comprehension, as e.g. in storytelling, involves inferring cumulative meaning, not only the understanding of single words or chunks. Such an identification of meaning is situated in the DMN. These results demonstrate that neuro-semantic encoding of narratives happens at levels higher than individual semantic units. This encoding is systematic across both individuals and languages. So, story-telling, especially in a darker surrounding like near camp fires, with the absence of too much sensory impression, fosters language creativity through listening comprehension (cf. Dehghani et al., 2017).

Investigating influences. Investigating the influence of sad and happy music on mind-wandering and its underlying neuronal mechanisms, researchers found that sad music, compared with happy music, is associated with stronger mind-wandering. Findings demonstrate that, when listening to sad vs. happy music, people withdraw their attention inwards and engage in spontaneous, self-referential cognitive processes. These findings call for a systematic investigation of the relation between music and thought, having

broad implications for the use of music as text carriers in (language) education and clinical settings (cf. Taruffi et al., 2017).

Mental exploration. The DMN is also engaged in remembering the past and envisioning the future. Research shows that the functional connectivity of the DMN is related to the quality of remembering the past and rather marginally to future imagination.

In particular, picturing the future plays an additional role regarding one's motivation, e.g. for communicating. Mental explorations like these, and hence the DMN, help to anticipate upcoming events, prepare for communicative situations like dialogues or monologues in any language and to evaluate them beforehand (cf. Buckner et al., 2008; Medea et al., 2018; Ostby et al., 2012).

The 'social brain'. Social cognition, particularly higher-order tasks such as attributing mental states to others, has been suggested to activate a network partly overlapping with the DMN. This is called

the 'social brain'. Both networks therefore seem to foster empathy, the experience of understanding another person's thoughts, feelings, and condition from his or her point of view – an indispensable precondition especially for oral communication in any social context (cf. Mars et al., 2012).

6. CONCLUSION

It is during these times of daydreaming, of recalling memories, of envisioning the future, of monitoring the environment, of thinking about the intentions of others, and otherwise, when thinking seems to be without an explicit goal, but all sensory input like language material, especially if relevant, is memorised, processed and prepared for availability whenever necessary. Though the concept of the involved network, the DMN, is not without controversy in the scientific community, it can be said that if looked upon as a resting state or an active one, the DMN and its functional areas definitely foster implicit language learning. Implicitly acquired language can be used implicitly – and therefore almost automatically creatively and fluently.

References

- Asimov, I. (1971). *The Eureka phenomenon*. Retrieved from <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/4657323/the-eureka-phenomenon-by-isaac-asimov>
- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: Longman.
- Baird, B., Smallwood, J., Mrazek, M. D., Kam, J. W., Franklin, M. S., & Schooler, J. W. (2012). Inspired

- by distraction: Mind wandering facilitates creative incubation. *Psychological Science*, 23(10), 1117-1122. doi: [10.1177/0956797612446024](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612446024)
- Böttger, H. (2018). Home of mindfulness: Neuroscientific evidence in contemplative pedagogy. In H. Böttger, K. Jensen, & T. Jensen (Eds.), *Mindful evolution* (pp. 39–52). Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Broyd, S. J., Demanuele, C., Debener, S., Helps, S. K., James, C. J., & Sonuga-Barke, E. J. (2009). Default-mode brain dysfunction in mental disorders: A systematic review. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 33(3), 279-296. doi: [10.1016/j.neubiorev.2008.09.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2008.09.002)
- Buckner, R. L., Andrews-Hanna, J. R., & Schacter, D. L. (2008). The brain's default network: Anatomy, function, and relevance to disease. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1124(1), 1-38. doi: [10.1196/annals.1440.011](https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1440.011)
- Dehghani, M. et al. (2017). Decoding the neural representation of story meanings across languages. *Human Brain Mapping*, 38(12), 6096-6106. doi: [10.1002/hbm.23814](https://doi.org/10.1002/hbm.23814)
- Dijksterhuis, A., & Meurs, T. (2006). Where creativity resides: The generative power of unconscious thought. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 15(1), 135-146. doi: [10.1016/j.concog.2005.04.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2005.04.007)
- Harrison, B. J. et al. (2008). Consistency and functional specialization in the default mode brain network. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 105(28), 9781-9786. doi: [10.1073/pnas.0711791105](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0711791105)
- Hasenkamp, W. (2014). Using first-person reports during meditation to investigate basic cognitive experience. In S. Schmidt & H. Walach (Eds.), *Meditation: Neuroscientific approaches and philosophical implications* (pp. 75–93). Heidelberg/New York: Springer. doi: [10.1007/978-3-319-01634-4_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01634-4_5)
- Immordino-Yang, M. H. (2016). Emotion, sociality, and the brain's default mode network: Insights for educational practice and policy. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3(2), 211-219. doi: [10.1177/2372732216656869](https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732216656869)
- Immordino-Yang, M. H., Christodoulou, J. A., & Singh, V. (2012). Rest is not idleness: Implications of the brain's default mode for human development and education. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(4), 352-364. doi: [10.1177/1745691612447308](https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612447308)
- Killingsworth, M. A., & Gilbert, D. T. (2010). A wandering mind is an unhappy mind. *Science*, 330(6006), 932-932. doi: [10.1126/science.1192439](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1192439)
- Kuhnert, M.-T., Bialonski, S., Noennig, N., Mai, H., Hinrichs, H., Helmstaedter, C., & Lehnertz, K. (2013). Incidental and intentional learning of verbal episodic material differentially modifies functional brain networks. *PloS One*, 8(11), e80273. doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0080273](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0080273)
- LEAR Lab. (2019). *Language Education & Acquisition Research Laboratory*. Retrieved from <https://www.ku.de/slf/anglistik/didengl/forschung/labor/>
- Mars, R. B., Neubert, F.-X., Noonan, M. P., Sallet, J., Toni, I., & Rushworth, M. F. S. (2012). On the relationship between the 'default mode network' and the 'social brain'. *Frontiers in Human*

- Neuroscience*, 6. doi: [10.3389/fnhum.2012.00189](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2012.00189)
- Mason, M. F., Norton, M. I., Van Horn, J. D., Wegner, D. M., Grafton, S. T., & Macrae, C. N. (2007). Wandering minds: The default network and stimulus-independent thought. *Science*, 315(5810), 393–395. doi: [10.1126/science.1131295](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1131295)
- Medea, B. et al. (2018). How do we decide what to do? Resting-state connectivity patterns and components of self-generated thought linked to the development of more concrete personal goals. *Experimental Brain Research*, 236(9), 2469–2481. doi: [10.1007/s00221-016-4729-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00221-016-4729-y)
- Ostby, Y., Walhovd, K. B., Tamnes, C. K., Grydeland, H., Westlye, L. T., & Fjell, A. M. (2012). Mental time travel and default-mode network functional connectivity in the developing brain. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(42), 16800–16804.
- Peters, H. (2011). *Default mode network changes during NREM sleep: A combined EEG/fMRI study*. München: Verl. Dr. Hut.
- Petersen, S. E., & Sporns, O. (2015). Brain networks and cognitive architectures. *Neuron*, 88(1), 207–219. doi: [10.1016/j.neuron.2015.09.027](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2015.09.027)
- Raichle, M. E., MacLeod, A. M., Snyder, A. Z., Powers, W. J., Gusnard, D. A., & Shulman, G. L. (2001). A default mode of brain function. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 98(2), 676–682. doi: [10.1073/pnas.98.2.676](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.98.2.676)
- Raichle, M. E., & Snyder, A. Z. (2007). A default mode of brain function: A brief history of an evolving idea. *NeuroImage*, 37(4), 1083–1090. doi: [10.1016/j.neuroimage.2007.02.041](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2007.02.041)
- Ricard, M., Lutz, A., & Davidson, R. J. (2014). Mind of the meditator. *Scientific American*, 311(5), 38–45. doi: [10.1038/scientificamerican1114-38](https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican1114-38)
- Seeley, W. W., Menon, V., Schatzberg, A. F., Keller, J., Glover, G. H., Kenna, H., Reiss, A. L., Greicius, M. D. (2007). Dissociable Intrinsic Connectivity Networks for salience processing and executive control. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 27(9) 2349–2356. doi: [10.1523/JNEUROSCI.5587-06.2007](https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.5587-06.2007)
- Sio, U. N., & Ormerod, T. C. (2009). Does incubation enhance problem solving? A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(1), 94–120. doi: [10.1037/a0014212](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014212)
- Smallwood, J., Nind, L., & O'Connor, R. C. (2009). When is your head at? An exploration of the factors associated with the temporal focus of the wandering mind. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 18(1), 118–125. doi: [10.1016/j.concog.2008.11.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2008.11.004)
- Smallwood, J., Obonsawin, M., & Heim, D. (2003). Task unrelated thought: The role of distributed processing. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 12(2), 169–189. doi: [10.1016/S1053-8100\(02\)00003-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-8100(02)00003-X)
- Taruffi, L., Pehrs, C., Skouras, S., & Koelsch, S. (2017). Effects of sad and happy music on mind-wandering and the default mode network. *Scientific Reports*, 7(1), 14396. doi: [10.1038/s41598-017-14849-0](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-14849-0)

Narrative and identity in the foreign language classroom: Reflections on symbolic competence

by Evelyn Vovou

Evelyn Vovou National and Kapodistrian University of Athens evovou@yahoo.com

Published in *Training, Language and Culture* Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 22-39 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.2](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.2)

Recommended citation format: Vovou, E. (2019). Narrative and identity in the foreign language classroom:

Reflections on symbolic competence. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 22-39. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.2](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.2)

The high rates of both social mobility and impelled migration and the technological changes in communication have led to the formulation of an extremely diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. As far as foreign language teaching and learning is concerned, this change has created the need for a revised pedagogical and didactic approach that better suits speakers and learners in multicultural environments. The paper discusses the weaknesses of the communicative and the intercultural approach to language teaching and supports an ecolinguistic turn towards language use. Based on this stance, the paper focuses on a discourse- rather than a user-oriented competence, namely symbolic competence, that is to be considered as a meta-competence, coined for language users in multilingual and multicultural settings. In order to make the transition from language user to language learner clearer, the paper tries to prove the usefulness of incorporating the notion of symbolic competence as an objective in foreign language teaching practice by introducing two examples of textual and visual stimuli that are analysed on the basis of discursive characteristics, genre, Self- and Other-positioning, complexity and ambiguity of meaning, etc. These examples are selected from teaching of German as a Foreign Language materials and can be used both as teacher training material and as language teaching resources.

KEYWORDS: *symbolic competence, narrative, discursive identity, foreign language teaching, foreign language learning, German as a Foreign Language*



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

1. INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The micro-environment of a classroom mirrors the societal dynamics that take place in a certain timeframe. This means that classrooms nowadays are culturally diverse and should thus be considered as a place where multicultural and multilingual capital is being exchanged. This has

resulted in a pedagogical shift towards multicultural approaches to education in general (Banks, 2006; Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Nieto, 2004), which in turn led to reformed governmental policies, adapted curricula, etc. As far as foreign language teaching is concerned, talk of culture has transformed from awareness of the sociocultural context of language use (Fairclough, 1989) to the intercultural approach to the native and target

culture/language, as distinct entities but also in contact (Byram, 1995; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999; Fantini, 1997), and lastly to foreign language learning in a multicultural and multilingual context (Kubota, 2004; Dendrinos, 2012; Dendrinos, 2015; Kramsch & Zhu, 2016), or – one would argue – to an intercultural competency in globalisation (Crozet et al., 1999).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The discussion is based on the principles of symbolic competence formulated by Claire Kramsch of Carnegie Mellon University and compares it to the communicative approach, intercultural approach and ecological approach as language teaching methodologies. Symbolic competence is described, analysed and exemplified in two examples of activities taken from the teaching of German as a foreign language in Greece.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The communicative approach

The communicative approach to language teaching and learning that was introduced in the 1970s (e.g. Halliday, 1975; Candlin, 1976) and established in the 1980s (e.g. Ellis, 1982; Littlewood, 1981; Swan, 1985) serves us as researchers and language teachers and teacher trainers up to this day. Curricula, textbooks and materials still offer methodological ideas and steps on how learners can handle a communicative

situation effectively through the medium of the target language. This presupposes that language users can handle any communicative situation effectively, as long as they possess a common code, a common context for interpreting meaning, a common *Erfahrungshorizont* or *Weltwissen* (buzzwords representing the popularity and importance of the communicative approach regarding German as a Foreign Language), and – most importantly – common communicative intentions, a shared interest in how to effectively handle a situation. Based on the above, communication between language learner and native speaker is now understood as an adaptive process. Language learners must possess the linguistic code of the native speaker, bearing the same linguistic *manieres*, place utterances in the same sociocultural context as the native speaker and interpret the utterances of the native speaker based on cultural affordances one does not personally possess. The implications of this are stark and range from native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) to linguistic and cultural assimilation. One more comment regarding the pitfalls of the communicative approach that is worth mentioning in the context discussed is the limiting way in which we saw language. Although the communicative approach is code-oriented, foreign language learners were taught that there are correct and incorrect, appropriate and inappropriate ways of using the target language. To be communicatively competent would therefore

mean distinguishing between these ways (Kramersch & Vinall, 2015) and this knowledge was then to be tested through standardised practices, which is still the case regarding formal language assessment. Although limitations in diverse linguistic and cultural settings are obvious, the communicative approach has – seen from a methodological-didactic standpoint – equipped teachers with valuable strategies, such as e.g. the use of authentic materials, the arrangement of the classroom based on the communicative activity, etc., and paved the way for more elaborate methodologies like Scaffolding (Klewitz, 2017), Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) and *Szenariendidaktik* or teaching in situations (e.g. Hölscher et al., 2006).

3.2 The intercultural approach

On the other hand, the intercultural approach to language use as well as language teaching and learning is based on the *'ethnolinguistic assumption ... that aligns language use and ethnic or cultural group identity in a linear and one-on-one relationship'* (Blommaert et al., 2012, p. 3). As will be discussed below, globalisation has caused discontinuities in communicative norms and practices, as the idea that group identity is culturally homogenous has been called into question. A weakness of the intercultural approach in today's globalised societies lies in the power relations between nations, languages and language users (Hymes, 2003; Nieto, 2017). A culturally

'A weakness of the intercultural approach in today's globalised societies lies in the power relations between nations, languages and language users'

homogenous group identity would mean in practice that a language learner with a specific L1 would have to adapt herself, being communicative and interculturally competent, to the target culture. This directly creates a power relationship. This specific L1 is most probably the language of a minority, either on a sociopolitical or on a population level. In times of globalisation, identity is no longer rooted in culture. Identity is *'constructed and upheld by the stories we tell and the various discourses that give meaning to our lives'* (Kramersch, 2011, p. 356). More precisely, our narratives and the genres in which we choose to formulate them construct our discursive identity and direct the power our discourse loses or gains. One can observe a turn towards identity and therefore towards user-oriented approaches to language. On this basis, and influenced by an ecological approach to language and language use (Fill, 1998; Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2006; Steffensen & Fill, 2014), Kramersch (2011) proposed a symbolic dimension to intercultural competence. *'The self that is engaged in intercultural communication is a symbolic self that is constituted by symbolic*

systems like language as well as by systems of thought and their symbolic power' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 356).

3.3 The ecological approach

Although the ecological approach to language is not a pedagogical approach per se, an adaptation of key concepts to language learning and teaching is compliant with the diversified linguistic environments we live in. In summary, in order to be able to approach human interactions ecolinguistically, one should consider specific parameters, such as the cognitive, psychological, linguistic, interactional, ethnographic, social, historical, cultural, aesthetic, political, virtual, historical, aesthetic, ideological and cognitive (Kramersch & Steffensen, 2008). Both the communicative and the intercultural approach considered some of the above, such as the cultural, the interactional, etc., but without taking into consideration that those parameters interrelate with each other. In this context, the language user is in interrelation with other language users, in the sense that their subjective reality forms the intersubjective (social) realities.

In order to 'effectively communicate', language users in multicultural settings should consider their interlocutor's subjective social reality. An ecological approach to language could therefore be seen as prerequisite of effective communication. The main objective of foreign

language teaching in globalised societies should therefore be to equip learners to reframe linguistic/interactional events and discourses through their own as well as their interlocutor's lived experience. The discursive practices of the language user/learner set the boundaries for the possible meanings that can be attributed to a single event, an utterance, a speech act, etc.

3.4. From culture to discourse

As mentioned above, identity is no longer rooted in culture: '*[...] culture as a membership in a national community with a common history, a common standard language and common imaginings*' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 355) is no longer to be taken for granted. The accelerated shifting of the world's population has had a profound and ongoing effect on the institutions of traditional society, including the environment and mediums of communication. Spurred by technological progress, this resulted in the emergence of cyber-communication, that is, in novel forms of environments that operate on new norms of social interaction. The notion of identity has therefore detached itself from its institutional, nation-oriented value and formed into a more self-oriented concept, where the individual is defined by their discourse(s) and dialectic in order not only to be communicatively effective but to survive. This indicates that an individual must not be integrated in a specific group with a common lived past, common thought patterns, common

rituals and common values and conventions of behaviour, as was the target of the communicative and intercultural competence approaches of the 1990s and 2000s, but to possess adaptive identities, expressed through the adaptive function of their discourse(s). This also affects the positioning of a language user/learner based on the power of their discursive patterns.

3.5. On symbolic competence

In the context we are discussing, Kramersch (2006, 2011) and Kramersch & Whiteside (2008) introduced the notion of symbolic competence as *'the ability not only to approximate or appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which language is learned and used'* (Kramersch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 664). They complemented this with the *'ability to play with various linguistic codes and with the various spatial and temporal resonances of these codes'* (Kramersch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 664). In a later, discourse-oriented definition, Kramersch (2011) categorised discourse as symbolic representation, discourse as symbolic action and discourse as symbolic power. Discourse as symbolic representation indicates that the lexical and grammatical structures that a language user employs denote and connote their (subjective) reality. Discourse as symbolic action points to the performative dimension of one's linguistic choices and discourse as symbolic power refers foremost to the intertextual relationship with other

discourses and to the dynamics and/or friction this relationship may create on a micro and macro level.

Kramersch (2011) points to specific questions that prove the ability of the inter-/multiculturally competent speaker and are therefore evidence of their symbolic competence. These questions relate to the heterogeneity of discourse(s), genre, authorship, framing of communicative events and their relationship to context, etc. For example: *'[...] whose words are those? Whose discourse? Whose interests are being served by this text? [...] How does the speaker position him/herself? How does he/she frame the events talked about? What prior discourse does he/she draw on?'* (Kramersch, 2011, p. 360). The above brings the poststructuralist notions of intertextuality, interdiscursive personogenesis (Vovou, 2018), indexicality, subject positioning as well as narrative identity and authority to the foreground and introduces them as classroom resources that may be used for the development of an *'awareness of the ... cross-cultural context in which language unfolds'* (Kramersch, 2011, p. 360).

Although symbolic competence was not especially coined as a notion for foreign language literacy and pedagogy, the above questions can be used as resources for teaching practice. This paper tries to illustrate this on concrete examples based on the teaching of German as a Foreign Language.

‘Discourse as symbolic action points to the performative dimension of one’s linguistic choices and discourse as symbolic power refers foremost to the intertextual relationship with other discourses and to the dynamics and/or friction this relationship may create on a micro and macro level’

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1 German as a Foreign Language in Greece

In order to prove the usefulness of the incorporation of symbolic competence in foreign language curricula and smoothen the transition between theory and practice, I will briefly recapitulate the aforementioned theoretical framework on the example of foreign language teaching and learning in a more concrete way, drawing upon the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Teaching of German as a Foreign Language.

The courses of German as a Foreign Language – *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, or *DaF* – in Greece are taught according to syllabi, textbooks and materials calibrated to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This means that teachers follow the

communicative model of language use, teaching and learning and organise their classroom activities based on the descriptive scheme of the CEFR (North, 2006): reception, interaction, production and mediation, in both the spoken and written medium. Some key pillars of communicative teaching of DaF in Greece are e.g. introduction of authentic materials, group organisation, teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction, comprehension of and appropriate responding to a communicative intention, consideration of social context. The development of intercultural competence is also a goal, so consideration of nuances of the target culture and adaptation to them are parts of the teaching of DaF, but only as far as specific domains of language use that are embedded in the curricula and adapted by textbooks are concerned.

4.2 Two examples based on the teaching of German as a Foreign Language

Drawing upon the research conducted so far in regards to symbolic competence and foreign language teaching and learning, I propose two examples, on the basis of which teachers can directly train the reading, writing and speaking skills of learners at B2-C2 level, or teachers can be trained into how to choose appropriate materials and work towards the development of symbolic competence. The examples constitute of textual and visual stimuli – two written texts and an accompanying visual narrative – and are chosen

according to the following criteria: the texts (i) reflect an autobiographical narrative, (ii) reflect distinct and not so distinct discourses, (iii) possess linguistic choices in lexicogrammar, structure, etc. that are distinct for specific genres, (iv) initiate questions around authorship and author positioning, (v) allow for discussions around Self- and Other-positioning, (vi) reflect a narrative that renders them relatable to learners with migrant backgrounds, (vii) can be seen in their whole as a meaning-making tool in a social context, (viii) reflect an emotional aspect, either of their author or of a protagonist. The presentation of the chosen examples in the paper focuses more on teacher training and is structured in such a way that it could help teachers understand why and how to choose textual, visual and other resources, in order to promote the symbolic competence of their learners. The *why* can be explained on the basis of the above criteria, while the *how* will be explained hands on. The next step of the teacher training activity is to align the objective(s) of symbolic competence to communicative activities.

More specifically, both examples employ an art text analysis, so that teachers may recognise the discussed characteristics that are indicative or instigate instances of symbolic representation, action, and power, and are reflected in the above criteria. Parallel to reading the excerpt (Appendices A and C) and engaging in text analysis, teachers can be given the corresponding

worksheet (Appendices B and D). In order to exemplify the didactic approach to symbolic competence proposed in the paper, the worksheets are completed. The worksheets are divided into three columns. In the left-hand column, the participants can describe the act behind the discourse, genre, narrative, event, their lived experience, ambiguities of meaning, etc. (see criteria), that they recognise in the given literary text. In the middle column teachers can write down a task formulation that mirrors the specific act. The proposed task formulations often involve indexicalities as well as stylistic characteristics, particularly regarding the Self- and Other-positioning, the change in perspective and the genre. In the right-hand column, teachers can describe the communicative activity that best suits the task formulation that they have chosen for the specific act.

4.3 First example – *Am Ende Bleiben Die Zedern*

The first example is an excerpt from the book *Am Ende Bleiben die Zedern (In the End, the Cedars Remain)* by the Lebanese-German author Pierre Jarawan (2016a) (see Appendix A), accompanied by a visual narrative (Jarawan, 2016b). The use of the visual narrative allows both teachers and later learners to gain more insights into the different perspectives of the author's autobiographical *Ich*-Perspective as narrated Self and the author's perspective as narrating Self. The visual narrative complements the textual by revealing to the

learner the perspective of the narrated Self that is not visible in the textual stimulus, but only imagined. This switching between perspectives means switching between different social realities, which in turn means different indexicalities that can be used as teaching objectives (see Task formulation, Appendices B and D). If learners are then taught to interpret indexicalities, whether lexicogrammatical or otherwise, and on this basis distinguish between perspectives and different social realities, they will develop an awareness of the symbolic representations of linguistic choices as well as towards the symbolic power that these linguistic choices might generate regarding a different social, cultural, chronotopical, historical, etc. reality.

Literary texts, such as this one, are useful for demonstrating to learners the genre of storytelling and its narrative properties. Again, coming in contact with narratives means that the learners adapt their reasoning to diverse perspectives, to relations between characters but also between author and reader, to various discourses within the same excerpt (depending on the positioning of each character), to the author's subtle – and not so subtle – intent and, most importantly, to ambiguity. Storytelling, and narrative forms in general, welcome ambiguity, and this can be a fruitful ground for learners, because of the high semantic complexity and the – sometimes – low contextual support. Moreover, dialogical narratives, such as

the first example, provide a feeling of orality, of greater tensions and negotiations of greater linguistic and cultural capital. This too is useful to incorporate into teaching, because it is similar to real-time dynamic interactions outside of the classroom. The above points are considered both in the depiction of the act and in formulating a relevant task (Appendix B).

4.4 Second example – *Kaffeekränzchen*

The second text (Appendix C) is quoted in Hinnenkamp (2003) and is used in order to explain intercultural competence. The main purpose for choosing this example is to illustrate the differences between an intercultural and an ecolinguistic approach to foreign language teaching. Hinnenkamp (2003, p. 2-3) may ask similar questions regarding the cultural discrepancies that are depicted in the text and in doing so he reveals those discrepancies and makes them available for the learners to grasp and assimilate but does not provide a meta-framework that covers the field of linguistic choices from a micro-level (representation) to a meso-level (action) and to a macro-level (power) of language use, as symbolic competence does. As in the first example, positioning, genre and reflection by the learner are the main objectives (Appendix D). From an intercultural standpoint, the text is an interesting choice exactly because Greek learners of German can relate to the Greek character in the text and divert attention from the German

character. Although this falls within the same scope as the previously discussed L1,2/C1,2 duality, it is interesting to apply the same example in multicultural classrooms, where the dynamics are totally different to an all-Greek homogenous classroom. If we introduce this text into a multicultural classroom, where for example 50% are Greek learners of German, 30% are Albanian, 10% African and 10% former SSRS (Soviet Socialist Republic States), the dynamics of Self- and Other-positioning as well as the different discourses of homeland and of stereotypes will be very far from being the same. From a symbolic standpoint, the negotiation of cultural capital in such a classroom working on this specific textual stimulus will be intense and thus will contribute to the framing of new social realities and discourses.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Why is symbolic competence useful for our foreign language teaching practice?

The above examples accurately demonstrate the need for a new approach to language use in relation to foreign language teaching and thus a reason for introducing symbolic competence as a goal for language teachers in multicultural classrooms. The first point to consider is that teaching towards achieving intercultural competence is often limited to conditioning language learners to adapt their use of the target language – or the hybrid language formed by cross-linguistic interferences for that matter – to

the behavioural patterns, values, lived experiences of the target culture. This duality of L1,2/C1,2 (Blommaert, 2005) proved to be helpful to a certain degree in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the term ‘intercultural competence’ gained popularity among researchers, because it allowed us to make a step towards inter-national understanding (UNESCO, 1989). However, if we consider the power dynamics between nations, the adaptation of language learners to a target culture practically leads to linguistic and cultural assimilation of the minority (Bastardas-Boada, 2014). In a world where power relations between nation-states are ever-changing due to the complexities of globalisation, adaptation or integration no longer serve their purpose. Symbolic competence is compliant with this in flux-condition: compared to an interculturally competent speaker, a symbolically competent speaker has the *‘capacity to recognise the historical context of utterances and their intertextualities, to question established [conceptual] categories and place them in their historical and subjective contexts. But it is also the ability to resignify them, reframe them, re- and transcontextualise them and to play with the tension between text and context’* (Kramsch, 2011, p. 359). Rather than merely adapting to the nuances of the target culture, the symbolically competent language user/learner will be able to frame and re-frame events, intentions and actions at a macro-, meso- and micro-level (Coupland,

‘In a world where power relations between nation-states are ever-changing due to the complexities of globalisation, adaptation or integration no longer serve their purpose’

2006); this means, recognising their social, cultural, chronotopical, historical, aesthetical, etc. dimensions, to position themselves in relation to those dimensions by drawing upon resonating indexicalities and to resignify them in order to give them new relatable meaning.

The second point that speaks for the development of symbolic competence in foreign language learners is, as described above, that foreign language curricula often present a limited number of domains of language usage in comparison to the domains that learners/speakers are confronted with in life outside of the classroom. The CEFR contextualises language activities in four domains: the public, personal, educational and occupational, stating that *‘these may themselves be very diverse, but for most practical purposes in relation to language learning they may be broadly classified as fourfold’* (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 14). The vast majority of language-learning textbooks – giving the example of DaF textbooks in Greece – adapt their content strictly to those four domains, again probably for reasons of

practicality. If one examines textbooks, especially regarding lower levels of competence (A1-B1), the subdomains of usage are more or less the same: family, school life, living, daily routine, studying, working, use of technology, etc. The domain *Landeskunde* (culture), firstly introduced to foreign language curricula during the intercultural turn, is still very much visible in both German-lead research (e.g. Rösler, 2012) and textbooks, which in itself reflects the limited domains as described above and the persistence of foreign language teaching to the L1,2/C1,2 duality. The same thematic divisions of content can be observed in higher competence levels (B2-C2), although the cognitive complexity of the presented content is higher, which in turn may affect how the (sub)domains are presented but not their boundaries. When it comes to ‘usage of technology/media’, the subdomain is presented to learners more from an outside-looking-in-view: learners are asked to discuss the theme but not to engage with the diversified forms of communication that the usage of technology entails. The Age of Information has created new environments of communication, where anonymity, and therefore concealment of (cultural) identity and intent, is the standard. The only way we can relate with the interlocutor is their discourse and vice versa. On these grounds, language teachers should prepare learners for discourse-specific and not user-specific communication. This *‘[...] calls for an approach [...]*

to teaching that is discourse-based, historically grounded, aesthetically sensitive, and takes into account the actual, the imagined and the virtual worlds in which we live' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 366).

A pedagogical turn towards the development of symbolic competence would address the issues described by introducing different discursive practices, different genres and different narratives as foreign language teaching resources, so that learners develop the ability to adopt different perspectives and thus different discursive selves.

5.2 Teaching towards symbolic competence

The notion of symbolic competence has attracted a number of researchers in a number of research fields, including the field of Critical Foreign Language Pedagogy (e.g. Kearney, 2012; Luks, 2013; Crichton & Murray, 2014; Back, 2016; Díaz, 2016; Snell, 2016; Étienne & Vanbaelen, 2017). Luks (2013) proceeded to incorporate symbolic competence as an objective in the textbook for reading and writing in French as a foreign language. In the *Teacher's Guide*, when pointing to tips for creating own material in the vein of *the Literary in the Everyday*, the author emphasises, that teachers should *'incorporate dimensions of cross-cultural or symbolic competence according to Kramersch's recommendations'* (Luks, 2013, p. 18), while quoting these recommendations from Kramersch (2011) and linking them to chapters in the textbook. These include: *'Use communicative activities as food for reflection on the nature of*

language, discourse, communication and mediation. Pay attention to what remains unsaid, or may even be unsayable because it is politically incorrect or disturbing [...]. Bring up every opportunity to show complexity and ambiguity [...]. Engage the student's emotions, not just their cognition' (Kramersch, 2011, p. 364).

The above configures with what was said so far. In order to be symbolically competent language learners should be able to reflect on discursive practices and reframe them, on genre and its connection to discourse, on the verbal, cultural and/or social tensions that a written, oral or visual stimulus can generate in the learners themselves as well as on the cognitive and semantic complexity of a stimulus. As seen above, the ambiguity of an (authentic) stimulus is not something to avoid in the foreign language classroom, but rather something to engage the learners with. This practice draws upon the complex and ambiguous meanings that language users are confronted with in their everyday life, given the immensely diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. It must be noted that ambiguity, not only in form of highly indexicalised, open-ended meanings but also of hidden intents, was something that the CEFR failed to include, which in turn led to the sterility of teaching. The question arises especially as far as higher levels of competence are concerned. How can we expect our pupils to mediate between languages, when the meaning-making of the

‘How can we expect our pupils to mediate between languages, when the meaning-making of the content they are to mediate is bounded to their culture?’

content they are to mediate is bounded to their culture? Can there be mediation of mere information and not of (ambivalent) meaning or (hidden) intent? And if yes, is it useful to present to our pupils only informational content? Ambiguity, metaphorical meaning, hidden intent is what language learner will be confronted with in life, those elements are part of language and of pragmatic competence, as the CEFR defines it. For this reason, Vovou (2018) proposes the development of a framework for evaluating such learning stimuli by mode and index, so that the choice of such stimuli is compliant with the level of competence. Luks (2013) proposes something similar regarding visual stimuli used in language teaching: teachers should ‘*match symbolic imagery to a reader’s interpretations*’ (Luks, 2013, p. 13).

Díaz (2016) proposes teaching resources that will aid teachers in the selection, adaptation and implementation of interculturally-oriented pedagogical practices: transcultural/translingual migration literature, autobiographies, oral traditions and *mémoires* are to be included in the

authentic teaching materials that all foreign language teachers employ in their teaching. Kearney (2012, p. 61) prompts language teachers to ‘*furnish opportunities for analysis of perspective and for perspective-taking to pursue the cultivation of symbolic competence*’ and points directly to the cultivation of understanding authorship and identity positioning. Étienne & Vanbaelen (2017) introduce a *Semiotic Gap Activity* in order to examine their pupils meaning-making processes and reflect on symbolic representations and discursive perspective-taking. Lastly, Back (2016) defines ‘*symbolic competence in interaction as the performance of cultural memories and history, and demonstrate(s) how even the most elemental level of symbolic competence can come up against resistance in a language learning context*’ (Back, 2016, p. 2) and coins the term *symbolic performance* as a correlating, not overlapping, notion. Back (2016, p. 2) does not fail to critique the fact that ‘*there is still little research on what symbolic competence looks like in interaction, with most scholars highlighting its relational, reframing potential*’.

On this basis, Vovou (2018) tried to shed light into how symbolic representations, action and power emerge in interaction, examining if and how those facets of symbolic competence occur in oral foreign language examinations between Greek examinees and DaF learners and examiners with German and Greek L1.

6. CONCLUSION

Research up until now, including the present study, has shown that the notion of symbolic competence, as formulated by Kramersch (2011), can and should be added as a teaching objective in foreign language curricula. The usefulness of orienting the teaching and learning of foreign languages towards discourse and not culture is not only necessary due to the given sociopolitical and technological changes of the early 21st century, but also achievable. This does not mean that the communicative model should be considered obsolete. As discussed in the present study, the teaching objectives that aim to the development of symbolic competence can and should be realised

through communicative activities. A limitation that presented itself during the designing of the Grids for the Development of Symbolic Competence (Appendices B and D) is that the cultivation of awareness of symbolic representation, action and power through concrete teaching objectives can be achieved in learners that have reached a certain level of linguistic competence (B2 and above). That is, because both task formulation (middle column) and the nature of the act itself (left hand column) are cognitively complex for lower level language learners to grasp. In general, the idea can be supported that gearing learners towards symbolic competence will change the scenery in modern language learning in multicultural milieus.

APPENDIX A

Excerpt from *Am Ende Bleiben die Zedern* (Jarawan, 2016)

‘Entschuldigt.’

‘Es wird funktionieren’, murmelte Vater. Er saß auf der Couch rechts, an der Stelle, an der er immer saß. Meine Schwester war auf seinem Schoß eingeschlafen.

‘Was der Libanon braucht, ist eine Aufgabe’, sagte Hakim.

‘Wenn diese Leute nichts zu tun bekommen, werden sie anfangen, ihre Gewehre zu vermissen. Wir müssen wieder das Finanzzentrum werden, das wir waren, damit die Scheichs ihr Geld nicht mehr in den Golfstaaten lassen, sondern bei uns investieren, in Firmen, internationale Schulen, Universitäten, Infrastruktur und Hotels. Dann werden wir wieder ein Land sein, das die Welt gern besucht, ein Land der Begegnung, Konferenzen, Messen ...’

‘Es wird funktionieren’, wiederholte Vater. ‘Es ist gut, dass Hariri gewonnen hat’.

‘Er hat Geld, seine Firmen werden das Land wiederaufbauen, und alles – Straßen, Häuserwände, Plätze – wird glänzen. Aber dann werden die Idioten kommen, die ebenfalls im Parlament gelandet sind, und an die schönen Hauswände pissen ...’

‘Hakim’, fuhr Mutter ihn an.

‘Entschuldigt’, sagte er abermals, dann wandte er sich mir zu: ‘Samir, möchtest du einen Witz hören?’

Ich wollte.

Ein Syrer kommt in ein Elektrogeschäft und fragt den Verkäufer: ‘Entschuldigen Sie, haben Sie auch Farbfernseher?’

Und der Verkäufer antwortet: ‘Ja, wir haben eine große Auswahl an Farbfernsehern’, woraufhin der Syrer sagt: ‘Wie schön! Dann hätte ich gerne einen grünen’.

Ich lachte. Hakim kannte eine Menge Syrer-Witze und

erzählte sie auch gerne mehrfach. Oft war er selbst derjenige, der sich am lautesten über sie amüsierte. Auch diesen hatte ich mindestens schon dreimal gehört, allerdings variierte Hakim immer wieder die Farbe am Schluss. Warum hier

ausgerechnet Syrer die Trottel waren, darüber hatte ich mir nie Gedanken gemacht. Die Deutschen erzählten sich Ostfriesenwitze, die Libanesen erzählten Witze über Syrer. Ich fand das logisch.

Appendix B

First Example: Worksheet. Grid for the Development of Symbolic Competence

ACT	TASK FORMULATION	COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY
reflect on different discourses: discourse of ethnicity discourse of homeland discourse of political power	Which passages indicate a change in discourse? Which lexical indices echo fragments of ethnicity/ homeland/ political power?	selective reading discussion
reflect on: authorship positioning of the Self positioning of the Other	Which lexical/ grammatical indices echo the characters in the narrative? Which passages show the relationships between characters? Which genre does the author employ in the text and which in the video segment, in order to state his positioning (i) as author (narrating self), (ii) as autobiographical narrator (narrated self), (iii) as an insider regarding the described culture, (iv) as an outsider?	selective reading selective listening
reflect on the specific genre storytelling	What patterns of the genre does the author employ? Which passages in the text echo the characteristics of the genre? What needs does the genre meet? (Need for identity? For sense-making?) Are there lexical indices that point to the role of the author? Are there lexical indices that point to the characteristic of the audience that the author wished to address? How does the order of events serve the genre?	matching task categorisation selective reading
reflect on: migrant experiences lived experience of homeland of the learners	How does the lived experience of the author/ his father/ Hakim resonate with you?	discussion (to allow the 'not said' to reveal itself) writing a journal retelling/rewriting the story incorporating the own experience rewriting the story in turns, incorporating the collective experience
reflect on: ambiguities of meaning	Which witticisms, metaphors, etc. can you recognise? Based on which indices can you recognise them? Why does the author employ them? What is his intent? How would you reframe the witticism, metaphor, etc. based on your experience?	selective reading writing/ adapting the ambiguous structure in the mother language

Appendix C

Kaffeekränzchen (Hinnenkamp, 2003)

Anna aus Griechenland besucht eine Sprachschule in Deutschland. Mit der Lehrerin Brigitte versteht sie sich sehr gut. Eines Tages lädt B. ihre Schülerin zum Kaffee ein. 'Sagen wir vier Uhr', macht Brigitte die Verabredung fest. A. freut sich. Sie kommt um halb fünf. B. meint, sie habe schon lange gewartet. A. ist verdutzt. Der Kaffeetisch ist gedeckt, der Kaffee fertig. A. ist erstaunt. Sie hat selbstgebackenen

griechischen Kuchen mitgebracht.

'Uih, wir sieht der denn aus', bemerkt B. A. findet B. unhöflich. Nach dem Kaffeetrinken zündet sich A. eine Zigarette an. B. bittet sie, auf dem Balkon zu rauchen. A. ist verletzt. Um 6 Uhr bemerkt B., sie habe noch sehr viel zu tun und bittet A. zu gehen.

A. fühlt sich rausgeschmissen. Ihr erstes deutsches Kaffeetrinken – eine einzige Enttäuschung.

Appendix D

Second Example: Worksheet. Grid for the Development of Symbolic Competence

ACT	TASK FORMULATION	COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY
reflect on stereotypical discourse: cultural stereotypes social stereotypes	What is your understanding of the word <i>Gast</i> ? How would you react to a personal invitation between a teacher and a student? How would you frame such an invitation, if (i) you were the teacher, (ii) if you were the student, (iii) if you and the receiver had the same culture/ language, (iv) if you and the receiver had a different culture/ language?	free association expression of opinion (written or oral), structured writing/ speaking creative writing
reflect on: positioning of the Self positioning of the Other	Which lexical/ grammatical indices echo the characters in the narrative? Which linguistic structures point to the German <i>Alltagskultur</i> ? Which linguistic structures point to cultural gaps? Where does the narrator position herself? How does this affect the genre? How do the name abbreviations reflect the positioning of the author?	selective reading discussion
reflect on: genre linguistic style	What function do the name abbreviations perform regarding the style and the genre of the text? What function do the linear grammatical structures perform? Are unusual linguistic structures present? What do they reveal about the style and the genre of the text? What is the authors intent based on the stylistics of the text? Do the stylistics of the text work in favour of the character in the narrative? If yes, which one?	categorisation selective reading discussion
reflect on: own experiences of cultural misunderstandings in your homeland in the target country abroad	How would you react in a similar situation, if you were (i) the teacher, (ii) the student, (iii) the foreigner, (iv) the native? Tell us of a cultural misunderstanding that you were involved in or witnessed, while remaining faithful to the genre of the text.	discussion (to allow the 'not said' to reveal itself) storytelling retelling/rewriting the story incorporating the own experience rewriting the story in turns, incorporating the collective experience storytelling with emphasis on negative/ positive emotion role play

References

- Back, M. (2016). Symbolic competence in interaction: Mutuality, memory, and resistance in a peer tutoring context. *L2 Journal*, 8(3), 1-22. doi: [10.7220/2335-2027.5.5](https://doi.org/10.7220/2335-2027.5.5)
- Banks, J. A. (2006). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum, and teaching*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Bastardas-Boada, A. (2014). Linguistic sustainability for a multilingual humanity. *Sustainable Multilingualism*, 5, 134-163. doi: [10.7220/2335-2027.5.5](https://doi.org/10.7220/2335-2027.5.5)
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, J., Leppänen, S., & Spotti, M. (2012). Endangering multilingualism. In J. Blommaert, S. Leppänen, P. Pahta & T. Raisanen (Eds.), *Dangerous multilingualism* (pp. 1-21). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Byram, M. (1995). Acquiring intercultural competence.

- A review of learning theories. In L. Sercu (Ed.), *Intercultural competence: A new challenge for language teachers and trainers in Europe* (pp. 53-69). Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.
- Candlin, C. N. (1976). Communicative language teaching and the debt to pragmatics. In C. Rameh (Ed.), *Georgetown University Roundtable* (pp. 168-180). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge, UK: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.
- Coupland, N. (2006). The discursive framing of phonological acts of identity: Welshness through English. In J. Brutt-Griffler & C. Evans Davies (Eds.), *English and ethnicity* (pp. 19-48). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crichton, J., & Murray, N. (2014). Plurilithic and ecological perspectives on English: Some conceptual and practical implications. In N. Murray & A. Scarino (Eds.), *Dynamic ecologies: A relational perspective on languages education in the Asia-Pacific region* (pp. 31-48). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Crozet, C., & Liddicoat, A. J. (1999). The challenge of intercultural language teaching: Engaging with culture in the classroom. In J. Lo Bianco, A. J. Liddicoat & C. Crozet (Eds.), *Striving for the third place: Intercultural competence through language education* (pp. 113-126). Melbourne: Language Australia.
- Crozet, C., Liddicoat, A. J., & Lo Bianco, J. (1999). Intercultural competence: From language policy to language education. In J. Lo Bianco, A. J. Liddicoat & C. Crozet (Eds.), *Striving for the third place: Intercultural competence through language education* (pp. 1-22). Melbourne: Language Australia.
- Dendrinos, B. (2012). Multi- and monolingualism in foreign language education in Europe. In G. Stickel and M. Carrier (Eds.), *Education in creating a multilingual Europe* (pp. 47-60). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Dendrinos, B. (2015). Is 'Multilingualism' taking a back seat in the EU? Time for action. *Paper presented in the 13th Annual European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL) Conference*. Retrieved from http://www.efnil.org/conferences/13th-annual-conference-helsinki/proceedings/24__Dendrinos.pdf
- Díaz, A. R. (2016). Developing interculturally-oriented teaching resources in CFL: Meeting the challenge. In R. Moloney & H. L. Xu (Eds.), *Exploring innovative pedagogy in the teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language* (pp. 115-135). Singapore: Springer.
- Ellis, R. (1982). Informal and formal approaches to communicative language teaching. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 36(2), 73-81. doi: 10.1093/elt/36.2.73
- Étienne, C., & Vanbaelen, S. (2017). Exploring symbolic competence: Constructing meanings(s) and stretching cultural imagination in an intermediate college-level French class. *L2 Journal*, 9(2), 63-83.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. London: Longman.

- Fantini, A. E. (1997). *New ways in teaching culture*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Inc.
- Fill, A. (1998). Ecolinguistics – State of the Art 1998. *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 23(1), 3-16.
- Fill, A., & Mühlhäusler, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Ecolinguistics reader: Language, ecology and environment*. A&C Black.
- Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (1990). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1975). *Learning how to mean*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hinnenkamp, V. (2003). Die Anderen als Fremde – Wir als Fremde: Missverständnisse und Brücke in der interkulturellen Kommunikation. In W. Rometsch & D. Sarrazin (Eds.), *Best Practices in der Arbeit mit suchtmittelabhängigen Russlanddeutschen in der ambulanten Suchthilfe* (pp. 7-19). Münster: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe.
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *ELT Journal*, 60(4), 385-387. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccl030
- Hölscher, P., Piepho, H. E., & Roche, J. (2006). *Handlungsorientierter Unterricht mit Lernszenarien. Kernfragen zum Spracherwerb*. Oberursel: Finken Verlag.
- Hymes, D. (2003). *Now I know only so far: Essays in Ethnopoetics*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Jarawan, P. (2016a). *Am Ende bleiben die Zedern*. München/Berlin: Piper Verlag GmbH. Retrieved from https://dasdebuert.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/jarawan_leseprobe.pdf
- Jarawan, P. (2016b). *Am Ende bleiben die Zedern: A visual narrative*. Retrieved from https://www.buecher.de/shop/bayern/am-ende-bleiben-die-zedern/jarawan-pierre/products_products/detail/prod_id/44098189/#trailer
- Kearney, E. (2012). Perspective-taking and meaning-making through engagement with cultural narratives: Bringing history to life in a foreign language classroom. *L2 Journal*, 4(1), 58-82.
- Klewitz, B. (2017). *Scaffolding im Fremdsprachenunterricht. Unterrichtseinheiten Englisch für authentisches Lernen*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Kramersch, C. (2006). From communicative to symbolic competence. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90(2), 249-252.
- Kramersch, C. (2011). The symbolic dimensions of the intercultural. *Language Teaching*, 44(3), 354-367. doi: 10.1017/S0261444810000431
- Kramersch, C., & Vinall, K. (2015). The cultural politics of language textbooks in the era of globalization. In X. L. Curdt-Christiansen & Weninger, C. (Eds.), *Language, ideology and education: The politics of textbooks in language education* (pp. 11-28). London: Routledge
- Kramersch, C., & Steffensen, S. V. (2008). Ecological perspectives on second language acquisition and socialization. In N. Hornberger & P. Duff (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 17-28). Heidelberg: Springer Verlag.
- Kramersch, C., & Whiteside, A. (2008). Language ecology in multilingual settings. Towards a theory of symbolic competence. *Applied Linguistics*, 29(4), 645-671. doi: 10.1093/applin/amn022
- Kramersch, C., & Zhu, H. (2016). Language, culture and

- language teaching. In G. Hall (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 38-50). London: Routledge.
- Kubota, R. (2004). Critical multiculturalism and second language education. In B. Norton (Ed.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 30-52). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative language teaching: An introduction*. London: CUP.
- Luks, J. G. (2013). *Le littéraire dans le quotidien: Resources for a transdisciplinary approach to reading/writing at the first and second year levels of college French*. Center of Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL). Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/0Byg7PyauMJRScGxPdIpReVJQaUU>
- Nieto, S. (2004). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Nieto, S. (2017). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781315465692
- North, B. (2006, March). The Common European Framework of Reference: Development, theoretical and practical issues. *Paper presented at the symposium 'A New Direction in Foreign Language Education: The Potential of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages'*. Minoh, Japan: Osaka University of Foreign Studies. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251995323_The_Common_European_Framework](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/251995323_The_Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_Development_Theoretical_and_Practical_issues)
- Rösler, D. (2012). *Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Eine Einführung*. Stuttgart & Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler.
- Snell, A. (2016). Play and bricolage in adult second language classrooms. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 31(2), 77-92.
- Steffensen, S. V., & Fill, A. (2014). Ecolinguistics: The state of the art and future horizons. *Language Sciences*, 41, 6-25. doi: 10.1016/j.langsci.2013.08.003
- Swan, M. (1985). A critical look at the communicative approach. *ELT Journal*, 39(1), 2-12. doi: 10.1093/elt/39.1.2
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- UNESCO. (1989). *International understanding through foreign language teaching. Handbook on foreign language teaching as a means for international understanding. International working group on foreign language teaching*. Bonn, Germany: German Commission for UNESCO. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/35_58.pdf
- Vovou, E. (2018). *Sprachliche Ökologie im Bereich des Lernens und der Evaluation von Fremdsprachen. Die mündliche Sprachprüfung als Erscheinungsfeld symbolischer Kompetenz*. Retrieved from <https://pergamos.lib.uoa.gr/uoal/frontend/file/lib/default/data/2870346/theFile>

Writing diplomatically: Managing potential conflict

by Barry Tomalin

Barry Tomalin Glasgow Caledonian University London barrytomalin@aol.com

Published in Training, Language and Culture Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 40-54 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.3](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.3)

Recommended citation format: Tomalin, B. (2019). Writing diplomatically: Managing potential conflict.

Training, Language and Culture, 3(2), 40-54. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.3](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.3)

The aim of this paper is to assess the role of emotional language and neutral language in the preparation and production of formal official documents. The paper explores the model offered by the United Nations in two references of diplomatic writing, The United Nations Editorial Manual and the United Nations Correspondence Manual. The example selected, from many that could be chosen, is that of Arabic-speaking diplomatic students responding in writing to a simulated political incident that could lead to conflict. The discussion examines the importance of emotional intelligence in managing one's own feelings and hence the language one uses. It also offers a methodology teachers can use in helping students become aware of emotive usage in reading passages and in their own writing and how to manage it. The conclusion stresses the importance of avoiding emotive language in official correspondence and finding ways of substituting it with more neutral words and expressions to achieve balance.

KEYWORDS: Arabic, linguistics, UN, diplomacy, conflict management, tweetplomacy, emotional intelligence, critical awareness



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

1. INTRODUCTION

Diplomats are the guardians of a nation's heritage and interests. When states are in conflict or are steering towards a potential conflict situation, it is the diplomats who keep the doors open to discussion, often behind the scenes, in order to seek ways towards a peaceful settlement. An important means of achieving this is to employ the appropriate language, neutral and objective and frequently indirect – in short, the diplomatic language. This is important in public discourse, whatever diplomats might say in private, and strong messages may be delivered using polite

language. An important part of diplomatic training courses is raising critical awareness of what is the right and wrong way to use language and how to observe the protocol of what type of communication to use and what language is appropriate. Contrary to some opinions, diplomatic language is not mindless bureaucracy, but an important tool in the successful management of international relations. What works for diplomats can also work for international business and negotiation, and the case study offered here is intended as an aide to teachers in understanding the principles and

practice of diplomatic language.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The paper outlines the key features of the UN guide to diplomatic correspondence in English through the key modes of written communication and compares it with the use of rhetoric in one of the working languages of the UN – Arabic. It then takes an exercise in preparing diplomatic correspondence with a group of Arabic-speaking students as a basis for how strong feelings and the style of expressing them needs to be adapted to fit the norms of diplomatic communication.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Diplomatic communication

Diplomatic correspondence is one of the keys to formal contact between states and between states and international organisations (e.g. the UN). The aim is to ensure diplomatic communication continues to take place. Diplomatic communication fulfils a number of functions, some of the most important being to communicate decisions, express approval or disapproval, congratulate, confirm arrangements, initiate contact, make proposals, and threaten.

In this paper, we explore the expression of disapproval and the use of threat and the language used to convey it. However, our first question has to be why, when and how does diplomatic communication take place. Diplomatic

correspondence takes place whenever official communication is needed between states and between states and international organisations. The most important function of diplomatic correspondence is to keep a record of agreements, decisions and positions taken (Marshall, 1997).

3.2 How does diplomatic correspondence take place?

According to Barston (2014), the most common forms of diplomatic correspondence are notes or notes verbales, letters, memoranda, and aides-memoires. A more formal approach is used in the categories of communication such as resolutions, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and treaties. Types of communication such as reports and briefings, speeches, statements, communiqués, press interviews, and declarations are also used in diplomatic and official correspondence. Each type of communication has a particular style of address and particular qualities of approach. Common to all diplomatic writing is the focus on respect for the recipient, objectivity of observation and analysis, and often the use of the 3rd person to allow focus on the problem, not the personality.

Notes verbales form part of a correspondence. Their function is to bring an agreement into effect. Although in Japan and in UN correspondence they are called Notes verbale, there is no significant difference with note, as used in the UK, the US or

most of Europe. Notes or notes verbales are often used for routine administration, such as registration of treaties, granting or refusing overflight clearance, peace proposals, but also official protests, for example a record of a state's position regarding a dispute. The linguistic devices used are very important. First of all, the form of address is usually third person singular. The style tends to be very formal, using phrases such as *the Embassy of ... presents its compliments ...*, *the Embassy avails itself of the opportunity to...*, etc. The note is usually initialled, but not signed and the paragraphs are not numbered (Barston, 2014).

Letters are exchanged direct between Head of State and Head of State or with an international body. Their function is to raise questions about or explain policy, set out positions and intended lines of action, establish intent to initiate agreement, MOU (memorandum of understanding or a treaty) or (through the UN) to establish a complaint or defend policy or advance a case. A letter is a more personal correspondence, addressed personally to the recipient, often directly between Heads of State and dated. Therefore, there is a more common use of *I* and *you* and the communication is likely to be signed with a full signature followed by typed name and position at the foot of the letter, rather than initialled.

A memorandum is a detailed statement of acts and arguments and may be a statement of policy

'Common to all diplomatic writing is the focus on respect for the recipient, objectivity of observation and analysis, and often the use of the 3rd person to allow focus on the problem, not the personality'

supporting claims, a warning, a statement making policy recommendations and it may be used to explain detail on specific treaty or agreement clauses where greater detail is needed. The characteristics of a memorandum are that it may be supported by a covering letter and is similar to, but less formal than a note, with no opening or closing formalities and no signature is necessary.

Aides-memoires are official statements used as follow-up to visits, trade fairs, conferences, etc. to propose initiatives as a result of discussions and as a record of administration and policy commitments. They are usually written in the 3rd person, but less formal than memoranda and are based on discussions. Speaking notes may be used to record the conclusions of a telephone call.

Resolutions are formal statements often used by international organisations as a result of conferences and summits.

Communiqués are an official record of discussions

between Heads of Government, usually compiled soon after meetings and covering the agenda of the meeting as a whole. Their key style qualities are accuracy, selectivity, speed, short paragraphs, and space between paragraphs. They may use sub headings, if appropriate. It is important in communiqués to keep it simple. Marshall (1997) advises avoiding complicated sentences (15-25 words is ample) and writes: *'If you cannot easily read your reports aloud they are probably not as clear as they should be'* (Marshall, 1997, p. 161).

An Memorandum of Understanding is used for regulating external relations with outside Ministry of Foreign Affairs agencies. They are used to follow up treaties and for detailing implementation procedures and may be kept internal to preserve confidentiality of information. Their style tends to be more informal than agreements or treaties and this may on occasion pose problems. A principle issue is terminology, which may differ from state to state and department to department. There is often a possible difficulty of retrieval. Where are documents stored? The documents may create low norm setting and lack of consistency, and worst of all there may be issue of confidentiality and secrecy leading to poor foreign policy co-ordination.

The final area of diplomatic communication to discuss is that of briefings. These are papers designed to advise and inform foreign ministries

and Heads of Government on policy and procedure. A briefing should explain the background and areas to which the briefing applies and that need to be dealt with, list policy and procedure options with positives and negatives, and finally advise on best options.

3.3 Guiding principles of diplomatic writing

The guiding principle of diplomatic language are provided by the United Nations in two key documents. One is the United Nations Correspondence Manual (United Nations, 2000) and the other is The United Nations Editorial Manual (United Nations, 2014). Both documents are available online. The United Nations Editorial Manual Online is intended to serve as an authoritative statement of the style to be followed in drafting, editing and reproducing United Nations documents, publications and other written material. The United Nations Correspondence Manual identifies the correct way to address officials at different levels of state and international organisation governance.

In exploring the diplomatic writing process, we will look at protocol, preparation, making an argument, persuasion and confidentiality.

3.4 Protocol

Protocol is fundamental to diplomacy. Four key issues need to be addressed in any diplomatic document of the types described above.

1. *Symbols*. Should the document have official symbols such as coats of arms, official logos, etc.? These can add to the formality of a document.

2. *Terms of address*. This has already been discussed in the description of the main types of diplomatic document. Is the document personal or general? Should it be addressed using the 1st person singular or the third person singular or plural? The Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Government?

3. *Structure and layout*. What is the expected structure of the document? It will have an introduction, content and a conclusion, but should it have single-spaced or double-space lines and how should paragraphs be differentiated? All this becomes part of diplomatic practice.

4. *Sign off*. Different types of documents follow different conventions. Should they be signed or left unsigned? If they are signed, should the signature include full names or just initials?

3.5 Preparation

Apart from the protocol element, the preparation of a diplomatic document needs careful thought, as it will remain on record for years, maybe even centuries, to come. For any diplomat, there are three key questions to consider. What is the message you wish to convey? Who do you wish to convey it to? What sort of message do you wish to

convey? (Marshall, 1997). In answering the first question, the key principle is to include what is essential, not what is desirable. '*Our job is to deal with the essential and to convey it in its most coherent, concise and persuasive form*' (Marshall, 1997, p. 156). Have a beginning, middle and end. Precision is important. What can be left out? An orderly, accurate and complete message achieves balance with the key delivery points. Never sacrifice clarity and brevity. Start the reader on the right path and encourage them to keep on it. The first sentence is crucial. Have a sense of priorities. Have a clear temporal sequence. Group related ideas and thoughts. The core of the message must always be in focus. It is a good idea to write down your essential message in one or two sentences and make sure you lead up to it (Marshall, 1997).

3.6 Making an argument

According to Marshall (1997), an argument can be 4 things:

- 1) a statement of fact advanced to influence the mind and support a proposition;
- 2) a connected series of statements intended to establish (or subvert) a position and hence a process of reasoning;
- 3) an argument establishing the pros and cons of a proposition, discussion or debate;
- 4) the summary of a conference, discussion or debate.

Different tools can be used to strengthen an

‘Apart from the protocol element, the preparation of a diplomatic document needs careful thought, as it will remain on record for years, maybe even centuries, to come’

argument. They include illustration with examples, describing situations briefly or in detail, adding new but relevant information to clarify a point, varying approach and style, and laying devil’s advocate and then demolishing the argument (Marshall, 1997).

3.7 Confidentiality

This is one of the key issues in any diplomatic correspondence. Who should be allowed to read it? A number of linguistic devices exist to establish confidentiality. Some common examples include:

- Eyes only (for your eyes only)
- Private and confidential
- Classified information
- Circulation restricted
- Information embargoed until (DATE)
- Information released under Chatham House Rule (Chatham House is the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, based in Chatham House; under the Chatham House rule nothing said in a meeting can be attributed outside it. Everything should remain internal).

Other ways of preserving confidentiality are to ask recipients of a confidential or sensitive document to sign non-disclosure agreements or for the distributor of the document to blot out potentially controversial or politically sensitive words and phrases so that the reader cannot access them. This is called redacting a document (Barston, 2014). If, however, a leak occurs, it is important to have the original (safe) version of the document available in case information has been manipulated or quoted out of context.

3.8 The Arabic language

Arabic is one of the most beautiful and expressive languages in the world, and the native language of more than two hundred million people. It is also the official language of twenty countries and the language of the holy Qur’an. In 1973, it became the sixth official language of the United Nations and is the fourth most widely spoken language in the world (Nydell, 2002).

Arabic is a Semitic language, along with Hebrew and Amharic (Ethiopia) and Aramaic, Syrian and Chaldean, which are still spoken in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq (Nydell, 2002). Many words in English come from Arabic, including *coffee*, *saffron*, *ginger*, *apricot* and *sherbet*, and also many words beginning with *al*, of which the most famous is probably, *algebra* but also *algorithm* and *almanac*.

‘The true heritage of Arabia can be found in its

language. In the harsh desert environment which was not conducive to the development of fine arts, the cultivation of language became an art form in itself. Even today poetry and eloquence hold a revered place' (Cuddihy, 2002, p. 55-56). The important point is the use of language to convey emotion. As Cuddihy (2002, p. 56) says, 'Arabic is not merely a tool for conceptualisation, it is a vehicle to convey atmosphere and emotion'.

There are different varieties of Arabic, ranging from different regional varieties to classical spoken and written Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, originating in the Hijaz region of Arabia. Classical or modern standard Arabic, as it is now known, is the most important variety.

What is important for this study is that classical Arabic places great value on rhetoric. Arabic is sometimes described as a 'flowery' language. In other words, it rejoices in the creative, rhetorical use of language expressing the speaker or writer's eloquence. This is opposite to the normal use of English, which frequently disparages rhetoric.

On the contrary, in Arab politics how you say something is as important as what you say. The use of Arabic allows rhetoric to be used, sometimes in a disparaging way with threats, promises, exaggeration and slogans, whereas English tends to avoid it, although that is changing with the popular press and the rise of populist rhetoric.

'Arabic is sometimes described as a 'flowery' language. In other words, it rejoices in the creative, rhetorical use of language expressing the speaker or writer's eloquence'

'Westerners are not in everyday speech given as Arabs are, to quoting poetry, ancient proverbs and extracts from holy books. Perhaps the greatest difference between the Levantine approach to language and that of Westerners is that Levantines, like most Arabs, take pleasure in using language for its own sake' (McLoughlin, 2008, p. 62).

'Poetry continues to play a central role in Arab daily life and it is often said that poetry is the book of the Arabs. To this extent, linguistic eloquence is always appreciated by Arabs, whereby style and delivery can be as important as content' (Al-Omari, 2008, p. 82).

'Another important feature of the Arabic language is that it is a poetical language in a very big way. In everyday use, the language is full of idioms, euphemisms, proverbs and flowery phrases that will baffle and sometimes confuse most foreigners. Finally, when Arabs communicate in writing, their language tends to be both elaborate and formal, which can send conflicting messages to the untrained reader' (Al-Omari, 2008, p. 83).

Translation is a problem. There are certain words in Arabic that are not immediately translatable and the language needs a translator who can preserve the key message, but without being too literal.

This study examines how this difference in the use of rhetoric influences diplomatic writing in English. By definition, diplomatic writing is diplomatic and conforms by and large to the guidelines laid down by the United Nations. It advocates the avoidance of 'strong language' and sets out a form of phraseology which makes a state's position reasonably clear while avoiding any kind of extreme or potentially provocative expression, particularly through the use of rhetoric. It explores the language used by trainee diplomats responding to a diplomatic relations crisis and examines the relationship between UN conventional forms of expression and the use of potentially provocative rhetoric conveyed through the use of emotive adjectives and adverbs, nouns and verb phrases. It also recognises that the use of certain words might be due to the misunderstanding of dictionary or thesaurus translations and suggests ways in which diplomats and other writers can learn to use less emotive and more precise descriptive language in their communication.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

The study is the result of a course in diplomatic writing conducted for trainee diplomats from the

Arab world. The aim of the course was to teach students to manage the United Nations Correspondence Manual and the United Nations Editorial Manual, discussed above. At the end of the course the students completed a short exam, which involved three types of test. First was a gapfill activity in which students had to insert the correct diplomatic phrase into a letter from a British Ambassador to the Head of the Central Bank of the country he or she was stationed in. A second gapfill activity requested the students to complete an official communiqué using words listed. The third activity involved re-ordering the sentences of a UN note verbale regarding the violation of airspace in Bosnia Herzegovina.

The final activity was a free style writing task. It involved writing a note verbale from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in English, to the Foreign Minister of another country whose air force jets had 'buzzed' (flown very close in order to intimidate) two national airliners flying in international airspace.

Using the United Nations Correspondence Manual, the note verbale might have read something like this.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of STATE sends his compliments to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of STATE and wishes to express its concern over reports of disruption to the flight path of two

international airliners by fighter jets from STATE.

The incident, which occurred on DATE and took place in international air space, caused considerable concern to aircrew and passengers alike and may constitute a violation of international airspace regulations.

The ministry avails itself of the opportunity to request the ministry of STATE to urgently investigate the occurrence.

Notice the use of the 3rd person and the formulaic phrases, which act to establish respect as in, *sends his compliments, ministry avails itself of the opportunity*. The accusation is similarly expressed in an indirect style using the phrase, *wishes to express its concern*. It explains the issues as far as the airliner passengers and crew were concerned, politely but firmly, using the phrase, *caused considerable concern to aircrew and passengers alike*. It also contains a threat, but one which is expressed indirectly, as in the phrase, *may constitute a violation of international airspace regulations*. The note finishes with a request, once again wrapped in very polite terms, as in, *the ministry avails itself of the opportunity...*

34 students completed the test and all did well. However, the weakest point was the composition of the note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs protesting the violation of airspace by its air

force jets. Although the opening paragraph followed by and large the format proposed above, the description of the incident and its possible consequences were effectively a breach of diplomatic language and used words expressing emotion and anger, which may have been seen as out of place in a diplomatic exchange. Of the 34 drafts examined, eight maintained a degree of neutrality while expressing concern over the incident. 26, however, felt it necessary to express their concern in a stronger fashion. In the examples that follow the numbers in brackets after the italicised phrases indicate the number of times a word or phrase was used in the correspondence.

Three letters used expressions describing the behaviour of the state that had 'buzzed' the airliners, such as *aggressive behaviour* (2) and *categorically unacceptable behaviour*. In this case more diplomatic language might refer to *behaviour which has caused concern*. Twelve letters referred to *actions or acts as hostile* (10), *a clear act of aggression and conflict* and *unacceptable acts*. In this case it might have been better to avoid the outright accusation of aggression and focus on the effects on the crew and passengers with a phrase like *caused the crew and passengers acute fear and discomfort*.

Three letters used the word *threat* accompanied once again by 'undiplomatic' adjectives. Examples are *a violent explicit threat, a violent explicit threat*

to the lives of innocent civilians and a clear violent threat. More muted expressions of displeasure were contained in seven communications, as follows: *is very disappointed, this action is not the best and gravely disappointed* (5). In all cases the notion of intentional threat should be avoided as the intention is not proven. The key is to focus on the physical event and, if the writer wishes, its effect on the passenger and crew, which can be documented, and not on the intentions of the fighter jets or the state to whose air force they belonged as that isn't known for sure although it may be suspected.

Intensifiers were used in a number of communications to strengthen the expression of outrage at the incident. Here are some examples. *The STATE protests strongly against the STATE's behaviour, ...strongly urges the government to reconsider its categorically unacceptable behaviour, ...strongly denounces the aggressive behaviour of STATE airforce, ...constitutes a flagrant infringement of sovereignty, protest categorically, categorically not accepted and violates the law of international airspace.* A more legally neutral expression nevertheless includes a 'strong' word *violation* as a noun in *constitutes violations of safety/ international law* (2). These simply need to be left out for the reasons stated above, no proof.

Finally, a number of communications clearly state

the likelihood of reprisals, as in these examples: in the light of evidence of its hostile acts, *this aggressive action, if it re-occurs in future, will force the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take unpleasant action to protect our people, any further such acts could trigger a response by STATE and will not hesitate to take necessary measures* (2). This last example is a firm but more acceptable phraseology, but it is nonetheless a threat. Threats by all means, but they need to be kept within the confines of international law. What are they talking about? Armed conflict, denial of overfly rights or withdrawal of diplomatic relations? The most likely threat is recourse to international law, but the state concerned doesn't have enough evidence yet. So, a consequence may be hinted at, but cannot be stated in either specific or general terms.

In summary, this relatively small sample shows how even in a diplomatic environment declamatory and emotional expressions of strong feeling can find their way into diplomatic correspondence. The key linguistic devices used to express feelings are adjectives and adjectival phrases (e.g. *aggressive, flagrant, unpleasant, violent, unacceptable*), adverbs and adverbial phrases (e.g. *categorically, strongly*), nouns and noun phrases (e.g. *violation, infringement, threat, aggression*), and verbs and verb phrases (e.g. *violate, force, trigger, denounce, take unpleasant action*).

In addition, the placing together of certain words creates a phrase intended to intensify the expression of anger at the incident, as in: *categorically unacceptable, violent explicit, clear violent, and flagrant infringement.*

This paper has taken as a case study the situation of Arabic-speaking trainee diplomats, but in fact diplomats speaking any language are in danger of overreacting, especially if faced with actions which might put their citizens in danger. The question is how do we teach trainee diplomats and indeed all foreign language students how to recognise and tone down possibly provocative language.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Using emotional intelligence

Although the state whose airliners were 'buzzed' by opposition fighters had a right to be angry, diplomatic correspondence is not the place to express it. Diplomacy is all about reading between the lines. A diplomat will understand immediately what lies behind the neutral phraseology and measured language and protocol of a communication. No one denies international incidents such as these give rise to strong feelings, but in diplomatic correspondence these feelings need to be expressed in carefully considered, neutral language, and with allowances made for the so-called emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence as

the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth. Developed and publicised by Harvard psychologist Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence consists of five qualities, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2006).

Self-awareness is the ability to recognise and understand personal moods and emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others. Indicators of self-awareness include self-confidence, realistic self-assessment and a self-deprecating sense of humour. Self-awareness depends on one's ability to monitor one's own emotional state and to correctly identify one's emotions.

Self-regulation is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods and the propensity to suspend judgment and to think before acting. Indicators include trustworthiness and integrity, comfort with ambiguity and openness to change.

Internal motivation is a quality that allows one to recognise what is personally important in one's life, a joy in doing something, curiosity in learning and a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. Indicators include a strong achievement drive, optimism and a commitment

to organisation.

Empathy is the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people, a skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. Empathetic people tend to be good at intercultural sensitivity and concern, or care or a wish to soften negative

emotions or experiences in others. Indicators are an ability to search for and find common ground and build rapport (Goleman, 2006).

The process of understanding emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) is explained below (Table 1).

Table 1

The process of understanding emotional intelligence

	Awareness of emotions	Management of emotions
Self	Self-awareness	Self-management
Others	Social awareness	Relationship management

In relation to oneself, the key is understanding one's own emotions and feelings. That leads to social awareness of others' feelings and needs. As a result of growing awareness of oneself, one learns to manage one's own emotions and ultimately better manage one's relationship with others. Feelings and expression are very closely linked, so understanding one's own feelings can lead to a better understanding of the right language to use in a response to a situation and a better use of appropriate language to manage situations which might reflect or lead to conflict.

5.2 Social media and 'tweetplomacy'

There are arguments to suggest that in the world of

governance and statecraft the use of political language has changed and, in the opinion of many, coarsened, as much more emotional and even derogatory language has entered politicians' discourse, partly as a result of the increasing use of social media by politicians aiming to reach their public.

There is much discussion as to whether electronic forms of communication can be considered diplomatic. These relatively new forms of communication, such as tweets, emails, blogs and vlogs, may not be seriously considered as official diplomatic correspondence, but they are very influential and the danger is the text can be easily

manipulated for political purposes, if only to maintain public presence and get you and publicise your state's and maybe your opinions. They have become essential means of expressing views on events and a way of communicating with the public.

Known by many as 'tweetplomacy', the media used are Twitter, emails, Facebook posts, blogs and vlogs. The principal Twitter political communicator in the world right now is President Donald Trump of the United States, although he is far from the only one. Trump, however, is notorious for the way he expresses his views directly, emotionally and often quite rudely in making disparaging comments about those he disapproves of, such as 'Sleepy Joe' Biden (Democratic contender for the Presidential Election in 2020), or 'crooked Hillary' (to describe his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, in the 2106 presidential election). Trump also referred to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, as 'a disaster' and 'a national disgrace' in his tweets criticising Khan's difficulties in controlling an outbreak of knife-crime in London, leading to the death and injury of a number of mainly young people. It remains to be seen whether the rise of 'tweetplomacy' will continue or whether there will be a backlash and maybe an attempt by the UN or other agencies to establish norms and styles considered more suitable to diplomatic and governmental online public discourse.

'It remains to be seen whether the rise of 'tweetplomacy' will continue or whether there will be a backlash and maybe an attempt by the UN or other agencies to establish norms and styles considered more suitable to diplomatic and governmental online public discourse'

5.3 A methodology for developing critical awareness of language

What is important in diplomatic language is to avoid emotive language, particularly, adjectives, intensifiers (particularly adverbs), nouns and verbs in favour of more neutral and indirect language, which nevertheless conveys the facts, the seriousness of the situation, the evidence and possible actions and outcomes, without, however, adding insult to injury. So, as a teacher, advising students on how to avoid the use of emotive language in official communication while making your point clearly, how should one proceed? Here are five steps.

RECOGNISE. Select words and phrases from a text (written assignment or reading passage) that contain possibly emotive language. Present it to the students. If it's from a written assignment, don't identify the student who wrote it.

ANALYSE. Analyse the words or phrases. What do they mean? What emotions are they trying to express and with what force?

MANAGE. Ask the group to find alternative words and phrases that express the same sense, but in a more neutral fashion (e.g. instead of *blasted*, use *criticised*, instead of *thwarted*, use *rejected*).

REFLECT. Ask the students what they have learned and as a result what they will do, say (write) and, most importantly, think differently in future in a similar situation.

CRITICAL THINKING. Ask students to bring examples into class of texts where they feel the language is unbalanced with regard to the situation or people described. Ask them to find more neutral words and phrases to use as substitutions.

This is a very valuable exercise in raising critical awareness among intermediate and advanced language students and enabling them to critically evaluate what they read and what they write. Fifteen minutes once a week will have a definite effect on raising critical awareness of language.

6. CONCLUSION

All languages use rhetoric to express feelings and engage their audiences. This paper has chosen examples from Arabic speakers, but could have

‘What is important in diplomatic language is to avoid emotive language in favour of more neutral and indirect language, which nevertheless conveys the facts, the seriousness of the situation, the evidence and possible actions and outcomes, without adding insult to injury’

come from any language community. It has also identified the role of a more neutral and balanced use of language in both national and international situations, especially where observation, critical analysis and balance are important, and explained how the United Nations approach has established norms for international language use for the official languages of the UN. It has also examined a case study of letters responding to a potential international incident drafted by Arabic-speaking students of diplomacy working in English, and has identified the use of emotive language and suggested how it can be modified to offer a more neutral and balanced approach. Finally, the paper has suggested a methodology teachers can use to raise critical awareness and encourage good practice in the drafting of official correspondence. Strong feelings are inevitable and frequently commendable, but balanced delivery is paramount in the maintenance of positive international relations, especially in diplomacy.

References

- Al-Omari, J. (2008). *Understanding the Arab culture: A practical cross-cultural guide to working in the Arab world*. Oxford: How To Books Ltd.
- Barston, R. P. (2014). *Modern diplomacy* (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Cuddihy, K. (2002). *Saudi customs and etiquette*. London: Stacey International.
- Goleman, D. (2006). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Marshall, P. (1997). *Positive diplomacy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Mayer, J. D., & Salovey, P. (1997). What is emotional intelligence? In P. Salovey & D. J. Sluyter (Eds.), *Emotional development and emotional intelligence: Educational implications* (pp. 3-31). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- McLoughlin, L. J. (2008). *Colloquial Arabic*. London: Routledge.
- Nydell, M. K. (2002). *Understanding Arabs: A guide for westerners*. Yarmouth Maine: Intercultural Press.
- United Nations. (2000). *United Nations correspondence manual: A guide to the drafting, processing, and dispatch of official United Nations communications* (Vol. 4). New York, NY: United Nations. Retrieved from <http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/resource/UN-correspondence-manual.pdf>
- United Nations. (2014). *United Nations editorial manual online*. Retrieved from https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Guidelines/United_Nations_Editorial_Manual_Spelling.pdf

Persuasive techniques in advertising

by Irina D. Romanova and Irina V. Smirnova

Irina D. Romanova Moscow Aviation Institute id-vedenina@yandex.ru

Irina V. Smirnova Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) nomeolvides333@yandex.ru

Published in Training, Language and Culture Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 55-70 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.4](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.4)

Recommended citation format: Romanova, I. D., & Smirnova, I. V. (2019). Persuasive techniques in advertising. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 55-70. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.4](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.4)

The article explores persuasive techniques employed in commercial advertising and linguistic devices used to realise them. This study views persuasive techniques as features of rhetoric used for expressing logos, ethos and pathos. Depending on the principle of argumentation employed, the techniques are classified into three groups: those pertaining to logical reasoning (logos), those presenting a positive image of the company (ethos), and those involving the emotional component (pathos). The authors provide a detailed description of the persuasive techniques identified in the course of the research and single out the corresponding linguistic devices. The corpus of materials for the analysis comprises authentic commercials and original scripts of sample advertisements recommended for advertising agencies. Statistical frequency of persuasive techniques is elaborated to identify and describe the universal persuasive technologies used in advertising. Awareness of persuasive techniques improves the quality of advertising that affects the recipient's preferences and attitudes in a subtle way without limiting their freedom. The results of the study will prove useful for those involved in the advertising industry as well as for everyone interested in the issue.

KEYWORDS: persuasion, advertising, argumentation, ethos, logos, pathos, persuasive technique



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the age of consumerism, the role of advertising should not be underestimated, be it in terms of developing business and international relationship, informing the society about new products and services, or drawing attention to crucial social issues. However, many people are critical of advertising as they feel it intrudes on their privacy and coerces them into buying unnecessary things, which is why marketing companies are challenged to convey their message in a subtle way without imposing their products on consumers. Ethically

neutral persuasive techniques that respect the consumer's freedom of choice can be more efficient and elevate the advertising industry to a higher-quality level by making the potential buyer more receptive.

This study aims to identify and describe the most common persuasive techniques used in English-language commercials, classify them in accordance with the principles of argumentation, and analyse the corresponding linguistic devices yielding the most efficient results.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research is conducted within the framework of the lingua-pragmatic approach. The corpus for the analysis comprises a collection of 60 commercials (approximately 5964 words) and original scripts of sample advertisements compiled from the year 2000 onwards and recommended by a voiceover intermediary company *Voices.com* for advertising agencies. Quantitative data analysis provides insights into the occurrence of persuasive techniques in English-language advertising with the results of the study presented in graphs and charts.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Persuasion is a type of social interaction that attempts to influence and change attitudes in an atmosphere of free choice (Perloff, 2017). While persuasion refers to social influence which *'certainly seeks to achieve the goals of a person using it'* (Mulholland, 2003, p. 14), it stands in stark contrast to manipulation or propaganda inasmuch as it is ethically neutral, overt and can be withdrawn.

Research into the notion of persuasion goes back to ancient times when rhetoric gained popularity as the art of speaking. According to Aristotle (1926), rhetoric observes the available means of persuasive argumentation based on three main principles: *logos* pertaining to the rational appeal; *pathos*, or emotional argumentation, used to

'A persuasive technique is a complex set of linguistic tools employed to change attitudes and get responses without openly imposing any ideas on the recipient. In advertising, persuasive techniques are employed not so much to increase sales but rather to build rapport and raise brand awareness'

involve the audience; and *ethos*, or moral argumentation, presenting the speaker as a trustworthy person (Darics & Koller, 2018). Although the division seems clear on the surface, it might prove difficult to establish the boundaries between *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* as in the course of persuasive interaction they overlap and co-exist. This means that the speaker could share their views in support of rational argumentation and build the atmosphere of emotional engagement at the same time (Cockcroft et al., 2014).

A persuasive technique is a complex set of linguistic tools employed to change attitudes and get responses without openly imposing any ideas on the recipient. In advertising, persuasive techniques are employed not so much to increase sales but rather to build rapport and raise brand

awareness. Young (2016) lists five principles of argumentation that are specific to the sales relationship and form the basis for persuasion in advertising:

- demonstrate the company’s awareness and understanding of the consumer’s needs;
- create a friendly and responsive environment to build rapport and demonstrate the responsible attitude to the consumer’s expectations;
- demonstrate professionalism to show that the company is a worthy product or service

provider;

- create a desire to use the advertised product or service;
- provide evidence to explain how the product will benefit the consumer.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1 Classification of persuasive techniques in advertising

The study distinguished 10 persuasive techniques in advertising expressing logos, pathos and ethos (Table 1).

Table 1

Classification of persuasive techniques on the basis of rhetorical principles

LOGOS	ETHOS	PATHOS
Appeal to rationality	Self-representation Appeal to authority	Seeking common ground Personal involvement Appeal to desires/preferences Appeal to state awareness Appeal to time awareness Appeal to benefit Flattery

The corpus subjected to analysis (approximately 5964 words) contains 1014 instances of persuasive techniques of which 82 refer to logos, 128 pertain to ethos and 804 to pathos. The following pie-chart presents their distribution with logos accounting for 8%, ethos for 13% and pathos totally outnumbering

the others with a massive 79% of the sample (Figure 1).

4.2. Persuasive techniques based on rational argument (logos)

Logos corresponds to the use of rational argumentation as a way of reasoning that the

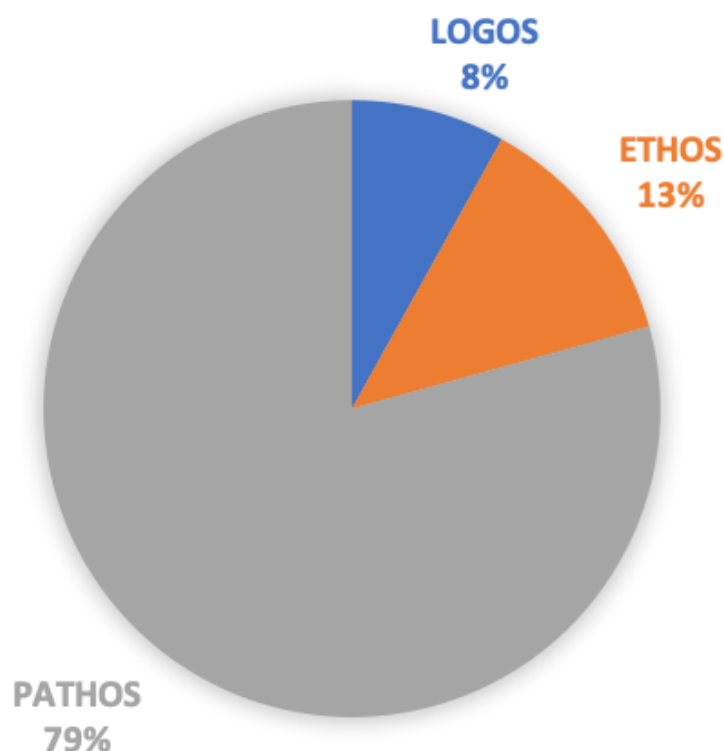


Figure 1. Frequency of occurrence of persuasive techniques referring to logos, ethos and pathos

receiver might accept. Sample analysis demonstrates that the logos-based persuasive technique *appeal to rationality* is explicated through tripling, and qualitative and quantitative signs.

Tripling introduces information in three-point lists which assumes all items are of equivalent value (Darics & Koller, 2018), which equally contributes to the expression of the idea as well as to preserving grammatical and structural integrity. In advertising, tripling expressing logos is used to give reasons while describing the advantages of the advertised product. In terms of cognitive science, three arguments (or four) have proved to

sound more persuasive than two or one. The following advertising letter illustrates cases of tripling.

Dear Reader,
New Business View multimedia magazine.
How do today's business leaders keep up to date without trawling through hundreds of pages of newspapers and magazines? They rely on New Business View – the only digital multimedia magazine to bring you all the latest business news, trends and opinions on one handy, multi-format disk. Subscribe to NBV, and we guarantee you'll never need to buy another magazine! Be the first to know about mergers and takeovers, marketing

trends and management tools. Watch, listen and read, on DVD, in the car, or on your PC. NBV gives you a deeper understanding of the issues that matter, whoever you are, wherever you are and whenever you want. 'Better than an MBA' – NBV is your private briefing from the world's best business specialists. NBV is used by executives in leading companies, large, medium and small, all over the world. Over half of America's top business schools recommend it as part of their programmes. You too can enjoy a better view of the world of business. Subscribe now for twelve months or more and receive three issues totally free of charge. Just fill in the attached form or subscribe online at www.newbusinessview.com.

Sincerely Yours, Jim Bradley

PS Reply within fifteen days and get free access to NBV's new daily podcast! (Allison et al., 2009, p. 66).

Tripling is employed to describe the advantages of the advertised products and the benefits it could give to the potential audience:

There's no need to cut the lawn, shovel the driveway, or climb unnecessary stairs – you'll have more time, more energy, and more life! Those are just three great benefits of living at Green Gables (Voices.com).

Antonio's has fresh seafood, homemade pasta, and signature dishes sure to please, bringing you back

for more (Voices.com).

Our super-integrated technology makes it possible – giving you less weight, more power, more speed and more choice (Cockcroft et al., 2014).

Moreover, tripling often includes information which is able to contribute to positive evaluation of an advertised product:

We created the world's first, full line-up of powerful, portable computers. Because we know from experience that every user has different uses and needs. So, we've designed models ranging from notebook-sized laptops offering the maximum in portability to powerful office portables that are a match for any desktop (Cockcroft et al., 2014, p. 74).

Book discounted airfares, hotels, and your rental car all on our web- site, www.website.com. Website.com... Simple, inexpensive, and fast... Shouldn't everything in life be like this? (Voices.com).

Motivating utterances also sound more persuasive if they are arranged in three-item lists: (a) *Attend keynote speeches, participate in workshops and learn more. This two-day event is only \$300 and your meals throughout the day are included (Voices.com);* (b) *We're looking for musical acts and people to serve on several committees*

working behind the scenes. Come share your time, talent and treasure (Voices.com).

Qualitative and quantitative signs are used to present rational arguments, facts and figures to provide the audience with evidence in favour of the idea. An extract from a car advertisement shows several cases of quantitative signs.

So, here's what you tell the Financial Director. Firstly, the new Saab is a four-door, five-seater, family saloon. Don't mention the integrated aerodynamic skirts, alloy wheels, or exclusive badging. Secondly, inform him there is 23.8 cu. Feet of luggage space in the boot, but omit there's 195 b.h.p. 16-valves, and an all new turbo-charged power unit under the bonnet. Say that's it's quite nippy, and jolly safe when overtaking. But please leave out the 0-60 in 7.5 seconds, forget that it's faster than a Ferrari Mondial from 50 to 70 m. p. h. Oh, and mention the 38.1 m.p.g. Not the 140 m.p.h. (Cockcroft et al., 2014, p. 203)

Quantitative signs are presented in the description of the new Saab (23.8 cu, 195 b.h.p., 16-valves, 0-60 in 7.5 seconds, from 50 to 70 m.p.h., 38.1 m.p.g) which helps the audience understand why the advertised car is a good choice. In addition, the extract presents a case of tripling at the same time: *Firstly, the new Saab is a four-door, five-seater, family saloon. Don't mention the integrated aerodynamic skirts, alloy wheels, or exclusive*

badging.

Qualitative signs can be found in references to names of well-known places, companies, labels, breeds, etc.:

It's finally here! The Cat's Meow Tour has purred its way up to Marsha's Cove. We've got Abyssinians, British Shorthairs, Burmese, Chantilly kittens, Cornish Rexes, some splendid Egyptian Maus, Japanese Bobtails, Maine Coon Cats and many more! Did I mention our Russian Blues, Persians, Ragdolls and Pixie-Bobs? You won't want to miss this fine array of felines. Here's your personal invitation to join us at Bloomers Fairgrounds for an all-day event, from eight to six on Saturday November 12th. The Cat's Meow Tour, at Bloomers Fairgrounds, for one day only. Meooooowwww! (Voices.com).

This piece of text mentions different cat breeds which will be exhibited at the show being advertised. The mention of real characteristics of the upcoming show can provide a fair reason for visiting the place for people interested in cats. Qualitative and quantitative signs can be arranged in tripling sets. Apparently, both means of appeal to rationality are likely to be used within one persuasive text as they work at different levels: grammatical for tripling and lexical for qualitative and quantitative signs. The following examples show more cases of the combined use of tripling

‘Logos corresponds to the use of rational argumentation as a way of reasoning that the receiver might accept’

and qualitative and quantitative signs:

Shelly’s Interiors has a wide array of styles in their portfolio to choose from, including Modern Chic, Urban Elegance, and Rural Escape (Voices.com).

When you plan your honeymoon, don’t just book the first flight to Tahiti... surprise your beloved with an unforgettably romantic getaway to one of the great European capital cities. Experience the finest that Paris, Rome, Madrid, and Athens have to offer (Voices.com).

4.3. Persuasive techniques in advertising based on moral arguments (ethos)

Ethos, which is responsible for the moral aspect of the process of persuasion, is represented by persuasive techniques of *self-representation* and *appeal to authority*. The former pertains to the notion of corporate image which is the perception outsiders have of an organisation. In advertising, this technique aims to present the company as a group of people or a team sharing the same positive attitude to their product or service. This opinion normally sounds trustworthy, what with it being shared by a group of people. Self-

representation is usually expressed by the personal pronoun *we (us)* or the possessive pronoun *our* as in the following examples:

Looking for a new set of wheels but have to trade in your old ones first? Check out Austin’s number one automotive buy and sell online at www.website.com. We’ve got cars of all shapes and sizes listed on the web including vintage cars, family vans, and sports cars! (Voices. com).

We can open doors on your behalf. Whether you want great days and nights out with your friends and family, a bit of peace and quiet before you leave the airport or entrance to an exclusive shopping event, we can make it happen (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 76).

Our super-integrated technology makes it possible – giving you less weight, more power, more speed and more choice. We call them the First Family of Portables. And everyone is as individual as you are. Call in at your local Toshiba dealer and see which portable computer we’ve designed for you (Cockcroft et al., 2014, p. 203).

The other feature which is typical of self-representation is the use of lexis referring to the company’s experience and proficiency:

Business travel at the speed of your fax machine... is that even possible?! Zip around the country in

‘Ethos, which is responsible for the moral aspect of the process of persuasion, is represented by persuasive techniques of self-representation and appeal to authority’

your own personal jet, complete with a licensed pilot and hors d’oeuvres to keep you on top of your game (Voices. com).

Sip on the finest of teas poured by expert servers in traditional kimono and participate in an authentic Japanese Tea Ceremony that you’ll always remember (Voices. com).

If your credit rating is making you and others around you cringe, there’s only one thing to do, and that’s to turn to the professionals at Creative Credit Solutions (Voices. com).

Our team of professionals at Global Transact House and Home will raise and nurture your investments as if they were their very own. We’re very protective of our young! (Voices. com).

The last example illustrates the use of a personal and a possessive pronoun as well as specific lexis for self-representation. Although *we* is normally used by companies for self-presentation, there are cases where the *I* is preferred. This way, the

advertisers present the company as a friend or an advisor who is having a private talk with the potential customer:

The more someone makes you think about your body, the harder it becomes to ignore. Your tongue, for example. Usually, you hardly notice it’s there. But when I mention it, you can feel your tongue bumping against your lower front teeth... See how you can help at selfesteem.dove.co.uk. Dove. Be your beautiful self (Campaignlive.co.uk).

The second technique related to ethos is *appeal to authority*. It also deals with the moral aspect of persuasive argumentation. In this case, information is presented as shared knowledge thus creating the image of a competent and reliable company. From the cognitive perspective, appeal to authority is related to the formula *everybody says U*, which means that something is said as if it is a general truth or quotation (Herman & Oswald, 2014).

This effect is achieved through different ways of establishing authority, such as repetition, impersonal *you* statements, collective nouns, parallel constructions and statements with the formal subjects *there* or *it*:

Girls, I’m going to let you in on a little secret... It’s not what you wear, it’s how you wear it! That’s why shopping at Miranda’s Boutique on Fifth Avenue is so easy! (Voices.com).

People listen to them, they subscribe to them, and they love them... (Voices.com).

The more someone makes you think about your body, the harder it becomes to ignore (Campaignlive.co.uk).

Appeal to authority can also be expressed by direct quotations demonstrating that the advertisement is based on socially recognised statements:

An old Japanese proverb says that if a man has no tea in him, he is incapable of understanding truth and beauty. Suki's Tea Room offers a unique solution to those who seek truth, beauty and a strong cup of tea (Voices.com).

Have you been wondering what your special vocation is?... Take some time to listen to the Lord during 'A Come and See' weekend at St. Peter's Seminary. This weekend of spiritual reflection is open to men seventeen years of age and older... As Jesus said to Peter, 'Feed my sheep'. Are you being called to shepherd God's flock? Come and see (Voices.com).

Appeal to authority is also found when proper names referring to celebrities or other public persons are used:

And finally, whatever you do, don't say the new

CD was partly developed by Erik Carlsson, the legendary rally driver. Just explain that it's wholly favoured by Harry Dobson, the frugal company car manager (Cockcroft et al., 2014, 203).

Appeal to personal experience is another technique which also provides evidence in favour of the idea presented to the recipient. It functions in the following way. The speaker mentions his or her own experience of dealing with the advertised object that has been rather successful, which presupposes that the speaker has good reasons for recommending it to other people. The following example illustrates this technique at work:

Hi, my name is James, and I'm a podcastaholic. It all started with the MP3 player my darling and unsuspecting wife gave me for Christmas last year. First, it was a podcast about fishing. Yeah, fairly harmless, you would think. Then, I branched out into technology, sports, marketing, do it yourself projects, and a podcast about grammar of all things! My palette for this stuff is so acute and I'm learning so much (spoken aside: to the apparent dismay of darling dearest). Well, this year, I suspect she'll not be buying that new video one, but that doesn't mean I can't get it for the kids! Get your MP3 player this holiday season by logging onto www.website.com (Voices.com).

This piece of advertising information is transmitted by an allegedly satisfied customer who introduces

himself at the beginning, tells his story and goes on to share his positive experience of the use of MP3 players. Appeal to authority or personal experience overlap with rational argumentation as evidence given by customers in favour of the advertised product can be referred to rational reasoning.

4.4 Persuasive techniques based on emotional involvement (pathos)

This group comprises 7 techniques each targeting a particular emotional component. Most of the techniques referring to pathos correlate with Brown and Levinson's (2014) politeness universals, as they are aimed at maintaining rapport so that the recipient feels valued and respected, their position acknowledged and their preferences taken into consideration.

Seeking common ground is used to indicate that the recipient belongs to the social group where specific wants, goals and values are shared (Brown & Levinson, 2014, p. 103). This can be achieved by means of colloquial language (or in-group language) and address forms (in advertisements the potential consumer is always addressed as *you*), by contraction and ellipsis, by deixis and indicators of possession. The following examples demonstrate how seeking common ground functions.

Do you wake up every morning and show up looking like your mommy dressed you? You're

nearly a grown man! It's not exactly the image you want to have, is it? Well, mom can scratch that chore off her list when you tell her that you'll be buying your own clothes from now on by yourself at Crawford's Menswear (Voices.com).

This example contains the address form *you* and instances of colloquial language (*mommy, well..*) which reduce the distance between the advertiser and the prospective customer as if they were close friends. The deictic *now* also contributes to claiming common ground as it allows the presenter to include the communicants in the speech event by indicating their special and temporal location.

Ever heard of a podcast? People listen to them, they subscribe to them, and they love them... as a business, doesn't that sound like something that you'd like to be a part of? Well, you can when you hire the podcast pros at Podcast Princess Productions (Voices.com).

In this example, ellipsis creates a friendly atmosphere and serves as an in-group marker.

Girls, I'm going to let you in on a little secret... It's not what you wear, it's how you wear it! (Voices.com).

Here, common ground is stressed by the in-group usage of the address form *girls* indicating that this

piece of advertising information is 'a little secret of us/girls'.

Self-involvement is used to demonstrate the speaker's contribution, which intensifies the interest of the recipient. The advertised company creates an image of a particular speaker, who is likely to be presented as a friend, advisor or a teacher who not so much informs the audience about the advertised product or service but rather gives their evaluation of it and shows their attitude. The company presenting a product in an advertisement aims to describe its performance in a positive light to persuade the audience of the value of their product. Self-involvement can be found in lexis, providing positive evaluation (*powerful office portables, exclusive badging*), contrast or comparative structures intensifying the quality of the advertised product (*food just like mamma used to make*), intensifiers and comparatives, (*most, only, all, at least, very...*), metaphors (*spread your wings in our friendly and tranquil worship environment*), and hyperbole (*within hours, your home will be transformed to reflect your tastes*). Example:

Our team of professionals at Global Transact House and Home will raise and nurture your investments as if they were their very own. We're very protective of our young! (Voices.com).

Appeal to desires is used to point out the possible

preferences the recipient may have and demonstrate that the speaker has taken them into consideration. In advertising, the desires mentioned usually sound general. They point to things which most people would be happy to possess. At the cognitive level, mention of such preferences raises the desire to get them which results in an increased interest in the advertisement itself. Appeal to desires is generally realised with the help of lexis denoting feelings or wants and can be found in questions and clauses of cause:

Poulton's After Dinner Mints. What a ridiculous name! They're not after dinner mints, they're during the morning, after lunch, before going out, while watching TV mints. Whenever you feel like a cool, chocolatey mint, Poulton's are the ones (Rimmer & Vinogradova, 2013, p. 5).

Want a sneak peek of the new Honda CRV Black Edition? (Campaignlive.co.uk)

Flattery is aimed at praising the recipient in order to create a positive environment to introduce the advertised object. Flattery can be found in utterances indicating that the recipient is special for the company:

Here's your personal invitation to join us at Bloomers Fairgrounds for an all-day event, from eight to six on Saturday November 12th

(Voices.com).

We call them the First Family of Portables. And everyone is as individual as you are. Call in at your local Toshiba dealer and see which portable computer we've designed for you (Cockcroft et al., 2014, p. 74).

Appeal to state awareness is also related to the potential consumer's feelings about the received message. This technique makes the recipient aware of a certain state that is considered necessary to understand the transmitted information. The implied state usually creates a positive background for introducing the advertised product:

The more someone makes you think about your body, the harder it becomes to ignore. Your tongue, for example. Usually, you hardly notice it's there. But when I mention it, you can feel your tongue bumping against your lower front teeth. The tip's just resting on them. You notice your tongue feels just a little too long for your mouth. And you notice it never really lies still. You move it about constantly, without thinking about it. Backwards and forwards. And from side to side. Suddenly, it feels strangely wet and heavy in your mouth, doesn't it? A few seconds ago, you hardly noticed your tongue. But just one message ensured you can't stop thinking about it. Now imagine the hundreds of messages girls are exposed to every day, subtly changing the way

they think about their bodies. See how you can help at selfesteem.dove.co.uk. Dove. Be your beautiful self (Campaignlive.co.uk).

This text obtained from the *Campaign* business journal shows that appeal to awareness of one's personal state can be realised by lexis linked to senses or feelings.

Appeal to time awareness aims to motivate the potential customer to respond to the advertisement as soon as possible. To do this, the advertisement points out that there is a reason for acting without delay (for example, a time limit set for a bargain). Drawing the recipient's attention to the necessity of being in a hurry is likely to induce them to react. As for lexical tools, this persuasive technique is achieved through the use of deictic markers of time (*now, today*) and words referring to time (adverbs of frequency, numerals, etc.):

Now is the time to get yourself to Valley View, by car, on foot, or even by air to take advantage of this outrageous sale - you'd better get here quickly, 'cause this promotion is only going on for 24 hours and the automobiles are leaving the lot faster than you can say 4-wheel drive! (Voices. com).

Early bird tickets are selling fast for this Black-Tie event so make sure that you take down this phone number in order to secure your table! Ready? Dial 555-7812 to reserve your table now (Voices. com).

‘Most of the techniques referring to pathos correlate with Brown and Levinson’s (2014) politeness universals, as they are aimed at maintaining rapport so that the recipient feels valued and respected, their position acknowledged and their preferences taken into consideration’

Providing reasons for reacting quickly usually implies that there is a possibility for the recipient to miss their chance:

A limited number of tickets will be available at the door, so order in advance to secure your table and save! (Voices. com).

Spaces are limited! Go online now to www.website.com to reserve your seat or call toll-free to register (Voices.com).

Appeal to benefit is also used to indicate that taking the proposed course of action is in the recipient’s best interest, which increases their emotional involvement. Quantitative signs referring to discounts or other lexical indicators of a special price or conditions serve as means of appealing to benefit:

Always wanted to get your MBA? What’s the hold up? If it’s tuition fees, let me tell ya, do I have a deal for you. At Gerard’s MBA Institute, we’ve just slashed the entrance fee by 50%! (Voices. com).

Call 555-5555 or visit www.website.com for your free sample today (Voices. com).

4.5 Statistics on the use of persuasion techniques in advertising

The bar chart below demonstrates the frequency of the described techniques (Figure 2). Study results show that most of the persuasive techniques identified in the course of the research pertain to pathos, proving that the role of the emotional component is essential to advertising. The bar chart shows that seeking common ground and personal involvement (both rely on pathos) outnumber the other persuasive techniques observed in advertising. The other techniques responsible for emotional involvement (appeal to desires, appeal to time-awareness, appeal to personal experience, flattery, appeal to benefit, appeal to state awareness) are much lower in frequency. The occurrences of self-representation and appeal to authority, corresponding to ethos, are almost equal in number.

5. DISCUSSION

Taking into account the statistics obtained in the course of the analysis it is fair to state that seeking common ground and personal involvement are

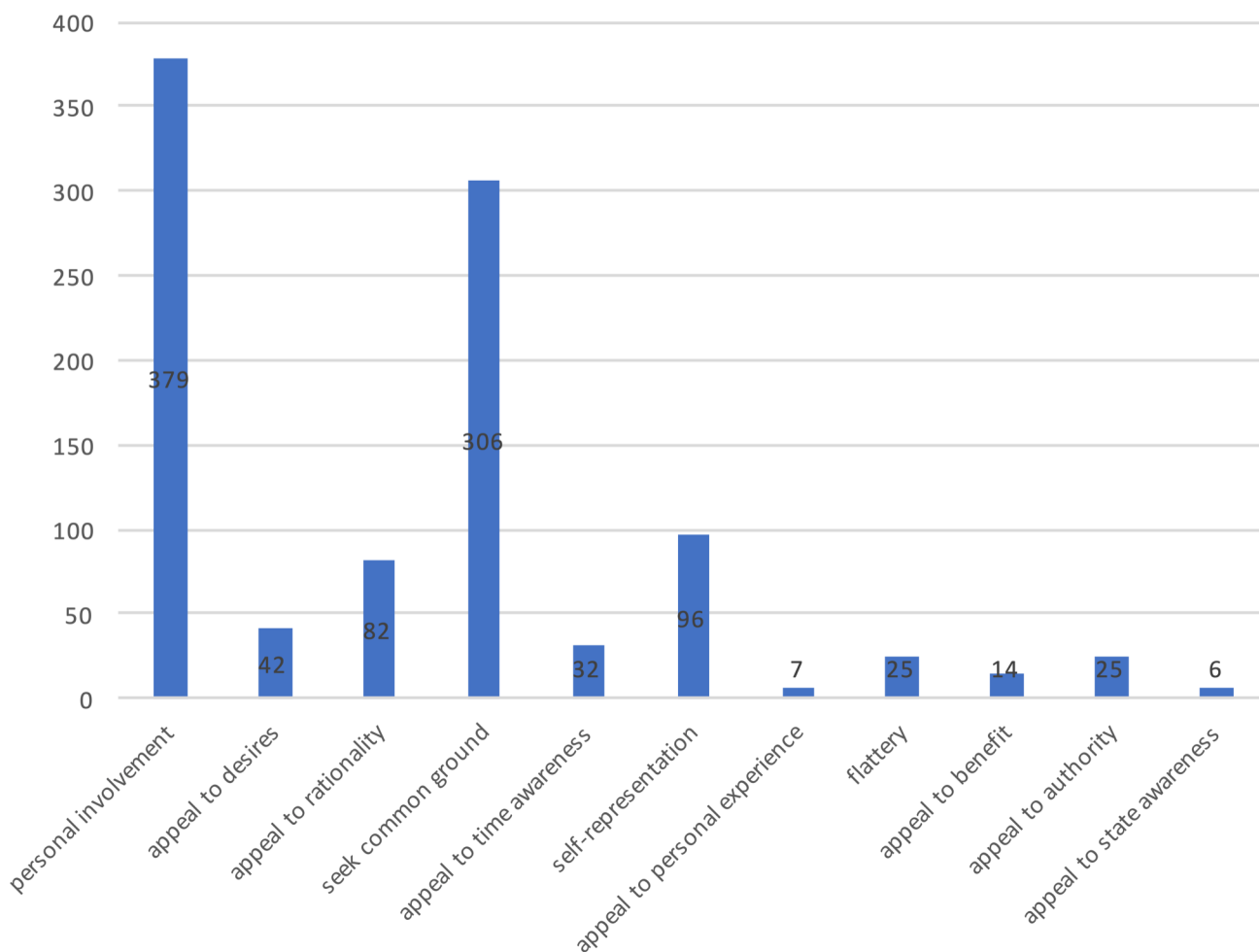


Figure 2. Quantitative representation of persuasive techniques found in commercials

key to most advertisements.

Ethos and pathos usually overlap and are equally employed in persuasive argumentation. The following example demonstrates the use of a combination of persuasive techniques:

We'll get you in. There are some gig, movies, store sale and other events that are just too good to miss. Tell us where you'd like to be and we'll get you in. Going travelling? We'll get you lounge

access, away from the hustle and bustle of the airport (Darics & Koller, 2018, p. 79).

This commercial, advertising an airline, starts with self-representation, seeking common ground and personal involvement techniques using the personal pronoun *we* to present the company, the personal pronoun *you* to address the recipient, and the future tense to give a promise. Both ethos and pathos are involved. The next sentence

illustrated all argumentative principles at work. The construction *there are* expresses appeal to authority, appeal to rationality is expressed through tripling (*some gig, movies, store sale and other events*). These are combined with personal involvement, which creates a positive attitude by means of the comparative '*other events that are just too good to miss*'. The effect of personal involvement is intensified by repetition of the promise '*we'll get you in*' throughout the text. The other technique related to pathos in the commercial analysed is appeal to desires which is expressed in the question '*Going travelling?*', the elliptical character of which also manifests seeking common ground. To achieve the desirable effect in advertising one needs to employ combinations of persuasive techniques maintaining a balance between the ethos, logos or pathos components of argumentation. Linguistic means used to realise the techniques are also important: for instance, tripling should be considered a universal way of presenting ideas due to its ability to combine with other means, for example positive lexis, qualitative signs, the imperative mood, etc.

The effect of persuasive techniques could be different as it largely depends on the appeal to different personal types. The evaluation of advertising can differ for certain individuals. Common ground and personal involvement are universal in this sense as they aim at reducing the distance and creating a positive environment.

Appeal to rationality can be considered an ethically neutral technique used to support logical reasoning. Appeal to benefit and time awareness are found to be the most uneasy techniques in terms of persuasion as they may sound motivating for some people, while others regard this technique as an attempt to coerce them into doing things they didn't intend to do. Appeal to desires is also tricky as its impact depends on the nature of needs and preferences mentioned. Therefore, this technique actually proves effective only if the potential consumer believes that the commercial meets at least some of the needs that are important to them.

6. CONCLUSION

A persuasive technique is described as a complex set of linguistic tools which help change the customer's attitudes and receive their response without imposing on them. A careful analysis of the corpus of materials comprising commercials and sample advertisements allowed to distinguish 10 basic persuasive techniques. Depending on what principle of argumentation is employed (logos, ethos or pathos), the techniques are classified into three groups. As ethos, logos and pathos overlap and co-exist in the course of persuasive interaction, it can be difficult to establish the boundaries between them. To achieve the desirable effect in advertising it is necessary to employ combinations of persuasive techniques to maintain a balance between the ethos, logos or

pathos components of argumentation. To achieve the desired impact, it is also essential to be aware of different types of consumer types. Seeking common ground and personal involvement are

key to most advertisements, while the use of emotional techniques – such as appeal to benefit, desires or time awareness – can differ depending on the type of potential customer.

References

- Allison, J., Townend, J., & Emmerson, P. (2009). *The business: Upper-intermediate student's book*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Aristotle. (1926). *The art of rhetoric* (Vol. 2). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (2014). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cockcroft, R., Cockcroft, S., Hamilton, C., & Hidalgo-Downing, L. (2014). *Persuading people: An introduction to rhetoric*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Darics, E., & Koller, V. (2018). *Language in business, language at work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Herman, T., & Oswald, S. (2014). *Rhetoric and cognition. Theoretical perspectives and persuasive strategies*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.
- Mulholland, J. (2003). *A Handbook of persuasive tactics: A practical language guide*. London, UK: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203420768
- Perloff, R. M. (2017). *The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the twenty-first century* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rimmer, W., & Vinogradova, S. (2013). *Exam success*. Cambridge University Press.
- Young, S. C. (2016). *Brilliant persuasion: Everyday techniques to boost your powers of persuasion*. London: Pearson UK.

Semantics and pragmatics of the double modal 'might could'

by Irina S. Lebedeva and Svetlana N. Orlova

Irina S. Lebedeva Moscow State Linguistic University lebedeva_irina_68@yahoo.com

Svetlana N. Orlova Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) topsv@yandex.ru

Published in Training, Language and Culture Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 71-84 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.5](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.5)

Recommended citation format: Lebedeva, I. S., & Orlova, S. N. (2019). Semantics and pragmatics of the double modal 'might could'. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 71-84. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.5](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.5)

The paper presents an analysis of semantic and pragmatic features of the double modal 'might could' which proves to be the most common of combinations of modal auxiliaries observed in modern English. Although at first glance combinations of two modal verbs might seem to be cases of grammatical distortion, their use is scientifically recognised. The first instances of double modals date back to the seventeenth century. While previous research has focused primarily on formal, pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of double modality, this study aims to describe the functional potential of double modal combinations by looking into the semantics of their components. The distinction between epistemic, deontic and dynamic modalities forms the basis for the analysis. It is generally assumed that in the case of 'might could' the first-tier component is normally used in the epistemic meaning of supposition implying uncertainty, whereas 'could' is either deontic or dynamic. Close analysis of situations where 'might could' was used by native speakers of English enabled us to conclude that although the epistemic value of 'might' prevailed in the majority of the analysed examples, in about one third of them its use was not purely epistemic. With the deontic 'could' the first-tier 'might' was clearly a politeness marker, whereas in the case of the dynamic 'could' it manifested possible lack of commitment. While the double modal is not recognised as standard British or American English, it does exist as a dialectal feature in both Britain and the US, and this article discusses the use of double modals as a popular dialectal variety of English used in regions of the US and Great Britain.

KEYWORDS: modality, double modal, might could, epistemic possibility, tentativeness, unwillingness, sociolinguistics



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

1. INTRODUCTION

Double modality is observed in the southern United States and some regions of the UK such as northern England, Northern Ireland and Scotland where there exist combinations of two modal verbs. Hasty (2012) gives an overview of different double modal forms attested in literature: *might*

could, must can, might oughta, might would, must could, could oughta, might should, may can, should oughta, might can, may could, would oughta, might will, may will, may should. The double modal *might could* is the most commonly used one. Research into the area has been conducted since the 1960s (Labov, 1972; Butters,

1973; Coates, 1983; Boertien, 1986; Di Paolo, 1989; Battistella, 1995; Bigham, 2000; Dickey, 2000; Nagle, 2003; Bernstein, 2003). Formal, pragmatic and sociolinguistic characteristics of double modal combinations have been extensively described so far; however, the semantics of the components still remains understudied, which accounts for the topicality of the present paper.

Although double modality is outside the scope of Standard English and is not addressed in the school syllabus, it is a widespread phenomenon which non-native speakers of English might find confusing and should at least be aware of. For this reason, the topic of the paper is of practical importance for modern English language teaching and learning, particularly in developing reading comprehension.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study presents an analysis of the semantic and pragmatic features of the double modal *might could*. This choice is determined by the fact that double modals with *might* as the first-tier component are by far the most common among other double modal combinations, *might could* being the most frequent of all. The number of double modals subjected to analysis totals 690 tokens. These are instances of double modal combinations obtained from The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), British National Corpus (BYU-BNC), Scottish Corpus of

Texts & Speech (SCOTS), Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE), Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States (LAGS), Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS), Verilogue Corpus, as well as collections of examples and samples of electronic discourse which include brief news items, internet comments, e-mails and blogs covering the period from the 1990s to 2015.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Double modals in the linguistic literature

There exist different views on double modal combinations. Labov (1972) states that first-tier modals formally function as adverbs. Bigham (2000) also asserts that the initial *might* in the combinations *might could*, *might would* and some others appears to be an adverb for a number of reasons.

1. *Might* is never used in the tag of disjunctive questions (the question *I might could get back on time, mightn't I?* should be viewed as ungrammatical), whereas normally modal auxiliaries are allowed to be repeated in the tag, as in *I might get back on time, mightn't I?*
2. In echo questions it is the second modal verb in the pair which is fronted, as in an echo question to the statement *I might could be a Valkyrie for Halloween* would be *Could I might be what for Halloween?* rather than *Might I could be what for Halloween?*

'Although double modality is not addressed in the school syllabus, it is a widespread phenomenon which non-native speakers of English might find confusing and should at least be aware of'

3. The initial modal *might* cannot be preceded by an adverb, similar to two adverbs of the same type that cannot be placed together (the sentence *You probably possibly could get to the dentist on time* is ungrammatical). As the evidence obtained by Biggam (2000) shows, it would be incorrect to say *You possibly might could get there on time*.

According to Boertin (1986), both components in the double modal combination are verbs. Di Paolo (1989) argues that double modals should be thought of as an idiomatic, single lexical item, where both modals appear to be tense-matched (*may can* and *might could*), rather than tense-mixed (*may could* or *might can*). Hasty (2012, p. 10) contradicts this view saying that the first-tier modal, for example *might*, can combine with several other modals (*might could*, *might should*, *might would*), which points to the compositionality of double modal combinations. If the two components were a single lexical item, they would resist separation, but such sentences as *He might probably could help you* or *I might not could go to the store*, where the double modals

are split by an adverb and a negation, suggest that the two components function independently. According to Nagle (2003, p. 350), double modals are usually arrayed in tiers: the first-tier modals (*may*, *might*, *must*) express 'speaker-oriented epistemic possibility', so *must* in *She must can speak Spanish* denotes the speaker's certainty about the person's ability to speak Spanish; the second-tier modals are a more open class and include *can*, *could*, *should*, *will*, *would*. The ordering of the modals closely parallels the ordering of adverbials: 'speaker-oriented' adverbials are always to the left of 'subject-oriented' adverbials.

3.2 Geographical distribution of double modals

Nagle (2003, p. 349) names northern England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the southern United States as the areas of the double modal construction distribution. However, within the United States, evidence suggests, the use of *might could* extends to states outside the South. Feagin (1979) reports occasional usage of *might could* in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, North Dakota, and Nebraska. Di Paolo (1989) adds examples from Utah. Using data from the Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States (LAMSAS), Montgomery (1998) points out that double modals are associated with speakers from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Kentucky, New Jersey, West Virginia, Ohio, and Delaware. LAMSAS evidence does show that double modal

‘Semantics of the double modals may be addressed by considering the range of meanings that have been attributed to modals in general’

combinations occur outside the South. The Verilogue Corpus presenting samples of doctor-patient discourse provides examples attested in Georgia, Massachusetts, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio and Nebraska. Among speakers of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE), double modals are common both within and outside the South (Labov, 1972; Feagin, 1979; Fennell & Butters, 1996). Bernstein (2003, p. 110) notes that some of the combinations are also found among Caribbean creoles (there are territorial differences in the distribution and frequency of double modals; however, *might could* is the most widespread of all double modal combinations, which fact has been attested in all the areas).

3.3 Semantics and pragmatics of double modals

Semantics of the double modals may be addressed by considering the range of meanings that have been attributed to modals in general. If the classification of modalities into deontic, epistemic and dynamic (Palmer, 2001) is taken into consideration, it makes sense to see *I might could do it* as ‘combining a degree of willingness and

ability (dynamic modality) with a degree of uncertainty (epistemic modality); that is, I’m willing to do it, but I’m not sure I have the ability’ (Bernstein, 2003, p. 113). According to Bernstein (2003) a sentence such as *It might could be rape* sounds wrong to native Southerners because it has only epistemic value; it lacks the dynamic function associated with *might could*.

Bigham (2000, p. 5) differentiates between three major semantic types of double modals. The first domain of the double modal meaning is uncertainty. ‘*If a speaker is unsure of the certainty of a statement or the probability/possibility of an action but does not wish to seem simplistic and curt by simply stating that the speaker doesn’t know*’, a double modal can be used. Bigham (2000, p. 6) provides two examples to illustrate the meaning:

- a. *I might could make it up, but I don’t know;*
- b. *Jenny Lee might could sign up, couldn’t she?*

In the first example, the speaker had failed a college course and was being asked by her parents whether or not she would be allowed to repeat the class for a better grade. Later the researcher questioned the speaker on this usage and she explained that while she did not want to lie to her parents, she still wanted to ease their minds so she could continue to receive money from them. The second double modal meaning is that of reducing

force. 'When a speaker wishes to express reluctance to a request or wishes to make a critique without sounding harsh, overstepping personal boundaries, or seeming unyielding' (Bigham, 2000, p. 6), they use a double modal. This semantic type is seen in the following examples:

- a. *I might could stitch, but my hand's been actin' up.*
- b. *He might should study a little harder.*
- c. *Hayden shouldn't oughta be playin' with those lights, should he?*

Example (a) is typical of the reluctance type since it is an indirect response to an indirect question (the researcher asked his grandmother about a Halloween costume). Examples (b) and (c) are typical of the desire to critique while not overstepping personal boundaries (both examples are comments from the speaker to the mother on her parenting skills). The third semantic type is that of remote past. To illustrate this type of meaning Bigham (2000, p. 7) gives an example with *usedta*, regarding it as a semi-modal. In the sentence *You usedta couldn't go shopping after nine* the first modal expresses an extra dimension of remoteness to past events. This example was produced by a clerk at the local 24-hour Walmart about how people's shopping had changed in the past ten years since the store became a 24-hour location. This example would have been meaningless if the

store had opened only last year.

What Bigham (2000) calls semantic types, Mishoe and Montgomery (1994) regard as pragmatic functions of double modals. They single out two of them. One is found in face-to-face conversations, particularly those that take the form of negotiation. The other is observed in conversations where there is a threat to the speaker's 'face' (Goffman, 1959). Brown and Levinson (2014) mention two groups of wants associated with the perception of 'face' – positive face (the desire of positive approval and recognition) and negative face (the desire not to be bothered by someone). Di Paolo (1989) observes that sales assistants would normally use *might could* when they wanted to offer a suggestion that might run counter to their own wishes as a customer. According to Bernstein (2003) who sticks to the same approach, *might could* is a mark of politeness in conversation. It is used so that the listener will not feel threatened by the possible lack of agreement on the part of the speaker.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1 The double modal 'might could' with possibility 'might'

We proceed from the assumption that the first-tier component in the double modal combination *might could* is used in the epistemic meaning of possibility (supposition implying uncertainty). The other is either dynamic or deontic. The nature of the second component (*could*), the type of the

speech act and the setting affect the meaning of *might*.

The first group is the largest of the three mentioned above (76% of the *might could* corpus). Below are samples of spoken discourse where *might* and *could* form a combination of epistemic and dynamic modalities. *Might* expresses epistemic possibility (supposition implying uncertainty).

(1) *'It's an important cause because it's relatable to us girls,' Richardson said. 'Any girl could be diagnosed with breast cancer right now, and if we teenagers get involved in raising money, we might could find a cure.'*

This example comes from a recorded interview with a cheerleader participating in Birmingham's (AL) Race for the Cure – the annual charity race aimed at raising money to help breast cancer patients. The first-tier *might* expresses epistemic possibility, which can be paraphrased as *it is possible that*. *Could* is used in the dynamic meaning of ability and is equivalent to *we will be able to*. Therefore, saying *we might could find a cure* the speaker expresses her uncertainty as to whether it will be possible to find a cure for breast cancer. The two types of modality combined here are epistemic and dynamic.

As for the pragmatic function of the double modal it is used to make a supposition. Since 'epistemic

possibility' presupposes less than 50% of certainty – according to Vince's (2008) estimates, around 30% – the speaker obviously feels rather uncertain about the propositional content conveyed in the utterance.

(2) *He said he had yet to decide how his team/school would use the prize money if it won. 'It's really way more than we would spend in an average year,' Blackerby said. 'The first thing is Justin plays in our faculty game so I'm sure we would get some very nice shoes and uniforms for that. We would obviously share it with our girls program, and I would sit down with our principal and see how we might could help some of the other programs at the school.'*

In example (2) the coach of a school basketball team shares his plans for spending the prize money. There are a few school programmes he is responsible for, so he makes a supposition (*might*) about what could be done (ability) to foster the other school programmes.

(3) *The doctor said that each patient is different. There might be a chance I might could be back for some playoff games, but maybe not at full capacity.*

In this situation, an injured sportsman makes a supposition concerning whether he might be able to participate in some playoff games in case he

'The ordering of the modals closely parallels the ordering of adverbials: 'speaker-oriented' adverbials are always to the left of 'subject-oriented' adverbials'

recovers and is 'at full capacity'.

Of considerable relevance is the context in which the double modal is used: it is preceded by the phrase 'there might be a chance' and is followed by the adverb *maybe*, which suggests still a greater degree of uncertainty and supports the assumption that the first-tier modal *might* is epistemic.

The use of *might could* alongside other means expressing uncertainty, as in (3), is not infrequent.

(4) *If one school can give \$5,000 a year and another \$4,000, hell, that's just the way it is. If they can out-recruit you because of it, maybe the school with the new indoor facility might could out-recruit the other one.*

(5) *I thought that maybe if 'c' were at the top we might could finally get 'm' outside of that triangle. No such luck. One more try!*

(6) *Could be, this here City Man, once he finishes gettin' his folks out, might could go on back, fetch Lottie and her kids...?*

The corpus gives ample evidence for the use of the Perfect Infinitive after the double modal *might could*. In this case the second-tier component *could have done* is used in the dynamic meaning of unrealised possibility.

(7) *'Eli Jenkins did really well,' Clark said. 'We hope to have (Shortell) all ready for the playoff game but still don't know for sure. He might could have went (against SEMO), but wasn't full speed so we held him out.'*

This example was obtained from an interview with a coach whose quarterback, Max Shortell, was not able to perform in a match because of injury. *Might* is used in the meaning of epistemic possibility. As for *could*, it is followed by the perfect infinitive and, therefore, is used in the dynamic meaning of unrealised possibility. The speaker is uncertain as to whether the sportsman would have been able to perform had he not been held out, so the whole sentence can be paraphrased as 'it is possible that he would have been able to perform'. Hence, in (7) epistemic and dynamic modalities are combined and the double modal serves the purpose of making a supposition about a past event.

Below are a few other examples of this kind.

(8) *Brooker says Busey was solid in the role, but other actors may have been more accepted. 'But John Wayne wasn't available,' he said. 'The guy*

who played in 'Gun Smoke' (James Arness), he might could have looked more like him, but Gary Busey picked up on his characteristics, his walk, his gait.'

(9) *Beshear could not afford to have an avowed abuser as the number two man in the Cabinet that oversaw child and spouse abuse. He couldn't have it. He might could have moved him to the Alcoholic Beverages Commission or something like that. But that didn't happen.*

There are instances of *might could* where both modals seem to be epistemic.

(10) *'Ain't that somethin',' I said. 'This piece of paper is worth six thousand dollars.' 'Maybe might could be,' Armando said.*

(11) *'Can they do it on a mass scale, to a whole shipload of people?' 'Might could be. Would require some serious training for the practitioners.'*

(12) *'First time I've thought kindly of rattlesnakes.' 'You think he's still here?' 'Might could be.'*

Our analysis of examples (10), (11) and (12) is based on the assumption made by Coates (1983) that *could* is replacing *might* as the main exponent of epistemic possibility. Although Gresset (2003) doubts that *might* and *could* are strictly synonymous, she supports Coates' (1983) view by

saying that *could* is used 'more and more frequently in apparently epistemic or epistemically-oriented contexts' (Gresset, 2003, p. 82). *Might could* is followed by the notional *be* in all the three sentences, which supports Vince's (2008) evidence that *could* used to describe what is possible is especially common with the notional *be*. Hence, we presume that both modals in the tier in the above-mentioned examples are epistemic and the use of the double modal can be accounted for by the tendency for *could* to appear more and more often in epistemic contexts: the speaker first resorts to *might* and then, advertently (or inadvertently), chooses the more common *could*.

Thus, the double modal *might could* gives evidence for the gradual transition of the initially dynamic *could* into the epistemic equivalent of *might*. Below are a few other examples of this type.

(13) *'Might could be you're right,' Daniel allowed.*

(14) *'I'll bet that's Spanish Jack's brother,' said Morgan softly. He heard his father draw in a quick breath, saw him look upriver at the Spaniard. 'Damn. Might could be. Looks to be a Spanisher.'*

(15) *Might could be I'd find me a friendly Yank on the other side, trade him some tobacco for coffee and sugar and maybe some o' them little hard*

candies they have sometimes.

(16) *It still might could be viewed as a short-sighted move by O'Brien, but the decision is clearly paying off for both quarterbacks.*

(17) *I saw M. Butterfly. I could see what might could be slightly objectionable to some people.*

In most instances of such usage the double modal is found in simple elliptical sentences with the notional *be*, which suggests that the use of *might could* in the epistemic meaning has become conventional: speakers of American English normally use *might could be* to say that something is possible. In this case the semantics of *might could be* is close to the meanings of the adverbs *maybe* and *perhaps*.

(18) *He had a curiously uneven beard, long black hair, and a squirming bundle of arms, legs, fingers, and ears in each hand. When the right-hand burden paused for a moment to shriek, 'Daddy Odo!' Odo recognised it as Dunwin. And when the left-hand burden began crying, Odo recognised Wulfrith's distinctive wail. 'Are they yours?' the stranger repeated. His voice was really quite amazing, Odo thought. 'Well,' he replied cautiously, 'What if they are? I suppose I might could perhaps have seen one of them before.' The stranger was clearly not satisfied with this, but before he could object Odo added, 'Have they*

broken anything?' 'Not of mine,' the stranger said.

In example (18) Odo, the speaker, is asked whether the children, Dunwin and Wulfrith, who must have misbehaved, are his. Wulfrith says 'Daddy Odo', which proves he recognises him, however, Odo is wary of telling the truth. He expresses a high degree of uncertainty. Both verbs seem to be epistemic and are followed by the perfect infinitive (supposition is made about a past event, the speaker sounds highly doubtful or, which is more likely, pretends to be so).

4.2 The double modal 'might could' with disinclined 'might'

This group (6% of the *might could* corpus) comprises examples in which the speaker employs the double modal *might could* to express reluctance to perform an action or to disclaim responsibility for doing/not doing something. Speakers who use *might could* to talk about their ability/disability are often perceived as irresponsible, unreliable or lacking in commitment. Below is an example obtained from the novel *The Prefect Prey* (Andrus, 2011, p. 4).

(1) *Last night the four young women had visited five different clubs. Most were crammed with students from across the Southeast. Allie knew enough students and wanted to meet someone a little older and more mature. Someone totally different. That's what Allie was looking forward to:*

meeting guys who didn't say things like, 'I might could do that,' or 'You seen my new custom Camaro?' She'd only had one serious boyfriend, Tommy McLaughlin, and he'd moved away to go to LSU, then a week later had pictures of a new girlfriend up on Facebook. She didn't even bother to call him to find out what had happened. Allie did hook up with one nice boy from Louisville who was in the counselling psychology program at USM. He had a sweet smile and good, tight body.

Allie, one of the main characters, is in search of a suitable match. However, the girl does not want her potential boyfriend to say 'I might could do that', which suggests that using this double modal cannot be regarded as a person's good point. Furthermore, the girl wants to meet 'someone a little older and more mature', 'someone totally different' from people saying 'I might could do that'. Her perceptions of those whom she considers mature and boys who do say *might could* differ. Moreover, the girl's description of her undesirables suggests that she perceives boys saying 'I might could do that' as unreliable, immature and irresponsible people.

(2) *We might could make the case for that, but wouldn't we be overstating it?*

This example was attested in South Carolina and represents an extract from a student's speech. A student, aged 20, is making a report in front of a

class. Although she admits that making the case for that is possible, she most likely does not see any point in going into detail.

(3) *I might could do that, but that's the prettiest part of the yard.*

This is a conversation between an elderly mother and her son. The son suggests that she plant her trees elsewhere as he plans to make a swing for his children in the place. The mother replies saying she might could do that, but as it is the prettiest part of the yard and the trees will not look so good in a different place, she is unwilling to agree.

(4) *Dena Dalton handles those accounts. I might could help you, but I would rather have her call you.*

A bank clerk is talking to a client. The clerk admits he could (ability) help the client but is unwilling to do so because it is Dena Dalton's job. The use of *might* signals the expression of reluctance in the utterance.

(5) *'I think everybody knows that I'm leaning toward running for chairman,' Strong said Thursday. 'Nothing against Mike Gillespie. I'm just interested in that job and some things that might could be done through that job.'*

In (5) a candidate for the chairman's position

perceives his primary aim in case he gets elected as 'to do some things'. The use of *some* and *might could* makes the speaker sound unconvincing and uncommitted, because he is speaking in too uncertain terms.

4.3 The double modal 'might could' with tentative 'might'

Quirk et al. (1995) point out that epistemic *might* can be used tentatively in requests, directives and in expressions of opinion to add a note of politeness. In our corpus we found instances of *might could* combinations with the so-called tentative *might* (18% of the corpus), which were used in the speech acts mentioned by Quirk et al. (1995) as well as in suggestions and refusals.

Below are a few representative examples of *might could* where *might* imparts tentativeness to the utterance.

(1) 'Well how do you think you'll get in?' I just looked at her and said, 'I wondered if you might could arrange that, Ms. Tilley.'

Analysing this example, we proceeded from the assumption that the conventional 'I wondered if...' suggests that the utterance is a polite request. *Might could* has become a common way of making a request where *could* expresses deontic modality (requesting) and *might* is a politeness marker (it attends to the interlocutor's negative face – the desire to be free from imposition (Brown

& Levinson, 2014). The Distance (D) between the speakers in this situation is long, the speaker's Status (P) – Subordinate.

(2) 'I thought you might could do it a little different this time. I'm tired of this same old look.'

This is a conversation between the client (P+, D+) and her hairdresser (P-, D+). A woman in her forties wants to have a new haircut and addresses the hairdresser with this request. This example is similar to (1): epistemic *might* used as a marker of politeness is followed by deontic *could*. The only observed difference is the perceived P-variable: in (2) the female speaker is Superior.

(3) 'You might could try Don's Hobbies down on Park [Avenue].'

In this situation the sales assistant (P-, D+) fails to find what the customer (P+, D+) needs and suggests that he visit another store. *Might* is used in the epistemic meaning (supposition implying uncertainty), whereas *could* is deontic (suggesting).

It is a case of unequal communication where the clerk occupies the subordinate position. Due to his lower status and inability to meet the customer's needs, the sales assistant resorts to politeness to mitigate imposition (Rx – the rank of imposition) (Brown & Levinson, 2014).

(4) *Despite all the disciplinary incidents, Winston was suspended just once – sitting out the 2014 Clemson game after shouting an obscenity in a crowded area of campus. Nevertheless, Bowden said Fisher treated a star player like Winston ‘like most coaches would.’ ‘There would be some that would be strict,’ Bowden said. ‘He might could have been suspended a little bit more for his actions. But Jim is faced with what all coaches are faced, and that is having a great player, and trying to save him through problems.’*

Example (4) presents an expression of opinion. A coach is trying to help a notorious sportsman resolve problems. The speaker, another coach who calls the sportsman an ‘*embarrassment to Florida State*’, shows his disapproval of Winston.

In directives and requests the double modal *might could* is often used alongside other politeness devices.

(5) *Describing the Village Tavern’s vinaigrette as ‘very light with just the right amount of tartness and sweetness,’ Kitty Robinson e-mailed to inquire, ‘Do you think you might could get the recipe?’*

(6) *Commissioner McMurrian: Thank you. And I guess I was actually going to follow up on some of the things that Commissioner Edgar said and follow along that line of thought. But given that comment, I was hoping Ms. Gervasi might could*

speak to that.

(7) *Good afternoon Mr. Peavy last year you were so generous as to send the letter notifying Ag teachers in Georgia of our Open House event. I was wondering if I might could get you to forward the letter for this year’s event to your Ag teacher list serve? Hope to see you later.*

(8) *‘Just out?’ he half mimicked. ‘Out where? You think you might could tell me?’*

Due to the high Rank of imposition (Rx) (Brown & Levinson, 2014) inherent in directives and requests. the politeness markers observed in (5), (6), (7) and (8) serve to increase the manifested degree of politeness.

It is assumed that physicians tend to use double modals at large. Hasty’s (2012) sociolinguistic analysis conducted in the US South reveals that double modals are favoured by experienced doctors, especially women. Patient-doctor interaction is a reliable source of instances of tentative *might* used to reduce the Rx of directives. Patient-doctor interaction is a clear case of unequal communication where the physician is the one who gives directives, yet it is the patient who is perceived as the powerful speaker (P+, D+).

(9) *You might could try and see if you want to try a*

little bit of that and see how it does for you.

(10) *Another thing we might could have on is the Neurontin.*

5. CONCLUSION

The double modal *might could* consists of two modal components arrayed in a tier. *Might* is used in the meaning of epistemic possibility (supposition implying uncertainty), the other component – the modal verb *could* – is either dynamic or deontic. With dynamic *could* the modal verb *might* is used to express either a high degree of uncertainty or the speaker's reluctance or unwillingness to perform an action. In opinions, suggestions, requests, refusals, and directives *might* is perceived as a politeness marker and is used alongside other politeness devices. The speaker's decisions concerning the necessary degree of politeness (the number of politeness means which apply) depend on the situation.

References

- Andrus, J. (2011). *The perfect prey*. New York, NY: Kensington Publishing.
- Battistella, E. L. (1995). The syntax of the double modal construction. *Linguistica Atlantica*, 17, 19-44.
- Bernstein, C. (2003). Grammatical features of southern speech: yall, might could, and fixin to. In S. Nagle & S. Sanders (Eds.), *English in the southern United States* (pp. 106-118). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bigham, D. (2000). What 'might' might could be in 'might could': The case of double modals in Appalachian English. Retrieved from <http://dsbigham.net/files/LINGLUNCH-paper.pdf>
- Boertien, H. (1986). Constituent structure of double modals. In M. Montgomery & G. Bailey (Eds.), *Language variety in the South: Perspectives in*

The double modal *might could* occurs in highly informal environments which are characterised by the use of lexical items belonging to the informal register, exorbitant use of interjections, hedging devices and frequent occurrences of ellipsis, as well as elements of informal or non-standard grammar including the informal use of *there's* with plural nouns, the use of the non-standard *ain't*, double negation, incorrect usage of pronouns, wrong verb forms, incorrect word order (including the direct word order in questions).

Although the use of double modality displays lots of territorial variation, *might could* is common in all the areas where instances of double modals have been attested. The epistemic value of *might* depends largely on the environment (the meaning of the second-tier *could* and contextual features). Perceptions of *might* by recipients vary and depend largely on the setting (the situation, its pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects).

- black and white* (pp. 294-318). Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Brown P., & Levinson, S. (2014). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Butters, R. (1973). Acceptability judgments for double modals in Southern dialects. In G. Bailey & R. Shuy (Eds.), *New ways of analyzing variation in linguistics* (pp. 276-286). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Coates, J. (1983). *The semantics of the modal auxiliaries*. London: Croom Helm.
- Dickey, M. W. (2000). A Midwestern double modal. *Chicago Linguistic Society*, 36, 207-221.
- Di Paolo, M. (1989). Double modals as single lexical items. *American Speech*, 64, 195-224.
- Feagin, C. (1979). Modality: Double modals and liketa. In C. Feagin (Ed.), *Variation and change in Alabama English: A sociolinguistic study of the white community* (pp. 151-175). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Fennell, B., & Butters, R. (1996). Historical and contemporary distribution of double modals. In E. Schneider (Ed.), *Focus on the USA* (pp. 265-290). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Garden city.
- Gresset, S. (2003). Towards a contextual micro-analysis of the non-equivalence of might and could. In R. Facchinetti, M. Krug & F. Palmer (Eds.), *Modality in contemporary English* (pp. 81-99). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hasty, J. D. (2012). We might should oughta take a second look at this: A syntactic re-analysis of double modals in Southern United States English. *Lingua*, 122(14), 1716-1738. doi: [10.1016/j.lingua.2012.09.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2012.09.005)
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mishoe, M., & Montgomery, M. (1994). The pragmatics of multiple modals in North and South Carolina. *American Speech*, 60, 3-29.
- Montgomery, M. (1998). Multiple modals in LAGS and LAMSAS. In M. Montgomery & T. Nunnally (Eds.), *From the gulf states and beyond: The legacy of Lee Pederson and LAGS* (pp. 90-122). Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Nagle, S. (2003). Double modals in the southern United States: Syntactic structure or syntactic structures? In R. Facchinetti, M. Krug & F. Palmer (Eds.), *Modality in contemporary English* (pp. 349-370). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Palmer, F. (2001). *Mood and modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1995). *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman.
- Vince, M. (2008). *Macmillan English grammar in context (advanced)*. Oxford: Macmillan.

Hedging in different types of discourse

by Tatiana I. Gribanova and Tamara M. Gaidukova

Tatiana I. Gribanova University of Northern Iowa tigribanova65@yandex.ru

Tamara M. Gaidukova Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University) tom062006@yandex.ru

Published in Training, Language and Culture Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 85-99 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.6](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.6)

Recommended citation format: Gribanova, T. I., & Gaidukova, T. M. (2019). Hedging in different types of discourse. *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 85-99. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.6](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.6)

The article describes discourse features of some of the most common hedges observed in modern English and explores their communicative impact on the utterance. The authors apply Prince et al.'s (1982) classification of hedges into approximators (modify the propositional content conveyed in the utterance) and shields (modify the truth value of the utterance) to analyse hedging behaviour in two discourse genres: the interview and political speeches. The paper aims to identify the most common types of hedges used in the two types of discourse, explore their structural types and pragmatic features, and account for their usage in the two types of discourse. The study is conducted within the framework of contemporary linguistics, such as functional grammar, pragmatics and comparative analysis. The authors make inferences about the nature of hedging, key features of hedges and their discourse-marked specifics.

KEYWORDS: hedging, political speech, interview, approximator, adaptor, rounder, plausibility shield, attribution shield



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with hedging, a phenomenon widely used by native speakers of English in everyday conversation and writing. Despite considerable theoretical research on hedging which has been conducted since it became the topic of linguistic study in the 1960s (Lakoff, 1973; Prince et al., 1982; Crismore & Vande Kopple, 1997, 1999; Crompton, 1997; Cabanes, 2007; Caffi, 2007; Fraser, 2010; Brown & Levinson, 2014) the nature of hedging, classes of hedges, their pragmatics and discourse features remain understudied. Moreover, discourse-marked specifics of hedging behaviour are left outside the

scope of most investigations of modern English.

The practical value of the research is that it provides insight into the use of hedges in two different discourse genres which differ in their primary purposes and the degree of spontaneity: the interview (spontaneous, informal) and political speeches (planned, formal). Appropriate hedging behaviour requires awareness of the functions of hedges and structural patterns they are used in. When non-native speakers fail to hedge correctly, they may be perceived as impolite, offensive, or arrogant. If they misinterpret a hedged utterance, they may misunderstand the interlocutor's

intention. Hedging is part of the target culture that foreign speakers and language learners should be aware of. This article aims to study the frequency of hedges in the two discourse types, their collocability and pragmatic functions.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The analysis focuses on the two categories of hedges, approximators and shields (Prince et al., 1982), in interviews of British celebrities and in political public speeches of British Prime Ministers (2000-2013). The choice of the sources of material was determined by the differences in the communicative purpose, degree of formality and spontaneity of the two genres, which makes the study of hedging discourse oriented. Among the methods used for linguistic assessment of the corpus data are quantitative and comparative analyses. The sources of material subjected to investigation comprise authentic scripts of interviews with British actors, singers, musicians, TV-hosts as well as political public speeches by British Prime Ministers, obtained from the BBC, the Guardian and the Independent.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Research history

Research on hedging first appeared in the 1960s in the field of logic and philosophy. Later researchers focused on the semantic and pragmatic features of hedges. The term '*hedge*' in linguistics was introduced by Lakoff (1972, p. 195) who defined

the phenomenon as a means to make things '*fuzzier or less fuzzy*'. This view was further developed in the works by Prince et al. (1982), Crismore (1990), Fraser (2010), Crismore and Vande Kopple (1997, 1999), Caffi (1999), Brown and Levinson (2014), and others.

Although Lakoff (1972) understood hedging widely as both reinforcement and attenuation of the propositional content, today hedges are treated differently with their reinforcement aspect being laid aside. Hosman (1989) studied the interactive effects of intensifiers and hedges in speech and concluded that hedges have an influence on perceptions of attractiveness and credibility, while intensifiers do not. This is, probably, the main difference between these two notions. Hübler (1983) in the book *Understatements and Hedges in English* shows the difference between the notions of '*hedge*' and '*understatement*'. In his view, understatement deals with the propositional content of the sentence, whereas hedging focuses on the speaker's attitude to the situation. To prove his point of view he suggests the following examples:

- a. *It is a bit cold here.*
- b. *It is cold in Alaska, I suppose.*

According to Hübler (1983), (a) contains an understatement, while (b) is a hedge because it pertains to the speaker's attitude.

‘Hedging is part of the target culture that foreign speakers and language learners should be aware of’

3.2 Classifications of hedges

The notion of hedging is a controversial issue in linguistics. Classifications of hedges are numerous and often display noticeable differences. This may be because the underlying principles of research on hedging are different. Researchers view hedges from different perspectives, and different variables are taken into consideration in classifying them. Moreover, the classes of hedges subjected to analysis may vary considerably. For example, Lakoff (1972) focused on propositional hedging, Fraser (1975) considered performative verb hedging, and Brown and Levinson (2014) investigated the speech act aspect of hedging, describing hedges in terms of politeness strategies.

A multidimensional approach was introduced by Prince et al. (1982). Relying on the conclusions made in earlier studies, the scholars suggested that hedges should be divided into two major classes – approximators and shields. The first class (approximators) hedge the propositional content and may be further subdivided into adaptors and rounders. Adaptors, such as *somewhat, kind of, sort of, some, a little bit*, apply to class membership and contribute to the interpretation of

the utterance. Rounders, such as *about, approximately, something, around*, indicate a range, within which a notion is approximated. The other major class (shields) pertain to the degree of uncertainty about the propositional content that the speaker expresses and may reflect the extent of their involvement. These hedges fall into two groups: plausibility shields and attribution shields. Plausibility shields, such as *I think, probably, I take it, as far as I can tell, I have to believe right now, I don't see that* convey the speaker's uncertainty, doubt about what is being said. The other subclass – attribution shields – comprises expressions contributing to the truth value of the proposition, as in *according to, presumably, at least, to somebody's knowledge*, etc. They often make mention of the source of information.

Prince et al.'s (1982) distinction of hedges into approximators and shields is often criticised as purely theoretical. Skelton (1988) points out that this classification is sustainable only in the abstract. He believes that approximators could easily function as shields.

To illustrate this, he offers the phrase, *'It's made of something like rock'* claiming that *something like* here is an approximator as it makes the context fuzzier. But if we use *I suspect* in the same phrase it will be regarded as a shield. On the whole, shields are more frequent in speech and can extend over more than one sentence.

Salager-Meyer (1995) includes the following classes of words in the taxonomy of hedging devices.

1. Shields: *can, could, may, might, would, to appear, to seem, probably, to suggest*.
2. Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time: *approximately, roughly, about, often, occasionally, etc.*
3. Hedges expressing personal doubt and direct involvement: *I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, etc.*
4. Emotionally charged intensifiers: *extremely difficult/interesting, of particular importance, unexpectedly, surprisingly, etc.*
5. Compound hedges: *could be suggested, would seem likely, would seem somewhat, etc.*

Salager-Meyer (1995) includes intensifiers in the class of hedges and analyses the frequency of their occurrence and distribution in different genres. Her findings suggest that case reports and research papers contain fewer hedges than editorials, and in reviews the use of the passive voice is one of the most common hedging devices.

Caffi (1999, 2007) in the course of the research on *mitigation* – which is defined as either lessening

the intensity or force of something unpleasant or attenuation of the possible unfortunate effects on the recipient – introduces another classification of mitigating mechanisms singling out three major types: bushes, hedges and shields. *Bushes* are expressions that aim to reduce the precision of the propositional context and, as the result, affect the truth value of a proposition. *Hedges* are expressions that affect the emotive and relational aspects and reduce the degree of the speaker's commitment. Finally, *shields* are devices used to avoid personal self-ascription and disclaim responsibility, for example by assigning it to a different speaker. Caffi's (1999, 2007) mitigators resemble Prince et al.'s (1982) hedges, although the labels are applied differently.

Chan and Tan (2009) elaborate on Salager-Meyer's (1995) theory. According to their linguistic investigation, all hedges can be grouped into: adverbials (e.g. *approximately*); epistemic verbs (e.g. *suggest, seem, appear*); modal verbs (e.g. *may, can, would*); cognition verbs (e.g. *believe, suppose, think, surmise*); hypothetical constructions (*if*-clauses + adjectives, adverbs, nouns expressing modality); anticipatory *it*-clauses and *there is/are*.

Crompton (1997, p. 280) suggests another typology of hedges: copulas, other than *be* (e.g. *The result appears to be that...*); lexical verbs (e.g. *The result suggests that...*); modal verbs (e.g. *The*

result might be that...); probability adverbs (e.g. *The result possibly is that...*); probability adjectives (e.g. *It is possible that the result...*).

3.3 Functions of hedges

The controversial character of hedging has brought about a great diversity of views of the functional aspect of hedges. There is no consensus among linguists concerning the purposes of hedging either. Lakoff (1972) mentions two reasons why hedges are used in the first place: to express uncertainty or to soften the speech to be polite. Prince et al. (1982) and Skelton (1988) believe that the main function of hedges is to convey information in an unobtrusive and unostentatious way. Crystal (1987) explains the use of hedges by the speaker's intention not to be precise, avoid further questions and their unwillingness to tell the truth. According to Salager-Meyer (1994, 1995), explicit expression of facts, opinions, information or claims might not seem very appropriate, even impolite in many situations. Besides, hedging allows speakers to present information and report research results to the audience in a more precise way: *'Hedging may present the strongest claim a careful researcher can make'* (Salager-Meyer, 1994, p. 151). Brown and Levinson (2014), Cabanes (2007) and Fraser (2010) consider hedges in terms of positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness strategies minimise the threat to the hearer's positive face, make them feel satisfied, valued and relaxed, whereas negative politeness

'The controversial character of hedging has brought about a great diversity of views of the functional aspect of hedges. There is no consensus among linguists concerning the purposes of hedging either'

strategies serve to mitigate the effect the utterance may produce on the recipient, especially if the rank of imposition the utterance conveys is high, make it more tentative and less impinging. What all researchers agree upon is that hedges are discourse features which functions may succinctly be described as follows: they contribute to precision, politeness and attenuate the negative imposition.

4. STUDY AND RESULTS

4.1 Approximators: Adaptors

This study aims to explore speakers' hedging behaviour in interviews and political public speeches, two genres representing oral discourse. The interview is characterised by a relatively high degree of spontaneity and instantaneous decision making because in the majority of cases the interviewee cannot even predict what questions they will be asked. Besides the interviewee is likely to receive loaded or inconvenient questions to which they may have difficulty in finding an answer. Political public speeches, by contrast, are

generally prepared in advance. They are expected to be well-organised and strategically planned to satisfy the goals set by the speaker. Yet, they also allow for a certain degree of spontaneity, primarily due to the unexpected character of the audience's reaction. Political public speeches are usually referred to as quasi-spontaneous discourse genres.

Since the class of hedges is vast and displays great diversity, we have chosen the most frequently occurring items for our analysis. According to Prince et al. (1982), the most frequently used adaptors are *sort of*, *kind of*, *a little bit* and *somewhat*. These are hedges that affect the truth value of the proposition, make it less representative, thus attenuating its imposition.

4.1.1 Adaptors in the interview

Since the interview involves a lot of spontaneity, speakers tend to use many hedges to mitigate the imposition of their utterances and sound less categorical. Quantitative comparison of *kind of* and *sort of* (the most common adaptors) allowed us to conclude that during the interview speakers tend to use *kind of* more frequently than *sort of* (57% and 43% correspondingly), although it is noteworthy that this difference is not considerable.

Kind of and *sort of* may modify various parts of speech and are normally used in pre-position to the modified item. The most commonly used distribution pattern for *sort of* is *sort of* + verb

'What all researchers agree upon is that hedges are discourse features which functions may succinctly be described as follows: they contribute to precision, politeness and attenuate the negative imposition'

(58%), reporting verbs being the most frequent class, as in:

(1) *You sort of think: 'Oh Christ, I'm going to have to just let go of the expectation and just play the part and try be as truthful about who I feel April is as I possibly can be.'*

(2) *We played it on a tape cassette, and he just sort of said <...>*

In 25% of instances of *sort of* it was followed by a noun or a noun phrase: *sort of* + noun/noun phrase, as in:

(3) *It was sort of a solo flight.*

(4) *But I did study Shakespeare, that was sort of my thing.*

The pattern *sort of* + adjective was encountered in

17% of cases, as in:

(5) *I work with new people all the time and in different places, and it can be quite disorienting and so it's sort of nice to be working with the same person again.*

The adaptor *kind of* is used in the interview in a similar way. The most common pattern found in the corpus is *kind of* + verb (45%). Interestingly, verbs preceded by *kind of* in our interview corpus either belong to the informal register and/or are emphatic, as in:

(6) *I had to kind of bang on people's doors for it to get made, so it was interesting.*

(7) *Sam wants to give Charlie the perfect first kiss because her first kiss kind of sucked.*

This is a notable difference, bearing in mind that *sort of* modified primarily reporting verbs.

In 29% of the *kind of* corpus, it preceded a noun or a noun phrase (*kind of* + noun/noun phrase), as in this example:

(8) *<...> as opposed to kind of a failure of what she wanted him to be.*

Kind of may also modify adjectives (19.5%), as in this example:

(9) *'Penny Lane' was kind of nostalgic, but it was really a place that John and I knew <...>*

Occasionally, *kind of* and *sort of* were used as hesitation fillers which allowed the speaker to find the right word in case they felt doubtful or had to search for words, or have not come up with an idea, as in:

(10) *I don't think victims are particularly attractive, in kind of as a character trait, you know?*

(11) *So, it's sort of – it's a fabulous way to get into character. If you've got such an extreme costume <...>*

Instances of *kind of* modifying clauses were observed in 6.5% of the *kind of* corpus (*kind of* + subordinate clause):

(12) *I think that's kind of how most people do this stuff.*

No such examples were found for *sort of*, which suggests that this hedge can hardly modify clauses.

Despite Prince et al.'s (1982) evidence for the most frequently used adaptors being *sort of*, *kind of*, *a little bit* and *somewhat*, our analysis shows that this hedge is infrequent in the interview examples. There were only eleven occurrences of *a little bit* in the ten interviews analysed. The structural

patterns observed in the case of *a little bit* are as follows:

A little bit + adjective (39%):

(13) *I was a little bit nervous to the point that Beryl was offering so many cups of tea and biscuits to me that I think she thought she was playing Mrs. Hudson.*

A little bit + adverb (30%):

(14) *But I would find moments throughout playing April and Hanna where I would understand them a little bit more as time went by.*

Verb + *a little bit* (31%):

(15) *If I watch an actor doing something like that, at a certain point I think you start to switch off a little bit and tune out.*

A little bit in the hedging function was used in the preceding position to adjectives and adverbs, and in post-position to verbs. No considerable differences were observed in the occurrence rate of *a little bit* with different parts of speech.

The results obtained in the course of the analysis of interviews with British celebrities point to a high frequency of *sort of* and *kind of* in the hedging function. *A little bit* was rare. No instances of *somewhat* were registered.

Several situations where *almost* seemed to function as an adaptor were found in the corpus. It modified the propositional meaning of adjectives and verbs and was used in the preceding position:

(16) *He can smell the dwarves, and he knows there's something else going on the mountainside. He's almost telepathic.*

(17) *There's so many teenage TV series and movies and whatever else, that it's kind of a subject matter people almost hate to hear.*

4.1.2 Adaptors in political public speeches

None of the above adaptors (*kind of*, *sort of*, *a little bit*, *somewhat*) was observed in the corpus subjected to analysis. This can be because any modification of the propositional content with the aim of making it sound fuzzy or vague in political public speeches will produce an undesirable effect of being perceived as an unreliable person by the public. The purpose of hedging runs counter to the requirements set for politicians. Apart from a variety of other requirements, they need to sound confident and knowledgeable and avoid evasive statements.

4.2 Approximators: Rounders

Rounders represent a class of hedges which modify the propositional content presented in figures, statistics, deictic markers of time and measurements. They are normally used when the

exact or precise information is of no importance to the speaker. Among the most common rounders in Prince et al.'s (1982) classification are *almost*, *about*, *approximately* and *something between*.

4.2.1 Rounders in the interview

Rounders such as *almost*, *about*, *approximately*, *something between* were attested in the corpus of interviews with British celebrities, however, they were infrequent. The interview rarely contains much statistical data in the first place, which makes rounders somewhat unnecessary. Of the four rounders attested in the interview corpus, the hedge *almost* was the most common (72%). *Almost* used as a rounder normally modifies nouns (76%) and adverbs (24%), as in:

(18) *It was almost a week, 5 days that we were in that green orangery thing, a lovely conservatory near Bristol.*

(19) *And it seems that, when you read about Lili's story, she would blend almost immediately in the world.*

The pattern *almost* + *like* + (*numeral* + *noun*) + *gerund* was frequently used in the interview with the meaning 'similar to', as in:

(20) *Almost like two magnets repelling each other.*

(21) *<...> it became almost like doing a one man*

show to the most surreal audience of people you know.

However, it remains unclear whether *almost* functions as an adaptor or a rounder here. Such cases of ambiguity are not infrequent, which proves it was not for nothing that Prince et al.'s (1982) classification of approximators into adaptors and rounders came in for severe criticism.

The rounder *about* is considerably less frequent (28%) than *almost*. It is used to modify nouns and noun phrases (usually numbers and measurements):

(22) *About 6 weeks ago, I travelled to Edmonton Alberta to show Connor the movie at his hospital.*

(23) *About a third of them were given to me by <...>*

No instances of *approximately* and *something between* were found in the interview corpus.

4.2.2 Rounders in political speeches

According to Wardhaugh (2010), hedges are typical of colloquial spontaneous speech which means that they are hardly ever used in political public speeches that belong to quasi-spontaneous discourse types and are traditionally planned in advance. However, the analysis conducted on our

corpus proves the opposite: politicians often use rounders to hedge utterances which contain statistics pertaining to the issue discussed. Information supported by statistical data is usually perceived by the recipient as highly reliable, and therefore sounds more convincing to them.

However, everyone understands that exact numbers are of no interest to the public. Few of them are going to assess the information presented for their attention. Moreover, hedging allows speakers to disclaim responsibility for what is being said and convey information in an unostentatious way. Among the most common rounders (approximators of degree) are *almost*, *about*, *roughly*, *approximately*, *nearly*, etc.

In our corpus comprising political public speeches *almost* (53%) and *nearly* (40%) were rather frequent, while *about* turned out less common (7%). The most common pattern for *almost* was *almost* + numeral + noun/noun phrase (62, 5%):

(24) *Leave aside that almost two mln children are brought up in households where no one works.*

The other two patterns observed are noticeably less frequent. *Almost* modified adjectives (19%) and adverbs (18,5%) (*almost* + adjective):

(25) *It seems almost impossible to believe now, that so recently, the T& G were mulcted for*

£50,000 by an Order of the Court.

(26) *But despite all of them, I believe there is in every Conference a general will that seems to emerge almost unknowingly to set its own objectives.*

In (25) and (26), the function of *almost* is closer to that of adaptors rather than rounders, i.e. *almost* influences the truth value of the proposition attenuating its force.

The rounder *nearly*, which is semantically equivalent to *almost*, modified only nouns and noun groups (usually numbers and measurements):

(27) *Nearly a third of your income of £37 million comes from private individuals and companies and we would like to thank them very much indeed.*

The rounder *about* always preceded statistical data presented in figures:

(28) *The £2.5bn Pupil Premium that I first wrote about 10 years ago.*

The rounders *approximately* and *roughly* were not found in the political speeches analysed.

4.3 Shields: Plausibility shields

Shields unlike approximators do not affect the truth value of the propositional content conveyed

in the utterance. They pertain to the relationship between the content and the speaker. Plausibility shields show the speaker's commitment to the truth of the propositional content. They make the statement of ideas less categorical and are intended to help the speaker disclaim responsibility for the general truth of the information conveyed in the utterance. To this group belong *I think, I take it, probably, as far as I can tell, right now, I have to believe, I don't see that*, etc. (Fraser, 2010).

4.3.1 Plausibility shields in the interview

Among the plausibility shields found in the interview are *I think, I suppose, I believe, I guess, as far as I'm concerned* and *I assume*. They are widely used by interviewees, which seems quite natural as in the course of the interview people express their own thoughts and opinions that they might want to make less categorical or straightforward.

The analysis of ten interviews with British actors, TV-hosts, musicians and artists shows that among the plausibility shields attested in literature *I think* is the most common (87%). It either precedes the propositional meaning presented in the form of a clause or follows it, as in these examples:

(29) *I think when you're making an album, as the songs are piling up, one of the good things about it is that you will often write the song that you need.*

(30) *Actually, I would have said the opposite, I think.*

Several instances of *I think* may occur in the utterance.

(31) *I think we in the Beatles had always liked 'Rain' but I think we thought of that as a song, as a kind of radio thing, 'Paperback Writer' was a bit more immediate.*

Other plausibility shields are less common in the interview: *I suppose* (6%), *I guess* (4%), *I mean* (2%). *I believe* (1%) has the lowest frequency among the plausibility shields in the interview:

(32) *So, I suppose the closer a character comes to me, the more challenging I actually – in a funny kind of way, I think I'd find it.*

(33) *So, I guess I try and do things and keep people around me who to an extent normalise what is in one sense a very abnormal situation to be in on that level.*

(34) *You had to put off filming, I believe, because of availability.*

There are instances in the corpus where different plausibility shields are used by the speaker.

(34) *No. No, I think it would – you'd be cutting*

your nose off to spite your face if you turned down a fantastic script and a fantastic character simply because it was set 200 years ago. I mean, apart from, I think period films now means anything from ten years ago to the beginning of time. So – you know. I mean, no. I do love period films, personally. I love the fact that you can escape into a completely different reality. I think for me, what I love about film is that it's complete escapism. And I find personally that seeing these costumes, these weird societies, helps me to forget my life, and actually just dive into the story. So, I think that's why as an actress, I like being in them, as well. It's a way into a fantastic fantasy world.

The plausibility shields *I assume* and *as far as I am concerned* were not found in our interview corpus, due to their formal character. The interview is for the most part informal, so the use of forms which indicate a high degree of formality would be a stylistic mismatch.

4.3.2 Plausibility shields in political speeches

Despite the evidence found in literature for the infrequency of plausibility shields in political discourse, instances of *I think* and *I believe* were observed in our corpus of political speeches, as in the following examples:

(35) *But I think that in our modern world, in these times of stress and anxiety...the family is the best welfare system there is.*

(36) *But despite all of them, I believe there is in every Conference a general will that seems to emerge almost unknowingly to set its own objectives. And I believe this Conference is in the process of doing the same thing.*

(37) *And it reflects those themes and priorities which the Party established in opposition and which we believe are the ones which should now most concern a Labour Government.*

The plural *we* instead of *I* is frequently used in political public speeches to seek common ground (Brown & Levinson, 2014) and build rapport.

4.4 Shields: Attribution shields

Attribution shields assign responsibility to someone other than the speaker and affect the degree of the speaker's commitment. Such phrases as *according to one's estimates*, *presumably*, *at least to one's knowledge*, etc. can be examples of this kind of hedges. The analysis of the two types of oral discourse, both spontaneous and pre-planned, provide no data on the use of attributive shields.

5. DISCUSSION

Previous research into the problem of hedging limited the phenomena to colloquial speech only, spontaneous speech with pauses, repetitions and hesitations, conditions, the frequent usage of hedges. This viewpoint may lead to the conclusion

of their extremely low frequency of occurrence in utterances pre-planned. This is partially true, as the overall frequency of hedges in political public speeches is lower as compared to interviews. However, it wouldn't be correct to say that hedging is not applicable to public discourse. Certain types of hedges used for suitable purposes are quite common there and contribute to the pragmatics of the utterance.

Interviews representing oral spontaneous speech abound in adaptors (*kind of, sort of, a little bit*), which makes the utterance less categorical, less certain, and this adds a touch of casualness to what is being said. They are used in various contexts and modify different parts of speech. There are examples where adaptors are used several times in the paragraph. The discourse nature of interviews accounts for the low frequency of rounders (*approximately, something between, etc.*). On the other hand, their functional specificity makes rounders communicatively justified in political public speeches – they are used for efficiency. The use of shields in the material subjected to analysis is stylistically and functionally marked. The colloquial plausibility shields (*I believe, I think*) are used in texts of spontaneous interviews, while their more formal variants (*I assume, as far as I am concerned*) prove to be zero frequent. Political public speeches provide additional data on the use of plausibility shields (*I think, I believe*). These hedges reinforce

the speaker's involvement, which contributes to the positive perception of the speech by the audience.

6. CONCLUSION

Hedging is a multidimensional phenomenon combining semantic, pragmatic and cognitive aspects. The pragmatically correct use of appropriate types of hedges serves as a natural instrument of language. The findings obtained in the course of this research allow us to suggest interpretations of hedges in two types of oral discourse, namely interviews and political public speeches. Interdependence between the type of the hedge used, its stylistic reference and communicative message of the utterance is a proven fact. Adaptors tend to be avoided in political speeches and discourse due to their casual style. This class of hedges is used as a stylistic device adding intrigue and increasing expectation. In the interview, on the contrary, adaptors prove to be frequently used as this type of discourse presupposes a certain degree of spontaneity and casualness. Rounders are more commonly used in political speeches than in interviews due to their informative character. Politicians prefer to use approximate figures instead of giving exact information in their speeches. In interviews, rounders accompanied by figures appear less frequently which can be explained by the absence of facts and statistics in this type of discourse. Nevertheless, rounders

turned out to be commonly used in the interview with adjectives or verbal actions making the statement vague or less certain. Plausibility shields are most frequent in interviews, which is quite understandable, as the interview is organised as a string of questions asked in order to get interviewees' personal answers, which are mostly spontaneous. When used in political public speeches, they emphasise the involvement of the speaker and their authority. Attribution shields are rarely used in both interviews and political public speeches. Interviews as an example of oral spontaneous/quasi-spontaneous speech are expectedly full of hedges of various types used in combination with different parts of speech. The variety of hedging devices is accounted for by the nature of the given type of discourse. The interviewees tend to use them to mitigate the utterance and demonstrate a low degree of certainty to protect themselves from possible criticism on the part of the interviewer and the audience. The choice of the hedging device is determined by the speaker's communicative aim,

the function of the hedge and the linguistic item it modifies. The appropriate use of hedges enables the speaker to realise their communicative goal in a way most appropriate to defend themselves and save face. The data proves that political public speeches do not deny hedging. By using hedges politicians aim to produce a desirable effect on the audience and evoke a desirable emotional response from them. These hedges have the following functions: limiting the truth value of the proposition to the speaker's opinion and judgments, shifting responsibility, attenuating the impact of the speech act, mitigating the proposition, supporting the statement with facts and statistics in an unostentatious way. The study demonstrated the role of hedging awareness in building effective interpersonal communication. The hedges under analysis in the two types of oral spontaneous and pre-planned discourse prove to be stylistically and functionally marked. Being a controversial area of modern communication, this topic presents opportunities for further linguistic analysis.

References

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (2014). *Politeness. Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cabanes, P. A. (2007). A contrastive analysis of hedging in English and Spanish architecture project description. *RESLA, 20*, 139-158.
- Caffi, C. (1999). On mitigation. *Journal of Pragmatics, 31*(7), 881-909. doi: [10.1016/S0378-2166\(98\)00098-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00098-8)
- Caffi, C. (2007). *Mitigation*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Chan, S. H., & Tan, H. (2009). *Maybe, perhaps, I believe, you could: Making claims and the use of*

- hedges. *The English Teacher*, 31, 98-106.
Retrieved from <http://journals.melta.org.my/index.php/tet/article/view/361/251>
- Crismore, A. (1990). Rhetorical contexts and hedges. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 20(1), 49-59.
- Crismore, A., & Vande Kopple, W. J. (1997). The effects of hedges and gender on the attitudes of readers in the United States toward material in a science textbook. In A. Duszak (Ed.), *Cultures and styles of academic discourse* (pp. 223-247). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Crismore, A., & Vande Kopple, W. J. (1999). Hedges and readers: Effects on attitudes and learning. In R. Markkanen & H. Schröder (Eds.), *Hedging and discourse: Approaches to the analysis of a pragmatic phenomenon in academic texts* (pp. 83-114). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Crompton, P. (1997). Hedging in academic writing: Some theoretical problems. *English for Specific Purposes*, 16(4), 271-287. doi: [10.1016/S0889-4906\(97\)00007-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(97)00007-0)
- Crystal, D. (1987). *The Cambridge encyclopaedia of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fraser, B. (1975). Hedged performatives. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics III: Speech acts* (pp. 187-231). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Fraser, B. (2010). Pragmatic competence: The case of hedging. In G. Kaltenbock, W. Mihatsch & S. Schneider (Eds.), *New approaches to hedging* (pp. 15-34). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Hosman, L. (1989). The evaluative consequences of hedges, hesitations, and intensifiers powerful and powerless speech styles. *Human Communication Research*, 15(3), 383-406. doi: [10.1111/j.1468-2958.1989.tb00190.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1989.tb00190.x)
- Hübler, A. (1983). *Understatements and hedges in English*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Lakoff, G. (1973). Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 2(4), 458-508. doi: [10.1007/BF00262952](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00262952)
- Prince, E., Bosk, C., & Frader, J. (1982). On hedging in physician-physician discourse. In J. Di Pietro (Ed.), *Linguistics and the professions* (pp. 83-97). Norwood/New Jersey: Ablex.
- Salager-Meyer, F. (1994). Hedges and textual communicative function in medical English written discourse. *English for Specific Purposes*, 13(2), 149-170. doi: [10.1016/0889-4906\(94\)90013-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906(94)90013-2)
- Salager-Meyer, F. (1995). I think that perhaps you should: A study of hedges in written scientific discourse. *The Journal of TESOL France*, 2(2), 127-143.
- Skelton, J. (1988). The care and maintenance of hedges. *ELT Journal*, 42(1), 37-43. doi: [10.1093/elt/42.1.37](https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/42.1.37)
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction into sociolinguistics*. New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell.

Dreyer's English: An utterly correct guide to clarity and style (a review)

Original work by Benjamin Dreyer published by Century Books 2019

Reviewed by Barry Tomalin

Barry Tomalin Glasgow Caledonian University London barrytomalin@aol.com

Published in Training, Language and Culture Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 100-103 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.7](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.7)

Recommended citation format: Tomalin, B. (2019). Dreyer's English: An utterly correct guide to clarity and style (a review). *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 100-103. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.7](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.7)



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

Oh no, not another dictionary! Especially, not another English dictionary! But no, this one is different. First, its author is Benjamin Dreyer, Vice President, Executive Managing Editor and Chief Copy Editor of *Random House Publishing* in the USA. Secondly, it is not a dictionary. It is a wise and witty commentary on English usage, covering vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. Its style is personal. It is as if Dreyer is talking directly to the reader and it is frequently very amusing.

It is extremely useful for editors, copywriters, teachers of English and for anyone writing in English, indeed for anyone writing emails, blogs, books articles or exercises for students.

Dreyer's English is divided into two parts. Part 1, *The Stuff in the Front*, is devoted to prose writing, rules, punctuation, how to write numbers and advice on grammar and usage. Part 2, *The Stuff in*

the Back, deals with easily misspelled words, use of proper nouns, words easily confused and 'trimmables', things that you can delete to make your writing clearer.

Dreyer begins with a challenge. In a chapter entitled *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying up (Your Prose)*, a nod towards Marie Kondo's highly successful book and TV series on *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying*, Dreyer suggests we go for a week without writing these words: *very, rather, really, quite* and *in fact*. 'If you can last a week,' he writes, 'you will be a considerably better writer than when you started'. Simplicity and clarity are Dreyer's watchwords.

Dreyer starts with an examination and 'rules and non-rules' in grammar and sentence structure. Many of us were taught at school never to begin a sentence with *And* or *But*, but many authors use

them as sentence starters to create a stronger effect. Dreyer's advice? If you begin a sentence with *And* or *But*, think first. What are you trying to achieve? If it's simply a pause, don't start a new sentence with them.

What about another rule we were taught at school? Never end a sentence with a preposition. The famous, but apparently never written or said, example is Winston Churchill's, '*Up with this I will never put*', as opposed to '*this is not something I will ever put up with*'. Dreyer's view? Of course, you can end a sentence with a preposition unless you can find a better word to end it with.

Another traditional grammar shibboleth is the 'split infinitive', most famously abused in the TV series *Star Trek* in '*To boldly go where no man has gone before*'. Grammatical traditionalists might argue it should say '*to go boldly...*', but think how much weaker that sounds than, '*to boldly go ...*' which has become a catchphrase.

Discussing punctuation, Dreyer is helpful on the role of full stops in abbreviations. Do we write U.S. or US to mean United States of America? U.N. or UN to abbreviate the United Nations or Ph.D (US) or PhD (UK) to describe an academic Doctorate in Philosophy? Once again, he accepts that British English and American English do things differently in many ways and we just have to accept it.

Another problem is the series comma, often known as the Oxford comma, used to punctuate lists of items. American English tends to insert a comma before the final 'and' as in *apples, pears, pomegranates, and potatoes*. British English tends to leave it out and write simply '*... pomegranates and potatoes*'. By and large, Dreyer would advise using commas unless it is obviously not necessary and gives a number of examples, including the famous book on correct punctuation by Lynne Truss entitled *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* rather than *Eats Shoots and Leaves* (without a comma) to describe a non-carnivorous animal. The title was intentional, by the way, in order to make the point. *Eats, shoots and leaves* suggests someone who has a meal, shoots someone or something and then goes out. *Eats shoots and leaves* suggests an animal who enjoys a diet of shoots of growing plants and leaves off trees and bushes.

Dreyer has valuable advice on the use of colons, semicolons, brackets, quotation marks and when to use dashes and hyphens. He also deals with numbers and insists on the importance of accuracy. He then points out that in his chapter on punctuation, entitled *Sixty-Six Assorted Things to Do and not to Do with Punctuation*, he intentionally left out number 38. Did I notice? I'm not telling, but you can probably guess.

For language teachers Dreyer is particularly interesting on the use of other varieties of English

beyond the US and UK varieties. First, he explores foreign loanwords that have become part of the English language, such as *karaoke*, *mea culpa*, *schadenfreude* and *bête noire* (he is particularly insistent on preserving the diacritical marks on loanwords from foreign languages). He notes that Indian English, spoken by 125 million people on the sub-continent, has several differences from UK and US varieties, many based on traditional culture. The use of, 'May I know your good name?', for example, is based on the Bengali difference between your official name (good name) and a familiar name used perhaps by your family. In the same way, Indian traditional politeness demands calling people *Auntie* or *Uncle* rather than using their names as a form of politeness. It may be considered rude to address older people by their name directly. Since much of India is vegetarian, you may see menus listing meat dishes as 'non-veg'. In other words, vegetarian cooking is the norm. Meat is the exception. One of my favourite Indian English words is *prepone*, the opposite of *postpone*. But it did not originate in India. *Prepone* was first used in the New York Times in 1913 by a certain J. J. D. Trenor.

On the back cover of the UK edition of *Dreyer's English* is a blurb (a sentence publicising the book) which goes like this: 'Written by Benjamin Dreyer, one of Twitter's chief language gurus, your English will never be the same again'. The sentence is

followed by an asterisk, which, when you consult it at the bottom of the cover reads, 'See page 94 for what's wrong with this sentence'. So, what's wrong? Page 94 explains. The problem is the use of a 'dangling participle', that long introduction that precedes the important message that 'your English will never be the same again'. The 'dangler', as Dreyer calls it, takes the essential message out of context and you wonder what it is doing there. Avoid danglers? No. They are often useful as an introduction or contextualisation of the main message of your sentence. However (Dreyer doesn't like this use of *However*, but never mind), if you do use them, make sure they are not confusing. Dreyer quotes Groucho Marx, the famous American comedian who once said, 'One morning I shot an elephant in my pyjamas. How he got into my pyjamas, I'll never know'.

For teachers and advanced students alike, Dreyer's list of words easily misspelt and words frequently confused is very valuable. He lists a hundred and ten commonly misspelt words and there are a hundred and fifty, what Dreyer calls, 'confusables', words frequently confused.

He also adds a list of proper nouns which are commonly misspelt (or misspelled in American English). *Atilla the Hun* should be *Attila the Hun*. In *Pride and Prejudice*, the heroine is *Elizabeth Bennet* (one -t), not *Elizabeth Bennett*, and the author is *Jane Austen*, not *Austin*. Nikita

Khrushchev makes it into the list. Dreyer comments, *'You'd think that people would look up a tricky name like Khrushchev. You'd be wrong'*.

Dreyer's chapter on *Peeves and Crotchets* aroused my curiosity. What are they when they're at home? Well, a *crotchet* is an unfounded belief or notion, and a *crotchety person* is someone who appears always bad-tempered and cross. Don't, says Dreyer, confuse it with *crochet*, a type of knitting technique using a small hook. A *peeve* is another word to describe something that annoys you. Language professionals are often particularly strong on pet peeves and crotchets. Until I read Irina Lebedeva's article about the double modal 'might could' in this issue, I was convinced that using 'might could' together in a sentence was the height of uneducated English usage. Not so,

apparently. And what about the use of the verb *ask* as a noun in *'That's a big ask'*? How would you use *data* in the singular? Is it *a piece of data* or *a datum*? Dreyer's opinion? *'The data supports the consensus that data is popularly used as a singular noun. Move on already'*, he says.

These are just some of the hundreds of examples of usage and misuse that Dreyer discusses. It's a dense book and one to dip into as reference chapter by chapter as well as to read for the sheer pleasure of it. *Dreyer's English* concludes with a recognition that a book is never finished. What you do is stop writing. As he writes at the end, *'There is no last word, only the next word'*.

Definitely a book I will want to keep by my desk and use for constant reference and warning.

Teaching digital literacy (a review)

Original work by Nik Peachey published by Peachey Publications 2019

Reviewed by Dominique Vouillemin

Dominique Vouillemin International House London dominique.vouillemin@7dnews.com

Published in *Training, Language and Culture* Vol 3 Issue 2 (2019) pp. 104-107 doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.8](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.8)

Recommended citation format: Vouillemin, D. (2019). Teaching digital literacy (a review). *Training, Language and Culture*, 3(2), 104-107. doi: [10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.8](https://doi.org/10.29366/2019tlc.3.2.8)



This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited (CC BY 4.0)

As the information age expands, so language learners are doing more and more learning online. However, they are not just learning how to use a foreign language. They are learning how to use a new methodology, online learning, to build their knowledge of the language and develop language learning skills to work with this relatively recent tool. Nik Peachey specialises in developing online activities for language learning that students and teachers can use in class or in distance learning. One of his recent online courses, delivered in an infographic, is about how to develop study skills for the 21st century. It explores the factors that influence existing study skills and encourages students to take part in online research into effective study skills techniques. Key skills developed include the ability to study and research online, the ability to read and understand digital information, the ability to check the credibility of online information, the students' ability to carry out online research and to

represent their findings visually and the ability to extract information from research and create informative text based on their findings. There is a teacher's presentation, a student's version of the presentation, and an infographic, all of which can be accessed online. The course offers a model that can be used by teachers, by students researching information and creating texts, and also for teacher training programmes.

Each programme is provided as a lesson plan. The lesson plan for *Studying How to Study*, as Peachey entitles it, contains seven tasks. The first four can be used independently as classroom reading or discussion activities. They involve a discussion task to get students thinking about the topic, a reading task to develop skills in scanning texts for specific information, and a reading task encouraging students to identify and summarise key points in a text. A follow-up discussion task allows students to exchange information on key things they have

learned from the text. The last three tasks are research tasks involving online investigation and take longer. First is a research task, guiding students through the process of researching and corroborating online information. Then follows a research task, which guides students through the process of creating research and producing and disseminating results. A final writing task helps students summarise what they have learned. The basic text for study is an infographic presenting information into research into study skills and methods, and is highly visual and accessible.

The *Lesson Plan* which follows is clear, comprehensive and detailed and consists of the questions which the teacher can use in class to help the students focus. The fact-finding reading scanning exercise asking what different figures in the infographic refer to is especially interesting. It was slightly alarming for me as a teacher to learn that 81% of students check emails during lessons and in a 70-minute lecture students actually spend an average of 17 minutes on their computers doing non-lecture related activities. Students are asked to find study tips in the infographic and to summarise them. There are ten. The study tips are available online at <https://payhip.com/b/oxeb>.

An important skill in using online resources for information is developing the student's ability to question and check information. Part of this is learning how to access the online references

behind the research. First, Peachey recommends students exchange information in small groups, raising issues they doubt or that they feel need further corroboration. He suggests the students check at least five facts in the infographic (particularly those they are doubtful about) and research the original reports to check that the factual information has been used accurately. He asks the students to make notes on what they learn, including the URL, the name and date of the publication or resource, the name of the author and the student's assessment of the credibility of the information. The students can then create their own research questionnaire, and Peachey offers free downloadable templates in the lesson plan. Students can also create their own infographics to present the results, the templates for which Peachey once again provides. The lesson ends with a writing task in which the students reflect on what they have learned. However, as Peachey recommends, this is not just an essay but an article for a blog or a student magazine. In other words, the outcome is practical. Peachey also gives advice on how to structure the text with an introduction, recommendations on how to improve study skills, things to avoid doing and how to write a conclusion. Also, he reminds us, never forget to credit any sources of information you include in your article.

The lesson plan is written for teachers and students of English but can be adapted to any language and

to any academic discipline, including science. It is bound to increase study skills efficiency and is incredibly easy for the teacher to access and use.

Peachey's digital lesson plans don't just cover digital study skills. They also include language teaching lesson plans on a variety of topics at all levels. In his most recent publication, *Street Art Project*, Ana Maria Casoria has produced an eight-slide detailed lesson plan with an infographic helping EFL secondary school children learn and use descriptive adjectives. Once again, the lesson plan is presented as a project involving online research and the topic is how people describe adolescents (i.e. secondary school children).

Although the lesson plan is aimed at students of English as a foreign language, it can easily be adapted for students of other languages than English. To begin with, the class divides into groups and each group has to think of either positive or negative adjectives to describe adolescents. Next, students in the positive groups pair off with students in the negative groups and compare notes. Then they look at photos of a teenager displaying various moods and try and match their adjectives to the images.

This is a good opportunity for the teacher to correct vocabulary and also to teach relevant grammatical differences, such as the difference between *bored* and *boring*, for example.

A discussion follows where the students in groups talk about what adjectives are commonly used to describe adolescents, who describes them and how they feel. This is where the street art comes in and where the students go online. The teacher asks the students to go online to research street art sites (Ana Maria's lesson plan provides the URLs, all free access) and find images to answer questions listed in the lesson plan. For example, '*Find a street art image which illustrates how adults see adolescents*'. The students research and then create their own short online presentation, using the images they have found online, to describe their view of themselves and of how others see adolescents. When they have finished, they show their presentations to their group or to the class and discuss the results. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to discuss real life images, learn to understand and use adjectives in a dynamic way, and use their online skills as a learning tool. Above all, it helps them learn about themselves, their community and about adolescence and how people see it – so it feels active and real. It takes the language out of the academic box it is so often confined to in the classroom and allows it to breathe the air of the outside world.

Nik Peachey doesn't just deal in vocabulary. He also uses his online lesson plans to work on grammar differences. His *A Girl by the Window* lesson plan practises the difference between the

present perfect continuous tense '*I have been looking for a job*' and the present perfect simple tense '*I have found a job abroad*'. The topic features a young Asian girl in a shopping mall at night standing by a shop window, her face reflected in the window pane. Students have the opportunity to discuss her past, how she lives now and her future, as well as how she feels and what she is thinking about. The students are also encouraged to use online resources such as brainstorming apps to share ideas, word cloud apps to search for words, and even a messaging

thread that they can continue and complete. If as a teacher you are into online resources and your students almost certainly are, I cannot recommend these lesson plans too much. They are inexpensive, clear, stimulating and encourage online research and the development of critical awareness and presentation skills. The perfect antidote for the dreaded 'Friday Afternoon' class. Above all, the adaptation of a communicative methodology and task-oriented learning to an online format opens up a whole new methodology of learning appropriate to our digital information age.

ICC News

by Michael Carrier

ICC Board Member

This year we moved venue from the possibly sleepy surroundings of Santorini to the bustle of Berlin. At least, you might think that, but having the conference in the sumptuous surroundings of the Europäische Akademie right next to the Grunewald gave us plenty of space for discussion and reflection, seeing old friends and making new ones. The theme for this year was Teaching and Learning Languages in the Multicultural World: Policy and Practice, continuing the concerns expressed last year by policy makers, researchers and practitioners continually faced with a fragmented and constantly changing body of students as well as disconnects between those who decide on policy and those charged with implementing it. The context of plurilingual, multicultural classrooms and the provision of training for refugees and the teachers of refugees took centre stage, but discussions ranged further than that with contributions from a wide variety of experiences and interests.

Those new to ICC conferences spoke favourably about the size of the conference – not so big that it becomes overwhelming – and the friendliness of the atmosphere. This is one of the special qualities of ICC conferences. It brings together those involved in research, policy and classroom practice, not just from the point of view of

language teaching per se, but also intercultural communication, internationalisation, professional purpose training, materials development among others. And everyone can (and does) contribute. Our thanks to keynote plenary speakers Bessie Dendrinis, Michael Carrier and Thomas Tinnefeld for providing thought-provoking sessions that were a platform for discussion and debate and which connected well with the workshop sessions. Thanks to all the workshop presenters and facilitators for the wide range of topics and for enlarging our own knowledge and expertise. Please see our [ICC website](#) for details of the presentations and workshops. Finally, thanks to Ellinor, Ozlem and Malou for their energy and organisation. You will be able to see the slide presentations and summaries of the presentations on icc-languages.eu/ICCjournal. We're busy planning next year's exciting venue, provisionally 8th-10th May. Put it in your diaries now and we'll advise next year's conference centre soon.

EUROLTA News

by Myriam Fischer Callus

EUROLTA Co-ordinator

ICC – The International Language Association is committed to providing top quality foreign language learning and teaching and has designed excellent teacher training programmes through EUROLTA (European Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults). EUROLTA is an internationally recognised teacher training programme for people

who want to teach languages to adults using up to date methodologies.

ICC has now set up a new action plan offering more support to ICC members and other educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities or training centres) who are aiming for educational excellence. The EUROLTA Trainer's Pack, now available in German and in English, contains a detailed module-by-module guide and is full of tips and advice for new language teachers. The Trainee's pack includes the necessary handouts and practical easy-to-implement activities.

Furthermore, the ICC will provide a series of teacher training resource packs containing material for various kinds of delivery – from 60 minute workshops to 20 hour modules. Topics will include teaching languages for special purposes, using digital tools in the classroom, an introduction to teaching literacy, a short module on cultural training, how to facilitate interaction between teacher and student, and many others.

A EUROLTA online and a EUROLTA blended course will be available soon.

Educational specialists need to invest in their teaching staff. For this reason, it is now possible to host a EUROLTA course in your centre. ICC offers support and provides the training materials, trainers and assessors (if needed). If interested, please visit [ICC website](#) or contact info@icc-languages.eu.

RUDN University News

by Elena Malyuga

Editor-in-Chief TLC

Vocational Training for Teachers

The Teacher Development Interactive course offered by the Economic Faculty of RUDN University in Association with Pearson PLC will provide resource materials for teachers over a two-year period. TDI offers up-to-date instruction from world-leading ELT experts with effective learning tools and models creating a motivating and enriching learning experience. The trainers for the course are Professor of Linguistics, author of English language textbooks, lecturer in Foreign Languages Dpt of the Faculty of Economics Wayne Rimmer, and CSc in Linguistics, Associate Professor in Foreign Languages Dpt of the Faculty of Economics Svetlana Popova.

RUDN University Welcomes AACSB Executive Vice President Timothy Mescon

Executive Vice President and Chief Officer for Europe, the Middle East and Africa for AACSB International Timothy Mescon visited the Faculty of Economics to discuss the opportunities for cooperation. Mr Mescon met with Dean of the Faculty of Economics Yuri Moseykin, Acting Manager of the International School of Business Irina Gladysheva, MBA Programme Supervisor Natalia Sakharshuk and Head of language training programmes Elena Malyuga. The faculty is

planning to join AACSB in order to further accredit its Economics and Management programmes.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, also known as AACSB International, is an American professional organisation founded in 1916 to provide accreditation to schools of business. Established early in the 20th century, the association has expanded to more than 100 countries around the world, helping business schools, students and businesses to succeed. The association has 3 international headquarters and offers over 95 professional development activities annually. According to the Financial Times, 96% of FT500 executives studied at an AACSB-accredited school.

First Joint Programmes with Brazilian Universities in the Framework of the BRICS Network University

RUDN University is introducing joint MA programmes with leading Brazilian universities – the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte and the Fluminense Federal University in Rio de Janeiro. The agreements are the first case of joint MA programmes of the BRICS Network University. The joint training of Russian and Brazilian students was initiated and organised by the Faculty of Economics and the Marketing

Department of RUDN University.

RUDN University Enters the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2019

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2019 were officially published earlier this year. RUDN University is represented in two subject rankings – Modern Languages (Top 200) and Linguistics (Top 300). Employers Recognition put the university over the top with 80 and 75.5 points awarded for Linguistics and Modern Languages, respectively. Ranking results are available at topuniversities.com/subject-rankings/2019.

RUDN University is Recognised for Its Strong Social Media Presence

Experts of the Russian Social and Media Research Centre rated social media presence of the 21 universities participating in the 5-100 programme based on the Engagement Rate (ER) index. The rating assesses social media communications and university-user networking performance. The highest ER is provided by native posts, i.e. real stories from real people, such as an interview with a post-graduate student from Italy Antonella Selvitella who studies foreign language teaching methodology and dreams of coming up with new approaches to learning Italian. RUDN University Facebook user coverage exceeds 12 mln people.

TRAINING, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Published by

Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
17923, GSP117198, Moscow, Russia, 6 Miklukho-Maklay Str.

info@tlcjournal.org

rudn.tlcjournal.org

Corporate contributor

International Language Association (ICC) &
ICC Press, International Certificate Conference – The International Language Association

Postfach 10 12 28 D – 44712 Bochum, Germany

Yorckstr. 58 D – 44789 Bochum, Germany

info@icc-languages.eu

icc-languages.eu/tlcjournal



June 2019

ISSN 2520-2073

ISSN 2521-442X

Volume 3 Issue 2

doi: 10.29366/2019tlc.3.2

The quarterly journal published by

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)