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Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen
Department of English Studies



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Problems and Solutions in
English Studies and FLT



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PREFACE

The third and last 2022 issue of volume 10 of *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT* titled “Problems and Solutions in English Studies and FLT” contains five papers focusing on various aspects of literature, discourse studies and methodology.

The issue opens up with a literary topic that introduces readers to a comparative study focusing on the portrayals of the sea in Sylvia Plath’s and Petya Dubarova’s works. The topic is not a new one for the author as Hristo Boev has dwelled on it in a greater detail in his monograph *Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath’s Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction*. The paper in this issue presents the main points in a more concise way. Despite the fact that the two poets grew up in different realities, the sea had an equally significant presence in the lives of both of them and was frequently personified as benevolent to the narrator and served as a harbour that helped sustain both Plath and Dubarova through adolescence. In addition to the general similarities and differences in the presentation of the sea, Hristo Boev shares his own translation of “A Sea Tale” („Морска приказка“) by Dubarova, which is an additional contribution of the study.

The issue continues with two papers on the use of politically correct language. The first one analyses the Macedonian media discourse on women politicians, namely the Minister of Defense and the Mayor of the city of Skopje. Using Critical Discourse Analysis Silvana Neshkovska analyses 40 articles on the two women politicians and comes to the conclusion that the media in the Republic of Northern Macedonia still resort to both overt and implicit sexist language, which, in turn, depict female politicians as ill-suited for this type of professional occupation.

The next paper titled “To Use ‘He/She’ or ‘They’: That is the Question” by Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu is also focused on the use of politically correct language; however, this time among students of English in Romania. The analysis presented in the paper is based on the findings from a questionnaire given to Romanian students in an attempt to find their attitude towards the use of politically correct language. Some of the conclusions reached by the author show that “students (young respondents) consider politically correct lexis necessary when this refers to more ‘serious’ issues, such as race, gender, religion, and disabilities”, while “‘minor’ issues such as sexual orientation, or anxieties regarding someone’s looks, intelligence or position are sometimes looked at with scepticism and quite rarely laughed at”.

Elena Bonta and Raluca Galita provide an overview of the different problems and solutions encountered by teachers worldwide during the pandemic. In their “Online teaching during Covid-19 Pandemic – challenges and solutions

around the world” they analyse the “voice of scholars” as presented in 62 pieces of research published all over the world. Using a qualitative method based on a purposeful sampling technique, the authors reached the conclusion that countries “tried their best to make teaching as effective as possible and offer students the opportunity to learn, although the approach was a difficult one, for both teachers and students, with repercussions (that were not necessarily positive) on the learning process”.

The next paper in the issue presents a review of some of the main publications on the essence of humour and adds to those the opportunity of said phenomenon to be also studied from the perspective of conversation analysis. Nimet Çopur and Cihat Atar state that CA could be used as a tool for humour analysis mostly through its principles of looking at interaction. Conversation analysis is also viewed as particularly suitable as it “enables researchers to gain insights with regards to what is produced/treated as humorous by the participants in the stretches of talk-in-interaction through unpacking the sequential details (verbal, nonverbal, and situational) of interaction”.

The issue finishes with an analysis on cognitive metaphors used in some British and Bulgarian articles on catastrophic events, mainly floods. In “In the mind’s eye: Mental conceptualization of floods by the British and the Bulgarian media” Ivaylo Gorchev, who is a PhD student, uses a corpus of 19 articles extracted from four newspapers – two for the British discourse and two for the Bulgarian discourse, argues and later on proves with examples from his corpus that the employment of FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR metaphor in the Bulgarian and the British media is similar. This comes to confirm the claim that thinking patterns, governed by similar bodily experiences result in similar linguistic expressions, as stated at the beginning of the study.

THE SEA IN THE WORKS OF SYLVIA PLATH AND PETYA DUBAROVA: A COMPARISON¹

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Abstract: This article compares the portrayals of the sea in Sylvia Plath's and Petya Dubarova's works. Both authors wrote their major poetry and prose during the Cold War, the former in the 1950s, early 1960s, the latter in the 1970s, on both sides of the Atlantic, respectively. They also belonged to opposing political and military camps – the USA and NATO on one side, and the Comecon on the other of which Bulgaria was a member state. The sea as a heterotopic place and space bordering on the human ones in their case will be shown to be a frequently personified natural element that is benevolent to the narrator and that allows a getaway into a phantasmatic world composed of dreamscapes marked by fictional transformations of the body typically contained in the areas around Boston, USA and Burgas, Bulgaria. Strongly present in their childhood, the sea also served as a vital force of the imagination which helped sustain both poets in their adolescence years and whose waning power in terms of its receding literary presence eventually signaled their approaching untimely demise.

Keywords: sea, journals, letters, Comecon, Cold War, modernism, comparative literature

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He is also a translator of English and Romanian with numerous literary translations to his credit. His main interests lie in the fields of Comparative Literature, Modernism, Literary Urbanism, Geocriticism and the Art of translation.

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1. Based on the author's monograph *Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath's Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction*. – a. n.

As a place of mass tourism during the season, the beach has been called by Michel Foucault (1984) “a site of temporary relaxation” (“Of Other Spaces”, p.3). Insofar as it can be seen as a border area between the land and the sea, its cultural qualities are related to human activities of various nature – from beachcombing to sunbathing and fishing, to name the ones that come readily to mind. The heterotopic dimensions of the beach and its appertaining elemental areas – land and water – are hence enriched by a space of transgression with the American Sylvia Plath and the Bulgarian Petya Dubarova who explore its protean properties and populate them with fictional humans who, once found in this environment, instantly adapt by becoming partially or completely amphibian. Another important element in this article is the exploration of what Foucault calls “propinquity” (ibid., p.2), that is proximity and namely how the sea affects places and spaces in its vicinity. We shall see that with both writers this often results in examples of daydreaming – the sea becomes a personality, or it simply exercises a benign influence irradiating nearby areas, affecting the narrator directly. While these transformations of space are typically linked to a fictional rendition of experienced childhood, its iterations on the pages of the authors under scrutiny contain the immediacy of what has just been experienced or may contain the coloration of the fond memory. Since the two poets in all certainty did not know about each other and no direct influence can be established, the comparison is in line with 21st century perceptions and concepts as neatly synthesized by Ben Hutchinson (2018) who in *Comparative Literature: A Very Short Introduction* provides the possible lines of comparative studies not based on influence, in this case *differing vs conferring responses to a recurring question* (p. 19) – the Cold War and *comparing occurrences of a particular topic in different literary periods* (ibid., p. 20) – the sea as a motif. The article also includes a combination of *historical vs geographical approach – looking across time vs looking across cultures* (ibid., p. 20). Likewise, the study also explores the possibility of *inherently acceptable comparisons of cultures in a minor language – Bulgarian² through a major language – English³* (ibid., p. 24). It is the aim of this study to also contribute to this critic’s affirmation that “in the continuous need to justify itself, that marks comparative literature as uniquely beholden to changing intellectual fashions, and thus to changing disciplinary metaphors [...] it must be understood comparatively, which is to say as historically contingent and context-specific” (Hutchinson, 2018, p. 12).

Sylvia Plath in her *Letters* (2017), *Journals* (2007) and *Johnny Panic* (2001) prose has a lot to say about the sea – the Atlantic Ocean at Boston. In her *Letters* it is an immediate reflection of the time spent near it and is always related to an incident which involves herself as a child. The letters featuring it as a setting

2. All translations from Bulgarian into English in this article are mine. – a. n.

3. Emphasis mine. – a. n.

are typically addressed to her grandparents and the young Plath comes out as the girl who is not afraid to brave the big waves when others watch at a distance. Her *Journals* and prose collection provide glimpses into the more distant past, especially prominent in some of her later essays when she was already living in England, was married to the English poet Ted Hughes and he was about to leave her or had already left her, which undoubtedly brings a yet stronger intensity to the evoked experience. The Bulgarian poet Petya Dubarova (2015) who wrote mostly poetry, but also prose including a journal which has been published recently also in its incompleteness, lived in Burgas, Bulgaria, on the coast of the Black Sea. Just like with Plath, the sea is a strong connection to Dubarova's childhood, and is well reflected in her *Poems* and essays, with both playing a vital role of a benign force related to a carefree existence, self-exploration, and an escape from oppressive realities. For Dubarova the warm southern sea of Burgas was a magical world, which could also be observed in certain short stories by Plath in reference to Boston and the Atlantic, but the Bulgarian poet had a very personal touch with the sea, expressed in her signature seal of a chromatism "синьо вълишебство" which resists a literal translation in English and should probably be rendered with the adjective *azure* rather than with *blue*. Her codified *azure/ blue* poetical world abounds in chromatisms dominated by this color which present the sea as a mythological creature often with humanoid aspects.

What formally brings Dubarova close to Plath was the fact that she also lived in the Cold War period but on the other side of the Berlin Wall, in Bulgaria, and so had the Comecon experience. Strikingly original for Bulgaria, with her natural rhymes, highly melodious idiom, cosmic tones, sense of magic and belonging, as well as with the intense portrayals of city- and seascapes, Burgas, and the Black Sea, she is the definitive Bulgarian poet of childhood and the sea. Writing about herself as a subject, Dubarova was part of an extant movement of excellent poets who also wrote confessionally such as Konstantin Pavlov, Hristo Fotev, Aleksandar Gerov, Ekaterina Yosifova and Boris Hristov and by writing in this mode they emphasized on the personal experience as opposed to ideologically important topics very much as the American Confessional poets of the 1950s and 1960s did. The Americans among whom there are names such as Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, John Berryman, W. D. Snodgrass, and Sylvia Plath thus inscribed themselves under the label *the Silent Generation*, relegating their internalized protest to poetry. Dubarova was fond of listening to Pink Floyd, Smoky and the Beatles and that alone shows a clear dissenting attitude towards the communist regime which did not tolerate Western rock music. She translated some of their songs which in her translation sound so much like the rest of her poetry that they are rather free adaptations than true translations. Elitsa Dubarova, her sister, from the "Forward" to the 2015 two-volume edition of her prose and poetry, reports that Dubarova was published in a European anthology called *Passages*

(2001) alongside Goethe, Petrarch, and Shakespeare. Also, her poetry has been translated into English in a book called *Here I Am, in Perfect Leaf Today* (1992) and launched in the USA (E. Dubarova, 2015, 1, p. 9).

There are many points of similarity between Plath and Dubarova bringing the two poets very close: the important theme of the sea in the Bulgarian poet's childhood, the fact that she wrote in a manner which was based on personal experiences, the introvert character of both her prose and poetry, the reflection of the epoch in her works and her tragic end only at the age of 17 through suicide in 1979. Dubarova may have suffered from depression herself although she mentions in her journal that she was naturally happy and did not need special occasions for that; her early poetry is also sparkling with exuberance. However, her death caused by taking sleeping pills also brings her close to Plath in one of the American poet's unsuccessful attempts to curb her life. Just like Plath, her journal is unfinished since only excerpts from it have been published, possibly potentially hiding family secrets or a particularly unpleasant exposure of the communist regime which is supposed to have been gone since 1989. As a reason for her suicide⁴ has been cited an unfortunate incident where she was unjustly accused of damaging some factory equipment during a school brigade – for producing Burgas beer⁵. Dubarova's journal entries and poems about school are numerous and gradually the communist school emerges as a sinister inhuman institution which aims to crush students' creativity and emotions. Dubarova, like Plath, loved sunbathing and bronzing up until from her beloved white in the summer she often turned almost black. With Plath, the sea is a place of play with her friends or her father, a place of endless daydreaming once the loss of the father figure has become too oppressive to bear – Otto Plath, her father, died when she was 9 years of age which the precocious and vulnerable Sylvia felt as a betrayal. The *coup de grâce* was delivered by Hughes leaving her in 1962 after 7 years of marriage, the double loss being reflected in Plath's angry poem "Daddy".

The sea in the two poets' works thus becomes a locus of heterotopic experiences, an element that underscores Heidegger's idea of the resident's being in a *place* and dwelling in its appertaining *spaces*⁶ (Heidegger, 1985, p. 65; Malpas, 2006,

4. In *The Bell Jar* (1966) Plath suggests that only psychiatrists should be held responsible for the patients' suicides: "And then Doctor Nolan told me how the best of psychiatrists have suicides among their patients, and how they, if anybody, should be held responsible, but how they, on the contrary, do not hold themselves responsible" (p. 253). Still, Dubarova may not have been suicidal at all. Much less than Plath's texts hers offer little evidence to that effect. – a. n.

5. See Pencho Kovachev's article about Petya Dubarova's note before her death on bg-voice.com as of 19 March 2014. – https://bg-voice.com/zagaduchnoto_predsmurno_pismo_na_petya_dubarova/ –a. n.

6. Also discussed in *Modern(ist) Portrayals of the City in Dickens and Dos Passos: Similarities, Differences, Continuities* (p. 30) and *The Different Dobruja in the Literature be-*

p. 230). Jeff Malpas also develops the idea of the relationship between *place* and *event* – the place always seen in the process of transpiring, “taking place” (ibid., p. 221), never ceasing to change. The *event* itself can be seen as a “disclosive happening of belonging”⁷ (ibid., p. 223), that is, the events in the discussed works by Plath and Dubarova will be viewed as being revelatory of the girls’ belonging to Massachusetts (Boston) and Burgas, respectively.

The information concerning Plath’s childhood and obtained from the journal entries was rendered there from the distance and further warping of the memory. It was through the same prism that her short stories about that period were written, too. Their capacity of evoking a memorable scene that illuminates an important moment through the liberating effect of autofiction is very important. The *Journal* entries may have served as a foundation on which to build the story, motioning the spotlight over the respective event, that is, the *Journals* that are now lost. As for Plath’s *Letters*, they provide invaluable information about her very early writing, as well as her evolving writing techniques.

Using a brainstorming exercise, Plath thinks of an incident from her childhood which exposes the process of creating such stories from memory, based on free associations that were tangent on the actual event. Among others, Andersen’s Ice Queen from his *Fairy Tales* (1981) and Lewis Carroll’s Alice from *Alice in Wonderland* (2009) inevitably appear. The tedium of dating reflected in the *Journals* is broken by child-like activities whenever Plath finds herself near the ocean in Boston:

July 19 – This morning I awoke into dampness, the windows white and vague with fog. This afternoon, while all the family was out the first big storm came. I had just washed my hair, and the rain began, big, wet drops from the great spread of sky [...] I could look through the screen to the wildly heaving trees, the gray ocean, angry with white foam, the crackling blasts of sheet lightning and the immediate whip cracks and rattling, banging, earsplitting bursts of thunder. Water ran in rivers down the pavement, and suddenly I remembered to shut the windows. But even as I ran from room to room, trying to close the fourteen or fifteen windows on the side where the rain was coming in, it was too late, and the sills were wet with puddles, and the water was collecting in streams along the floor (Plath, 2007, p. 77).

The description above allows us to see the young Plath identifying with the child when near the ocean. Even though she is occupied with counting windows, we are being presented with a highly poetical but controlled portrayal of the rainstorm and the ocean, that is, the hectic involvement of the speaker in preventing the water from flooding the many rooms of the house (judging by the number of

tween the Wars (p. 92). – a. n.

7. Ibid., pp. 226, 92. – a. n.

windows). Despite the heavy metaphorical usage throughout the description, it does not appear overburdened. In the *Journals* we have descriptions of the sea that experiment with colors – obviously, a good exercise for descriptive writing by Plath. Most of them are very good, with a few of them appearing overdone in the composite color effect, and cluttered, for example: “the ocean is cerulean towards the horizon, vivid azure nearer shore, blue and sheened as peacock feathers” (ibid., p. 238); “Clouds scudded across the pale thin brightening white moon, which laid a paving of platinum light on the ocean” (ibid., p. 250), etc.

In her letters from the 1940s, Plath’s perceptions of the ocean are, naturally, much more within what we would expect of a child – immediate perceptions – from the memory of an event that has just happened, for example in a letter to her grandparents whom she calls “Grammy and Grampy”, from July 13, 1945, she just calls it “salty ocean” (Plath, 2017, p. 54). She also seems to be the only girl that dares to brave the big waves: “I was the only one who dared to go in first for the waves were strong and cold until you ducked” (ibid., p. 54). In a letter to her mother from July 25, 1946, aged 14, more adjectives are applied and the description is excellent for a girl at her age, containing not only the changing faces of the ocean, but also the activities practiced there, with lots of physical details: “When we arrived we sat down on the familiar white sand and had our nosebag lunches, and then made our barefoot way tediously over the barnacled rocks, until we at last reached the sandy golden strip where the low tide was. How I love the ocean! We then hunted for sea creatures in the shallow, warm pools between the rocks!” (ibid., p. 103). Plath’s letters to her mother are considerably longer than those to her grandparents and usually relate a story, thus being excellent examples of narrative/ descriptive essays, for example: [describing a bike ride, July 1, 1947] “We passed little country farms and gardens on the way, luxuriant with placid spotted cows and bright yellow daisies. The warm, sweet moist smell of the wayside grass was wafted to our nostrils as we rounded a bend and came smack against the blue curve of the ocean” (ibid., p. 119). In another letter to her mother from 5 July 1947, Plath pays more attention to detail, and we can notice a shift of the usual for her adjectives applied to the *waters*, adding brusque concreteness as well as the sensation of plentitude and pervasiveness: “The waters were a light, salty blue and a sandy, smooth bar stretched out into the ocean. The water was free from crabs and seaweed, and I went swimming with Sally Haven, an adorable girl who lives in Newton” (ibid., p. 125).

Sometimes the correspondent would be different which brings about some stylistic modifications. In a letter to Hans-Joachim Neupert, a pen-pal of hers dated 24 September 1948, she writes in a manner which can be seen as deliberately literary: “Somehow I have a special place in my heart for the ocean. I like the way the water changes from one mood to another – from high waves on dark, stormy days, to tranquil ripples on sunny days. I still remember a

night that I spent on a lonely beach” (ibid., p. 163). What follows is yet another incident told near the ocean.

Childhood is much more present in the *Letters* (2017), in the *Journals* (2007) being occasionally evoked in the memory. Just like Dubarova, Plath grew up near the sea and it is very much present in all her writings concerning her childhood and adolescence. Before we get to the masterful portrayals of New York and the Atlantic from *The Bell Jar* (1966), Plath’s seascapes remain vivid, intelligent and a bit overambitious, which reflects her very young age for a writer. The texts have also demonstrated the acute awareness Plath had of the person she was talking to.

The sea is mainly present in Dubarova’s poetry which contains about 200 pieces and almost every single one of them could be used for the purposes of this analysis. Since the poems will be discussed in translation, there will be things from the original that will be missing, as any translation, even the best one, cannot prevent it. They were written in Bulgarian to show the sheer joy of using the language in celebration of life and were not meant to be translated.

In “Somewhere there”⁸ (*Там някъде*) written in 1977 from her acclaimed posthumous *The Sea and I* (*Аз и морето*) (2015) we find ourselves in the recognizable Burgas of the 1970s, also captured in the film reels of the epoch and today in the collective memory of those who were lucky enough to see it with their own eyes. It is rendered by the 15-year-old Petya in poetic colors with elements of nature representative of the city: “Somewhere there, in clouds, in maddening vines,/ From the eyelashes captured the taste of the brines/ From the sea-home of the salty crab/ From some enchanted old blue slab”| *Там някъде в облаци, в луди лози,/ от мигли запазили дъх на сълзи,/ от морския дом на соления рак,/ от някакъв стар, омагьосан син бряг* (Dubarova, 2015, 1, p. 13). It is obvious that the vines with their immediate access are more animated than the still life that follows, but every detail is important, and we have the presence of the sea everywhere – from the people’s *eyelashes* to the *salty crab* and *blue slab*. The *maddening vines* could also be a poetic reproduction of the haze which occurs close to the sea, as well as their irresistible pull to the sea people of Burgas whose eyelashes all have retained the sea in them. The vines are the ones that send a wave-like effect of movement to all other elements in the picture. Immediately after that appears the lyrical ‘I’, having set the scene. The appearance of the sun, some two stanzas down, over the sea city changes all the surroundings and affects the speaker: “A sun with the magic of a golden

8. This translation of a poem by Petya Dubarova from Bulgarian into English, as well as the other translations of her works, in part or in entirety, is done with non-commercial purposes and pursues no financial gain, the only scope being rendering the content of the work in the most representative manner for its spirit and essence so that it can be analyzed in this study. – a. n.

fountain/ Erupts from the soft vault almost undone/ And some sort of a strange matte dawn/ Makes me happy, tender and fond”| *Слънце с магия на златен фонтан/ изригва от мекия свод разлюлян./ А някаква матова странна зора/ ме прави щастлива и нежно добра* (ibid., p. 13). The *sun* causes a complete change of the environment, obviously for the eyes that register the change of colors and transformation of nature. While some transformations are insignificant, others are violent – the *vault almost undone*. This awakening to life of the city makes the speaker smile and she is suddenly *fond* of the changed environment, the lines suggesting an overall feeling of goodness. This ever-present craving for the warm sun of Burgas, Southern Bulgaria, and the warm colors of the sea at summer make Dubarova a poet of the southern Bulgarian sea.

In this ecstatic perception of nature Dubarova can be compared to Emily Dickinson (2012) in most of her poems. The lyrical ‘I’ in this poem of Dubarova’s is overly generous and wants to give the gift of the good mood to everyone, having captured the magic of summer Burgas. Likewise, Dickinson usually presents a solitary observer who remains in blissful solitude inebriated with godly nature – “I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed” (Dickinson, 2012, p. 28). By contrast, Plath is not so romantic as Dubarova, and not bubblingly ecstatic about changing nature, either, possibly due to the different effect of the Atlantic by comparison to that of the warm southern sea. She likes to observe and describe but is usually not very involved in the description. Instead, she likes to transgress spaces in nature on her own, when no one is expecting it, breaking on through to the other side. In this gem of a poem, Dubarova, aged 15, has the child’s desire of unconditional sharing absent in Plath at 16.

In “Murder” (*Убийство*) dated in 1975, aged only 13, Dubarova constructs one of her most memorable poems with a strong ecological theme – the pollution of her beloved sea which, just like in all her poems, is personified into some sort of a good-natured superhuman being, a leviathan that stoically bears the brunt of human abuse but who is finally defeated in his magnanimous super-humanness, deprived of the capacity to create, and give joy. The man-made element – the harbor is also personified into an evil cynic through the act of spitting crude oil. As with other poems by Dubarova, here we can also see three stages of an event – the spilling of the oil, the immediate reaction of the wounded sea and the disappointed people who fail to understand, and finally, a grim prediction of the death of the sea brought on by continuous misunderstanding and criminal neglect on part of the people: “A harbor spat crude oil/ Insolently creased his eyes and sneered/ A cold shiver ran through the sea,/ He coughed, strung gray veins, reared”| *Едно пристанище изплю мазут./ Нахално сви очи и се захили./ Премина през морето тръпка студ, закашля то, изопна сиви жили* (Dubarova, 2015, 1, p. 72). In this chronological cause-and-effect narrative

sequence, Dubarova is undoubtedly influenced by the Bulgarian tradition, her reliving the event is very emotional, the sea, an element of nature and the harbor – a man-made structure personified into good and evil humanoids, respectively.

The second stanza typically shows a member (offspring) that has become a casualty of the act: “A wave – beautiful and good,/ Poisoned lay beside the quay/ And sad seagulls with seagull plumes/ Adorned her grave, see”| *Една вълна – красива и добра,/ отровена полегна върху кея/ и тъжни чайки с чайкови пера/ закичиха и гроба ѝ/ и нея* (ibid., p. 72). The sea reacts as a human would over the death of his/ her child: “The sea did not sleep until dawn/ His child sadly to bemoan.../ In his heart he closed the sorrow/ And wistful waited for the morrow”| *Морето не заспа до сутринта./ За мъртвата си рожба дълго плака.../ Затвори във сърцето си скръбта/ и утрото замислено дочака* (ibid., p. 72). Dubarova keeps narrating the consequences of the oil spill eventually presenting the people who refuse to understand: “But he was silent in a light so gray/ His wound smarting bitter/ The beautiful, perished wave/ Kept spilling her poisoned litter...”| *Но то мълчеше в сива светлина/ и пареше му раната горчива –/ красивата загинала вълна./ Отровата не спря да се разлива...* (ibid., p. 72). The direct victims of the ecological disaster – dying fish, dolphins and seaweed also come into view with some naturalism arising from the vivid economical depiction the graphical concreteness of which is as much as hinted at, but as with so many of Dubarova’s works, it can easily be finalized through the readers’ imagination (ibid., p. 72). The poem finishes upon a postapocalyptic vision prophetically evoking a nuclear disaster (Chernobyl) or a nuclear arms exchange, which was always in the air during the Cold War, with an equally devastating effect on the sea: “And someday a freezing scowling cold/ Will envelop the harbor, oh so gray/ Under black foam as if under a mold/ At his feet the sea will die away”| *И някой ден навъсен, студ суров/ пристанището сиво ще облъхне, под черна пяна като под покров/ в нозете му морето ще издъхне* (ibid., p. 72). Plath’s highly evocative metaphor of the *bell jar* finds its place in Dubarova’s poem through portraying similar masks of uncaring people and indifferent institutions; the latter in Dubarova are completely absent for understandable reasons, crystalizing, like in Plath’s novel, into the *mold*, enveloping, covering all, effectively stifling life.

At this tender age Dubarova easily compares to the early Plath in the themes of her poems and the depth with which she treats them, creating an environment eerily free of adults. While they are visibly and palpably there in Plath’s early poem “Bitter Strawberries” (Plath, 1981, p. 299), in Dubarova their presence is usually reduced to the classroom where they stand in hierarchical opposition to the children.

Dubarova’s poetry goes through a transformation from 1977 onwards, becoming increasingly transcendental. The sea gradually recedes, the topics of secrets, lies,

guilt, ingratitude become central, the school is omnipresent as an insupportable oppressive institution, the school uniform – hateful because of its insistence on monochrome colors in a contrast with the poet’s “multicolor girl’s heart”. The bodily perceptions, the ecstasy and hedonistic delight of contemplating the changing cityscape with the beloved sea nearby no longer work and are ousted by an impostor – the preoccupation with the spiritual at the expense of the carnal. Religion also slowly creeps in but rather as a question to which Dubarova’s answer is that after death we live on in our children, thus taking a position very close to that of Plath – the nonexistence of God as we know Him from the Bible.

The analyzed works by the two female poets have shown the importance of their growing up by the sea. Plath was closer in age to Dubarova when she created her poems from *Juvenilia*, but they are not precisely dated. At any rate, she must have been at least 17 or 18 years of age, judging by Hughes’s note, and still may have written from memory. The sea from her childhood is more present in her letters and *Johnny Panic* (2001) prose. The poems by Dubarova are the freshest take on living and growing up by the sea as they evolved from the sunny summer girl, smiling, and laughing. Unfortunately, she became the serious school student who from her photographs does impart the look of a prisoner in a school uniform who would share that her hell is the high school – the English Language School of Burgas, with its relentless intransigence and rigid discipline. Dubarova’s poems are then unique because they not only recreate childhood in the 1970s Comecon Bulgaria, but they are children’s literature written by a child which can also be enjoyed by adults. Further transformations of space related to the sea are to be observed in both writers’ prose.

In her essay “Ocean 1212-W” (Plath, 2001, p.24) written in 1962 from the prose collection *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams*, Plath returns yet again to her childhood, this time around from the perspective of the twenty-nine-year-old adult, the age when Anne Sexton created her first major childhood-based poems. The essay shows the confidence of a writer who has proved her craft and who reaches back to times gone by, evoking yet again the mighty American Atlantic from her current life in England: “My childhood landscape was not land but the end of land – the cold, salt, running hills of the Atlantic. I sometimes think my vision of the sea is the clearest thing I own. I pick it up, exile that I am, like the purple ‘lucky stones’” (ibid., p. 24). Plath’s stance is clearly detached, reflective, yet the intensity of the memory gives concreteness and clarity to every detail, we can feel the significance of the experience through the senses of the child that Plath was. To be able to plunge into the distant past, and with that, quickly acclimatize the reader, similarly to the described technique from her *Journals*, she indulges in a *Mrs. Dalloway* stream of consciousness sequence based on a game of free associations, so she gets to the inscrutable sea: “The motherly pulse of the sea made a mock of such counterfeits. Like a deep woman, it hid a

good deal; it had many faces, many delicate, terrible veils” (ibid., p. 24). While in Dubarova’s representations of the sea it rather resembles an old giant with manlike qualities, for Plath it bears the similitude of a woman, in Bulgarian the word belonging to the neuter gender, in English to the nonanimate “it” category of nouns, which technically puts it in the same place.

Once before the wave is about to engulf her, with her mother catching her heels, the narrator is stopped for the first time from breaking through: “I often wonder what would have happened if I had managed to pierce that looking-glass. Would my infant gills⁹ have taken over, the salt in my blood?” (ibid., p. 24). Plath’s essay contains essential information about the first conscious transformation into an *other* zoomorphic entity, an amphibian that could have belonged to another world. Plath’s suggested transformation asks the question if it is possible, in this world, to live in an alternate reality, if we could transgress spaces and change even physically in the process, like Jack Sally from *Avatar* (2009) or Leto II Atreides from Frank Herbert’s *Children of Dune* (1987). Since the zoomorphic transformation remains checked in mid-action, Plath allows it to continue in the warped reality reproduced by the memory – in an inversed transformation of the skates “the shape of old pillowslips with the full, coy lips of women” (ibid., p. 25). While this anthropomorphic change looks grotesque and unsettling, the little girl turning into a fish is a whole new promising world that did not happen. Like Anne Sexton who had a grandfather living close to the breaking waves of the Atlantic, so did Plath – a grandmother who had a house there. Her phone number OCEAN 1212-W sounds like an incantation when repeated to the operator – an instant teleportation to a marine Terabithia where the sounds of the sea were combined with the fascinating discoveries of beachcombing over “mountains of rattling and cranking purple stones” (ibid., p. 25). Such a location has all the oneiric potential for endless daydreaming. Fantasizing remains in the realm of the would-be amphibian girl’s imagination who in “the same sea-bitten house” (ibid., p. 26) dreams of the sea washing up “a drowned sailor” (ibid., p. 26), thus wishing to connect romantically with other men of the sea who, however, realistically can exist only in death. This

9. In *The Bell Jar* (1966) the actual presence of gills in a human is a scientific fact but also related to death: “I thought drowning must be the kindest way to die, and burning the worst. Some of those babies in the jars that Buddy Willard showed me had gills, he said. They went through a stage where they were just like fish” (p. 166). The return to this early phase of human prenatal existence is linked to losing the faculty of abstract thinking, reading, and writing, with speaking severely reduced to short sentences. To act upon it, Plath demonstrates how her protagonist tries swimming as far out as possible (p. 167), a death realized in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* as Edna Pontellier’s road to freedom, also tried by Jack London himself, without success, so his Martin Eden from the eponymous novel kills himself by swimming towards the bottom of the sea. Plath’s novel is, above all, about a terrible loss of communication as well, leading to a complete communication breakdown, the road to getting “mad”. – a. n.

realization, undoubtedly, brings necrophiliac connotations to Plath's account. At the moment of writing the essay Hughes may have already left Plath and she would fantasize about relating to dead men rather than to alive ones – in life Hughes could be substituted by no one.

In the essay, having felt her gills almost sprouting, she keeps identifying with oceanic creatures, each one reflecting her attitudes to different events in her life: “a sad sea urchin” (ibid., p. 27) upon the birth of her brother, etc. The narrator in the essay repeats the exercise unobserved – entering the water half hoping to be sucked in by the sea, but instead, remaining alive and out of the water she feels “a reject” (ibid., p. 27).

Feeling rejected by the ocean that does not quite accept her as a worthy creature of the sea, the speaker keeps supplying food for her marine fantasies by describing how she would nurse injured starfish watching them regrow their lost arms (ibid., p. 27). The bits and pieces of conjured up childhood are finally all blown up into fragments of a sea storm: “Nothing could be seen. The only sound was a howl, jazzed up by the bangs, slams, groans and splinterings of objects tossed like crockery in a giants’ quarrel” (ibid., p. 30). The childhood spent near the ocean for Plath is mythological and transformative on a physical and mental level – she turns *amphibian*, occasionally borrowing other kindred marine animal forms, the sea elements turn into *quarreling giants*, a beach stroll potentially yields a *drowned sailor*.

In her short story “Sunday at the Mintons” (1952), Plath offers an early take on transgressing the water element, narrating about a retired brother and his helping sister, Henry and Elizabeth, the former a rather poorly concealed representation of her idealistic beau and the latter being herself. Plath employs a few of these female avatars – Sally from “That Widow Mangada” and even Alice from “Stone Boy with Dolphin” and “Among the Bumblebees”, identifying with Lewis Carroll’s Alice, thus speaking about her own fictionalized experiences as an omniscient confessional narrator. Eerily prophesying about a certain part of her family routines with Hughes, Plath describes the boring daily existence of Elizabeth “circumscribed once more by domestic duties” (ibid., p. 301). Being a confirmed daydreamer, Elizabeth goes with her brother to the pier where her amethyst brooch falls under a rock. The brother retrieves it but as she watches suddenly speechless, she sees him carried away by an enormous wave. In her imagination he goes through yet another transformation occasioned by the ocean: “She envisioned a green, aquatic Henry dropping through layers of clouded water like a porpoise. There would be seaweed in his hair and water in his pockets. Weighted by the round gold watch, by the white-faced compass, he would sink down to the ocean floor” (ibid., p. 308). In the story the youthful imagination of Plath aged 20 pictures him “taking his afternoon stroll alone on Sundays, walking briskly in the dilute green light, prodding curiously at

the sea anemones with his cane” (ibid., p. 308). As Henry spends more time on the bottom of the ocean, he somehow becomes part of its stately silent world: “Even as she meditated, the features of Neptune’s kingly visage blurred, puffed, rounded, and there, turned to look at her, was the startled face of a much-altered Henry [...]. Poor Henry. Her heart went out to him in pity. For who would look after him down there among all those slippery, indolent sea creatures?” (ibid., p. 308).

Through Henry’s transformation Plath explores man’s vanity and narrowmindedness since Henry changes but not for the better. Miraculously surviving among the marine animals in the ocean, possibly breathing with his gills, the ones little Sylvia was on the way of growing in “Ocean 1212-W” (before she started dreaming of mermaids and mermen), he is ill adapted to life there, looks startled and unable to fit in. He was used to lecturing about maps, atmospheric pressure, the moon controlling the tides, but there he is completely deprived of the possibility to use his marine knowledge, being in the ocean. Playfully ironic, Plath allows Elizabeth to join him in a sort of a *Splash* (1984) reversed sacrifice – Elizabeth tries to follow him in the water, but a sharp gust of wind lifts the skirts of her lavender dress, and she is taken up in the air, herself and Henry being separated by all the water of the ocean. Still weighted down by his watch and all the trinkets he cares about, he is in the ocean while she floats over the waves in the air: “Her high-pitched, triumphant, feminine giggle mingled with the deep, gurgling chuckle of Henry, borne along beneath her on the outgoing tide” (ibid., p. 309).

The story is prophetic in more than one way of the relationship she was going to have with the man of her life – Ted Hughes – the rather formal manner of Henry reminiscent of the typical Englishman although Plath knew about England from the books she had studied at school. The ocean was to stand symbolically between them, but again in an inversed order – herself rather pulled down to earth, being reduced to domestic duties, constantly trying to adapt, and himself, lighthearted and carefree, master of his destiny, a modern womanizer who could not commit to loving and being with one woman, riding the uplifting air currents.

The short story, the most revelatory of her relationship with her father and symbolic of her identification with Carroll’s heroine is “Among the Bumblebees” set in Boston near the ocean. Plath’s father was a passionate apiarist and the bees he kept were an eternal object of fascination for Plath – in 1962 she was to write the so-called “Bee Poems”, a sequence of five poems reconnecting yet again with him. In “Among the Bumblebees”, we are presented with Plath’s image of her father as a well-intentioned giant who could always comfort and reassure her with his very intimate presence: “For Alice Denway’s father had been a giant of a man. In the blue blaze of his eyes was concentrated the color

of the whole overhead dome of sky, and when he laughed, it sounded as if all the waves of the ocean were breaking and roaring up the beach together” (ibid., p. 310).

Again, as is the case with other appearances of Plath’s father in fiction “The Colossus” and “Daddy”, the latter containing a blended yet differentiated portrayal of both her father and Ted Hughes, her father is a mythological figure identifying with the mighty ocean. On the beach he swims powerfully in the ocean while she watches him from the shore where the waves break. She seems to be the only one who can command this god as when she calls him, he returns to take her for a swim out on his back (ibid., p. 313), thus allowing her to tame the deep waters of the ocean: “the water, black and deep beneath her, would seem calm and friendly” (ibid., p. 313). The story goes on to add details of father-daughter intimacies in which she grows ever stronger with the sensation that powerful as he is, he is but a “tame lion” (ibid., p. 314) in her hands. It is through this vital for the little girl communication that she also connects to the raging elements outside the house, establishing harmony with them as well, like Jack Sally braving the aerial challenges from *Avatar* with the help of his *ikran*:

Sitting on her father’s lap in the den, watching the waves at the end of the street whipped to a ragged froth of foam and blown spray against the seawall, Alice learned to laugh at the destructive grandeur of the elements. The swollen purple and black clouds broke open with blinding flashes of light, and the thunderclaps made the house shudder to the root of its foundations. But with her father’s strong arms around her and the steady reassuring beat of his heart in her ears, Alice believed that he was somehow connected with the miracle of fury beyond the windows, and that through him, she could face the doomsday of the world in perfect safety (ibid., p. 314).

Although Alice feels godly in the presence of her father, she is not a true mistress of the elements the way that he is their master, which requires his daily presence next to her. His power of control is so comprehensive that he is able to catch a bee in flight and release it before he gets stung since the bees will not even sting him, awed by his powers (ibid., p. 315), a textual reference to “Bitter Strawberries” where the bees turn into war airplanes. With this potential transformation of theirs, Alice’s father proves to be the undisputed master of all living things under the sky.

Having become half-amphibian or having a male character complete the ichthyological transformation that she was probably afraid to go through with makes Plath’s characters less part of the otherworldly half-human, half-animal beings than the half-serpent, half-human Alice makes the girl a true serpent in Carroll’s book. The reason for that is that the sea creatures in Plath’s texts remain more realistically mute than Carroll’s nonsense talking bizarre creations. Still, the desire to transgress the human form and be an indescribable and unknowable

other is part of a magical childhood in which the child could play God. From the marine zoomorphic transformations to identifying with the gods of the sea, Plath's mythological childhood spent near the ocean is woven in lore that proves prophetic as regards her future marriage and relationships with men. Plath tried to be the grown-up goddess, but the world was not so pliable in her hands and having forever lost her faithful *ikran* she had to go through yet other transformations of her feminine selves before she could become *Lady Lazarus*.

Just like Plath's, Dubarova's prose (short stories, journal entries and letters) is key to understanding better the poems, revealing some processes and circumstances behind the scenes, but the prose is important in its own right, especially the short stories and the *Journal*. Both modes show Dubarova completely capable of telling an interesting story with an enviable immediacy, lively dialogue, and sharp concern for meaningful detail. It is amazing that Dubarova managed to fill over 400 pages of quality literary material at the brittle age of between 11 and 17. Of course, just like the very young Plath, not everything she wrote is top-notch, but what makes her feat even more impressive is that she did not have the highly professional literary dignitaries such as Alfred Kazin that Plath had but had her schoolteachers from whom she could not have learned much. As for poetry advisors, the best known was the late poet Hristo Fotev whose poetry is arguably less impressive than Dubarova's by comparison. So whence the universal appeal and high literary quality of her writings? It is evident that if Bulgaria ever had a self-made naturally born poet, Dubarova was the one.

The first transformation I will discuss in her is a short story – a masterfully crafted modern fairy tale called “A Sea Tale” (*Морска приказка*). In it she uses Alice's conceit of falling asleep and dreaming about turning into a fish, a similar technique to Plath's in “Sunday at the Minton's”. At the time of writing, she was only 13. Below I offer my translation of the tale in question.

The waves are still bashing their cold watery foreheads against my chest. My eyes, aching with fatigue, seem to still see the black mussels turn their pointed ends at my feet. In my stomach – swallowed sea water. It is welling up, surging towards my mouth. Perhaps unhappy for my having locked it where it is dark and cramped. My arms, like death-tired gills¹⁰, are feebly dangling. The eyelids, heavy with the salt and water, will not close.

Сякаш още блъскат вълните студени мокри чела в гърдите ми. Преуморените ми до болка очи като че още виждат черните миди, обърнали остриета към нозете ми. В стомаха ми тежи погълнатата морска вода. Тя се бунтува, повдига се към устата ми. Недоволна е може би, че съм я затворила на тъмно и тясно. Като уморени до смърт хриле на риба лежат отпуснати ръцете. Клепките тежат от солта и водата, но не се затварят.

10. Perhaps also a subconscious desire to become one with the sea in drowning. The imagery is strongly present in Plath and is both mythological and moribund. – a. n.

How did I insult the sea? Why did he suck my last drop of strength so cruelly? Why did he make my lips blue, blue, like the color of his depths?...

The tired eyelids lap warmly the pupils of my eyes. I fall asleep...

I ride the waves with my eyes closed. Let them take me somewhere. In between my fingers, like annoying little snakes, are writhing blue and black seaweed. The sun is touching my back with the fiery palm of his hand. But suddenly I turn my eye towards the shore: "Oh, Sea, wait, take me back!"

My arms turn cold and refuse to move. Involuntarily, I bite into the flesh of a big wave and run out of air. I sink. The salty waters wash my eyes wide open. My body hits something. I fall through. But I breathe, I breathe! The air is wheezing between my nostrils and hits my lungs.

But where did I end up? I am afraid! How fast it all happened. I look at my feet. Uncannily, a stream of sunlight flows and creeps along the walls of my den. Now I notice that I find myself in a big cool vessel. I touch timidly the cold bottom. But this is an amphora! My initial astonishment is replaced by horror yet again: "Oh, you, stupid cruel amphora! Why did you swallow me? To see how slowly and painfully I will die of hunger and thirst? Why did you hide me and not let the sea drown me!?" I clench my fists and pound the high thick walls. I try to climb up, to get to the opening, which, strangely, is closed. But in vain I scratch and pound, to no avail I scream and cry. There is no one to hear. I fall to the bottom tired to death, and I sink into the depths of unconsciousness... I am awake and horrified again. Oh, how my body hurts. But strange again – it seems to be changing its shape. I close my eyes. I feel I am becoming smaller and smaller.

С какво ли обидих морето? Защо то така жестоко изпи и последната ми капка сили? Защо направи устните ми сини, сини, като цвета на дълбината си?...

Уморените клепки близват с топлина зениците. Заспивам...

Аз лежа върху вълните със затворени очи. Нека ме носят нанякъде. Между пръстите ми като досадни тънки змийчета се заплитат сини и черни водорасли. Слънцето сякаш е допряло до гърба ми горещата си длан. Но изведнъж обръщам очи към брега: „Море, чакай, върни ме!“

Ръцете ми изстиват и отказват да се движат. Без да искам, захапвам плътта на една висока вълна и въздухът ми свършва. Потъвам. Солените води мият широко отворените ми очи. Тялото ми се удря силно о нещо. Пропадам някъде. Но аз дишам, дишам! Въздухът остро свиста между ноздрите и дробовете ми.

Но къде попаднах? Страх ме! Колко бързо стана всичко. Поглеждам към нозете си. Незнайно от къде потича струя светлина и ползва край стениите на леговището ми. Сега забелязвам, че се намирам в огромен хладен съд. Докосвам плахо студено дъно. О, това е амфора! Но първото ми учудване е заместено отново от ужас: „О, ти, глупава, жестока амфора! Защо ме погълна? За да видиш как бавно и мъчително ще умра от глад и жажда? Защо ме скри, а не остави морето да ме удави!?“ Аз тискам в юмрук дланите си и удрям високите дебели стени. Помъчвам се да се покатеря нагоре, за да стигна отвора, който, кой знае защо, е затворен. Но напразно драскам и удрям, напразно креция и плача. Няма кой да ме чуе. Падам на дъното уморена до смърт и потъвам в дълбините на безсъзнанието... Отново съм будна и ужасена. О, колко силно ме боли тялото. Но странно — то сякаш изменя формата си. Затварям очи. Чувствавам, че се смалявам, смалявам.

Am I running out of air again? No, I want water. The amphora suddenly tilts. Its neck crashes open and as if a callous palm of someone's hand thrusts me into the water. Oh, how strange I swim! My head hurts from the strong blow. I raise my hand to touch it. The horror of it! Instead of hands I see two wretched fish gills. Yes, my whole body is the body of a fish. Why did the sea mock at my helpless state so? Why did he turn me from man into a stupid fish?

The same callous palm of a hand is shoving me somewhere. Below me are moving marine deserts covered with dead sands. Ugly clams peer at me, looking like black bulging eyes. A strange animal with slimy slippery legs stares at me and shakes its whole body, bristling up, as if to challenge me to a fight. I close my eyes. I do not want to look at anything anymore. But unexpectedly, my fish body touches the bottom. I look around. I find myself in a wonderful sea hall. From all sides – a forest of blue seaweed. Some reach up flexible arms and tremble ever so slightly. Others spread enormous petals looking like fans, sewn up from tender blue silk. In their shade the sand looks violet. A few rosy jellyfish depart from this shade and soar transparent and light as bladders of air. A trusting sea-horse alights without sound before me and looks at me with its black beady eyes.

Beside me swim schools of motley fish. But suddenly, in the fish world panic strikes. Something wiry and tight grabs me with thousands of others. It pierces my body, suffocating me. Now I realize. A fish trawler has cast its fishing net. Now I will die in it like so many millions of other fish. How cruel man is! How mercilessly he pillages the depths of the sea. Now I understand why the sea is insulted. For centuries he has been forced to bear – being locked in the shackles of thousands of ports, cut by the bottoms of so many ships, with its waters pillaged.

Но въздухът ми ли свършва? Не, искам вода. Амфората неочаквано залитва. Отворът ѝ с трясък се отваря и сякаш нечия груба длан ме изхвърля във водата. О, колко е странно плуването ми! Главата ме боли от силен удар. Вдигам ръка да я пипна. Ужасно! Вместо ръцете си виждам две жалки рибешики хриле. Да, цялото ми тяло е рибешико. Защо морето така се подиграва с беззащитността ми? Защо от човек ме превърна в глупава риба?

Същата груба длан ме тласка нанякъде. Под мен минават морски пустини с мъртви пясъци. Грозни миди ме поглеждат, приличащи на черни облепени очи. Някакво странно животно с гадни плъзгави крака се заглежда в мен и цялото се разтърсва, сякаш ме предизвиква да се бием. Затварям очи. Не искам да гледам повече нищо. Но неочаквано рибешикото ми тяло се докосва до дъното. Поглеждам. Намирам се в някаква чудна морска зала. От всички страни — гора от сини водорасли. Едни протягат нагоре гъвкави ръце и потреперват леко. Други разперват огромни листа, приличащи на ветрила, съшити от нежнотиния коприна. В сянката им пясъкът изглежда теменужен. Няколко розови медузи се отделят от тази сянка и изплуват нагоре, прозрачни и леки като мехури въздух. Едно доверчиво морско конче каца безшумно пред мен и ме поглежда с черните си стъклени очи.

Край мен преплуват пъстри ята риби. Но изведнъж сред рибешикия свят настъпва паника. Нещо жиливо и здраво грабва мен и хиляди други. То се впира в тялото ми, задушавя ме. Сега разбирам. Рибарски кораб е спуснал мрежата си. Сега и аз ще умра в нея както милиони риби. Колко е жесток човекът! Как безмилостно ограбва морските дълбини. Сега разбирам защо морето е обидено. Векове наред то е принудено да търпи — да бъде заключвано в оковите на хиляди пристанища, да бъде разрязвано от дъното на много кораби, да бъдат ограбвани водите му.

I see nothing else anymore. I lie – a breathless fish. And the fishermen have no idea that they have killed me – the man with the fish body. Perhaps someday the sea will treat them like he treated me. Then they will be killed by other people who will be equally unaware that by killing the sea, they will be killing themselves. I wake up. My head dizzy with my dream. Before me meek and quiet lies the sea.

Повече нищо не виждам. Аз лежа — бездиханна риба. А рибарите съвсем не знаят, че са убили мене — човека с рибешкото тяло. Може някога и с тях морето да постъпи както с мен. Тогава те ще бъдат убити от други хора, които също не ще знаят, че са убийци не на морето, а на самите себе си. Събуждам се. В главата ми тежи сънят. Пред мен смирено и утихнало лежи морето (Dubarova, 2015, 2 pp. 8-10).

In this early piece of prose, Dubarova remarkably builds a story of zoomorphic transformation full of vivid details – from the *black and blue seaweed* to *jellyfish* and *seahorses*. The man-fish takes a closer look at the marine animals. It should be noted that Dubarova recreates a convincing animated depiction of sea life and that its representatives – plants and animals are endemic to the Black Sea, in the same way that we have the plants and animals typical of the US Atlantic coast in Plath – anemones, sea urchins and starfish. The textural properties of the coastline are also present in both – with Plath, the pebbly beach, while with Dubarova, the beach is sandy, reflecting its geophysical qualities in Boston and Burgas, respectively. Just like with Plath, the portrayal of the underwater world is not entirely pleasant for the puzzled human being turned into a fish – there are animals that look frightening for the man-fish: *A strange animal with slimy slippery legs stares at me and shakes its whole body*. And again, like Plath, there are the cognitive perceptions of the amphibian who, in Dubarova's text, finishes his transformation and the only thing that has remained of the former human being is the consciousness. Unlike Plath, who keeps the story going from the imagination of the person not in the sea, Dubarova chooses to present the sea incident from the perspective of this human consciousness in the fish body. As a result, the sensation is sometimes painful with a naturalistic touch: *the air is wheezing between my nostrils and hits my lungs*. In “A Sea Tale”, Dubarova connects to the world of fairy tales and her ecological presentation of the story is reminiscent of the underwater world we see in Andersen's “The Little Mermaid”, elements of which are also present in Plath – the *King of the Sea* with his *trident*. In all three stories, Andersen's, Plath's and Dubarova's, there is the sensation of overwhelming silence, with the *gurgling* sounds of Henry in “Sunday at the Mintons”, which gives rather an additional mocking touch to people's insistence on communication at all cost, also mocked at in *Splash* where the mermaid, upon the insistence of Allen (Tom Hanks), speaks in her own sea language and all TV sets in the room burst to pieces.

The transformation in Dubarova's text has a very clear purpose – to show the world from the perspective of a fish that has fallen victim to humans, but a fish with human consciousness, thus presupposing that fish and humans can

be completely identical in their perceptions and mentality once put in the same body and the same environment, with the difference that fish do not speak. This presumption is, of course, naïve and is entirely within the concerns of the little girl aged 13 that Dubarova was. Plath, being much more mature, in at least 2 texts stops at the transformation to an amphibian body, both evoking the soviet writer's representation of an amphibian man's experiences, Alexander Belyaev in his *The Amphibian Man* (*Человек-амфибия*) from 1928. As mentioned, Dubarova, unlike Plath, did not have the best teachers in literature and writing. Still, her achievement is exceptional since she got to her writing heights not because of the circumstances but in spite of them.

Aged 14, in her short story – essay “Happiness” (*Щастие*) Dubarova undertakes yet another physical transformation based on self-negation. A girl of the joyful summer and warm southern sea, in this text Dubarova yearns for the winter in her desire to stifle and annihilate everything that connects her to the summer, and which unlocks her summerly behavior:

The summer should not have come. It simply should not. I am waiting for winter. I want her to come with eyes – nests of cold, with arms – make-believes, with hairs – thickened with mud and sorrow. I will go to her myself, will sink into her lap. I alone will hold out my hand. She will lock my heart in her cold orbit. I will not shiver, will only feel how my heart shrinks like a tortured warm clover and will not speak. I will go white, all of me. My eyes, like sunny bunnies, will turn livid black. The fierce frost will bite at my hair. I am waiting for winter. I want to see my summer dead – withered in a gray chimney or right under the trees. And grim, like a predatory fish, I will trample upon his hair and will go from here. It is then that my motley blood will darken, and my veins will interweave frightened into a forest.

Не трябваше да идва лятото. Не трябваше. Аз чакам зимата. Аз искам тя да дойде с очи – гнезда на студ, с ръце – измислици, с коси – набъбнали от кал и мъка. Аз сама ще ида при нея, ще потъна в лоното ѝ. Сама ще дам ръката си. Тя ще заключи сърцето ми в своята студена орбита. Аз няма да треперя, ще чувствам само как сърцето ми се свива като измъчена топла детелина и ще мълча. Ще побелея цялата. Очите ми, приличащи на слънчеви зайчета, ще станат сивочерни. Свирепата скреж ще загризе косите ми. Аз чакам зимата. Искам да видя мъртво моето лято – изсъхнало в някой сив комин или направо под дърветата. И мрачна като хищна риба, ще стъпча косите му и ще си отида. Едва тогава мойта пъстра кръв ще потъмнее и вените ми ще се сплетат уплашено в гора (ibid., p. 25).

In this striking text Dubarova manages to take herself apart and show how each single part of herself dies a winterly death. The winter is personified into a huge elderly woman with the irradiating power of turning everything white. This desire to kill all her youthful summerly emotions is a denial of the summer that prompts her to “go crazy” with all the enjoyment that it brings, and all the time spent by her beloved sea. The opening is remarkably profound and masterfully constructed, judging by the tender age of its author, and renders itself to many metaphorical interpretations, some of which can be the nuclear winter that could occur at any moment from a Cold War missile interchange – it was on TV all

the time on both sides of the Berlin Wall, or it could be the study process as its peacetime in-house equivalent. Identifying with the winter effectively kills off emotions and renders one close to death or dying. It could also simply mean a desire to not feel so much because feeling brings her pain as so amply attested to in Dubarova's numerous references to school, lessons, and examinations. Still, it could mean seeing herself in an *alter ego* which is her complete opposite, but this *significant other* is invited to nullify everything that she is, perhaps an early longing for death which will allow her to fit in society more and which eventually became a reality through silencing herself by her own hand.

The second paragraph removes most of the above suppositions and relegates the negation of the summer self to school experience where winter should prevail and from which we learn that it was the desk alone and its color that made the speaker happy, but everything else was counteractive and produced the desire of freezing her feelings and emotions:

Then my beautiful wooden desk will not dare sing green songs for me in class. I will not laugh at the red corrections in my class work. They will never resemble sunny bunnies to me. The glass in the window in class will be afraid to release golden paths of light towards my eyes. The port, sumptuous as a blue anemone, will dim its contour. And the ships will not trumpet touchingly when I am in class, being examined. They, light as dragonflies, will leave my cold town off to new happiness. And I will sink into gray bays of numbers, words, theses, and theorems. It is the only way to make my ravenous schoolbook¹¹ sate. He will look at me through his invisible glasses pleased. And I will, perhaps, become the queen of all knowledge.

Товага вече моят хубав дървен чин не ще посмее да ми пее в час зелени песни. Не ще се смя на червените поправки в контролното. Те никога не ще ми заприличат на слънчеви зайчета. Стъклото на прозореца в клас ще се страхува да спуска златни пътечки от светлина към очите ми. Пристанището, пищо като синя актиния, ще притули очертания. И корабите няма да тръбят трогателно, когато съм в клас и съм изпитвана. Те, леки като водни кончета, ще оставят моя студен град и ще тръгнат да търсят ново щастие. И аз ще потъна в сиви заливи на цифри, думи, теми, теореми. Единствено така ще задоволя глада на алчния си бележник. Той ще ме погледне през невидимите си очила доволен. И аз ще стана може би царица на всички знания (ibid., p. 25).

This paragraph reveals a 1984 surveillance and supervision model – the schoolbook which bore the marks that students were given. It was especially incriminating for the school students back in the 1970s through to the 2010s. Even though it continued to be used until 2019, its psychological power was from then on greatly diminished simply because students stopped paying so

11. The word in Bulgarian is “ученически бележник”, a small booklet where marks were regularly entered so that they could be seen by the parents. Before the electronic register became a reality for most schools in 2019 and parents started receiving notifications for each examination of their children, the schoolbook was the only way parents could see their children's school progress. The schoolbook bore the school seal and the principal's signature on its first page and was an official document. Often it was an interminable source of domestic drama. – a. n.

much attention to it, and so did the teachers. The text testifies to the fact that the schoolbook was a formidable weapon for disciplining the children into obedience since they could receive a low mark even when they were not being examined, simply because they might misbehave – laugh in class, etc. The green wooden desk where Dubarova sat suggests the potential for sensuous delight, but the teacher in the classroom usually brought an atmosphere of dead seriousness similar to what we see in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, hence Dubarova's appreciation of the British rock group. As the text suggests, Dubarova was easily distracted by the summer sounds outside – the *trumpeting ships* which turn into *dragonflies* and fly away where they stand a higher chance of making people happy. The *bronze Burgas* basking in summer sunshine from "Somewhere There" here becomes *my cold town*. The city perceived through the classroom, especially in summer, becomes modernistically unreal: *The port, sumptuous as a blue anemone, will dim its contour*. The prevalence of sea and water images related to parts of the city makes the school a frontier of harshness, gestapo-like discipline, and insensitiveness in the daily acquisition of new knowledge. To be apt to the task, the speaker will have to deny everything that she is – the sunny girl – and blend in the school winter reigning supreme.

The short essay reveals a poem-like structure, poetry in prose as everything that Dubarova wrote in her early writings was certainly poetical just like all that Plath wrote throughout her works was poetical, poetry or prose. The speaker's realization is that she would like *winter* to come for her although she is all *summer*. Her reference to being poor as a reason for not having the *winter* strongly suggests that one needs to have a certain predisposition to be able to associate with *winter* in actual summer. And then the question is if the speaker is so *poor* in these qualities that *winter* simply can have no hold over her. Dubarova's weaponry for resisting *winter* – her *green desk, window, sunlit port, herself, all her ships, smiles, sunny bunnies* are all strong insular reflections of *summer* which persist even when astronomical winter has come. All the transformed urban elements to the smallest item – the *green desk* work as a protective shield forever stopping *winter* from taking over and this is expressed in the sudden change of the subject – 'I' becomes 'we'. The essay ends with the hope which, as we know, turned out to be an illusion: "And perhaps my schoolbook, manuals, they will forgive every little deviation of mine because, after all, I am the summer's daughter... I am happy to have the summer!" | *И може би бележникът, учебниците ще ми прощават всяко малко отклонение, защото все пак аз съм дъщеря на лятото... Щастлива съм, че имам лятото!* (ibid., p. 26).

This essay is one that connects Dubarova to Plath yet again – in the accumulative image of *the summer's daughter* almost identical with the more sumptuous *summer queen* in Plath. It also expresses Dubarova's desire to become *the queen of knowledge* corresponding to the overachieving Plath who in her *Journals* expresses the desire to command a vast knowledge of the world. The sad reality for Dubarova is that she was at school, not college, and she was subjected to an inhuman system of factological and ideological material present in almost all

subjects without access to the examples of great literature. The rest of the short stories, especially from 1979, together with the journal entries, show a certain departure from the highly poetical expression of the early prose work, suggesting that perhaps Dubarova was advised to make this differentiation and so we get well-written short stories more in line with what was being written at the time in Bulgaria where the sea is hardly present. Having lost the connection with it, its healing effects of daydreaming no longer work and so Dubarova succumbs to the forces she has so aptly fended off by portraying it time and again in her works. Likewise, with Plath, it also loses its power of creating life-saving seascapes. The ocean in Boston from 1953 evoked by the self-exiled Plath in London 10 years later becomes nothing but another vector to a possible suicide as demonstrated in *The Bell Jar* (1966), thus the darker overtones of Plath's seascapes, never completely absent in her works, finally catch up with her.

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SEXISM ON DISPLAY: THE IMAGE OF WOMEN POLITICIANS THROUGH THE PRISM OF JOURNALISTIC DISCOURSE

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Abstract: *From 1960s onwards sexist language intended to denigrate, objectify and trivialize women has been seriously exposed internationally and huge efforts were made to replace it with gender-neutral language. However, to date, sexism has not been fully suppressed and it is especially conspicuous in relation to women who assume active roles in public life.*

This study has both qualitative and quantitative design and looks into the presence of overt and implicit sexism (as categorized by Mills, 2008) in journalistic discourse and the role of sexist language in molding the image of modern day women politicians. For the purposes of this study, we conduct a critical discourse analysis of a corpus of 40 news articles published on various online news portals and electronic platforms of traditional media. All analyzed articles comment on the political statements and actions of two Macedonian female politicians currently in office – the Minister of Defense and the Mayor of the city of Skopje.

The findings suggest that Macedonian journalistic discourse, under the pretext that politicians' dealings need to be monitored closely, scrutinized and even criticized, still leaves the door slightly open for both overt and implicit sexist linguistic forms, which, in turn, depicts female politicians as ill-suited for this type of professional occupation.

Keywords: *sexism, women politicians, journalistic discourse*

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Introduction

Sexism has been a keenly debated topic since the 1960s especially in the English language (Lillian, 2007; Mills, 2008). Feminist theorists and activists put special efforts to change the way women were represented in advertisements, newspapers and magazines, and also the way they were named and addressed in texts and in interaction (Mills, 2008, p. 1).

Literature review shows that a lot of definitions of sexism have been offered so far, depicting sexism as “language which discriminated against women by representing them negatively” (Vetterling-Braggin, 1981), or as “a set of traditional beliefs about the characteristics and behaviors considered appropriate for women and men, which have a pernicious influence on women by perpetuating their subordination to men” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001; Glick et al., 2000); “the ideology and practice of relegating women to a lower rung on the social hierarchy than men simply by virtue of their femaleness” (Lillian, 2007, p. 720); etc.

As can be seen in the definitions, sexism reflects discriminatory attitude mainly towards women, most frequently expressed via sexist language intended to belittle women and trivialize the activities associated with them.

Parks and Robertson (1998, p. 478) identify a number of linguistic forms that can be characterized as sexist language. These include: false generics (e.g. *he*, *mankind*), hierarchical and separatist terms (e.g. *man and wife*, sex differentiated job titles), and words that can decrease self-esteem and negate personal identity (e.g. referring to adult females as *girls* rather than *women*, emphasizing the importance of women’s marital status with titles such as *Miss* and *Mrs.*). Similarly, under sexist language Mills (2008) lists different elements such as: the use of generic pronouns such as *he* (when used to refer to both males and females); word endings such as *-ette* used to refer to women (e.g. *usherette*); nouns referring to men and women which seem to have a different range of meanings (e.g. *landlord* and *landlady*, *manager* and *manageress*); insult terms which seem to differ for men and women; the names women are given and those which are used for parts of their bodies, etc. In fact, Mills (2008) adopts a wider perspective on sexism and advocates for a much more fluid and pragmatic, context-dependent view of sexism. She purports that statements may be considered to be sexist if they rely on stereotypical and outdated beliefs regarding women’s roles in society; when they imply that men’s experience is human experience, or when they are based on the presupposition that any activity associated with women is necessarily trivial or secondary in relation to male activities (Mills, 2008, pp. 1-2).

Research shows that people learn sexist language at an early age (Hyde, 1984), and that in the course of time it becomes a linguistic habit (Lips, 1997). Swim

et al. (2004) discuss the reasons why people resort to using sexist language, and mention that it is traditional and ingrained in the current written and spoken language practice; people lack knowledge about what constitutes sexist language; some people do not even believe that such a language is sexist, and, in some cases, people use it simply to protect the already established social hierarchies. Mills (2008) also brings forth interesting arguments about the motivation behind using sexist language – sexism is sometimes motivated by fear and hatred; people align themselves with particular conservative models of social formation; there exists “a conflict and competition over resources and status” and “women’s ‘natural’ role is at odds with women’s actual roles in contemporary society” (Mills, 2008, p. 41). And this final argument clearly refers to women who assume active roles in public life, particularly women who engage in politics, as in the past the political arena was mainly reserved only for male individuals. As contemporary societies around the world are making huge progress in many respects, politics seems to become increasingly more welcoming of women; however, these changes do not transpire without any opposition and resistance.

Sexist language has been a widely explored topic in English but this certainly is not the case with the Macedonian language. Furthermore, the Macedonian society which is rather traditional and patriarchal in the recent decades is faced with a surge of female politicians who undertake active roles in making important political decisions. Their actions and words surely do not go unnoticed on the part of the general public that is gradually getting used to this new reality, but also by the Macedonian media whose reporting molds public opinion about women politicians to a great extent. Considering the above stated, this study, by means of critical discourse analysis, focuses on researching the presence of sexist language in Macedonian journalistic discourse.

Theoretical background

Sexism in journalistic discourse targeting female politicians

Analyzing sexism in politics has attracted the attention of a number of researchers who explored the forms of sexism used in newspapers, television, radio programs, social media, etc. Thus, for instance, Hellinger (2006), analyzed German national newspapers in an attempt to detect the ways in which the former German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was named. The findings of this study show that the most frequently used title with reference to Merkel was the social title which discloses her marital status – ‘Frau Merkel’, and that, understandably, was not the case with her male colleagues.

Mills (2008) discusses the representation of the former UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett in newspapers where she discerns that there is very little

direct quotation of Beckett herself and many quotations of other politicians and journalists' commenting Beckett's political dealings. This, in Mills' (2008) view, means that women's voices are being relatively 'unaccessed' when they are represented in the media, and that they do not get the same treatment as their male politicians. Instead, women are associated with the private sphere, and an emphasis is put on their private life roles of daughters, wives, mothers, etc. Additionally, Mills (2008) underlines the fact that female politicians are often attacked through sexist language by drawing attention to their sexuality or attractiveness, as if that disqualifies them from claiming a place in the public sphere. Similarly, Page (2005), who investigated the way that Cherie Blair and Hillary Rodham Clinton have been described in the media, notices that media focus is on the crises in their personal lives, rather than on their professional careers and achievements. White (2006) analyses a news report in the Guardian about Margaret Beckett when she was appointed Foreign Secretary in the Labour government. White (2006) notices that despite that overall positive message about Beckett, there are still a number of ways in which the report undermines her political role by shifting the focus on her private life.

Mills' (2008) classification of sexist language

A number of researchers who have analyzed the concept of sexism pointed to the existence of different types of sexism (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1999, 2000; Lorenzi-Cioldi & Kulich, 2015; Mills, 2008). For the purposes of this study we draw on Mills' (2008) classification of sexism into *overt sexism* and *indirect sexism*, presented in her book *Sexism and Language*. Overt or direct sexism is the type of usage which can be straightforwardly identified through the use of linguistic markers, or through the analysis of presupposition, which has historically been associated with the expression of discriminatory opinions about women, which signals to hearers that women are seen as an inferior group in relation to males. Drawing on previous researchers' findings and on her own, Mills (2008) identifies a number of categories of overt sexist language. The 'generic pronouns' 'he'/'him'/'his'/'himself' when used to refer to both men and women are considered an instance of overt sexism as their usage is interpreted to suggest that male is the norm and female is the marked form, and thus contribute to the general invisibility of females within language and society. Similarly, 'generic' nouns such as the noun *man* are also deemed sexist as they are used to refer to both men and women but, in essence, more often than not, they refer only to men. Feminist theorists have noted that the insult terms used for women such as *bitch*, *ho*, *pimp* and *faggot* are also overtly sexualized (Braun, 1999; Braun & Kitzinger, 1999, in Mills, 2008). Semantic derogation of terms which have been associated with powerful women or with femininity such as *lady*, *governess*, *mistress*, *madam* and *dame*, have historically become pejorative, whereas their male equivalents retained their associations with high

status (Schultz, 1990, p. 136, in Mills, 2008). Also, in the pairs of words for women and men (e.g. *host* and *hostess*), the word to denote the female tends to pick up a sexual overtone, which is not present in the word used for the male; thus, *hostess* can mean (a) a bar worker who is sometimes a sex worker, (b) an air stewardess and (c) someone who hosts a party; whereas only the latter meaning, a *host*, is available for males. The first names given to women tend to have diminutive forms (e.g. *Debbie*, *Nikki*, *Maggie*, *Mandy*), whereas male names tend not to have diminutive forms (Mills, 2008, p. 26). The titles *Mrs.* and *Miss* draw attention to the marital status of women in a way that the term for men *Mr.* does not. The term *Ms.* was introduced in the 1970s in the UK and US in order to give women the option of choosing to represent themselves as something other than married or unmarried (Mills, 2008, p. 31). *Transitivity* refers to women often being represented as the recipient of others' actions, i.e. in the object rather than in the subject position in sentences (Wareing, 1994 and Mills, 1995b, in Mills, 2008). As for *reported speech*, Mills (2008) draws attention to Caldas-Coulthard's (1995) contention that there is a tendency in news reports for the speech of females to be represented in indirect rather than in direct speech, which suggests that women's statements are often mediated by newspapers.

The above stated forms of overt sexist language have been contested by feminists for a very long time and, as a result, they became stigmatized by most language users. However, Mills (2008, p. 7) argues that has led to an increased use of a more indirect or discourse level of sexism which manages to express sexism whilst at the same time denying responsibility for it. Actually, Mills (2008) claims that it is not always possible to agree on what is sexist, in that sexism is an evaluation of an intent to be sexist rather than an inherent quality of the utterance or text alone. Thus, in Mills' (2008) terms, *humor* often exaggerates certain features associated with a group or draws on and plays with stereotypical knowledge for comic effect. For example, humorous utterances will presuppose that men and women are different and exaggerate that supposed difference. This type of a joke can help to create a sense of solidarity amongst men and will reinforce the unequal power relations. Also, Mills (2008) argues that *collocations*, which are used to represent women in the public sphere, associated with conflict or problems, and which trivialize women's roles, characterizing women as unfit to fully assume males' role are instances of indirect sexism. Indirect sexism is also deemed to occur in prefacing sexist statements with disclaimers or hesitation (e.g. *I don't want to be sexist or politically incorrect but...*), which allows for the sexist statement to be made whilst permitting the speaker to avoid charges of intentional sexism. *Androcentric perspective* refers to a great number of words in the English language which etymologically display a male perspective at work; whereas *narrative pathways or scripts* and *metaphors* according to Mills (2008) are brought into play in news reports about women and men in the

public sphere and present an institutionalized indirect sexism, where sexual or romantic scenarios or scripts are drawn on when referring to women in positions of institutional power.

Mills' (2008) discussion of sexist language is not limited only to these forms; however, to discuss and analyze all of them would be far beyond the scope of the study at hand.

Research methodology

In this study we analyze the way Macedonian women politicians are represented in journalistic discourse and whether sexist language is employed in reference to them to degrade their contribution in politics. More specifically, drawing on Mills' (2008) classification of sexist language, we wanted to inspect the presence of overt sexism (the modes of address used in reference to the female politician and the use of reported speech in conveying their actual statements) and the existence of implicit forms of sexism (humor, collocations, scripts and metaphors). The ultimate goal of this research was to inspect how these forms, if present, mold female politicians' public image.

For the purposes of this study we compiled a corpus of 40 newspaper articles, published on various Macedonian internet news portals (e.g. Alon, Makfaks, Kurir, MKD, Sakam da kazam, etc.) and online platforms of traditional Macedonian television programs (e.g. Telma, Alfa, etc.), in the period from January to October, 2022 (see Appendix for links and titles of news articles). Twenty of the articles in the corpus pertain to the current Macedonian Minister of Defense, Slavjanka Petrovska's public statements and political moves. Given that the Minister of Defense assumed office shortly before the outburst of the war in Ukraine at the beginning of 2022, her public statements and interviews mainly pertain to this major military conflict, which affects the world at large, our country including. As Macedonia has recently become a member of NATO, its position regarding the war is in line with the position of NATO. The articles included in the corpus were retrieved randomly as a result of online research by using the following key words: *Slavjanka, Petrovska, Minister of Defense*. The other 20 news articles refer to the current mayor of the City of Skopje, Danela Arsovska, who assumed office in 2021. All the analyzed articles about her were released in September and October, 2022 and were about the sudden and rather unexpected feud between the mayor and the opposition party, VMRO DPMNE¹, which supported her candidature in the pre-election campaign. The key words used in finding these articles were: *Danela, Arsovska, Mayor, Skopje*.

The analysis of the selected articles was based on critical discourse analysis (CDA), which according to Fairclough (1995, p. 131) views language as a social

1. VMRO DPMNE stands for Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity. – a. n.

practice, i.e. both a socially shaped and socially shaping mode of action that is historically and socially situated. The discussion on the obtained results was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Overall, the analysis tried to provide answers to the following three research questions:

- Q1. Is sexist language targeting female politicians present in Macedonian journalistic discourse?*
- Q2. If present, is the sexist language in journalistic discourse overt or implicit, or both?*
- Q3. If present, how does sexist language mold the image of female politicians in journalistic discourse?*

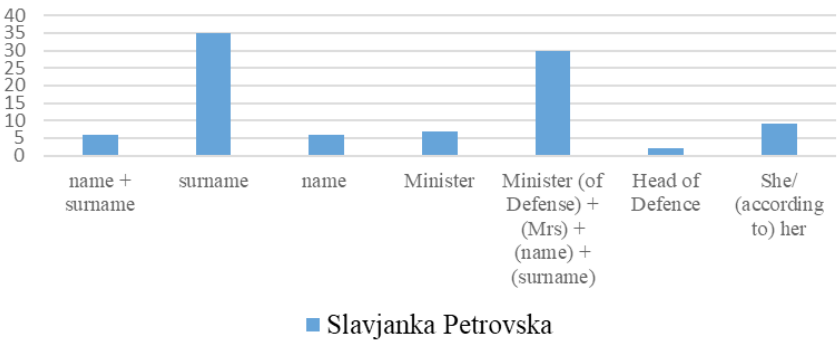
Results

Analysis of the news articles about the Minister of Defense, Slavjanka Petrovska

First, we were interested in the overt form of sexism and we investigated the ways this female politician was referred to in the analyzed articles. A number of modes of reference surfaced in that respect: name; surname; name + surname; Minister; Minister (of Defense) + (Mrs.) + (name) + surname; Head of Defense, and the pronouns *she* and *her* (in the phrase ‘according to her’) (Table 1).

The analysis showed that of all these options the current Macedonian Minister of Defense in journalistic discourse was predominantly addressed by her *surname* (36%). The omission of her professional title, Minister of Defense, could be attributed to the tendency to employ economical linguistic expression in the news articles to avoid overburdening the news with unnecessary information already known to the readers. However, it could also be interpreted as a deliberate avoidance of her professional title as a result of implicit disapproval of her holding what traditionally used to be a typically male political post in the Macedonian political arena.

Table 2.
Modes of reference used for the Minister of Defense in news articles



As far as the professional title *minister* is concerned, as Macedonian is a grammatically gendered language, there are two separate terms, one for males – *министер*, and one for females – *министерка*. In all the analyzed news articles, the female term – *министерка* was used, which points to the fact that this type of overt sexism is avoided and that this term has entered into common use in the Macedonian context as the number of women holding this political post has increased over the past decades.

Now, it is important to mention that the professional title *министерка* (*minister* (fem.)) on its own was not very frequently used (7.4%). In fact, in most of the cases the title was combined with other terms/titles and that was the second most frequently used mode of reference in the analyzed articles (31.5%). More specifically, there were cases in which the title was used in its full form but without the name and the surname (*Министерката за одбрана*) (*Minister* (fem.) *of Defense*) (2.1%), in some cases the title Minister was combined with the surname (*Министерката Петровска*) (*Minister* (fem.) *Petrovska*) (5.2%), or with both the name and the surname (*Министерката Славјанка Петровска*) (*Minister* (fem.) *Slavjanka Petrovska*) (6.3%). In most cases, the full title was combined with the full name of the female politician (*Министерката за одбрана Славјанка Петровска*) (*Minister* (fem.) *of Defense Slavjanka Petrovska*) (16.8%). There was only one instance in which the title *Minister* was combined with the title that indicates the politician's marital status *госпоѓа* (Mrs.) and her surname (*Министерката за одбрана г-ѓа Петровска*) (*Minister* (fem.) *of Defense Mrs. Petrovska*) (1.05%).

The other modes of reference that were rather infrequently used included the following: *Head of Defense* (2.1%); name + surname (6.3%); name (6.3%), and the pronouns *she* and *her* (in the phrase '*according to her*') (9.4%). The use of all of these, apart from *Head of Defense*, could be indicative of using overt sexist language, intended to trivialize the politician's professional role. Of all these modes of reference, the least respectful and, perhaps, the most sexist one is using the politician's first *name*, which points to adopting a highly informal tone, which, in turn, clearly signals disregard for the politician's position. In addition, the content of the news articles which make use of the Minister's name is purely ironical or even sarcastic and is intended to question the politician's capacity for holding such a demanding public position (see Ex. 1 and Ex. 2).

Ex. 1 Доколку ја нападне Украина: Славјанка ќе го бомбардира Путин со пораки на Вибер.

(If an attack is launched on Ukraine, Slavjanka will bombard Putin with viber messages)

Ex. 2 Славјанка го искара Путин: Руската инвазија врз Украина го наруши мирот во Европа, со сојузниците во НАТО ќе ја браниме и ќе ја одбраниме демократијата.

(Slavjanka scolds Putin: Russian invasion of Ukraine undermines peace in Europe, we will defend democracy with our NATO allies and we shall prevail)

Both examples above are intended to disclose to the readers the apparent ‘ludicrousness’ and ‘lack of rationality’ of the politician, who with her statements condemning Putin, in fact, sounds as if she is instigating a conflict with Russia, despite the fact that Macedonia is no match for Russia in any possible respect. In other words, the humor in the form of irony, or sarcasm used in these articles depicts the Minister of Defense as someone who lacks military training and, consequently, military reasoning abilities, or in other words, is not cast into the soldier mode, and as a result cannot make for successful Minister of Defense, which, of course, is based on sexist grounds, and can be interpreted as an instance of implicit sexism. The same intent can be recognized in the following examples (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3 „Држ се Украина стигне Славјанка, да сум на место на Путин не би се задевал“, смеа без престан на социјалните мрежи

(“Hang on Ukraine, Slavjanka is coming to your rescue. If I were Putin, I wouldn’t mess with her”, incessant laughter on social media)

Some of these articles whose purpose is evidently more in the direction of entertaining the readers than informing them, feature other Macedonian politicians’ reactions to the Minister of Defense’s statements. The content of these articles is intended to denigrate the Minister by hurling her way offensive words such as *shortsighted servant* (*кусоглед слуга*), *dumb-headed* (*акмак*), *shallow-minded puppet* (*недоветна послушнице*). Clearly, the aim of this overt form of sexism, termed *insults* by Mills (2008), is to draw attention to the ‘fact’ that the politician is not worthy of the position she has been entrusted with.

Given that conveying female politicians’ statements indirectly, i.e. via reported speech, is interpreted as depriving politicians of their actual ‘voice’, and, consequently, is treated as overt sexism, we looked into whether the Minister of Defense’s statements were conveyed directly (via quotations), or indirectly by means of reporting verbs (e.g. *say*, *announce*, *explain*, etc.) followed by paraphrases of their actual statements.

Chart 1. *Defense Minister's statements in the news articles: quotations vs. reported speech*



The analysis showed that although the majority of the Minister's statements were conveyed directly (quotations) (57.5%) (Ex. 4), a significant percentage of the Minister's statements were conveyed indirectly (42.4%) (Ex. 5). The fact that reported speech was used for almost half of the Minister's statements is indicative of the existence of implicit sexism, as these instances can be interpreted as an attempt at taking something out of context and distorting the politicians' actual message to the public.

Ex. 4 Петровска: Тенковите за Украина се транспортирани и со нивната донација не се нарушува борбената готовност на Армијата

(Petrovska: The tanks have been transported to Ukraine and this donation does not undermine our Army's combat readiness)

Ex. 5 Петровска најави дека ќе се набавуваат нови хеликоптери кои се мултифункционални и тоа е на линија на плановите за развој на одбранбените способности и капацитети на нашата Армија

(Petrovska announced that new multifunctional helicopters will be procured, which is in line with the plans for developing our Army's defensive capacity)

All verbs used in the articles in relation to the Minister's actions and comments regarding the war in Ukraine are typical of journalistic discourse (e.g. *say, announce, clarify, add, explain, point out*, etc.) and do not collocate with other words to create some kind of negative connotation. This shows that journalists are careful not to use this form of implicit sexism. With regard to collocations as an implicit form of sexism generated by combining words to create negative connotation, in the analyzed news articles about the Minister of Defense, only a few examples were detected. Thus, in Ex. 6, the use of the collocation *ги брани одлуки на владата* (*defends the government's decisions*) suggests that the Minister, instead of having a mind of her own about the issues of importance, is just echoing the words previously said by other politicians in the government.

Ex. 6 Помогнавме на земја која ја брани територијата, и не важно од која земја е нападната. Вака, министерката за одрбана Славјанка Петровска ги брани трите одлуки на владата за воени донации кон Украина.

(We are helping a country that defends its territory; it is completely irrelevant what country attacked it. This is how the Minister of Defense, Slavjanka Petrovska, defends the three decisions of the government about the military donations to Ukraine)

In Ex. 7 the collocation *не кажува што друго донираме* (doesn't say what else we donate) presents the Minister's actions as secretive and devoid of transparency, which, given that politicians are expected to be transparent and honest, is a major instance of overstepping one's official duties and violating the professional conduct.

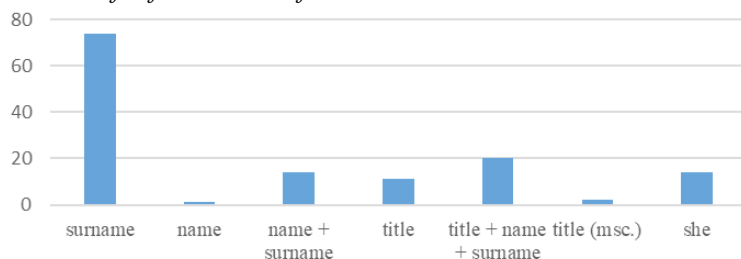
Ex. 7 Освен тенкови, министерката Петровска не кажува што друго ѝ донираме на Украина

(Apart from the tanks, Minister Petrovska does not say what else we donate to Ukraine)

Analysis of the news articles about the Mayor of Skopje, Danela Arsovska

In this part of the analysis, first, we looked at the modes of reference used for the female politician, holding the post Mayor of Skopje, Danela Arsovska. Unlike the English noun Mayor which is used to refer to both male and female politicians, in Macedonian, this noun has two forms, one for masculine gender – *градоначалник* and one for female gender – *градоначалничка*. As more and more women assume this public office, the feminine form of this noun becomes quite common in Macedonian.

The analysis of this portion of the corpus shows that, here too, the most frequent mode of reference was the politician's *surname* (*Arsovska*) (55.1%). The fact that there is no mention of her title along with her surname could be attributed to the conciseness and brevity and the rather formal register required in journalistic discourse. However, as in the previous case, this could be interpreted as avoidance to mention her title due to non-acceptance of the fact that a female has been entrusted with managing the capital city of the country.

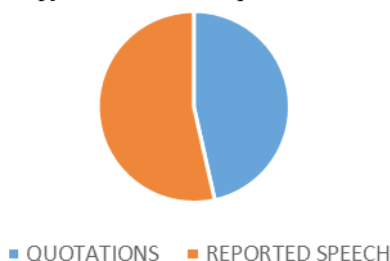
Table 2. *Modes of reference used for Danela Arsovska in the news articles*

The second most frequently used mode of reference is a combination of the title with: a) her full name – *Градоначалничката Данела Арсовска* (Mayor (fem.) *Danela Arsovska*), b) her surname – *Градоначалничката Арсовска* (Mayor (fem.) *Arsovska*), and c) the full name and the name of the city (*Skopje*) – *Градоначалничката на Скопје Данела Арсовска* (Mayor (fem.) of *Skopje Danela Arsovska*) (14.7%). In some of the articles, she was referred to with the title only – *градоначалничката* (Mayor (fem.)), (8.1%).

The third position in terms of the frequency of use in the analyzed corpus was shared by the following modes of reference: *name + surname* (10.3%) and the pronouns *she* and *her* (in the phrase ‘according to her’) (10.3%). Their presence can also be interpreted as overt sexism due to the avoidance to make an explicit mention of her professional title in the case of the former, and both her name and title in the case of the latter. This suggests hidden but palpable deprivation of the credit the female politician deserves for such a responsible and at the same time demanding public service.

There were few instances of addressing the female politician with the masculine form of this noun in Macedonian – *градоначалник* (Mayor (masc.)) (1.5%), which is also an instance of overt sexism, particularly given the fact that this mode of reference was used in an article which reported on an opposition politician’s strongly negative reaction of the way the mayor handles certain city matters.

With respect to the how the mayor’s statements were conveyed in the analyzed news articles, what was noted is an almost equal tendency of using both direct speech (quotation) (46.5%) and reported speech (53.4%).

Chart 2. *The Mayor of Skopje’s statements: quotations vs. reported speech*

As mentioned previously, according to Mills (2008), conveying a politician's public statements indirectly, i.e. via reported speech, always leaves room for distorting the original message and potentially for devaluing it, to a certain extent (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8 Арсовска демантира дека Обвинителството „влегло” во Град Скопје

(Arsovska denounces that the Public Prosecution has “entered” the city of Skopje)

Also, the analysis of the corpus shows that the use of quotations of politician's statements, on the other hand, seems to be reserved for achieving primarily the effect of shock on the part of the readers. In other words, journalists seem to prefer quotations when they have a specific attention-getting appeal and vouchsafe a strong reaction on the part of readers (Ex. 9 and Ex. 10).

Ex. 9 Арсовска до ВМРО-ДПМНЕ: Ви го фатив директорчето со рачето во медот и сега одеднаш не чинам

(Arsovska to VMRO-DPMNE: I caught your little director with his little hand in the honey, and all of sudden you find me inadequate)

Ex. 10 Арсовска: Немој да се криеш Мицкоски, дојди тука кажи ми што имааш!

(Arsovska: Mickovski, don't hide, come out and show me what you've got)

In Ex. 9, the Mayor addresses the representatives of the opposition party, VMRO DPMNE, and accuses their leader, who supported her candidature in the election campaign, for illicit dealings; whereas in Ex. 10 she challenges the leader himself, Mickovski, to face her and explain his actions.

The predominant sexist language used in the analyzed news articles referring to this female politician has the form of indirect sexism and is realized in the form of collocations. The image that is molded for the politician by means of combining words in the analyzed articles is an image of a disruptor, irrational and aggressive person; a politician who is prone to getting into fights and arguments; an inconsiderate politician who forces people to resign and lacks transparency in her dealings. Simply put, the image carved for the politician in this case is an image of a politician who is incapable of delivering her pre-election promises. These are some of the collocations used in reference to the Mayor of Skopje: *business interest, money and tenders, fights against an entire machinery, secret meeting, an argument with VMRO, cornered/blackmailed politician, fierce criticism, Danela's law, started a war, partnership based on interest, comes uninvited, interrupts a press conference, insufficient results, fierce arguments, the conflict escalated*, etc. Ex. 11 and Ex. 12 illustrate this point quite clearly:

Ex. 11 Андоновски: Арсовска во време на најголема криза од ЈП Водовод брка од работа 100 вработени

(Andonovski: Arsovska in times of greatest crisis lays off 100 employees from Public Water Supply)

Ex. 12 Неуспешниот партиски пазар на Арсовска и ВМРО-ДПМНЕ на штета на граѓаните

(The unsuccessful political bargain of Arsovska and VMRO-DPMNE at the expense of citizens)

Finally, in the case of this politician, in the analyzed corpus we found instances of another type of implicit sexism – scripts and metaphors where sexual or romantic scenarios are drawn on when referring to the female politician (Mills, 2008) (Ex. 13, Ex. 14 and Ex. 15).

Ex. 13 Данела Арсовска со отровни стрели кон Христијан Мицкоски
(Danela Arsovska shoots poisonous arrows towards Hristijan Mickovski)

Ex. 14 Данела Арсовска: Од зурли и тапани – до обвинувана за kukavichko jajce

(Danela Arsovska: From being celebrated with trumpets and drums to being blamed for being a cuckoo's egg)

Ex. 15 Данела Арсовска и ВМРО-ДПМНЕ пред разделба

(Danela Arsovska and VMRO-DPMNE on the verge of splitting up)

In all of the examples above, the politician is represented as having a romantic affair with the opposition party, due to their support for her candidature in the pre-election campaign, which was initially pompously celebrated in a way similar to wedding ceremonies (with music and dancing), but which, at this point, is on the verge of falling apart as a result of unsurmountable disagreements between the ‘romantic partners’ (Arsovska and the opposition).

Discussion and conclusion

This research confirms the presence of overt and implicit sexism in both sets of news articles, i.e. in relation to both female politicians. Namely, despite the fact that in both cases *surnames* and certain combinations with the *title* as a central element were predominantly used to refer to both female politicians, a practice which can be attributed to the curt and precise journalistic style and the formal undertone of media reporting, there were instances of overt sexism in some of the articles in which the female politicians were addressed just by their *first name*; their *first name* and *surname*; the pronouns *she* and *her* (in

the phrase '*according to her*'), clearly, because there is explicit avoidance to mention their title which points to lack of appreciation and acceptance of their role in society. The same applies to the instances in which the masculine noun of their professional title was used (e.g. *Градоначалник (mas.)*) despite the fact that in Macedonian the feminine form of this noun is in existence and in common use. A case of overt sexism is, undoubtedly, addressing a female politician with a title which indicates her marital status (*Г-ѓа -Mrs.*), which, normally in the case of male politicians is not something that is drawn attention to, and, consequently, the same should apply to women politicians as well. The use of insults as an overt form of sexism was mainly avoided, except in the case of one of the politicians, in which case the insults used referred to the politician's alleged lack of reasoning capacity. The high percentage of reported speech in the case of both female politicians also points to the existence of overt sexism as, by not conveying the politician's statements directly, i.e. by reporting them, journalists are left with an option to distort the meaning to a certain extent and present it in a way in which it suits their purposes (among which the top two, undoubtedly, are to attract more readers and to play a crucial role in creating public opinion).

As to the presence of indirect forms of sexism, in the case of the female politician who has the position of Minister of Defense, it was mostly realized as humor in the form of irony and sarcasm, targeting primarily the politician's reasoning abilities. In the case of the Mayor, it was most clearly visible in the abundant use of collocations used with a negative connotation, leaving the readers with the impression that this female politician lacks tactfulness and is prone to rash and not well-thought out actions, features not appreciated in politics, i.e. features that are more likely to harm than enhance political processes. In addition to the collocations, in the case of the latter, instances were found of implicit sexism in the form of scripts and metaphors where sexual or romantic scenarios were invoked to present the politician's political moves.

In conclusion, in the case of both politicians, irrespective of whether it is done consciously or not, the news articles, by means of both overt and implicit sexist language, contribute largely to creating an image for the female politicians which is not exactly preferable and compatible with the already accepted and expected comportment norms in politics in general. This, on the other hand, hints possibly at the Macedonian society's persistent 'clinging' to its traditional and patriarchal values, despite all its ongoing efforts to open itself more to contemporary democratic trends and processes that call for, among other things, gender equality, i.e. greater inclusion and fair treatment of women in all spheres of life, politics in particular.

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Appendix

	Title of the article	News portal/ online platform of traditional media	Date	Link
1.	Slavjanka Petrovska: Voenata donacija za Ukraina e suverena odluka na RSM, a ne pritisok od NATO alijansata	TELMA	15.08.2022	https://telma.com.mk/2022/08/15/slavjanka-petrovska-voenata-donacija-za-ukraina-e-suverna-vladina-odluka-na-rsm-a-ne-pritisok-od-nato-alijansata/
2.	S. Makedonija kje is-rati oprema, no ne I vojnici vo Ukraina	DW	1.03.2022	https://dw.com/mk/%D1%81%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D1%9C%D0%B5%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BE%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%98%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D1%83%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0-a-60970604
3.	Petrovska: Dokolku NATO pobara makedonskata armija mozhe da se vkluchi vo mozhniot konflikt megu Rusija i Ukraina	Kurir vesti vo dvizhenje	24.01.2022	https://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/petrovska-dokolku-nato-pobara-makedonskata-armija-moze-da-se-vkluchi-vo-mozniot-konflikt-megu-rusija-i-ukraina/
4.	Donacijata za Ukraina nema da ja zasegne borbenata gotovnost na ARM, reche Ministerkata Petrovska	sdk.mk	5.10.2022	https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/donatsijata-za-ukraina-nema-da-ja-zasegne-borbenata-gotovnost-na-arm-reche-ministerkata-petrovska/
5.	Petrovska: Tenkovite za Ukraina se transportirani I so nivnata donacija ne se narushuva borbenata gotovnost na Armijata	Nova Makedonija	16.08.2022	https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/petrovska-tenkovite-za-ukraina-se-transportirani-i-so-nivnata-donacija-ne-se-narushuva-borbenata-gotovnost-na-armijata/

6.	Ruskata ambasada so reakcija na izjavata na ministerkata za odbrana Slavjanka Petrovska	Kanal 5 TV	29.01.2022	https://kanal5.com.mk/ruskata-ambasada-so-reakcija-na-izjavata-na-ministerkata-za-odbrana-slavjanka-petrovska/a513459
7.	Osven tenkovi, ministerkata petrovska ne ka\uva shto drugo I donirame na Ukraina	Ohridsky	15.08.2022	https://ohridsky.com/%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA/
8.	Petrovska: Edinstvena pogreshna odluka e ruskata invazija an Ukraina	MRT	25.08.2022	https://mrt.com.mk/node/77298
9.	Petrovska od Brisel: Jas sum vo postojana komunikacija so Kiev I ako ima potreba od voena pomosh, podgotveni sme da go storime toa	Deneshen vesnik	16.06.2022	https://denesen.mk/petrovska-od-brisel-jas-sum-vo-postojana-komunikacija-so-kiev-i-ako-ima-potreba-od-voena-pomosh-podgotveni-sme-da-go-storime-toa/
10.	Dzonson ja popari Slavjanka: Nitu edna chlenka na NATO vo momentov ne e podgotvena da isprati sili vo Ukraina	Infomax.mk	25.01.2022	https://infomax.mk/%D1%9F%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BD-%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BFa%D1%80%D0%B8-%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%98%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D1%83-%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%87%D0%BB/
11.	D'rzh se Ukraino, stizhe Slavjanka, da sum na mesto na Putin ne bi se zadeval, sme bez prestan na socijalnite mrezhi	Skopje1.mk	24.01.2022	https://skopje1.mk/archives/160516
12.	Slavjanka go podbra Putin: Rusija deluva provokativno I destabilizirachko so postavuvanje na sili dolzh granicata	News24	23.01.2022	https://new24live.com/slavjanka-go-podbra-putin-rusija-deluva-provokativno-i-destabilizirachko-so-postavuvanje-na-sili-dolz-granicata/
13.	Slavjanka Petrovska prechekana vo London so "Jovano Jovanke"	Republika.mk	08.03.2022	https://republika.mk/vesti/makedonija/slavjanka-petrovska-prechekana-vo-london-so-jovano-jovanke/
14.	Slavjanka Petrovska od London: NATO e obedineto vo garantiranje na bezbednosta na zemjite-chlenki	Kajgana	08.03.2022	https://kajgana.com/slavjanka-petrovska-od-london-nato-e-obedineto-vo-garantirane-na-bezbednosta-na-zemjite-chlenki
15.	Poddrshka za Petrovska od celoto rakovodstvo na SDSM, Shilegov poracha "Teshko volkot po koj kuchinja ne laat"	Sloboden pechat	03.2022	https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/podrska-za-petrovska-od-celoto-rakovodstvo-na-sdsm-shilegov-poracha-teshko-volkot-po-koj-shto-kuchinja-ne-laati/
16.	Slavjanka Petrovska: Britanija mi napravi golema chest so "Jovano, Jovanke"	Faktor	11.03.2022	https://faktor.mk/slavjanka-petrovska-britanija-mi-napravi-golema-chest-so-jovano-jovanke

17.	Slavjanka Petrovska so nova poraka za krizata megju Ukraina i Rusija	republika. online	16.02. 2022	https://republika.mk/vesti/makedonija/slavjanka-petrovska-so-nova-poraka-za-krizata-megju-ukraina-i-rusija/
18.	Slavjanka kje pravela sojuz za bezbednost so Kosovo i Albanija: Pa tie se trenirani so godini da se borat protiv nas i Srbite	Republika. MK	07.09. 2022	https://republika.mk/vesti/makedonija/slavjanka-kje-pravela-sojuz-za-bezbednost-so-kosovo-i-albanija-pa-tie-se-trenirani-so-godini-da-se-borat-protiv-nas-i-srbite/
19.	Dokolku ja napadne Ukraina: Slavjanka kje go bombardira Putin so poraki na Viber	tvvesti.com	24.01. 2022	https://tvvesti.com/?p=9241&fbclid=IwAR1ynNb69bkVZLGmSvpp6luzkSLELExZUW32W2jeFcsrFLQuaTeK8809HHc
20.	Slavjanka go iskara Putin: Ruskata invazija vrz Ukraina go narushi mirot vo Evropa, so sojunznicite vo NATO kje ja branime i kje ja odbranime demokratijata	Infomaxs.mk	21. 06. 2022	https://infomax.mk/%d1%81%d0%bb%d0%b0%d0%b2%d1%98%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%ba%d0%b0-%d0%b3%d0%be-%d0%b8%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b0%d1%80%d0%b0-%d0%bf%d1%83%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%bd-%d1%80%d1%83%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b0%d1%82%d0%b0-%d0%b8%d0%bd%d0%b2/?fbclid=IwAR0qYD3MoxDAJoBECVvJuiUI9ItiHs1ubiFuG6RXW5_xj14gqxMENzFjCfM
21.	Arsovska naznachi v.d. direktori na javnite pretprijatija	ohridsky	28.09. 2022	https://ohridsky.com/%d0%b0%d1%80%d1%81%d0%be%d0%b2%d1%81%d0%ba%d0%b0-%d0%bd%d0%b0%d0%b7%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%87%d0%b8-%d0%b2-%d0%b4-%d0%b4%d0%b8%d1%80%d0%b5%d0%ba%d1%82%d0%be%d1%80%d0%b8-%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d1%98%d0%b0%d0%b2%d0%bd/
22.	Danela Arsovska se združuva so “Ognenata grupa” na DUI – sinot na poraneshniot reis stana director	Fokus	28.09. 2022	https://fokus.mk/danela-arsovska-se-zdruzhumva-so-ognenata-grupa-na-dui-sinot-na-poraneshniot-reis-megu-direktorite/
23.	Arsovska go nareshhe “Talat Slaveski” Pretsedatelot na sovetot oti i go iskluchi mikrofonot koga zboruvashhe za Mickovski	Sakam da kazam	29.09. 2022	https://sdk.mk/index.php/dopisna-mrezha/arsovska-go-nareche-talat-slaveski-pretседателот-na-sovetot-oti-go-iskluchival-mikrofonot-dodeka-zb-oruvala/?fbclid=IwAR22nXvtH0jLWLRGSMxIXnavB6zYQUjdTZzps6XHyz08Ays3Eg_OnWny1RI#.YzWcM9xzp4.facebook
24.	Arsovska naznachi novi direktori, GROM go dobi “Gradski parking”, aktivistkata Radmila Pesheva vo “Lajka”, Kadri na DUI vo “Ulici i patishta” i “parkovi i zelenilo”	Sakam da kazam	28.09. 2022	https://sdk.mk/index.php/dopisna-mrezha/arsovska-naznachi-novi-direktori-grom-go-dobi-gradski-parking-aktivistkata-radmila-pesheva-vo-lajka/?fbclid=IwAR2chowWsVPHfd7PGI8_jH4d0L3k-BeowPv0W5sKQJPG75bmcSPNe0w6iqM#.YzReDsffGLQ.facebook
25.	Danela Arsovska so otrovni streli kon Mickovski	DW	15.09. 2022	https://www.dw.com/mk/arsovska-mickoski-nikogas-nema-da-izleze-od-tender-matricata/a-63133430
26.	Danela Arsovska: Od zurli i tapani do obvinuvana za kukavichko jajce	DW	16.09. 2022	https://www.dw.com/mk/danela-arsovska-od-zurli-i-tapani-do-obvinuvana-za-kukavicko-jajce/a-63148292
27.	SomnezHITE na Arsovska ispratani vo “prochistitelnata stanica”	DW	15.09. 2022	https://www.dw.com/mk/somnezHITE-na-arsovska-ispratani-vo-prochistitelnata-stanica/a-63125646

28.	Danela arsovska i VMRO – DPMNE pred razdelba	DW	12.09. 2022	https://www.dw.com/mk/danela-arsovska-i-vmro-dpmne-megu-namesteni-tenderi-i-neispolneti-ocekuvana/a-63093089
29.	Haos vo grad Skopje, VMRO-DPMNE i Danela Arsovska vo otvorena vojna	24	15.09. 2022	https://24.mk/details/khaos-vo-grad-skopje-vmro-dpmne-i-danela-arsovska-vo-otvorena-vojna
30.	Danela Arsovska: Finansiskata policija i Obvinitelstvoto se vo JP Vodovod i kanalizacija	faktor	16.09. 2022	https://faktor.mk/danela-arsovska-finansiska-policija-i-obvinitelstvoto-se-vo-jp-vodovod-i-kanalizacija
31.	Danela arsovska od funkcija go razreshi sekretarot na grad Skopje	A1on	12.09. 2022	https://a1on.mk/macedonia/danela-arsovska-od-funkcija-go-razreshi-i-sekretarot-na-grad-skopje/
32.	Neuspeshniot partiski Pazar na arsovska I VMRO-DPMNE na shteta na graganite	Radio slobodna Evropa	13.09. 2022	https://slobodnaevropa.mk/a/%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%83%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%88%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%80-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D0%B2%D0%BC%D1%80%D0%BE-%D0%B4%D0%BF%D0%BC%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%93%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5/32031670.html
33.	Danela Arsovska: Centarot na Skopje mora da bide mesto kade shto kje bide zadovolstvo da se prosheta i da se zhivee	MIA	5.10. 2022	https://mia.mk/%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BF%D1%98%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%BE/
34.	Danela Arsovska go razreshi direktorot na JP Vodovod i kanalizacija Perinski poradi samovolie	MKD	12.09. 2022	https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/skopje/danela-arsovska-go-razreshi-direktorot-na-jp-vodovod-i-kanalizacija-perinski
35.	Arsovska gi povika direktorite da podnesat ostavki, ostavka podnese I direktorot na “Drisla”	MKD	13.09. 2022	https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/skopje/arsovska-gi-povika-direktorite-da-si-dadat-ostavki-ostavka-podnese-i-dire
36.	Sudir Arsovska – VMRO DPMNE: Trajko Slaveski ne razmisluva za ostavka	360 stepeni	13.09. 2022	https://360stepeni.mk/sudir-arsovska-vmro-dpmne-trajko-slaveski-ne-razmisluva-za-ostavka/
37.	Arsovska: Nemoj da se kriesh Mickoski, dojdj tuka kazhi mi shto imash!	Sloboden печат	09. 2022	https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/arsovska-nemoj-da-se-kriesh-mickoski-dojdj-tuka-kazhi-mi-shto-imash/

38.	Gradonachalnikata Danela Arsovska poleka kje ostane bez nitu eden director vo javnite pretprijatija	ALFA	09. 2022	https://alfa.mk/%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BF/
39.	Arsovska demantira dek Obvinitelstvoto “vleglo” vo Grad Skopje	NET PRES	22.09. 2022	https://netpress.com.mk/arsovska-demantira-deka-obvinitelstvoto-vleglo-vo-grad-skop-e/
40.	Zamenichkata na Arsovska podnese ostavka, Grad Skopje reagira deka ja stavila partijata pred skopjani	Makfaks	29.09. 2022	https://makfax.com.mk/makedonija/%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0/

TO USE “HE/SHE” OR “THEY”: THAT IS THE QUESTION

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Abstract: *This paper aims to underline the close connection between language and culture. Linguistic interaction is not only a series of sentences from a speaker to a hearer, but it also involves the cultural context which influences the interactants either to use political correctness or not. In recent years, native speakers as well as English teachers have been forced to deal with the abundance of terminology contrived so that people would not be offended by a ‘biased’ language which ignores/rejects their gender, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. We try to show how sometimes an ‘unbiased’ language can have comic implications from a lexical-semantic point of view, but the goal of this discussion is to point out or even eliminate certain inequalities in society and to make the students understand these word-creations. The last part of this paper examines a questionnaire given to Romanian students which is meant to be a survey of their attitude towards the use of language with political correctness. The findings reveal the students’ opinions on gender, on societal restrictions and on (ab-)using language.*

Keywords: *political correctness, sexist language, equality, discriminatory practices, gender identity terms*

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Introduction

Communication between/among people supposes not only the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but also good knowledge of culture and societal norms proving that language is inextricably linked to the mentality of the people involved in interaction, to the events and phenomena occurring in that particular society, to the lifestyle a group of people chooses, to the people's traditions and values (Tsykalyuk & Shchukina, 2022). The paper deals with the issue of political correctness – how this has caused a great debate and how it is generally perceived as sounding exaggerated and artificial, how this changes and/or hides the meaning and deteriorates the respective language. Political correctness is of great importance for TEFL since teachers aim at producing proficient users of English who are supposed to not only communicate fluently in English, but also to understand the cultural setting of the target language, as well as the intentions of the interlocutors.

Plančić, Zanchi and Čudić suggest that PC raises the students'/ learners' awareness of specific social issues such as tolerance for race, gender, sexual orientation (2018, p. 56). There have been certain changes in people's feelings and behaviour, therefore, we tried to emphasize some issues that have been neglected before or insufficiently researched. Teachers of EFL are aware that without a good knowledge of PC, learners would not be able to communicate efficiently and would face intercultural catastrophe and/or blunders. Learners will know how to use PC when they are systematically exposed to it, when they are taught how to use certain expressions or idioms. Learners need to have access to (social) media, to be presented with reading and listening materials. This type of learning is highly motivating for advanced learners who are provoked by the new information, and whose competences are enhanced. The aim of this paper is to show how political correctness conforms to social matters, how it advocates for the already approved views, and how it denounces discrimination in language and in behaviour. Since the 1980s, PC has already swept across America, and has also gained huge interest in Europe, consequently teachers in TEFL should teach their learners how to use the right words in the right situations. On the other hand, learners should be made aware of the weirdness of certain ways of expression which seem to abuse language.

Political Correctness

The term “political correctness” appeared for the first time 1793 in a US Supreme Court decision in the case *Chrisholm vs. Georgia* in which Justice James Wilson emphasizes that it is not politically correct to say “people of the United States”, and this should be replaced with “The United States” (Tokarev, 2016). Despite its earlier appearance in the English language, “political correctness” has been used more often since 1960s, having been defined by Noam Chomsky as a

healthy and correct expansion of moral concern (Burrige & Allan, 1991, p. 90). The term was also adopted by the American New Left taken from the Soviet and Chinese ideologies in which the term indicated whether their members followed the doctrine of the party or not. Because of this, the term acquired a negative connotation and referred to those members who strictly obeyed the ideology of the party and whose behaviour was considered ultra-correct.

We can see that the meaning of the term from 1960s does not correspond to the current definition, as it changed dramatically in the 1980s when, in university campuses, one was expected to be politically correct – which meant one was supposed to use a bias-free language and adapt to certain speech codes established by some professional societies. People were made aware of their discriminatory practices and expressions which had previously appeared to be neutral (Talbot, 2007, p. 754). A new legislation led not only to the development of a bias-free language, but also to a social change that promoted equality for women, for homosexuals, for ethnic groups, or sexual or cultural diversity. In the 1980s political correctness launched a new fashion (Zhou, 2018, p. 66): it was politically correct to recycle paper, to oppose the wearing of fur coats, to reject American consumerism (seen as one of the effects of American capitalism), to support women's right to abortion (a practice which has lately been considered as an act of breaking the foetus' right to be born). In the 1980s, political correctness became a pejorative term to denote the feminists, the Marxists, or the leftists because of their views on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or environmental issues.

However, since the 1990s political correctness has been the focus of international debate – newspapers or magazines, books, talk shows are no longer the only ones that approach political correctness, academic panels also discuss its merits or even its challenges/ dangers and public and political figures' ignorance of PC has been strongly rebuked (as in the case of former president Donald Trump). Despite its name, PC has nothing to do with politics, even though politicians, particular, are expected to use politically correct language, which is meant not to hurt or despise others.

Political correctness has been defined as a social code which is connected not only to language, but also to the behaviour and opinions of those who intend to avoid offending people who belong to different minority groups. PC's goal in language is to eliminate the vocabulary which could hurt people's feelings by making them feel excluded, offended, and discriminated. The definition implied that PC meant to be inclusive. This means that it is not enough to use a bias-free language, but also that one should use language as a reflection of one's thoughts and ideas. The theory behind this definition of PC originates in Sapir-Whorf hypothesis¹ that language represents thought, and it may even control

1. The hypothesis of linguistic relativity, also known as Sapir Whorf hypothesis, preaches

one's thoughts (Pinta & Yakubu, 2014, p. 81). Furthermore, using language to hurt somebody is a form of violence. Consequently, the language representing thoughts of violence may control the thought of violence, for instance. This form of violence despite being passive can have the same effects as the active form of violence. Therefore, if we change the language we think in, this language will have as effect a change in the way we think. This hypothesis will have a beneficial effect on society as the offending lexis as well as the conflicts from society will be removed. In this way, language can build through PC non-violent methods for the resolution of conflicts (Shedrack, 2004).

Pinta and Yakubu (2014, p. 82) consider that forms of discrimination like racism, sexism and homophobia are projections implied by society, and all attempts to exclude others have been gradually imposed. In their opinion, PC implies that people were not born with these forms of discrimination, but they were manipulated to believe in these values by the society in which they had been brought up. In other words, their attitudes are dictated by the politically incorrect language they use. Consequently, their attitude can change if people make conscious efforts to change the societal projections by using a politically correct language. Equally, PC does not mask the truth, the true reality, it does not mean to censor people's way of expressing themselves; it encourages people to be tolerant, to be inclusive and open-minded. When one is politically correct, one is not prevented from saying what he/she wants to say; one is taught into rejecting stereotypes and into embracing difference and diversity.

Political correctness may be categorized in English in the following types according to these issues: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, profession, etc.

a) Gender Perspective

As far as gender is concerned, women have fought throughout the last two centuries to have equal rights with men, thus even the titles of jobs and occupations were changed, i.e. the nouns ending in *man* in domains considered to be dominated by men have gained female suffixes, such as *-trix*, *-ess*, *-ette*: *poetess*, *authoress*, *manageress*, *usherette*. Gender seems to create the same problems in Romanian as it does in English, therefore, the Romanian learners of English find it easy to understand why this should represent a debatable issue

the principle according to which language influences the speakers in their perception about the world and their thoughts, hence the relation between language and thought. The term "Sapir Whorf hypothesis" is just a misnomer for many linguists since Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf never wrote any work together and never developed a hypothesis together, but they both believed that there is a connection between language and culture, be this strong or weak. Throughout history, this idea was referred to as 'strong hypothesis' (also called linguistic determinism) in which language determines people's decisions and thoughts, or 'weak hypothesis' in which language influences thoughts and people's decisions.

in English because there are nouns which do not have forms for both genders: *manager*, *usher* (= uşier), *lecturer* (= lector), *university professor* (= profesor universitar), *surgeon* (= chirurg), etc. And if these words acquire a female form, they are used pejoratively and sometimes have negative connotations. Quite often, certain occupations/jobs used to be ascribed to a particular gender. For instance, the word *secretary* is mostly associated with the image of a woman dressed carefully in sweater sets, wearing pearls, sensible heels, knee-length skirts demonstrating she could be an efficient right hand for a man, as well as a silent maid. Nowadays, the term has been replaced with *personal assistant*, or *executive assistant*, or *office manager* in order to upgrade the person's position and enhance his/her professionalism (Delekt, 2019, p. 154). On the other hand, we do not see many female barbers, or masons or ushers, hence the lack of a feminine variant of these occupations, or if there were such forms, they would sound ridiculous.

Nowadays, Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, has found herself in the position of being judged by the British media for everything she says or does and the public no longer knows whether she is the victim or the aggressor. She complained in her podcast *Archetypes* that her American way of telling her assistants what she needed or wanted was perceived by her British employees as a “bossy” behaviour – an adjective used negatively to refer to women who aspire to take on leadership roles in a very demanding way – or that the British media called her “ambitious” for marrying Prince Harry – a term which is also offensive (as if it were her intention from the start to marry Prince Harry for a better social position, as if any love feelings were excluded). In the debut episode of her Spotify podcast *Archetypes*, she and her friend, Serena Williams, discussed the double standard society sets for women who want to follow their dreams. Meghan Markle confessed that the education she received in America (an all-girls Catholic school in LA) always empowered girls to go after what they wanted. She blames her education for making her an ambitious woman: “The message to me and my classmates was clear: our futures as young women were limitless. Ambitious? That was the whole point” (Henni, 2022). Furthermore, Meghan Markle complained that she had never felt the negative connotation behind the word “ambitious” until she started dating her present husband. “Bossy” and “ambitious” used to define her behaviour made Meghan Markle consider that she was in reality perceived as “pushy” or “gold-digger” and was generally frowned upon for her attitude. She confessed in her podcast that “ambitious” for men was considered a quality whereas, when the term is applied to her, this changes into a negative and mean word. Her second guest, Laura Kray – a professor at the Haas School of Business and faculty director for the school's Centre for Equity, Gender and Leadership, also confirmed Markle's opinions: research showed that ambitious women were often perceived as

“power hungry, manipulative, not trusted” while ambitious men were generally seen as admirable (Henni, 2022).

We also have to mention that since the summer of 2021, the British Royal Family have undertaken a private inquest of their staff based on allegations that Meghan Markle’s behaviour when she was still a working member of the royal family was perceived as manifestations of ‘bullying’ especially by younger female members of her staff. In the two-year period, while she lived in the UK, Meghan Markle is said to have had at least four personal assistants who all resigned from their position similarly to other personnel from her PR team. The inquiry ended in 2022, but the Royal Family announced that the results will be treated as a private matter, shortly said, they will be kept a secret from the public.

In compliance with politically correct usage of language, the use of gender-neutral forms of expression is strongly advocated; consequently, words containing masculine endings/segments were transformed into gender-inclusive words: *chairman* vs. *chairperson*, *fireman* vs. *firefighter*, *mankind* vs. *humankind*, *policeman/woman* vs. *police officer*, *steward/stewardess* vs. *flight attendant*, *salesman/woman* vs. *salesperson*, *man-made* vs. *artificial*. In addition, indefinite pronouns which were usually referred to with the masculine form (i.e. One needs to know about *his* medical condition.), now are being referred to with both genders (One needs to know about his/her medical condition.) because the sentence states something about the human condition. Feminine Linguistics criticized the use of the masculine form whenever “one”/ “someone”/ “somebody”/ “everyone”/ “everybody” are mentioned, so, the ‘first wave’ of feminist demanded the usage of the personal pronoun “she” to have equal rights with the masculine form “he” as in: Everyone deserves to be happy and do whatever *s/he* wants.

When we talk about the titles we use before surnames, such as *Mrs*, *Mr*, *Miss*, these might be considered offensive for women. *Mr*. refers to men irrespective of their marital status, whereas *Mrs* and *Miss* differentiate between a spinster and a married woman putting the women in an uncomfortable position especially when they feel lonely and depressed if they do not have a life partner. Therefore, *Ms* is used because it is considered neutral and inclusive, as *Mr* is for men. Germans also perceive *Fräulein* as an offensive term for unmarried women, thus the general usage of *Frau* is applied. Romanian native speakers seem not to be disturbed by the use of *domnișoară* (Miss) instead of *doamnă* (Mrs), thus both titles are considered to be a polite form of address for a female interlocutor.

b) Gender identity terms/ sexual orientation

Similarly, certain morphological pairs are now abandoned due to the recent tendency of being gender neutral or inclusive. The headlines in newspapers and magazines have been filled with issues of equality referring to transgender and

non-binary people emphasizing their right to transform words in order to better express their identity. So, *husband* and *wife*, *brother* and *sister*, *son* and *daughter* have been recently replaced by *spouse*, *sibling*, *offspring*, whereas *father* and *mother* are abandoned to the modern usage of *parent 1* and *parent 2*.

The proper terms to define gender identity, including pronouns, show people's acceptance of transgender and nonbinary persons. GLAAD²'s reference guide offers the necessary education and guidance for us on how we should address LGBTQ people. This guide is intended to be used by journalists reporting for the mainstream media or for content creators who want to tell the stories of LGBTQ people as accurately and respectfully as possible. The first step into doing that is to ask people how they describe themselves, ask them about the pronouns they would prefer to be addressed with, and address them accordingly. This guide is defined as a way of respecting them and referring to them in a way that is true to what they are. GLAAD worked for this guide in collaboration with the National Center for Transgender Equality, with the Human Rights Campaign, and the Trans Journalists Association. We have to mention that this guide is mainly US-centred, especially in the Western part of the USA. Among the newest terms frequently used from this guide, we can mention *nonbinary* (refers to people who describe their gender as not belonging to the category of man or woman), *agender* (an adjective meant to define a person who does not identify as any gender), *gender fluid* (not strictly identifying as one gender; sometimes, the person identifies as different genders in different periods, or even identifies as more than one gender at once).

Besides using these nouns and adjectives to define and recognize these individuals, gender identity is also marked through pronouns. When we refer to persons, we use pronouns and getting the right pronouns for all kinds of people is not necessarily a transgender issue. The representatives of GLAAD suggest that getting the right pronouns for transgender and nonbinary people, especially for the youth is a way to let them know that you acknowledge them, that you see them, that you accept them especially when they are often discriminated. Shortly said, by getting the pronouns right, you accept their identity. When we are introduced to transgender and nonbinary persons, we could receive the following answers: "My name is Cătălina, I use her pronouns". If in the

2. GLAAD is an acronym for Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation – an American non-governmental media monitoring organization which was initially founded in New York City to protest against defamatory coverage for gay and lesbian persons in the media and entertainment industry. This organization was founded in 1985 when people wanted to protest against the *New York Post*'s defamatory AIDS coverage which was perceived as homophobic report. Since its foundation, GLAAD has included bisexual and transgender people. In 1987, after a meeting with GLAAD representatives, *New York Times* agreed to change its editorial policy to use more appropriate terms instead of harsher words referring to homosexuality, and soon more newspapers and televisions followed.

beginning this may seem like an awkward situation, knowing each other's pronouns could gradually become a routine and offer more accurate information about your interlocutor. This is extremely helpful in cases when the first names are less common or they are gender ambiguous: Leslie (in English), or Gabi (in Romanian).

The title of our paper is *To Use "S/He" or "They": That Is the Question* because we intended to show that nowadays political correctness also implies a non-sexist language reform which basically banned the use of "he" and "she" from Standard English because "the pronoun *he*, just like *she*, is not gender neutral" (Curzan, 2014, p. 117). A few months ago, I read on the ET Canada webpage about a particular concert (the sixth annual Blue Diamond Gala) held by Jennifer Lopez in L. A. where she was accompanied by her children – her twins (Emme Maribel and Maximilian David Muniz). The singer brought her 14-year-old child, Emme, up on stage for a joint appearance and referred to her daughter by using gender-neutral pronouns "they/them" to introduce her child to the audience. J. Lo said, according to *Entertainment Weekly*: "The last time we performed together was in a big stadium like this and I ask **them** to sing with me all the time, and **they** won't. So, this is a very special occasion. **They** are very, very busy. And pricey. **They** cost me when **they** come out. But **they're** worth every single penny because **they're** my favourite duet **partner** of all time." (Donahue, 2022). Fans and journalists posted the clip to social media, praising the artist for using gender-neutral pronouns for her daughter, Emme, and for not seeming to make an effort. Journalists say J. Lo's statements made a huge difference for the LGBTQ community and showed how much she supports her child in 'their' choice or in 'their' transition to identifying as non-binary. Emme was also praised for joining 'their' mother on stage for a duet of the song "A Thousand Years". 'They' also got onstage to perform a second song "Born in the USA" with 'their' mother.

The 'second wave' of feminists demand the use of a non-sexist language in which sentences like "A rider admits that he likes horses" are considered sexist and/or patriarchal and the version "A rider admits that he or she likes horses" is not inclusive enough, so, the pronoun "they" should be used as a singular pronoun in order to be gender neutral. Again, the representatives of GLAAD explain to us that when a person identifies as nonbinary and appears as feminine (or masculine), people often assume that this person wants to be addressed with "she/her" pronouns or "he/his" which is seen as a wrong presumption. Usually, this kind of people want to be referred to as "they". Consequently, a sentence like "Every student has to read at least one novel to pass his/her exam" should sound in the following way in PC: "Every student has to read at least one novel to pass **their** exam". This sentence highlights the gender sensitivity, but consciously violates the traditional rules of grammar that refers to the subject-verb agreement or to the relation between subject and its pronouns. This

also shows how language changes according to social and political demands. It evolves whenever it feels it has to change in accordance with the humans' needs. So, despite their conflict with traditional grammar, these constructions conform to the new rules of gender neutrality and show respect for what matters to some people.

c) Cultural Perspective

Another example of political correctness is the history behind Agatha Christie's novel *And Then There Were None* which was originally either *Ten Little Indians* or *Ten Little Niggers*. There has been a lot of controversy surrounding the renaming of problematic buildings, so, there was no surprise when films and novels were rebranded. The novel is a continuously best-selling novel in the whole world, and from the start, it was published under two different titles because of the public's sensitivity to the author's choice of a title and because of the rhyme theme present in the book. In the UK, the novel was published under the title *Ten Little Niggers* which was a rhyme from a minstrel song and children's game: "Ten Little Indians" referring to Indigenous North American people. In the USA, the novel had the title *And Then There Were None* because the word 'nigger' was perceived as a racial insult, therefore all references to this word were removed from the book and from the movie. Even in 1939, this title was considered too offensive for Americans (Stein, 2016). Agatha Christie did not avoid using racially loaded ethnic slurs, hence the contemporary renaming of novels or sites. The song became an icon of the black face minstrel shows and were widely known in Europe, where Agatha Christie might have watched them. The UK versions continued to use "Indians" or "Niggers" until 1985 when the word "Soldier" was used for the title and the name of the island. The original name of the island in the novel (Nigger Island) was meant to illustrate how the dark side of people trapped on the island re-surfaces and is the cause for their retribution. The rhymes found by the trapped characters refer to ten figures who die of violent deaths and these depict how fear and racial attitude have been instilled into human beings since childhood when they usually hear nursery rhymes.

To continue discussing Agatha Christie's lack of sensitivity towards racial and ethnic issues, we chose another example from her novel *Endless Night* which refers to a property called Gypsy's Acre. The female protagonist is constantly being scared by an old Gypsy who enjoys frightening people with her stories about presumed curses and ancient traditions. The writer constructs the novel around this offensive image of an ethnical minority, namely: that Gypsies curse people especially when money is involved, that Gypsies are used to migrate from place to place, that Gypsies can instil fear into gullible women and children. Following the intense debate regarding PC, producers, as well as translators of Agatha Christie's movies have for a few years tried to find

new names for settings and other sensitive matters. For instance, the Romanian translation of Gypsy's Acre (in the last episode of Miss Marple series from 2013) avoids the reference to any ethnical group, instead it chooses to transform the name into "Conacul nomazilor" (= Migrant's Acre) without any emphasis on the stereotypes referring to Gypsies.

The examples from Agatha Christie's work resemble the ethnic discriminative terms referring to Chinese Americans. If Black people are offended when one uses *eggplant*, *nigra*, *nigga* to define them, persons of Chinese ethnicity are insulted whenever they are referred to as *chink*, *chinky*, *chigga*, originating from the Chinese courtesy word *Chink* and from the Qing Dynasty. During the 1970s, *Negro* and *coloured* were accepted as suitable terms, while nowadays, *African American* and *people of colour* are preferred. Political correctness is the one that prevents people from saying *Paki* for *Pakistan American/British*; *Tacohead* or *Hispanic* for *Latin/Mexican American*; *redskin* or *Indians* for *Native American*.

Besides gaining a lot of attention and interest, PC has also attracted critics and opponents. One of the first opponents was George Orwell, who in the 1940s anticipated the future deterioration of language which seems to suit certain political and social needs, and who considered it an abuse of language. Teachers of EFL should mention to their students some new expressions which have been created by overzealous politically correct persons who have pushed things too far. We have chosen a few of these expressions in order to emphasize their humorous side and to make people amuse a bit. These are meant to demonstrate how clear English words are sometimes replaced by ridiculous periphrasis or euphemisms in an attempt to be trendy, to adapt to the new tendencies.

Dead = metabolically different

Alive = temporarily metabolically able

Bald = follicularly challenged

Short = vertically constrained

Stupid = intellectually challenged

Old age = youth deficiency

In this respect, we recommend teachers and learners avoid using extreme expressions, which would be considered too pompous, exaggerated, or ridiculous and/or absurd. The extreme cases would undermine or diminish the initial good intentions of PC, so, instead of trying not to exclude or offend others, the speaker would in his/her turn be excluded or mocked at by interlocutors or even marginalized and alienated in a society which he/she tried to change and/or improve.

Research methodology

Participants

The subjects in this study were 50 students studying in a bachelor's degree program at "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, Romania. All students were enrolled in English programs. They were students interested in English language, culture and civilization of different ages, genders, and backgrounds. The use of English with political correctness will check the students' interest in being involved in international matters and will enhance their competence of communicating in a foreign language and develop their careers. Their answers will offer us the youth's perception about this phenomenon and their openness to new topics and issues.

Materials

The research instrument was a questionnaire consisting of three parts: general information about the students' background, a 15-item multiple-choice test, and a survey. The Language Attitude Survey was conducted so that we receive more information from the students.

Questionnaire

General Information

This part of the questionnaire was interested in finding important data about the respondents, that is demographic information: gender, age, occupation (besides that of being a student), previous degree, place of birth and current address. All these pieces of information were kept confidential.

Test of the Use of English Containing Politically Correct Words

The second part contained a 15-item test referring to different politically correct terms in English used in different situations featuring two or more choices or even a blank line for their own version. The questions included vocabulary referring to race/ ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities. The choices were adapted from GLAAD recommendations or from the Oxford Dictionary of English Language.

Opinions (Language Attitudes Survey)

The third part of the test consisted of 10 questions that asked the students' opinions and attitudes towards the use of political correctness in both English and Romanian. The questions focused on three main topics: 1) opinions towards the practical use of political correctness in language; 2) attitudes towards the importance of political correctness; 3) limitations or negative attitudes towards the use of political correctness in language. All answers were based on a scale

from 1 to 5. The data showed the degree of opinions and attitudes through the range of mean score values, which were classified into five interval scales: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree.

Research procedures

Data collection

We collected the data from 50 students who were studying either in the first or second year of a bachelor's degree programme. The students were asked to fill in the questionnaire and to give it back on the same day.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the questionnaire (the test with the politically correct English; the participants' personal data) were analysed to calculate frequency and percentage. The qualitative data (opinions and attitudes) were also interpreted to make a short survey about the impact of political correctness upon the respondents.

Findings and Discussion

Questionnaire Results

Out of 50 students, the highest score was 13 and the lowest was 4, whereas the average score was 9.24. For the questions regarding gender, 34 students (68%) used politically correct language. They knew the neutral word for certain occupations, such as "police officer", "flight attendant", or "humankind". Only 40% of the students (=20 respondents) used "businessperson" instead of using "businessman". In terms of race and ethnicity related words, 96% of the respondents (48 students) knew that "black" is used with a negative connotation, and that "African American" is the politically correct version. However, only 52% (=26 students) used "Native American" instead of "Indians". For the questions referring to physical disabilities, 74% of students (=37 respondents) used the politically correct version "disabled people/ physically challenged people" instead of "handicapped person", and 86% of the respondents (43 students) used "senior citizen" instead of "old person". Regarding sexual orientation, only 30% of the students (=15 respondents) used "they" or "she/he" in sentences referring to "everyone"/ "one"/ "everybody".

Attitudes Survey

There was a total of 10 questions that the respondents were asked to value with scores from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). These are the average scores for some of these statements: "It is important for students to know the

politically correct language” = 4.74; “Politically correct language promotes the equality among people (regardless of their gender/race/sexual orientation/ religion)” – 4.86; “It is worth using political correctness” – 3.54; “Political correctness should be advertised/ promoted/ used in the media” – 4.20; “I find it useful for political correct language to be used/ promoted at workplace” – 3.34; “I think political correctness censors the way I express myself” – 2.02; “Political correctness is a non-violent way of accepting other people’s beliefs/ orientation/ opinions” – 4.00; “I think political correctness will help me in my future career” – 3.80; “I think political correctness will create a pleasant environment at my future workplace” – 3.88; “It is alright to use “vertically-challenged people” instead of “short people”, or “temporarily metabolically able” instead of “alive” – 1.22.

Opinions about Political Correctness in English and Romanian

The students’ opinions towards the usage of politically correct language were generally positive. They saw this type of language as a necessary tool to promote equality and to make people understand about other people’s needs and desires.

Conclusions

According to our findings, some students are able to use politically correct terms/ words in correct situations. Their correctness depends on the familiarity of the students with these concepts. The general politically correct terms referring to gender or race are known to students, whereas terms like euphemisms and cases of periphrasis are new to them, hence their incorrect answers. However, the respondents showed positive attitudes towards this topic and consider this type of language as a respectful way of speaking to or about others. Consequently, they consider political correctness (either in English or Romanian) should be introduced in universities and at workplace, but especially on TV, radio, and other forms of media. When asked about the malign effect, PC might have on language (seen as a form of censorship, or manipulation, or abuse of language), students mostly disagree with this idea, not sensing the possible threat of a social and political abuse of language. The respondents perceive political correctness as a non-violent method of reconciling people regarding sensitive issues such as race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. However, the students were aware that PC can only be a limited phenomenon, as only a few categories of persons use it and would like to promote it – the educated people living in urban areas. Furthermore, PC is considered a relatively new phenomenon for most people, hence its limited usage.

The SWOT analysis shows the extent to which young people are receptive to using PC and are aware that this phenomenon can help them in achieving their

career goals and in having a pleasant workplace atmosphere. However, they seem to be less interested in using all expressions considered politically correct as is the case of the amusing examples shown earlier in this paper. They find these words and expressions as useless, since being seen 'bald' and 'short' is not as offensive as being marginalized as in the case of the people of colour or some ethnic groups. In conclusion, students (young respondents) consider politically correct lexis necessary when this refers to more 'serious' issues, such as race, gender, religion, and disabilities, hence their tolerance to these matters is also increased. The 'minor' issues such as sexual orientation, or anxieties regarding someone's looks, intelligence or position are sometimes looked at with scepticism and quite rarely laughed at.

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ONLINE TEACHING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

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Abstract: When “school in the classroom” became “school at home”, both teachers and learners found themselves on an unexplored territory. We hypothesized that the change came along with a set of challenges that were partly similar, partly different around the world. Challenges were met with either timid or firm immediate efforts of applying approaches, strategies and techniques that could make teaching an effective process, even under the new circumstances.

The aims of the paper are to provide insights into the challenges online teaching faced during the Covid-19 pandemic in countries around the world, to identify the (applied or suggested) solutions for diverse challenges and similarities or differences between challenges/solutions. In our research, we used a qualitative method based on a purposeful sampling technique and collected data from the research work of scholars in countries from the six inhabited continents. Results confirmed our hypotheses. Although we had glimpses of the world online teaching process situation under unprecedented conditions, we could draw some general conclusions. The most important one was that countries tried their best to make teaching as effective as possible and offer students the opportunity to learn, although the approach was a difficult one, for both teachers and students, with repercussions (that were not necessarily positive) on the learning process. These repercussions could be noticed in each individual country, when returning to face-to-face teaching, and they now represent the hot topic of research all around the world.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, online teaching, challenges, solutions.

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Introduction

Online teaching and learning represent a challenging and interesting topic of research. Authors of books and scientific articles have debated for years on the offers, requirements, advantages and disadvantages of the two online versions of these interrelated processes.

The conclusions reached by these authors underline the ideas that online education offers accessibility (in terms of tools such as systems and programs), flexibility (with reference to time and use of materials), as well as opportunities for teachers' creativity, for a collaborative type of learning, for communication anywhere and with varied types of materials. These also may be regarded as advantages for both teachers and students. The process requires understanding of expectations from the part of the teacher and that of the students, teachers' mastery of new technologies, materials, strategies and techniques, as well as students' having devices for this particular type of activity and their handling the technology. Among the disadvantages that online education brings, research insisted on issues connected with the absence of face-to-face contact (triggering the possibility of less interaction with students); issues regarding knowledge, understanding and handling of technology (by both teachers and students); issues linked to various types of feelings, emotions and attitudes (often negative under emergency situations); issues related to adapted teaching methodology (which requires much more work from the part of the teacher), as well as increased responsibility for students (in terms of attendance and engagement in classroom activity).

Online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic

The last two years have brought into focus a great preoccupation with online teaching and learning, as the education process had to be "moved" online during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Referring to teaching during the pandemic, Hodges et al. (2020) suggest that a difference should be made between *emergency remote teaching* (a temporary change of the mode in which classes are held under special conditions, such as crisis and disaster) and teaching online (the learning experience that is characterized by a very good planning and design). Hodges et al. (2020) also talk about the necessity of immediate adaptations to this type of teaching, in terms of:

- a) finding the most efficient application and tools to work with;
- b) identifying the most efficient strategies in order to make the transition to online teaching as smooth as possible.

On the one hand, this meant teachers' revising of concepts and conceptions and, on the other hand, of the characteristics and benefits of the two interrelated processes. These ideas are well summarized by Rapanta et al. (2020):

Online teaching and learning imply a certain pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), mainly related to designing and organising for better learning experiences and creating distinctive learning environments, with the help of digital technologies (Rapanta et al., 2020, p. 923).

Online teaching under special circumstances also requires teachers' rethinking and reshaping their lesson planning and their strategies and class activities, as well as teachers' rethinking the relationship with remote students (trying to motivate and activate them) and make the transition to virtual classes a smooth process.

Online teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. Literature review

The literature on online teaching during Covid-19 pandemic already consists of a large display of bibliographic entries dealing with issues linked to the key words mentioned above. We shall offer a selection of these issues, having in mind two categories. The former is connected to teachers and their activity (but with direct influence on the process of learning). Studies were dedicated to types of challenges in the online teaching process (Recio & Colella, 2020); the importance of digital competencies, knowledge, and skills required to deal with emergency remote teaching (Tomczyk & Walker, 2021); teaching strategies during Covid-19 pandemic (Mahmood, 2021; Mankki, 2021; Teng & Wu, 2021; Lestiyawati & Widyantoro, 2020); creativity for online study success (Mahmood, 2021); pressure and disturbance to the teachers' professional roles and practices (Watermeyer et al., 2021) or psychological status of university teachers and their perceived motivation, the challenges and the technostress they faced (Akour et al., 2020).

The latter category has the student as its core. Thus, authors were preoccupied with issues such as students' level of satisfaction with online courses/ accomplishment of their needs (Lee et al., 2021); feelings associated with online courses (Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021; Hidalgo-Andrade et al., 2021); the psychological behaviour of students (Ribeiro et al., 2021; Irawan et al., 2020); increased likelihood of cheating among students during online examinations and the efforts and time needed to prepare online examinations (Akour et al., 2020) as well as with the analysis of the impact of online learning and assessment on undergraduate student well-being (Slack & Priestley, 2022).

The literature review on the topic, corroborated with our own experience with online teaching, made us consider that the key words of the online teaching process during Covid-19 pandemic are those presented in Figure 1.

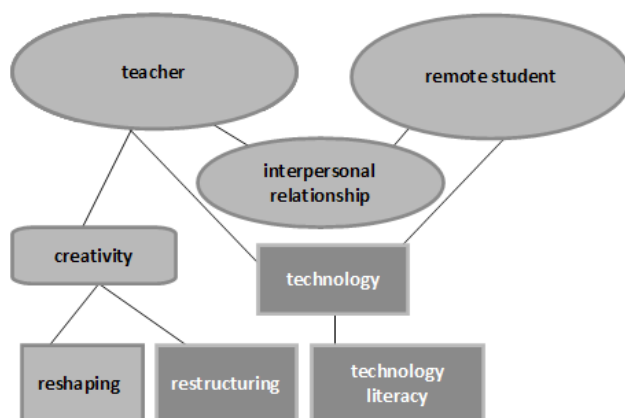


Figure 1. *Key words of the online teaching process during Covid-19 pandemic*

Methodology of research

During Covid-19 pandemic, when “school in the classroom” became “school at home”, both teachers and learners found themselves on an unexplored territory, or a (very) little explored one.

a) Hypothesis and research questions

Teaching online came with a large display of challenges for both teachers and students. Challenges were met with either timid or firm immediate efforts – solutions – of applying approaches, strategies and techniques that could make teaching an effective process, even under the new circumstances. Both challenges and solutions were partly similar, partly different around the world. Thus, the research questions are:

1. What are the challenges that online teaching in different countries faced during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What are the solutions that different countries identified for the challenges they encountered?
3. What is similar or different at the level of the challenges teachers and students faced and the solutions they resorted to?

b) Mode of Inquiry¹

1. “A mode of inquiry is a particular stance an analyst takes in order to accomplish an integral part of a research project”, Carbaugh mentions five distinctive modes: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative and critical (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 170).

The study uses a descriptive mode of inquiry. The meta-analysis of the data offered us insights into the different types of challenges and solutions that online teaching had to face during the Covid-19 pandemic.

c) Data collection and processing

The paper is a collection of Internet data representing research work (articles) of scholars (professors in universities, researchers) in countries from the six inhabited continents. We selected data by using a sampling technique and we took a series of steps in data collection. First, we scrolled the internet (searching for <“Teaching online during the Covid-19 pandemic” + the name of the continent>. We identified 62 materials (country reports, articles and blogs) that met the requirements of the purposeful sampling. Then we applied two exclusion criteria, thus using an intensity sampling technique, that is, we chose

...excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not highly unusual cases...cases that manifest sufficient intensity to illuminate the nature of success or failure, but not at the extreme. (Patton, 2001, p. 234).

We first excluded the materials other than articles; we scanned them all (= 45) and then we excluded the articles that did not refer to universities and articles in which solutions were not mentioned (= 25). The analysis was then made on 20 articles whose authors conducted interviews or applied questionnaires in their universities/countries, in order to gather the necessary data. The following table includes data concerning the countries we had in view as our sources of information, through the “voice” of the researchers.

Table 1. *Data collection pool*

Continent	Country	Researchers
Asia	India, Indonesia, Korea, Pakistan, Taiwan	Darius et al., 2021; Bawawa et al., 2021; Iswati, 2021; Widarini et al., 2021; Haryana et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2021; Bailey & Lee, 2020; Sahito et al., 2022; Sheng-Yi, 2021
Africa	Angola, Ghana, Nigeria	Mendonça da Costa & Gaspar, 2022; Agormedah et al., 2020; Ebohon et al., 2021
Australia	Australia	Mahmood, 2021

Europe	Poland, Romania, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary , Serbia	Cicha et al., 2022; Barbu et al., 2022; Casacchia et al., 2021; Ivanova, 2021; Díez-Gutiérrez & Gajardo Espinoza, 2021; Molnár et al., 2020
North America	Canada, Mexico	Conrad et al., 2022; Juárez-Díaz & Perales, 2021
South America	Ecuador, Colombia	Estrella, 2022; Hidalgo-Andrade et al., 2021; Rizo & Pereira, 2022

Findings² and discussion

The Covid-19 pandemic challenged both teachers and students alike, with direct repercussions on the whole context of online education. That is, in terms of Armengaud's (1993, pp. 60-62) conception

- a) the factual context – the interlocutors and their identity (teachers and students), the physical setting, the time and place of classroom interaction;
- b) the situational/ pragmatic context – with reference to the situation that is socially admitted by participants to interaction;
- c) interactional – having in view the chaining of speech acts in the discursive sequences;
- d) pre-suppositional – including the interlocutors' intentions and expectations.

A large display of challenges has been identified for all analysed situations; yet, not all our sources disclosed clear, detailed solutions for each challenge brought into focus.

Common challenges are related to the following issues:

- 1) Readiness of teachers and students for quick transition from face-to-face classes to online classes*

Were teachers and students in universities prepared to work online? Literature shows that many universities around the world have implemented distance learning, offering online courses, supplementary learning material or educational videos, for example, for many years (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

2. Names of countries occur anytime the researcher/author of the article mentioned things explicitly and the information was different from that offered by the other authors. At the same time, when names of countries are mentioned, the reader needs to take into consideration the authors and articles mentioned in the above table.

In this respect, our findings can start from mentioning the absence of clear institutional support as far as policies and technology are concerned.

Our findings also disclosed that there were universities in which working online was something usual (although not on a daily basis). It was the case of Hungary, for example, where education online was popular even before 2020; students were accustomed to receiving online courses and learning materials (Molnár et al., 2020). It was also the case of Australia, Serbia and Romania that offered, before the pandemic, alternative digital ways of teaching and learning, uploading materials on platforms and making them available to students, in the form of lecture recordings, pre- or post-reading activities, or various types of quizzes. Yet, there were countries such as Mexico, Bulgaria, Poland where both teachers and students were confronted with their little experience with online education and did not feel comfortable with the quick transition infrastructure (Cicha et al., 2022). In Nigeria, Pakistan, Ecuador, Ghana online teaching was something completely new and teachers and students were not prepared for the challenge of quickly coping with e-learning, as no training courses were ever offered to them. Korea also registered a large number of “novice” teachers with respect to technology use, a problem that caused intimidation. While in the first case teachers and students felt somehow confident in their abilities of handling technology, in the second case, feelings such as anxiety (Pakistan), discouragement, sadness (Italy) dominated the teachers’ online work, caused – first of all – by their lack of technology literacy (clearly stated by Indonesia), digital literacy and media literacy, doubled by the students’ ones.

Almost all countries signalled the necessity of (intense) training courses for both teachers and students as a solution for this challenge.

2) The issue of devices, software applications and platforms used for online classes

In all countries, online teaching confronted with a series of challenges connected with technology.

Lack of state investment in technology was mentioned, for example, in countries such as Angola, Pakistan and Ecuador. Lack of access to digital devices (Italy, Ghana) or outdated ones (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020) was another problem, together with problems linked with the services provided by online platforms (Nigeria), lack of internet, especially in rural areas (Angola, but not only) or problems with connectivity (all countries), even electricity (Angola) or the cost of the internet usage and lack of constant access (Ghana). Lack of availability of facilities and infrastructure was also reported in Indonesia. Although somehow prepared for working online, Australia also encountered problems with technology especially for students belonging to ethnic minorities, students from rural areas or coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers and students found similar solutions to create the link between them. Out of the

examples in which they were explicitly mentioned, we noticed that the similar types of applications (in the order of their use frequency in the analysed contexts) were used: Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Edmodo, Whatsapp, e-mail, Facebook and even Twitter and Instagram (Indonesia). Students worked on desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones.

The main solutions that all analysed countries found in order to solve the problem of bad connectivity are, by far, the following:

- a) pre-recorded lessons that allow students to access them when connectivity to internet is better/established. They are also a flexible learning tool for students, as they can pause whenever they want to, they can replay lectures and even adapt the speed to the individual learning style and preferences (Australia) (Mahmood, 2021);
- b) uploading the material on the website in advance (allowing students to read and understand the material, work on it, question it, expand information included in it, before being in the virtual class).

Yet, teachers and students often felt intimidated by the platforms they had to work with, especially because platforms did not allow them to see all students on the screen. This triggered challenges linked to students' motivation, their engagement in class activities, disruption of attention, or even to the teacher's control over the students' presence in the virtual space (Indonesia). The solutions the analysed sources mentioned were quite similar and they insisted on the teacher's need of changing their teaching methodology (to be developed in 4).

3) The teachers' need of adapting to online activity

Under the new circumstances, teachers were confronted with the requirement of handling the same content in virtual classes, with virtual students. This proved to be a challenge, as they lacked face-to-face interaction with their students. Researchers mentioned the fact it was quite difficult for teachers to apply new strategies, as they were still learning about e-learning, in general, and they needed some extra-time to think about new strategies and implement them in the virtual class.

We drew a unanimous conclusion from the experiences presented by researchers, namely the fact that it was vital that teachers understood they had to produce changes:

- 1) at the level of their understanding of online teaching requirements, (understanding the necessity of such requirements and how to adapt to them);
- 2) at the level of their daily activity of planning the lessons (structuring, reshaping course material and seminar activities, thinking, rethinking appropriate approaches, strategies, methods and techniques). This meant finding flexible approaches to acquaint students with technology and flexible

approaches to teaching (Ghana). It also meant adapting planning to the new teaching and learning conditions (Ivanova, 2021). This presupposed rethinking the time allotted for different activities, finding substitutive activities for those which required practice that could not be done during the lockdown, applying transposition of material when possible (from long boring lectures into attractive charts, diagrams, tables), in order to avoid boredom for students. In other words, they had to put their creativity at work. Thus, similar types of strategies and techniques were mentioned by all countries, starting from the necessity of preserving activity within the framework of a student-centred approach. The list includes the following techniques: collaborative learning, online discussions, online quizzes, debates, brainstorming, small group work and project-based learning. Individual assignment and animations were used in India and animations and virtual simulations or projects in teams were preferred in Romania. Blended techniques, such as videos + applications were suggested by Pakistan and Indonesia, while blended technique of the type online + offline or student-centred + teacher-centred activities were solutions found by Indonesia. Online learning portfolio, self-directed learning, knowledge background check were also used in Indonesia.

4) Coping strategies to solve diverse issues while working online

Among the challenges in this area of teaching, we identified the following similar ones:

► Students' understanding and interpretation of taught material

Researchers considered that it was difficult for students to gain full understanding of the material and to absorb all the knowledge that they were taught, or to concentrate during the courses (Korea, Nigeria). The cause was found in information overload (Canada) or the little opportunity for students to ask questions and clear doubts (Mexico) and this, in turn, caused – somehow – lack of students' enthusiasm for classes (Indonesia, Korea). The similar solutions for such challenges included the use of clear instructions, insistence on detailed explanations, asking questions to check understanding and the use of charts or tables – meant to reduce quantity and difficulty of the material. At the same time, asking the professor, asking peers, discussion forums (India), going through online material providing additional information proved to be efficient and solve the problem of clearing doubts. Other explicitly mentioned solutions for the same issue were the use of graphic diagrams (Romania) and flipped classroom technique (Pakistan), along with the use of chat box for elucidating queries in discussion forum (India) and providing more practical examples (Romania).

► Motivating students and developing their engagement in the class

Researchers mentioned the fact that, on the one hand, online teaching faced the teacher with reduced possibility of controlling students' focus on the materials

(Indonesia) and, on the other hand, it came with a decrease in students' motivation (observable at the level of – sometimes – reduced attendance of classes and at the level of their motivation for study).

For drawing students' attention from the very beginning of the lesson, the solution was to open the lecture with a “smart” question meant to draw the framework of discussion (Australia), stir the interest/ develop critical thinking and allow for teacher's receiving an answer from each student, while being with their camera on. Another solution was that of using frequent/ periodic questions during the lecture (Australia). Sahito et al. (2022) (Pakistan) also relied on questioning students as a technique of keeping attention alive. In order to keep them focused on the activity, small group discussions, the use of the Chat tools, of the verbal and nonverbal buttons, the use of task-based approach were preferred (Indonesia, Australia).

In order to develop motivation and, respectively, engagement during the class, countries opted for quite similar solutions: use of PPTs, videos, project work, media, which are meant to motivate and make lessons more interactive through discussions as follow-up activities. Other countries suggested the use of reflective blogs and online learning portfolios (Indonesia), the use of short, explicit, exciting material, the use of debates or brainstorming (Romania). Other identified solutions brought into focus were the use of collaborative learning, offering students encouragement and appreciation or making lessons more interactive (Indonesia); online discussion forums; the use of verbal/ nonverbal button or chat rooms (Australia); free synchronous and asynchronous discussion based on text, audio or audio-visual materials (Taiwan); working in groups and working at one's own pace (India) or engaging students in various platforms of social media or in virtual learning communities (Korea).

► *Arranging and facilitating group work*

Working with large classes and not seeing all the students on the platform became a challenge, too. Arranging and facilitating group work was considered a complicated issue (Korea). Yet, the platforms frequently used by teachers (Zoom, Microsoft teams and Google Meet, for example) offered teachers the possibility to resort to breakout rooms in order to work with small groups in turns, whenever they had brainstorming sessions or lively conversations (techniques used in many analysed situations). In order to make the process an effective one, two solutions stood out: giving students clear instructions about how to “enter” breakout rooms and how to carry on the activity, along with that of establishing rules from the first meeting.

► *Assessment and evaluation in online classes*

One of the most important challenges of the online teaching activity was that of conducting assessment and evaluation. It was signalled by all researchers. The

challenge brought into focus two aspects: that of the techniques used in order to ensure an effective assessment (based on reliability, validity, lack of ambiguity and objectivity), along with that of making students' grades reflect reality. In other words, teachers had to answer the questions: how could they adapt to the new way of assessing their students (in both formative and summative assessment) and how could their evaluation be a fair one, offering marks that reflect reality and avoiding students' misconduct (cheating) during examination sessions.

The solutions identified in the research articles indicated preference towards promotion of discussion forums, mini-research reports (Pakistan), or online quizzes with multiple-choice solutions (India) or self-assessment questionnaires and peers' comments and evaluation (Ecuador). Insistence was also made on the necessity of a timely feedback on the part of the teacher, as students need to gain a sense of accomplishment of their work (Canada, Taiwan). At the same time, learning effectiveness was assessed through in-class study experience, in-class task-assignments and in-class peer-evaluation (Taiwan).

In the case of oral/ written evaluation, where summative evaluation seemed to have created problems in terms of form and content, the solutions found by teachers included alternative ways to traditional ones, such as portfolios or co-evaluation that could give accounts of students' reflective and critical thinking (Spain). An aspect signalled by researchers was that students seemed to have received better grades in their exams – not reflecting their true knowledge. One solution for that was teachers' resorting to more problem-based learning, able to encourage critical thinking and make it less easy to find answers online (Nigeria).

► *Teachers' and students' emotional and psychological issues linked to online activity*

Both teachers and students had to fight moments of sadness, depression, and lack of accomplishment or stress brought by the many hours in front of the computers, laptops or tablets. Teachers were also confronted with tiredness and concentration difficulty in front of the computer (Italy) or the feeling of discouragement and dissatisfaction in their work because of the loss of face-to-face interaction with their students (Korea). They also felt that lack of face-to-face interaction affected class dynamics very much. The solutions offered included humanizing courses and strengthening the interpersonal relationship, so that the atmosphere could be less tense, less tiresome or boring.

► *Much more time spent to prepare courses and seminars*

Many researchers mentioned the challenge caused by extra-workload for teachers (Ecuador, Italy, Romania). In Romania, for example, a study in which interviews on this issue were conducted with teachers (Barbu et al., 2022)

disclosed the fact that many of them declared they had to work more than 4 hours preparing teaching materials and correcting assignments (as compared to the 4 hours before the pandemic).

Although no clear solutions were mentioned in the analyzed articles, researchers mentioned some other challenges in their own country:

- ▶ *A great number of assignments students received and the decrease of practical skills (Nigeria)*
- ▶ *Lack of emotional psychological support (Canada, Angola)*
- ▶ *Discomfort of speaking in the void; intrusion in the teacher's domestic privacy; fear of being recorded during the teaching process (Italy).*

Conclusions

This study aimed at identifying the challenges that teachers teaching online had to face during the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the solutions that teachers from universities in different countries had to find in order to meet the challenges and to offer students the opportunity to continue their study in the most efficient possible way.

Findings proved that challenges (no matter whether the countries had or had not previous experiences with online work) were almost the same for all countries analysed, with slight differences (connected to investment in technology and problems with technology) that were linked, especially, to the degree of the countries' social and economic development. The solutions were also similar in most countries with emphasis on the issues of efforts of transforming teacher-centred classes into student-centred ones and of finding the quickest and handiest solutions of adaptations under the unprecedented circumstances.

Researchers highlighted important requirements for online teaching – that can become, any time, an emergency remote teaching or a constant in the near future. Among them, a greater state involvement in establishing policies and providing online technology for universities (suggested by all countries, but especially the underdeveloped ones); the necessity for training courses for teachers as far as the use of technology is concerned (suggested by almost all countries, especially the underdeveloped and the developing ones); the necessity of choosing the platforms or tools that are able to monitor students' progress or activity in real time and more practical work examples and summaries of taught material so that processes of understanding and interpretation of information could be helped (suggested by Romania); being considerate to the feelings that students experience under stressful conditions that may have an important impact on participation to classes, timeless attendance, or timeless assignment transmission to the teachers (Australia).

Limitations and strengths of research

The study was based on a meta-analysis of data collected from research of scholars (articles exclusively) from various countries on the six inhabited continents.

Some limitations of the present study should be acknowledged. First, the method of data collection we have chosen did not allow inclusion for analysis of a larger number of examples from various other countries. Second, the perspective we have taken is that of the teachers, as most articles responding to the data collection requirements did not take the students' perspectives. Our future work could have in view this aspect, too.

The strength of the study lies in the possibility of offering further extensive research on the topic, even by insisting on only one type of challenge with different solutions offered in the various contexts of different countries.

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STUDYING HUMOUR FROM A CONVERSATION ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *Humour is a complex and dynamic phenomenon prevalent in social interaction in various settings, such as mundane talk and institutional contexts. It has been a focus of interest in social interaction research for decades. To date, scholars have sought to gain insights regarding what counts as humorous and why we find certain utterances funny (e.g., Carroll, 2014; Bell & Pomerantz, 2016). As such, scholars from various fields ranging from philosophy, sociology, psychology, pragmatics, and linguistics, to name a few, have adopted different approaches in the examination of humour. One of the new perspectives that offers unique insights into humour scholarship is Conversation Analysis (CA) methodology. CA is a method and a research field in itself deriving from ethnomethodology, and it provides valuable opportunities for researchers to investigate humour in interaction. Thus, the main aim of this study is to present Conversation Analysis as a candidate methodology to be used for analysing humour in interaction. It also provides a critical discussion of how CA approaches 'humour'.*

Keywords: *Conversation Analysis, Ethnomethodology, humour, humour theories, social interaction*

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Humour in interaction: An overview

Humour is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that is prevalent in social interaction in various settings, such as mundane talk and institutional contexts. It is not a straightforward job to define humour as what is considered humorous varies depending on culture, people, and even the time (e.g., Bell & Pomerantz, 2016; Bell, 2007). Therefore, scholars from various fields have sought to understand why we find certain utterances humorous and what, in effect, counts as humorous (e.g., Carroll, 2014; Bell & Pomerantz, 2016).

To date, studies in various fields, including philosophy, sociology, psychology (e.g., Martin, 2007; Warren et al., 2020), pragmatics (e.g., Hay, 2001; Dynel, 2009), linguistics (e.g., Norrick, 2010; Attardo, 1994; Raskin, 1985), and literature, (e.g., Kotthoff, 2007) to name a few, have provided invaluable observations regarding humour in interaction. By examining this phenomenon from different standpoints, humour theorists have sought to conceptualize it by basing their findings on different domains (Moalla, 2015). For example, some scholars addressed the cognitive-perceptual aspects of humour, such as General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) (Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 2001) in linguistics. Some studies (e.g., Martin, 2007; Raskin, 1985), on the other hand, have focused on the emotional perspective, for example, the Release (or Relief) Theory in psychology, which argues that humour releases tensions and dissipates from an excessive nervous energy in our bodies. From a sociocultural perspective, humour is generated through linguistic and non-linguistic means that are defined by politeness theory, face, and footing (Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011).

The pioneering theories of humour, namely, superiority theory, the release (or relief) theory, and the incongruity theory (Carroll, 2014; Martin, 2007), stem from psychological studies. To briefly introduce them, superiority theory suggests that humour emerges from feeling superior to and laughing at other people's inadequacies or stupidity. According to release theory, as mentioned earlier, humour releases tensions and dissipates from excessive nervous energy (e.g., Carroll, 2014; Martin, 2007). Finally, proponents of incongruity theory suggest that humour emerges at the juxtaposition of elements (e.g., an idea, image, text, event) which are perceived to be absurd, unexpected, odd, and, thus, inconsistent and contradictory with expectations (e.g., Martin, 2007; Forman, 2011; Bell & Pomerantz, 2016). These theories in various fields overlap and also build on each other. As an example, text-based theories draw on the analysis of interactions and the methodological and theoretical assumptions of pragmatics and discourse analysis (Ritchie, 2004).

Thus, various methods are applied to examine humour in different contexts. For instance, through applying methods including discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and ethnomethodology, discourse studies have provided significant observations in various settings such as the workplace (e.g., Schnurr

& Chan, 2011; Schnurr, 2009; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Holmes, 2007, 2006), computer-mediated communication and human-computer interaction (e.g., Morkes et al., 1999), gender studies (e.g., Holmes, 2006; Hay, 2000). In these studies, the main analytic focus has been on the functions of humour, suggesting that it mitigates conflicts (e.g., Norrick & Spitz, 2008), reduces stress (e.g., Lynch, 2002), and establishes social bonds (e.g., Van Praag et al., 2017; Martin, 2007).

Interaction analytic studies – for example, studies using Conversation Analysis (CA) – have provided valuable insights about how interactants produce and/or treat utterances as humorous. These studies are conducted in various settings such as classrooms (e.g., Reddington & Waring, 2015; Çopur et al., 2021; Matsumoto et al., 2022), workplace (Schnurr & Chan, 2011), and mundane talk (e.g., Haugh, 2010). One of the major areas of research in CA studies has been the sequentiality of laughter and smiling, and scholars have mainly attempted to understand how laughter and smile function in interaction (e.g., Glenn & Holt, 2013; Clift, 2016; Walker, 2017; Matsumoto et al., 2022). However, due to its principles, CA has been cautious when approaching ‘humour’ in interaction, which will be discussed in the following sections.

In addition to CA, critical discourse analysis (e.g., Khan & Ali, 2016) and multimodal discourse analysis (e.g., Ruiz Madrid & Fortanet-Gomez, 2015) have also been employed in examining humour in interaction drawing on recorded naturally-occurring data. For example, in workplace communication, various methods such as critical discourse analysis, multimodal interaction analysis, ethnography, and pragmatics (e.g., Holmes, 2007; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Haugh, 2016) have been adopted. As such, scholars have advanced our understanding of humour in these settings. However, there is still a need for further research into the phenomenon of humour in these settings and many other contexts of interaction.

Conversation Analysis

The History and Development of CA

CA is one of the several approaches in Applied Linguistics that specifically study spoken language and non-verbal interaction. In CA, the participants and context can be anybody and anywhere, as long as there is interaction, and it is not necessarily verbal. As it is a naturalistic approach, interventions are not favoured, and the world is studied as it is. Traditionally, linguistic approaches focus on the written language due to the implicit assumption that spoken language is not orderly. However, over time, studies focusing on the social aspects of language put forward that the spoken aspect of a language is essential and indeed primary. These perspectives, and thus CA, emerged from sociological

studies that were based on Goffman and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (e.g., Goffman, 1967). These researchers were not linguists but ethnomethodologists who studied members of societies and their practices to understand how they interacted as social beings (Ten Have, 2007). Ethnomethodological studies aim to find out how ordinary people achieve their interactional goals in mundane talk. Hence, language was not the focus of their studies. They considered language a resource human beings resort to achieve social functions. Garfinkel aimed to understand how ordinary people achieved their interactional goals in everyday life (Gardner, 2004).

These pioneering studies were followed by Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Abraham Schegloff in the early 60s and 70s (e.g., Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1979). Thanks to their studies, CA has become a distinct discipline, and it has turned into a naturalistic approach whose main aim is to observe, describe, analyse and understand talk as a default component of human social behaviour (Sidnell, 2010). To exemplify, CA studies such as Sacks et al. (1974) and Schegloff (1979) observed and described how human beings achieved mutual understanding in a bottom-up fashion without relying on linguistic competence. Hence, interaction is not analysed according to some pre-defined prescriptive rules, but there is room for finding out new patterns based on grounded theory. This is where CA differs from traditional linguistic approaches to language.

After the social turn in the 90s (Firth & Wagner, 1997), sociolinguistic studies have gained momentum, and CA has attracted more and more interest since then. Especially after 2000, there was a boom in CA-informed studies that focused on educational contexts. The seminal book that studied classroom interaction from a CA perspective by Seedhouse (2004) may be considered a significant step in adapting and adopting CA methodology into pedagogic circles in that it is the first book that analysed classroom interaction from a totally novel methodology, namely, CA. The suggestion of the Self Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) framework by Walsh (2011; 2013) and his CA-informed analysis approach in comparison to pure CA studies may have been argued to contribute to the adoption of CA studies in pedagogic circles, too, as this approach enabled researchers to conclude practical benefits for teaching, which is usually not the primary focus in pure or traditional CA studies. Some examples of these pedagogic benefits are focusing on locality and considering interaction as something that is dealt with in a reflexive fashion. This is the focus in the SETT framework, for instance. Teachers are not taught 'the best ways' of teaching. Rather, they are informed about some 'resources' that may be utilized depending on the context and the other elements of communication. This explains why reflective practice and individual development are the key terms in the SETT framework.

Precepts

There are three main principles in CA that were borrowed from ethnomethodology. They are accountability, indexicality, and reflexivity (for detailed reading, please refer to Gardner, 2004, p. 266). These rules are the underlying rules of Conversation Analysis. In line with them, CA has primarily three aims.

The first principle is studying naturally-occurring interaction as the principles of ethnomethodology are applied to naturally-occurring talk. CA methodology is strictly against artificial or made-up contexts unless that is the goal of the interaction. This perspective helps conversation analysts better understand real-life social actions (depending on the research aims, of course e.g., one may aim to study artificial contexts) as it provides real-life accounts. In other words, the focus in CA is the naturally occurring talk in contrast to traditional linguistic and discourse-analytic approaches that investigate language competence in an ideal context or experimental contexts (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). The next principle is concerned with finding out the organization and order in interaction. CA puts forward that there is order in interaction, and interaction is patterned at every level, similar to the organizations in linguistics as in syntax or morphology. However, this order is a reflexive one in that it creates the context, and it is also renewed and reshaped by the context via local contributions of the interlocutors. The final aim of the CA methodology is to understand how interlocutors interpret the other interlocutors' turns and actions. This contrasts with the concept of communicative competence in that competence is seen as shared among the interlocutors. Hence, achieving intersubjectivity, also called mutual understanding or shared understanding, is a co-constructed activity.

These precepts and primary aims have some implications for research studies. As mentioned above, the data in a CA study should come from real-life. This is in contrast to traditional linguistic and discourse-analytical studies as they tend to focus on made-up contexts to discuss grammaticality or acceptability. Discourse Analysis studies sometimes utilize made-up tasks to collect data about a specific function or act. CA, on the other hand, prioritizes studying only what is natural without any experimental design.

The Interactional Organization in CA

As mentioned above, the primary goal in CA is to unearth how social interaction is ordered and the consequences of this order for talk-in-interaction (Liddicoat, 2011). This is achieved by four analytic tools in CA: Sequence organization, turn-taking, the repair mechanism, and preference organization.

The first interactional organization is turn-taking. This organization is concerned with the rules for interlocutors to participate in talk. Primarily, there are two rules that focus on who can allocate a turn and who can take the turn.

It also focuses on the questions: “How do interlocutors take turns?”, “What are the types of the turns?” and “What is the turn size?”. The answers to these questions can provide many insights into the nature of interaction in a particular setting. Please refer to Liddicoat (2011) for a detailed reading on turn-taking.

The next organization is sequence organisation. In sequence organization, all the actions are seen as a part of adjacency pairs although there may be some other possible sequential organisations (Seedhouse, 2004). As Heritage (1984) points out, adjacency pairs are the building blocks of sequence organisation consisting of two parts: the first pair parts and second pair parts. The main concern of sequence organization is understanding how the two parts of an adjacency pair are preceded, interrupted, or followed by other turns or sequences. On the other hand, the repair mechanism is concerned with understanding how interlocutors deal with problems that occur in interaction. To define it more specifically, Schegloff (2007, p. 101) describes it as ‘efforts to deal with trouble sources or repairables marked of as distinct within the ongoing talk’. The final one is preference organization. The main idea in preference organisation is that responding to a turn may be done in several different ways. However, all these ways are not equal from a psychological and social perspective. Some of them are preferred more due to some reasons such as social norms or politeness. For example, when there is an invitation, potentially, it can be accepted or rejected. However, accepting and rejecting are not equal options since acceptance is “preferred” more than a rejection. That is why interlocutors need to resort to other resources, such as making excuses or mentioning some problems in rejection sequences, while an acceptance tends to be more straightforward (Liddicoat, 2011).

To summarize CA is a qualitative and inductive approach that mainly studies naturally occurring talk-in-interaction (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Liddicoat, 2011). Thanks to its inductive and emic approach, CA enables researchers to observe and find out novel patterns in the use of language. Hence, it is specifically qualitative, inductive, and empiricist. The goal is to understand how human beings achieve mutual understanding as a part of social practices. Accordingly, from a CA perspective, languages are not grammar or functions; instead they are a tool we use to maintain our life in our social groups. Hence, the goal in CA is to find out how human beings achieve this.

CA approach in studying humour in interaction

Unlike various disciplines, such as pragmatics and linguistics, in which humour is an established phenomenon, it is not treated as a social practice in conversation analytic studies. Since it does not represent a specific social action that can easily be described, conversation analysts consider humour an abstract and conceptual category and use it as an initial gloss of interactive sequences

rather than an analytic category (Glenn & Holt, 2017; Kaukomaa et al., 2013). To put it differently, in CA, using 'humour' as an analytic category reflects the analyst's judgement – instead of focusing on the participant's observable behaviours – due to which it is considered as 'labelling', and this does not align with the principles of CA approach.

As Heritage (1984) puts it, humour is considered a sort of 'typification' (pp. 144-150) in CA studies, which is a kind of abstract category that is "insufficient to describe social actions and sequences, or visible orientations of the participants" (Glenn & Holt, 2017, p. 295). Thus, using action-oriented terms such as 'laughable' (Glenn, 2003, p. 4) – a term referring to the source of the laughter – is more preferred in CA studies.

However, even though humour studies have been informed by interaction analytic research on laughter (e.g., Glenn, 2003; Jefferson, 1979; Hay, 2001; Holt, 2012), relying on action-oriented terms such as laughables and/or smilables may not always be enough in examining cases where, for instance, interactants produce a turn as 'dead-pan'. Moreover, existing studies (e.g., Reddington & Waring, 2015; Lehtimaja, 2011; Haakana, 2010; Kaukomaa et al., 2013) have demonstrated that interactants can employ various verbal and nonverbal conduct to mark a turn as humorous, as in Ford and Fox (2010, pp. 355-357) demonstrating 'swinging the torso while smiling', 'throwing back the head' as nonverbal resources used by the participants. Similarly, drawing on data from Finnish-as-a-second-language classrooms, Lehtimaja (2011) presents how students' reproach turns, including a mid-TCU (i.e., turn construction unit) or TCU-final teacher-oriented address terms, could be produced as humorous through various prosodic and nonverbal elements. Thus, humour can be considered a more comprehensive social interaction phenomenon requiring a more holistic approach. In this sense, CA has a lot to offer to humour scholarship.

As in all methods that stem from ethnomethodology, CA treats talk-in-interaction and all other conduct (e.g., nonverbal, situational) as indexical. Accordingly, participants accomplish understandings procedurally and contextually, which suggests that talk is context-shaped and context-renewing (Seedhouse, 2004, p.14; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). This emic approach allows the researcher to see the interaction as a whole rather than in isolation. Hence, when applied to humour research, it allows the researcher to see what is produced and/or treated as humorous by the participants. The researchers can comprehend and gain insights into the dynamics of humour in interaction through unpacking sequential details such as verbal (e.g., voice quality) and nonverbal conduct (e.g., gaze, a particular body movement) provided in CA analysis. CA approach insists on documenting evidence for analytic claims in participants' orientations. This may – at first sight – seem to be limiting the analyst (Glenn & Holt, 2017). However, this insistence, in fact, enables the analyst to conduct a reliable

approach in the examination of humour by avoiding external claims and/or assessing actions as ‘humorous’ in the analysis. As such, the analysts can gain an analytic grounding of what is oriented to as humorous by the participants (e.g., Reddington & Waring, 2015; Norrick, 2010).

All in all, despite all the debates about how to identify ‘humour’ in CA approach, it is still a social and prevalent phenomenon in interaction, and CA can be a valuable approach to explore it. It has proven to be a powerful method as it enables researchers to unpack how participants mark turns as humorous through deploying multimodal resources (e.g., Kaukomaa et al., 2013; Reddington & Waring, 2015; Norrick, 2010).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has discussed CA approach in humour studies. It started with a short overview of humour research highlighting the different approaches and methods used to examine the phenomenon. Later, the study has continued with a brief introduction to CA methodology and approach. Accordingly, CA stemmed from ethnomethodology and was used as a research method. Later, it turned into a research field itself. The precepts and the interactional tools of CA have been discussed briefly. The roots of CA, which is based on ethnomethodology and partially sociology, have some effects on its analysis mechanisms which also affect the study of humour. To exemplify, CA utilizes the emic perspective, and it is qualitative and inductive by nature. Accordingly, CA differs from other deductive approaches and methodologies because it does not start the analysis of humour with pre-defined categories. Rather, individual instances of humorous turns are collected and only after forming a sound collection are these instances analysed to come to a conclusion. This approach to data analysis potentially helps researchers come up with unique findings as their analysis is not limited to a pre-defined category.

Finally, in the paper, we discuss how CA approaches humour and highlight the strengths. As such, we propose that CA proves to be a powerful tool to investigate humour through its principles of looking at interaction. The emic approach taken in conversation analytic studies has much to offer in humour research as it enables researchers to gain insights with regards to what is produced/treated as humorous by the participants in the stretches of talk-in-interaction through unpacking the sequential details (verbal, nonverbal, and situational) of interaction.

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IN THE MIND'S EYE: MENTAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF FLOODS BY THE BRITISH AND THE BULGARIAN MEDIA

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Abstract: *From a cognitive linguistics perspective, the present study is aimed at the analysis of manifestations of metaphorical mental conceptualizations of flooding events in terms of war in the language used by the British and the Bulgarian journalists and the extent to which the implementation of the cognitive metaphor FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR differs in the media representations of the two countries. The corpus used for the research consists of 19 articles extracted from the electronic databases of four newspapers – two for the British discourse (the Guardian and the Independent) and two for the Bulgarian discourse (Monitor and Standart). A total of 33 example sentences have been extracted from the corpus (21 from the British media and 12 from the Bulgarian media) and they have been coded with respect to the mappings between the source and target domain of the cognitive metaphor. The results of the research show that the media both in the UK and Bulgaria rely on metaphorical projection from the domain of war when flooding crises are reported, which confirms the notion that metaphorical projection is a universal structural element of cognition.*

Keywords: *conventional metaphor, cognition, conceptualization, mappings, media language*

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Introduction

The famous Latin saying *Cogito, ergo sum* (*I think, therefore I am*), attributed to René Descartes, expresses the link between one's mental conceptualizations and their very existence. On the other hand, the connection between language and thought and whether the former determines, or at least influences the latter has been central to the Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis, which, with respect to its strong version, has been generally rejected by the scientific community, but as far as its weak version is concerned, within the cognitive linguistics enterprise, it is accepted that there is evidence which supports the claim "that language facilitates our conceptualising capacity" and that "cross-linguistic differences influence non-linguistic thought and action" (Evans & Green, 2006, p.98). While the extent to which our mental processes are influenced by language is an ongoing debate, concerning the language-thought relationship, it is language that encodes and reveals our thought processing mechanisms. As for the nature of language, it is often perceived as a set of signifiers and signified (Saussure, 1959, p.67), i.e. words, which, literally, refer to objects from the surrounding material world. For instance, an object, which is a piece of furniture with a back, a seat, and four legs for one person to sit on, is designated with the lexical item *chair*. Different versions of the same item can be denoted with different linguistic signs. If the chair is comfortable and has sides that one can rest their arms on it is labelled *armchair*. When it has three or four legs without a back or arms, then it is termed *stool*. Cognitive linguistics postulates that our conceptual perception of the world is derived from embodied experience (Evans & Green, 2006, p.365). People use the five senses to experience and learn about material objects. For example, a child sees, touches, smells, or even has a taste of the chair. Then, he or she hears the word *chair* used in context and connects the object that has been experienced with the senses to the word that have been heard and the information is stored in the mind. When the word *chair* is used by somebody else, a picture of the chair with all the connotations connected to that object in relation to its shape, colour, texture, scent or flavour is brought back. Thus, the child has formed an image schema related to the notion of chair. Image schemas "exist at a level of generality and abstraction that allows them to serve repeatedly as identifying patterns in an indefinitely large number of experiences, perceptions, and image formations for objects or events that are similarly structured in the relevant ways" (Johnson, 1987, p.28) They can be the basis for a metaphorical projection from one domain to another. When it comes to processing notions that are impossible to be experienced through the five senses because they cannot be seen, heard, tasted, smelled or touched, like for instance the nature of the character of a person or an organization, then in order to understand that notion and talk about it we might take a word that literally names a material object that can be experienced through the senses and use that word to refer to the notion that cannot be perceived through embodied

experiences. For the sake of illustration, let us take the noun *face*, as an example. Its first meaning does name a material object; or rather a part of it and that is “the front part of your head, where your eyes, nose, and mouth are”. Furthermore, it is used to label “the nature or character of an organization, industry, system etc. and the way it appears to people”, also “a steep vertical surface or side of a mountain, cliff etc.” as well as “the front part of a clock or watch where the numbers and hands are” (LDCE, 2003, p.559). The three meanings of the noun *face* are metaphorical in nature, and they show how metaphors are used as a way of understanding abstract concepts through the means of more specific, familiar ones.

Theoretical background

Traditionally, metaphors have been considered as tropes and thus have been expatiated on in the field of rhetoric since ancient times. Metaphors have been considered implicit similes that can be represented with the formula “A is B”, as in *Achilles is a lion*, which is based on resemblance between a lion and the character *Achilles* from the *Iliad*. The resemblance is not in his physical appearance but rather concerns qualities that a lion has, like bravery, which are projected to the hero (Evans & Green, 2006, p.293).

Mark Johnson in his book *The Body in the Mind* states that “metaphor was thought to be either a deviant form of expression or a nonessential literary figure of speech” (1987, p.66). He lists the following standard theories of metaphor: a) literal-core theories; b) metaphorical proposition theories; c) the non-propositional theory. He states that according to the literal-core theories metaphor was treated as a mode of expression, which is rhetorically powerful or artistically interesting without having any unique cognitive content. Metaphorical proposition theories emphasize the creative side of metaphor, where the “new whole that is created constitutes an entirely novel unity in our experience”. However, the specific nature of that creative activity of metaphorical imaginations has not been supplied within the metaphorical proposition theories. According to Mark Johnson, Donald Davidson’s non-propositional theory of metaphor states that metaphors do not have any distinctive metaphorical meaning apart from their literal meaning but only intimate (not mean) something and cause us to notice or see something and thus perform an important cognitive function. However, that theory does not provide an account of the connection between the literal meaning of the sentence and what the hearer notices (ibid, pp.67-72).

In their seminal book *Metaphors we Live By* (1980, p.3) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson theorize that metaphors are not merely poetic figures of speech, but are rather a fundamental feature of our conceptual system, i.e. they encode our thinking patterns and are used as structuring elements of our cognition. If we take the domain of TIME, it is difficult to find a lot of examples where TIME

is referred to in a strictly literal way. Time is more often than not conceptualized in terms of MOTION or SPACE, like in *Christmas is approaching* or *We are moving towards Christmas*, or alternatively, *Christmas is not very far away* (Evans and Green, 2006, p.290). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.15) the fact that humans walk in upright position and their heads are up, while their feet are down, gives rise to orientational metaphors where notions like happiness/unhappiness, consciousness/unconsciousness, health and live/sickness and death, having control/being under control etc. are conceptualized metaphorically on the vertical axis, where happiness, consciousness, health and live, having control etc. are considered UP, while unhappiness, unconsciousness, sickness and death, being under control etc. are considered DOWN. Similarly to how our physical experiences with orientation give rise to orientational metaphors, our experience with physical objects (especially our bodies) provides the basis for ontological metaphors, where events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., are viewed as entities and substances. Utterances, such as *Inflation is lowering our standard of living* and *We need to combat inflation* exemplify the INFLATION IS AN ENTITY metaphor (ibid, pp. 25-26). In addition to orientational and ontological metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson also delineate structural metaphors, such as RATIONAL ARGUMENT IS WAR, where we use one highly structured concept to structure another. The grounding of such structural metaphors is in systematic correlations within our experience. Rational argument is conceptualized in terms of physical conflict. Fighting is all-pervasive in the animal kingdom and humans have even institutionalized it as war. No matter if fighting takes place between animals or between a group of people its basic structure, which includes issuing challenges, attacking, defending, counterattacking, retreating, and surrendering, remains essentially unchanged. Instead of engaging in physical conflicts humans very often take part in verbal arguments which are comprehended in the same way as physical battles, i.e. there are territories to establish or to defend; one can either win or lose. In the case of a domestic argument between a husband and wife, every verbal means that they have at their disposal is used, like intimidation, threat, invoking authority, insult, belittling, challenging authority, evading issues, bargaining, flattering, etc. In the academic world, the diplomatic world or in the world of journalism a lot of the verbal means that are used in a domestic situation are not acceptable, but even in these situations RATIONAL ARGUMENT is understood and carried out in terms of war, since there are still positions that are held and defended (ibid p.61-63). With structural metaphors, the structure of the source domain is mapped onto the target domain. Kövecses (2002, p. 8) exemplifies that process through the conceptual metaphor SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE PLANTS. The authentic examples he has given, which are presented below, show how linguistic items from the source domain PLANT (*branch*,

grow, prune, root, flourish, blossom, reap) are used to conceptualize the target domain SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

He works for the local **branch** of the bank.

Our company is **growing**.

They had to **prune** the workforce.

The organization was **rooted** in the old church.

There is now a **flourishing** black market in software there.

His business **blossomed** when the railways put his establishment within reach of the big city.

Employers **reaped** enormous benefits from cheap foreign labour.

The mappings for that metaphor can be represented systematically, as follows:

Source: PLANT	Target: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION
(a) the whole plant	the entire organization
(b) a part of the plant	a part of the organization
(c) growth of the plant	development of the organization
(d) removing a part of the plant	reducing the organization
(e) the root of the plant	the origin of the organization
(f) the flowering	the best stage, the most successful stage

While discussing the domains of conceptual metaphor Joseph Grady (1997, p.177) notes that domains can range from “the simplest and most schematic (e.g., vertical elevation) to the richest and most vivid (e.g., the domain encompassing food, cooking, and eating)”. He suggests that domains can be analysed by means of primary scenes (like image-schemas), because their structure is relatively simple and cannot be decomposed into more basic structures, while some domains can be quite complex. He lists the domain of war together with some other domains, such as cooking, eating, buildings and journeys as domains that are structure by primary scenes. He points out that “the correspondences which constitute foundational metaphorical mappings are not based on perceived isomorphisms between broad domains of experience, but between much narrower, more local, temporarily bound elements of experience”. These elements intervene in different life domains like cooking, traveling etc. As a matter of illustration, he discusses typical scene from food preparation, which involve lifting of heavy objects, moving from place to place and assessing quantities. All those activities are the basis for conceptual metaphor but are not restricted to a food “domain” (ibid, p.176).

Corpus & Methods of analysis

The present study aims to identify in comparative terms the extent to which the cognitive metaphor FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR is present in the British and the Bulgarian media discourse on floods and whether there is congruence between the Bulgarian and the British media representation of floods concerning the available mappings between the source and target domain of the FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR metaphor. To that end a corpus of articles has been excerpted from the online databases of *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Monitor* and *Dnevnik* with the help of *flood*, *swamp*, *inundated*, *battle*, *border*, *pour* as search strings, which covers the period from 11.02.2014 to 04.11.2017. The corpus consists of 19 articles (11 from the British media and 8 from the Bulgarian media) that showcase the implementation of that cognitive metaphor by the British and the Bulgarian media and a total of 33 example sentences have been selected and analysed - 21 from the British media and 12 from the Bulgarian media. The extracted sentences have been classified and arranged with respect to the mappings between the domains of war and flooding crisis and then the selected examples have been analysed qualitatively.

Data Analysis

FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR

Natural disasters with their devastating power have always been around since the dawn of humanity and have evoked a sense of threat and anxiety. Despite the advances in science and technology natural disasters, and flooding in particular, are very common phenomena, which without warning can wreak havoc even on the most developed countries' economies. Since flooding is a movement of water towards territories, which are normally dry, from a metaphorical point of view the moving waters could be envisioned as tourists or visitors, but in reality, due to the destructive force of that movement, the moving waters are conceptualized as intruders or invaders that need to be opposed and thus seen to be at war with us, which gives rise to the FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR metaphor. When we think about war, there are certain elements that are always present in the imaginary picture in the minds of most people. These include *battle*, *fight*, *frontline*, *battlefield*, *army*, *soldiers*, *mobilization*, *casualties*, *strategies*, *warning*, *defence*, *attack*, *withdrawal*, *winning or losing the war*, etc. There are always at least two belligerent countries that are opposing each other. A war is always associated with destruction, death and damage. All those elements from the major theme war are mapped to elements of the target domain – in that case a flooding crisis. Here are the mappings between the domains of war and flooding crisis:

Mappings between the domains of war and flooding crisis

Source domain: war	Target domain: flood crisis
enemy	flooding, rivers
battles	prediction, preparation and response to flood waters
battlefield	flood-prone or flooded areas
armies	government agencies and nongovernmental organizations
soldiers	government agency employees and volunteers
winning a war	floods are prevented, or there is minimum damage and no casualties
losing a war	flooding is not prevented and there are lots of casualties and lots of damage
strategies in a war	strategies for tackling flood crisis and flood prevention
effects of war	effects of floods

With a view to exemplifying the utilization of the cognitive metaphor FLOODING CRISIS IS WAR, let us take a look at a few authentic examples from the selected corpus:

Flooding and a river are the enemies to be fought

[1] The **fight** against **flooding** for a city like York will not end /h/. A multimillion pound scheme to help protect 300 residents 'homes and businesses from the risk of flooding in an area called Water End is the latest effort under way, backed by council and Environment Agency funding. (G¹/11.02.2014); [2] Britain will take lessons in **combating flooding** from the Dutch after a formal agreement is to be signed by the two nations to share expertise. (I²/06.01.2016)

The noun *fight* in example [1] refers to a multimillion pound scheme, which aims at the prevention of flooding, but the term *fight* is very often associated with a battle between two armies. On the other hand, *combat* in example [2] has to do with the prevention of and response to emergency situations caused by flooding, but *combat* is, in reality, a war term meaning fighting, especially during a war. Here is a Bulgarian example [3] that expresses the same notion:

1. "G" stands for *the Guardian*. – a. n.

2. "I" stands for *the Independent*. – a. n.

[3 BG ex.] Цяло Банско излезе вчера **да се бори** с река Глазне, която минава през града. (Yesterday, the whole of Bansko gathered **to fight** the Glazne River, which runs through the city.) (St³/ 10.11.2016)

The usage of ‘*бору (fight)*’ in example [3] stands for all the effort that involve building flood defences with sandbags, rescuing people trapped by the rising waters etc., but as aforementioned the term has strong ‘war’ connotations. The enemy to be fought in the example is flooding and the river.

Government agencies employees and volunteers are soldiers

There are always two sides in a war and they are fighting against each other by amassing armies which consist of soldiers. While the belligerent countries in a human conflict use human beings as soldiers, in the context of flooding the first opponent includes the government agencies together with the citizens of the city that are trying to stop the waters and help people in need, and the second opponent is the rising water that is trying to engulf a town, a city or a village.

[4] As at Burrowbridge, locals are angry at what they see as a lack of help from the authorities – not **the Environment Agency**, which is battling bravely to hold back the waters – but others who could be getting supplies in and out to the few left there. (G/11.02.2014); [5] **The military have been mobilised** to provide additional support where the gold commanders need it ... **The assets that are needed from across the nation** have been mobilised to the areas affected. (G/11.02.2014); [6] **Troops** have been helping to evacuate flood-stricken residents in the Thames Valley where water levels continue to threaten thousands of home. Fire crews in Surrey alone have rescued 150 people in the last 24 hours. (G/11.02.2014)

Example [4] limns the battle of the Environment Agency with the waters and the locals’ anger at the lack of help from the other authorities, while examples [5] and [6] dwell on the other participants in the battle with the flood that have been mobilized, scilicet the agency’s employees, the military, the troops and the fire crews, some of which happen to be real soldiers, who are now fighting not against human enemies, but against the elements. Let us take a look at a few examples from the Bulgarian media:

[7 BG ex.] **Доброволци, огнеборци, общински служители и много фирми** полагаха огромни усилия, за да не допуснат р. Глазне да прелее в града (**Volunteers, firefighters, municipal officials, and many companies** have made great efforts not to allow the Glazne River to flow into the city). (St/ 10.11.2016); [8] **Спец звеното ни** е отводнило 47 къщи до момента, като в момента се борят да изведат водата от други 5 сгради (**Our specialized unit** has drained 47 houses so far, currently fighting to bring water out of another 5 buildings). (M⁴/ 08.08.2016)

Similarly to the examples from the British media, the Bulgarian examples [7]

3. “St” stands for *Standart*. – a. n.

4. “M” stands for *Monitor*. – a. n.

and [8] include *firefighters* and *military unions*, but they also include *municipal officials* and *companies* that make up the army that is battling the flooding crisis.

Flooded areas are battlefields

No war is fought in a vacuum and no battle takes place in an empty space but on a battlefield. When two armies oppose each other they have units that are facing one another in combat on a battlefield. Those units form a line that is called *the front* or *the frontline* (also *front line*). Since the two terms are synonymous, they can be used interchangeably. The regions affected by the floods are envisioned as battlefields and the boundary of the flooded areas are seen as the frontline.

[9] Justin Bowden, national officer of the GMB union, said: "This report of hostility from the residents on the Thames is a direct result of the irresponsible attack by Eric Pickles [the communities secretary] and others on the EA. His incitement has led to the very people **on the frontline** who are actually helping to alleviate the situation bearing the brunt of people's frustrations. (G/12.02.2014); [10] Union blames hostility towards **frontline EA workers** in Wraysbury on attacks by Eric Pickles and others. (G/12.02.2014)

The context of examples [9] and [10] is an article about the abuse some members of the Environment Agency have suffered by the local people in a flooded area, caused, supposedly, by the attack by the community secretary Eric Pickles and some other people. The employees of the EA are referred here as "the very people *on the frontline*". As it was mentioned earlier *the frontline* is a war term denoting a *battlefield*. In that context it simply means that those members of the EA staff were carrying out their responsibilities in the most affected by the flood areas but the use of the war term *frontline* instead of *flooded areas* is an absolute proof of the 'flooded areas are battlefields' metaphor.

[11 BG ex.] Европа мудро определи мерките за подпомагане на държавите **на предната линия**, които първи поеха вълната от имигранти - Гърция и Италия, но също и България, Унгария и Испания (Europe has sluggishly defined support measures for **frontline** countries that have taken the first wave of immigrants – Greece and Italy, but also Bulgaria, Hungary and Spain). (St/08.09.2015); [12 BG ex.] Миграционните и бежанските потоци са се превърнали в първостепенен проблем, с който Европейският съюз трябва да се справи през следващите години. По отношение на този проблем Гърция се намира **на предната линия**, затова и жителите на гръцките острови са номинирани за Нобелова награда за мир заради щедростта и съпричастността, която проявяват към хората, които войната е прогонила от родината им. (Migration and refugee flows have become a major problem for the European Union to face in the coming years. With regard to this problem, Greece is **at the forefront**, so the inhabitants of the Greek islands have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for their generosity and sympathy with the people who have been driven by war out of their homeland). (St/20.02.2016); [13 BG ex.] И съвсем логично предвид увеличил се многократно брой на мигранти

към ЕС, САЩ са още по-активни. Даваме си сметка, че тази вълна е огромно предизвикателство за цяла Европа, но също и е и голяма тежест за България, която е **почти на предната линия** на тази вълна. (And quite logically, given the ever-increasing number of migrants to the EU, the US is even more active. We realize that this wave is a huge challenge for the whole of Europe, but it is also a big burden for Bulgaria, which is **almost at the forefront** of this wave). (St/07.09.2015)

Even though the Bulgarian examples [11], [12] and [13] do not refer literally to flood waters but rather to waves of immigrants, they also showcase the usage of the war term *frontline* in a similar manner referring to the clash between the waves of immigrants and the citizens of the affected countries and the European Union as a whole, which might be provoked by the cultural shock that the population of the aforesaid countries may experience.

Effects of floods are effects of war

Wars are devastating. It takes months, years, or even decades for a country to recover from the dire consequences of war. For the surviving veterans of a war, the horrific memories of battles can haunt them for years. All those connotations about wars are hidden in the metaphors we live by every day.

[14] The floods have caused **widespread devastation** with some business owners facing tremendous financial hardship. (G/25.02.2014)

To begin with, example sentence [14] makes a mention of *devastation* as one of the consequences of the flooding crisis, a result that coincides with the results of any war and which in turn puts a strain on the budget of the belligerent countries.

[15] Its success, and that of similar schemes across the country, should be at the heart of the “complete rethink” of policy being officially promised **in the aftermath** of last month’s floods – which cost the country at least £5 billion – as climate change threatens to make them increasingly commonplace. (I/02.01.2016)

The meaning of the term *aftermath* from example [15], which is defined as “the period of time after something such as a war, storm, or accident when people are still dealing with the results” (LDCE, 2003, p. 649), reveals its strong war connotations, which include the huge loss of money that a country sustains as a result of a war.

[16] David Cameron has rejected calls by the Daily Mail and Ukip to raid the foreign aid budget to help **flood victims** in the UK. (G/11.02.2014); [17] Heavy monsoon rains have brought Mumbai to a halt for a second day as the worst floods to strike south Asia in years continued to **exact a deadly toll**. (G/31.08.2017); [18] At the weekend, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew over the state of Bihar, where **the death toll** is believed to have risen to 500. He pledged millions of pounds for relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and future flood mitigation. (I/30.08.2017); [19] Seals, moles, hedgehogs, badgers, mice, earthworms and a host of insects and

seabirds are among **the unseen casualties** of the floods, storms and torrential rains of the last few weeks, say wildlife groups. (G/23.02.2014); [20] The ordeal was repeated across parts of northern and central Bolivia, where irregular La Niña and El Niño weather patterns caused the worst floods in 60 years, **killing** dozens of people and 150,000 cattle, **destroying** more than 43,000 hectares of cultivated land and affecting 60,000 families. While the survivors have found themselves destitute, hungry, thirsty, and prone to fevers, infections and mosquito-borne diseases, the **psychological damage** has been equally acute. (G/08.12.2014)

In examples [16] to [20] war related vocabulary such as *victims*, to *exact a deadly toll*, *death toll*, *casualties*, *killing*, *destroying*, *psychological damage* that are typical when talking about the consequences of war are mapped to the consequences of a flooding crisis.

[21 BG ex.] Водната стихия **разруши** ски път в ски зона “Банско”, наводни кръчми в местността Пещерите и отнесе два моста. **За щастие пострадали няма**. (The water element **destroyed** a skiing road in Bansko ski area, flooded pubs in the Caves area and carried away two bridges. Luckily, no one was hurt.) (St/10.11.2016); [22 BG ex.] Реката може да отнесе половината град, потопа **разруши** заведения, ски път, мостове. (The river can carry away half the city, the flood **destroyed** restaurants, a skiing road, bridges.) (St/10.11.2016); [23 BG ex.] От голямото наводнение на 6 август **загинаха** 22-ма души, а няколко хиляди семейства загубиха цялата си покъщина. (22 people **were killed** by the great flood on August 6, and several thousand families lost all their furniture.) (St/15.08.2016)

Examples [21], [22] and [23], which are taken from Bulgarian media, do not differ considerably in their usage of war related vocabulary such as *разруши* (*destroyed*) and *загинаха* (*were killed*), but the expressions are not as varied as the English ones. It is worth mentioning, though, example [21] contains the sentence: *За щастие пострадали няма* (*Luckily, no one was hurt*). It relates to the partial victory that was won. In spite of the destructions caused by the flood, no human lives were lost.

War techniques and strategies are employed while tackling a flooding crisis

If a country wages a war against another country without the necessary preparation for winning the war, which includes amassing a powerful army, finding allies, spending money on armament and training it properly, the likelihood of it winning the war is very little. Despite all the aforementioned preparation, the war might still be lost without an effective strategy.

Strategy, in warfare, is the science or art of employing all the military, economic, political, and other resources of a country to achieve the objects of war. The term strategy derives from the Greek *strategos*, an elected general in ancient Athens. The *stratego*i were mainly military leaders with combined political and military authority, which is the essence of strategy.

Because strategy is about the relationship between means and ends, the term has applications well beyond war: it has been used with reference to business, the theory of games, and political campaigning, among other activities. It remains rooted, however, in war, and it is in the field of armed conflict that strategy assumes its most complex forms (Cohen, 2022).

[24] The decision not to develop a **comprehensive strategy** to address increased flood risk came in October just a few weeks before the flooding in Cumbria before Christmas and the most recent flooding in Lancashire and Yorkshire. (1/27.12.2015)

The context for example [24] is an article about the Government's rejection to take the advice of its own climate change advisers seriously and take action to protect the increasing number of homes at high risk of flooding, which in turn led to a lack of adequate prevention and consequently to a £50 million spending on a repair scheme for those whose property had been damaged. The primarily war term *strategy* in the example refers to a feasible plan that should have been developed with the intention of preventing or at least lowering the damage caused by an anticipated flood.

[25] "The government must immediately reverse the ludicrous cut of 1,700 EA jobs, followed by an independent inquiry into what are the realistic funding levels necessary to ensure the EA has both **the capital budget to protect the country** from flooding and drought and a big enough **revenue budget** to maintain, service and run these vital **defences**," Bowden said. (G/12.02.2014)

Example [25] continues with the idea of the implementation of a plan that will ensure the protection of the country from flooding. The verb protect again has its war connotations, especially in the collocation "protect the country", since a country is usually protected from a foreign aggressor. The aggressor in that example, however, is a natural disaster – flooding or drought. Another war related term, which has been used in the example, is *defences*. In its military sense the term means "all the systems, people, materials etc. that a country uses to protect itself from attack" (LDCE, 2003, p. 411). In the context of flooding prevention those are structures that have been erected on the banks of rivers that will not allow them to burst their banks despite the increase in their levels.

[26] An Environment Agency spokesman confirmed that some of its staff had received verbal abuse while working in Wraysbury on Monday. "For a short while, we temporarily **withdrew** staff on the advice of the police," the spokesman said. "Our staff were back in Wraysbury yesterday and again today, working alongside members of the community and colleagues from other agencies as part of the continuing effort to deal with this exceptional period of weather and flooding." (G/12.02.2014)

Another term that has war connotations and is used in the context of a flooding crisis is the verb *withdraw* in example [26]. In the military sense the definition

from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English reads as follows: “If an army withdraws, or if it is withdrawn, it leaves a place” (LDCE, 2003, p. 649). In the example the *army* that was withdrawn due to the verbal abuse they had received consisted of Environment Agency staff.

- [27] After talks with the cabinet office, real-time river levels, **flood maps** and more could all become available as free and commercially reusable data. (G/27.02.2014);
 [28] “We are **mapping** all the flooding zones to launch a project to build emergency shelters to make evacuation easy,” said Tagade. (G/31.08.2017)

Maps prove really useful during wartime, as they contain information that is helpful at the planning stages of military operations, which involve a lot of people. Similarly, the use of flood maps in examples [27] and [28] is reminiscent of the wartime strategy of using military maps.

- [29] The effect could be to enable a range of startups and larger businesses to develop local **flood warning systems** using Environment Agency information, such as groundwater levels, real-time river levels and flood risk to homes. (G/27.02.2014);
 [30] Three other critical data sets, including **national flood defences and flood warning areas**, are not open - and so cannot be used by other developers without special permission. (G/27.02.2014)

The usefulness of warning system usage is analogous to that of map usage during wartime. By definition,

a warning system in military science is any method used to detect the situation or intention of an enemy so that warning can be given. Because military tactics from time immemorial have stressed the value of surprise – through timing, location of attack, route, and weight and character of arms – defenders have sought to construct warning systems to cope with all these tactics (Davis, 2019).

Since the *enemy* during a flooding crisis is the rising water, the development of local flood warning systems, which is mentioned in examples [29] and [30] is one of the best strategies for winning the war.

- [31 BG ex.] От ранни зори кметството задейства **общинския план за защита при бедствия**. (Since early dawn, the City Hall has triggered **the municipal disaster protection plan**). (St/10.11.2016); [32 BG ex.] Местният съвет по сигурност и **щабът за изпълнение на плана за защита от бедствия** са в непрекъснат режим на работа. На всеки 30 минути те **докладват** на кмета Икономов спасителните и аварийно-възстановителните работи. Ситуацията е **овладяна**. (The Local Security Council and **the Disaster Response Plan Implementation Staff** are in a continuous mode of work. Every 30 minutes, they **report** to Mayor Ikononov the rescue and emergency repair work. The situation is under control.) (St/10.11.2016)

Examples [31] and [32] taken from a Bulgarian newspaper substitute the term *strategy* with *plan*, but the latter term basically has the same war connotations

as the term *strategy*. The verb *report* and the noun phrase *under control* from example (32) are war related in their nature, too.

[33 BG ex.] Преди да тръгне на проверка, той свика **работно съвещание на кризисния щаб** в община Бургас за ситуацията в районите, пострадали при жестокото наводнение преди десетина дни (Prior to the inspection, he summoned **a working meeting of the crisis headquarters** in the municipality of Burgas about the situation in the areas affected by the brutal flood ten days ago). (M/04.11.2017)

The term headquarters from example [33] has the following meaning with military connotations: “the place from which military operations are controlled” (LDCE, 2003, p. 750). The military reference in the example is mapped to the target domain of a flooding crisis by referring to the place where the strategies for prevention and response to floods are developed.

Conclusions

All in all, through systematic analysis from the perspective of cognitive linguistic the present study reveals that war terms are widely used both in the English and Bulgarian representation of flooding crises. The source domain of war is applied to the source domain of floods. War terms like *fight*, *combating*, *battling*, *mobilized*, *the military*, *frontline*, *devastation*, *aftermath*, *death toll*, *casualties*, *killing*, *psychological damage*, *defences*, *withdrew*, *warning systems* are all mapped to the target domain flooding crisis. The analysis shows metaphorical projections from domain of war to the domain of flooding crisis with the following mappings: flooding and a river are the enemies to be fought, government agencies employees and volunteers are soldiers, flooded areas are battlefields, effects of floods are effects of war and war techniques and strategies are employed while tackling a flooding crisis. There are not any significant differences between the media presentations of floods in the British and Bulgarian newspapers apart from that fact that the British media make more frequent use of war related terminology when discussing a flooding crisis. The research confirms that metaphorical projection is a universal structural element of cognition.

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Appendix. Corpus of the study

- G/11.02.2014 (1) – The fight against flooding in York (e.g.1)
- G/11.02.2014 (2) – UK floods: Cameron says ‘money is no object’ – as it happened; (e.g.4) (e.g.5) (e.g.6) (e.g.16)
- G/12.02.2014 - Environment Agency staff not sent to flooded area after ‘abuse’ from residents (e.g.9) (e.g.10) (e.g.25) (e.g.26)
- G/23.02.2014 - Wildlife casualties of floods grow amid fears over ‘polluted’ wetlands (e.g.19)
- G/25.02.2014 - Helping small businesses affected by the UK floods; Maize farmers must take some of the flood blame; (e.g.14)
- G/27.02.2014 - Environment Agency poised to open flood data to public (e.g.27) (e.g.29) (e.g.30);
- G/08.12.2014 - Bolivia after the floods: ‘the climate is changing; we are living that change’ (e.g.20)
- G/31.08.2017 - South Asia floods kill 1,200 and shut 1.8 million children out of school (e.g.17) (e.g.28)
- I/27.12.2015 - UK flooding: Government rejected warnings of high flood risk from own advisers (e.g.24)
- I/02.01.2016 – UK flooding: How a Yorkshire town worked with nature to stay dry (e.g.15)
- I/06.01.2016 - UK to take lessons from Dutch on how a low country can avoid flooding; (e.g. 2)
- I/30.08.2017 - At least 41 million people affected in floods in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, UN says (e.g.18)

- St/07.09.2015 - Корупцията подкопава демокрацията в България (Corruption undermines democracy in Bulgarian) (e.g.13)
- St/08.09.2015 - Не играйте по свирката на Орбан за бежанците (Don't dance to the tune of Orban on refugees) (e.g.11)
- St/20.02.2016 - Атина не може сама да удържи вълната бежанци (Atina cannot restrain the wave of refugees alone) (e.g.12)
- St/15.08.2016 - 100% компенсация за пострадалите в Скопие (100% compensation for the victims is Skopje) (e.g.23)
- St/10.11.2016 - Цяло Банско се бори с Глазне (The whole of Bansko gathered to fight Glazne) (e.g.3) (e.g.7) (e.g.21) (e.g.22) (e.g.31) (e.g.32)
- M/08.08.2016 - Пращаме 20 тона минерална вода към Скопие (e.g.8)
- M/04.11.2017 - Борисов свика кризисния щаб за пострадалите от потопа в Бургас (Borisov summoned the crisis headquarters for the flood victims in Burgas) (e.g.33)

