

Volume 11, Issue 2 - 2023 · ISSN 2534-9538

Studies in Linguistics, Culture and FLT

Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen
Department of English Studies

Издателство Асеневци

Studies in Linguistics, Culture and FLT

Volume 11, Issue 2 - 2023
Research in
English Studies and FLT



Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen
Department of English Studies

Издателство Асеневци

This second issue of the eleventh volume of Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT is the end result of the work of the Department of English Studies, Faculty of Humanities, *Konstantin Preslavsky* University of Shumen.

All issues in this volume have been published with the financial support from Project of the Bulgarian National Science Fund – Bulgarian Scientific Periodicals КП-06 НП 4/7 dated December 1, 2022.

Editorial Board*:

Editor-in-chief: Prof. Roumyana Todorova, PhD (Bulgaria)

Co-Editor-in-chief: Assoc. Prof. Desislava Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva, PhD (Bulgaria)

Editors:
Assoc. Prof. Carol Griffiths, PhD (Leeds University, UK), Prof. Dr. el-Sayed el-Aswad (Member of the American Anthropological Association, USA), Prof. Dr. Birsen Tütünis (Istanbul Kültür University, Istanbul, Turkey), Prof. Dr. Habil Hristo Kyuchukov (University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland), Prof. Dr. Habil Berrin Aksoy (Atilim University, Ankara, Turkey), Prof. D. Litt. Maya Pencheva (Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria), Prof. Peter Gärdenfors (Lund University, Lund, Sweden), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Z. Atayurt-Fenge (Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey), Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habil Anna Bączkowska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland), Assist. Prof. Abdullah Ahmed Zughaibi (English Department, Jazan University, Saudi Arabia), Assist. Prof. Joanna Mikosz, PhD (Lodz University, Lodz, Poland), Assoc. Prof. Irina Ivanova, PhD (Shumen University, Shumen, Bulgaria), Asst. Prof. Dr. Cihat Atar (Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey), Assist. Prof. Mira Bekar, PhD (Saints Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje, Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia)

SILC is indexed and watched by SCOPUS, Index Copernicus, ErihPlus, EBSCO, Directory of Open Access Journals, Scribd, GoogleScholar, Directory of Research Journals Indexing (DRJI), ROAD – Directory of Open Access Scholarly Resources, RINZ, MLA Directory of Periodicals, MLA International Bibliography, Dimensions, National Centre for Information and Documentataion (ID 2775), ResearchBib, Mendeley, and MIAR.

SILC is archived in CEEOL (full texts, electronic), Bulgarian National Library St. St. Cyril and Metodius (full texts, print and electronic), and the Bulgarian Portal for Open Science (full texts, electronic).

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

© Individual contributions: respective authors

© *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT*

© Asenevtsi Publishing, Sofia

e-ISSN 2534-9538; p-ISSN 2534-952X

https://doi.org/10.46687

ICV 2021: 79.21



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Contents

PREFACE 5

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EFL COURSE MATERIALS DEVELOPED ON THE GROUNDS OF CRITICAL LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY AND THE PLURILITERACIES TEACHING FOR DEEPER LEARNING APPROACH
Barbara Muszyńska; María Elena Gómez Parra 7

IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS' WELL-BEING DURING ONLINE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN INDONESIA: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
Priyatno Ardi, Rina Sari, Luki Emiliya Hidayat, Oktavia Tri Sanggala Dewi, Bambang Yudi Cahyono 26

SUGGESTING AN ONLINE PRACTICUM MODEL ON AN EXPLORATION OF THE LEARNING GAINS IN AN EFL REMOTE TEACHING PRACTICE COURSE: ONLINE, PRACTICUM, MODEL ETCEtera
Ali İlya, Ayşegül Daloğlu 46

VERBS DENOTING AUTHORIAL POSITION: A CONTRASTIVE BULGARIAN-ENGLISH STUDY OF MEDICAL RESEARCH ARTICLES
Ivaylo Yordanov Dagnev 71

"THOUGHTS, THAT BREATHE, AND WORDS, THAT BURN," OR THE GROWTH OF A WRITER'S MIND: ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S DIARY
Yana Rowland 83

THE AUTOFICTIONAL AILING SELF: DEPRESSION IN SYLVIA PLATH'S *THE BELL JAR* AND CELLA SERGHI'S *THE SPIDER'S WEB* – A COMPARISON
Hristo Boev *110*

(S)TALKING WOMEN: PORTRAYAL OF FEMALES IN ONLINE DISCOURSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ALBANIA
Eriola Qafzezi, Fabiola Kadi *130*

BOOK REVIEW: TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING IN THE AGE OF COVID-19
Antony Hoyte-West *148*

PREFACE

The second issue of volume 11 of *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT* for 2023 consists of seven papers and a review dedicated to different aspects of English Studies and FLT.

The papers can be grouped around the following fields of research: FLT, linguistics, media studies, and literature. There is also a review related to the topical issue of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on teaching and studying foreign languages, more specifically translation and interpreting.

The first article by Barbara Muszyńska and María Elena Gómez Parra is on the effectiveness of EFL course materials developed on the basis of critical language pedagogy and on the pluriliteracies teaching. Such educational materials are useful for language learning and help learners' personal growth and development provided teacher roles are changed in favor of the contextualization of those materials.

The issue goes on with a paper by Priyatno Ardi, Rina Sari, Luki Emiliya Hidayat, Oktavia Tri Sanggala Dewi, Bambang Yudi Cahyono on the recently discussed topics of online teacher progress, this time related to in-service EFL teachers' online professional development program in Indonesia from an ecological perspective. The findings showed that personal factors such as motivation, marital status, and spirituality, as well as systemic factors related to the national policy about EFL teacher certification, teacher education institution, home school, and family played a major role for the maintenance of teachers' well-being during this program.

There is yet another paper dedicated to EFL, and in particular to an online practicum model for pre-service English as a Foreign Language teacher education programs suggested by Ali Ilya and Ayşegül Daloğlu. The present study focuses on the learning advantages and skills student teachers made after a semester of online teaching. In the course of study, learners were involved in observation and reflection, collaboration, and evaluation which led to good learning outcomes.

The next paper by Ivaylo Dagnev deals with verbs denoting authorial position in a contrastive Bulgarian-English study of two corpora of medical research articles with high impact factors covering almost every field of medicine. The data contain three types of verbs: factive, non-factive and counterfactive and have been processed with the help of word processing programs for greater accuracy. One of the conclusions is that Bulgarian authors avoid expressing categorical disagreements which is not the case with the authors of the English-language medical research articles.

The fifth article titled "'Thoughts, that breathe, and words, that burn,' or the growth of a writer's mind: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's diary" is by Yana Rowland. It explores scholarly debates on 19th c. English literature, femininity, diurnal narrative, and aesthetic experience. The diary is a confession of the last two years of Elizabeth's life at the family estate of Hope End, and is a kind of self-acclaim by way of self-denial. This paper comes to prove the fact that self-questioning distinguishes E. B. Browning as a writer whose 'private diary identifies the concept of time as the kernel of her perception of identity as responsibility'.

The next study is again in the field of literary studies. In "The Autofictional Ailing Self: Depression in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Cella Serghi's *The Spider's Web* – a Comparison" Hristo Boev elaborates on the COVID-19 pandemic and the depression ensuing from it by discussing two novels by the American writer Sylvia Plath and the Romanian writer Cella Serghi with the aim of comparing the autofictional representations of depression. The comparative analysis helps understanding an identical issue – the modern 21st century disease and promotes an author from a smaller national literature to the realms of World Literature.

The issue continues with a study by Eriola Qafzezi and Fabiola Kadi in the field of media discourse titled '(S)talking Women: Portrayal of Females in Online Discourse of Social Media in Albania' targeting multimodal representations of societal issues related to the depiction of intentional female abuse, denigration and negativity. The authors believe that the information rendered will raise awareness about such problematic approaches toward females in Albania and will help resolving them to some extent.

Finally, the current volume focuses on a book review related to the very topical COVID-19 pandemic and the issues related to translation and interpreting. Its title is 'Translation and Interpreting in the Age of COVID-19' and the reviewer is Antony Hoyte-West. The book puts an emphasis on the adaptations which seem to have remained after the coronavirus disease, namely working remotely from home, increased digitalisation, as well as changing employment patterns across many professional domains. The book presents the standpoints of twenty-five authors from different institutions in nine countries across three continents in five-chapters on translation, six chapters on interpreting, and five chapters on translator and interpreter didactics during the coronavirus period. Some of the challenges are related to the change of face-to-face interpreting to remote interpreting, more specifically to remote simultaneous interpreting and the technology from a sociological perspective. Students and staff opinions on the matter were also discussed. A number of computer-assisted interpreting tools were dwelled upon and their pedagogical and practical assets were pointed out. It highlights the fact that translation and interpreting will definitely undergo some changes so that they can correspond to society's post-pandemic needs.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EFL COURSE MATERIALS DEVELOPED ON THE GROUNDS OF CRITICAL LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY AND THE PLURILITERACIES TEACHING FOR DEEPER LEARNING APPROACH

[1]Barbara Muszyńska; [2]María Elena Gómez Parra

[1]DSW University of Lower Silesia (Poland); [2]Universidad de Córdoba (Spain)

Abstract: *A review of literature that underpinned the theoretical framework for materials design presented in this study contributed to the development of English language course through the lens of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) and the Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning approach (PTDL). The purpose of the study was to gain initial knowledge on the effectiveness of such an approach for materials design, which could provide the basis for further questions related to the actualized learning potential of educational materials. With this purpose in mind, an interpretive content analysis of the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaires was conducted upon the course completion with university students from Spain and Poland. The obtained results suggest that educational materials prepared on the grounds of CLP and PTDL have the potential to support language learning in linguistically diverse educational contexts and can be characterized by their actualized learning potential. It is noteworthy that 30% of participants reported that the experience of working with the course led to personal growth and development. Nonetheless, as this research shows, such a process requires a change in the role of the teacher and a shift in the perception of learning goals in favor of the contextualization of learning materials, which is what future research should further examine.*

Keywords: *Critical Language Pedagogy, Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning, English language materials design, university students*

About the author: *Dr Barbara Muszyńska, a Fulbright Senior Award scholar at Texas Woman's University (2021-2022), works as an assistant professor at the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław, Poland. Her research focuses on bilingual and plurilingual education. She sees plurilingual and inclusive education as issues of paramount importance in today's world and believes that education and curricula should provide opportunities to include otherness and conflicting voices, thus creating conditions for critical reflection. Her research is interdisciplinary, it combines educational linguistics and pedagogy. She has published in numerous international journals on bilingual and intercultural education and EFL.*
e-mail: *barbara.muszynska@dsw.edu.pl* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0137-363X*

About the author: *María-Elena Gómez-Parra is University Professor, attached to the Department of English and German Philology at the University of Cordoba. Her area of work is bilingual and intercultural education. She directs the Research Group HUM-1006 "Bilingual and Intercultural Education" (EBeI). She is the director of the Ibero-American Network of Bilingual and Intercultural Education (IBIE) and the PI of research projects on bilingualism. She has published in numerous international journals on second language learning, intercultural education and bilingual education. She has participated as a researcher in numerous international projects (Erasmus Intensive Programmes, Comenius and KA2, among others), and is the director of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (EMJMD) entitled 'Play, Education, Toys and Languages (PETaL)'. She has coordinated the KA203 TEACUP (Teachers, Culture, Pluri) project. She has also been the president of the International Congress on Bilingual Education (from 2015 to the present).*
e-mail: *elena.gomez@uco.es* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7870-3505*

Copyright © 2023 Barbara Muszyńska, María-Elena Gómez-Parra

Article history: Received: 1 February 2023; Reviewed: 2 May 2023; Revised: 25 June 2023; Accepted: 27 June 2023; Published: 28 August 2023

This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Muszyńska, B., & Gómez-Parra, M-E. (2023). The effectiveness of EFL course materials developed on the grounds of critical language pedagogy and the pluriliteracies teaching for deeper learning approach. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 7-25. https://doi.org/10.46687/HTDA7311.

Introduction

This study is part of a larger research project where a thorough and critical analysis of the literature on materials design has been conducted to bring new knowledge to light, concerning broadly understood language education. The initial analysis revealed a lack of evidence-based language learning materials for adult learners, notably, materials that would be designed through the prism of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) (Crawford, 1978; Crawford-Lange, 1981; Auerbach, 1990; Crookes, 2012) and the Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning approach (PTDL) (Coyle & Meyer, 2021). The objective of the broader research was to know whether combining the two named above perspectives in language materials design could set the ground for the development of learning materials facilitating participatory learning, social understanding, promoting diversity and inclusivity in language education. This research has contributed to the development of English language course materials[1] written by Barbara Muszyńska (2020) who is also the author of the preliminary study described in this article. Its goal was to gain initial knowledge, which could provide the basis for further questions related to the actualized learning potential of educational materials (Bundsgaard & Thomas, 2011) to establish the relevance of the information obtained. With this purpose in mind, the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaire (Haynes, Spence & Lenze 2009) was used among students from different cultural backgrounds to validate this research and to verify the correctness of the formulated research questions concerning: (a) aspects of potential learning opportunities and their actualization; (b) verification whether the selected learning materials work in different cultural contexts; (c) in what respect the learning situation was successful. Throughout the research process, the authors of this study were reflecting on Stenhouse's concept (1983, p. 192), asserting that teachers need to be involved not only in the development of the educational programme but also in the evaluation and subsequent adaptation of teaching materials in order to improve educational programmes, as they are used in the classroom in their educational context (Hammersley, 2004).

The research questions which guided this research are as follows:

1) How did the students assess the appropriateness of the educational materials used in class?

2) What were the students' reactions to the change in the paradigm of teaching and learning?

3) What were the effective and ineffective learning opportunities?

1. The title of the course is 'Inclusive, Plurilingual and Pluricultural Learning Environment for English language Learning' (2020). The course is compatible with the WCAG 2.0 standards for students with disabilities and is available online for a free download.

The literature review in this article encompasses Critical Language Pedagogy, Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning, and materials design. The research methodology implemented in this study includes interpretive content analysis, scenario-based assessment for learning experiences questionnaire, and the actualized learning potential of the learning materials. The analysis presented shows that students from the University of Malaga in Spain and the University of Lower Silesia in Poland, appreciated working together during the course, organizing their learning, and using their language repertoires to communicate and construct new meanings, however, not always without perplexity. The approach of combing CLP and the PTDL shows promising results in materials design and its actualized potential of learning. It can facilitate participatory learning, and contribute to critical reflection in learners and self-management of their learning process. However, it requires a change in the role of the teacher and a shift in the perception of learning goals in favor of the contextualization of learning materials.

Literature review

Critical Language Pedagogy

Crookes (2010) represented the view that the application of the practicality of critical pedagogy to second language education and the development of sample second language education materials for teachers could contribute to increasing diversity in lessons and help teachers become familiar with theories concerning language education. Moreover, Canagarajah (2015) believes that critical pedagogy, in the context of language education, should be oriented towards practical action and is not a set of ideas, but rather a way of "doing, learning, and teaching" (p. 932). Such practice is motivated by a different attitude towards school and society. Within this perspective, both students and teachers bring their real-life experiences and needs to the educational process to operate a change in it, including changing the means and purposes of learning to create a more ethical, educational and social environment for learning (Canagarajah, 2015, p. 932). The development of social and linguistic competence enriches our sense of respect, tolerance, sensitivity to race, gender, disability, environment and social problems (Bulut & Arikan, 2015, p. 19). Languages are learned through participation in social practices where learners use their language repertoire to communicate and learn. Hence, the role of the teacher should be to create a scaffolding between the educational process and students as independent language learners. It is through language that we perceive the world, and it is through the language of the school/university that students have access to subject/academic knowledge. The ability to understand and express complex linguistic concepts orally and in writing (in the mother tongue, or a foreign

or second language) as well as metalinguistic competence, i.e., the ability to understand and express linguistic differences, is crucial in education[2].

Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning

The Pluriliteracies Approach to Teaching and Learning (Meyer et al., 2015) develops learners' ability to read, write, understand, use and engage with written texts in more than one language, thereby contributing to deeper learning and the development of transferable skills. This approach focuses on supporting learners in mastering subject content or topics and enabling them to understand them effectively through the lens of different cultures and languages (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 2). This approach is built on the idea that education should contribute to the development of learners. Therefore, subject content learning is not about listing facts, but rather deepening students' conceptual understanding, which ultimately contributes to the acquisition and development of both universal skills and new ways of thinking. In this approach, language is recognized as the key to developing and increasing conceptual understanding. It is this focus on language that ultimately leads to deeper learning, which can be described as the ability to take what has been learned in a specific situation and apply it to another. By supporting students in pluriliteracy skills, we can enable them to construct and communicate content purposefully and effectively across languages and cultures, and prepare them for living and working in the modern world (Meyer et al., 2015, p. 3).

The Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning (PTDL) is complementary to the above. It is based on a revised understanding of language and its role in learning, especially where language is seen as a means of knowing the world and learning as a process of meaning-making (Meyer & Coyle 2021). The pluriliteracies approach shows that progress in learning is based on the successful activation of two key processes: the internalization of concepts and the automation of relevant skills. Learning cannot be separated from language, so the progress learners make is reflected in their ability to communicate and demonstrate their understanding. Critical reflection by the learners themselves and self-management of their learning is also crucial in this process.

Materials Design

The approach educators adopt to educational materials design reflects not only their perceptions, values and knowledge but also their views on school and society. The ways in which languages are used in education, the design

2. Council of Europe (2020). *Education begins with language. Thematic report.* Publications Office of the European Union. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6b7e2851-b5fb-11ea-bb7a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

of teaching and learning materials and the organization of learning are social constructs in specific cultural settings. They may favor inclusion or exclusion of certain groups and individuals, as learning is deeply rooted in society and culture (Vygotsky, 1978) and power is deeply embedded in the notions of culture and language (Fairclough, 1999). Developing social and linguistic competences could make us enrich our sense of respect, tolerance and become more sensitive to issues related to race, gender, disability, environmental and social problems (Bulut & Arikan, 2015, p. 19). This requires a shift from passive to active learning, in which learning would involve a meaningful organization of experiences so that it could be more easily transferrable and applied to other situations (Taba, 1962).

Learners respond to the educational programmes in different ways, depending on their cultural interpretations and previous life experiences. Therefore, when planning the course, author 1 has decided to draw from problem-centered design. This approach is represented in Critical Language Pedagogy (Auerbach, 1990; Crawford, 1978; Shin & Crookes, 2005; Crookes, 2012; Canagarajah, 2015). The problem-centered design, based on reconstructionism and reconceptualism, considers learners' life situations and social problems (inequality and social injustice). Educational programmes and materials based on this model are prepared beforehand and are adapted to the problems and (life) situations of the learners while learning. Problem-based learning supports active learning. It empowers learners to conduct research, links theory with practice, and applies knowledge and skills to solve particular real-life problems posed by the students (Savery, 2006).

The course

The fundamental element of building the language course and educational materials in this study was social responsibility. The authors of this article advocate designing educational materials that are adaptable to cultural contexts, students (life) situations, and language levels. The activities in the course are diverse and inclusive, fostering participatory and plurilingual learning environments. Since the language in this approach is not solely seen as a medium of communication, but also as an instrument for thinking, this course exercises the idea that meaning-making, problem-solving and being creative in more than one language is the right of every student. The goal of the course is to approach teaching and learning as social processes in which learners are active co-constructors of knowledge with teachers (Jacobs & Farrell, 2001), and where language learning is seen as a process not a product (Ellis & Sinclair, 1989). Therefore, the goal of this course is not only the focus on language learning but also facilitating participatory learning, encouraging social understanding and creating opportunities to voice students' perspectives and engage in society matters through activism (the course content includes cultural biographies,

narrative accounts, society and community matters, among others). The above can be achieved by creating mutually negotiated pathways for learning with the students, which is the reason why the content of the course is adaptable to various cultural contexts. Every Unit of learning includes information about the Unit (theme, aims, genre for writing and assessment). Students can find functional language boxes and learning strategies embedded in the Units. The assessment sections comprise of reflection activities, writing a learning log, mentoring of learning (in groups or individual, in person or on a Forum online), and learning sets (working in a small group on an assignment) as well as individual assignments. As a result, learners should feel encouraged to reflect on their language work and to self-direct it through mentoring of learning, where they assess and reflect upon their learning process. The teacher is able to assess students' actual learning strategies through retrospective interviews and conversations about completing tasks during the course. The main genres in academic writing are introduced with an emphasis on empathy writing for social purpose (Nesi & Gardner, 2012).

Barbara Muszyńska's aim was to promote diversity and inclusivity in education, to advocate critical language awareness, deeper learning, transferable knowledge and skills through connection to the real world. Language learning in this course is viewed through the lens of the concept of interlingual grammar[3] and the idea of multi-competence[4] (Cook, 1999). The goal was to give learners an impulse for discussion and a space for active participation in preventing injustice, inequality and exclusion.

Methodology

Research Design

An interpretive content analysis (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Wester et al., 2004) of the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaires was conducted during this research. It served both as a method and a research procedure for arriving at answers to the questions posed (Noga, 2014). The content analysis in this study supported the development and interpretation of empirical data from the questionnaires collected from participating students. This type of analysis recognizes the text-bound nature of interpretation, as qualitative research design is more sensitive to context and flexible in incorporating new emerging themes (Ahuvia, 2001; Elbardan & Kholeif, 2017). Content analysis is

3. Interlingual grammar relates to or occurs between two or more languages.

4. Multi-competence is knowledge of two or more languages in the same mind. See also more recent publications to get a better idea: *Knowledge of two or more languages in the same mind*. http://www.viviancook.uk/Writings/Papers/MCentry.htm

used to make inferences from the text, which relate to the sender(s), the message itself, or the receiver of that message (Weber, 1990). The primary inferences concern the decoding of information that the questionnaires contain. The texts were coded into categories and then frequencies of occurrences within each category were scrutinized. The decoding of information occurred through the assignments between the text fragments specified by the analysis and the non-text elements based on the rules of semantics.

We have embraced Berelson's concept (1952, pp. 4-25) affirming that content analysis should fulfill the following conditions:

- the condition of objectivity (precise definition of the categories of analysis),

- systematicity (content should be analyzed in terms of all corresponding categories),

- the condition of quantitative approach (determines the frequency of appearance of certain categories in the content, the emphasis that is placed on it, or the degree of its omission),

- the condition of openness of the analyzed content (elimination of hidden content from the research),

- the condition and the need to strive (in order to reveal the remaining elements of the communication process),

- the condition and postulate of studying not single contents, but a set / stream of messages

- the postulate of comparative analysis.

The above suggests that content analysis should lead to objective conclusions, which in practice means that the procedures for arriving at any findings must be open and transparent (Holsti, 1969).

The following three approaches are usually used in content analysis (Pisarek, 1983):

- analysis of the features of the content itself or the forms of its delivery (focus on the layer of content study, the analysis of the content of the message);

- studying the authors of the content (focusing on the intentions and other characteristics of the content creators);

- searching for information in the texts about the recipients and the effects of the content, to then revealing the centers of interest by relating the content analysis to the found and evoked materials.

The research has concentrated on the third approach mentioned above.

In the study, we have asked about the meaning of particular words and forms of text by resorting to semantic analysis, as content analysts examine data to understand what it means to people, and what the information conveyed by them does (Krippendorff, 2004). The analysis of the data thus took on a semantic character, using the meanings contained in the message. The detailed analysis of the texts in this study was feasible on the grounds of the use of computer assistance. The Atlas.ti v.8 software was used to discover complex phenomena hidden in the analyzed text, which, for the reason of researchers' familiarity of the subject matter, might have been disregarded otherwise. The use of this program allowed us to better manage data and maintain greater objectivity when dealing with it, also enabling comparative and interpretative analysis which became more systematic. Thus, it allowed us to come closer to meeting the conditions for content analysis purposefully designed by researchers.

For the purpose of this study, analysis at both formal and meaning levels has been conducted. First, the content and meanings in the students' questionnaires were identified and classified by assigning codes to them (syntactic, formal analysis), and then conclusions were drawn about non-linguistic variables (meaning-level analysis was used). The advantage of such a research procedure allows for intersubjective, verifiable reading of the content of messages and the intention of their senders (Krippendorff, 2004).

Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences

The Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaire used in this study rests on the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences model proposed by Haynes, Spence and Lenze (2009, p. 3), which can be used to evaluate and (re)design learning activities during a course with learners. It helps to understand the effects and outcomes of learning activities and how to improve them. In this questionnaire, participants gave feedback on the learning activities conducted during the course to help assess the actualized learning potential of the course.

The Actualized Learning Potential of the Course

When introducing learning materials into a specific situation, some aspects of the potential of the learning materials are actualized through their integration with the historical constellation of artifacts of a given situation. Students and teachers more or less deliberately choose to supplement the learning material with tools and materials, and these phenomena comprise the design for learning, which constitutes the actual learning potential.

The three-step framework composed of a holistic evaluation of learning materials as proposed by Haynes, Spence and Lenze (2009) comprises of:

a. the potential learning potential, that is, the affordances and challenges of the learning material, and the competences supposedly supported when working with the material;
b. the actualized learning potential, that is, the potential for learning when the design for learning is enacted by integrating the learning material in a situation in a given context;

c. the actual learning, that is, how the participants actually develop their competences through working with the learning material or enacting a design for learning.

The authors of the framework suggest that it is not conceivable to interpret all three aspects of the evaluation process at one given time. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the authors have decided to focus on the actualized learning potential of the above-mentioned course as the focal point of this research was to analyze participant students' perspectives. When evaluating the actualized learning potential of learning materials, the authors were oriented towards the constitution of the situation, that is, the contextualization of the learning materials. Therefore, in this study, we have attempted to use and validate the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaire, which was used as a data collection tool to verify the correctness of the formulated research questions. The analysis focused on:

(a) aspects of potential learning opportunities and their actualization;

(b) verification whether the selected learning materials work in various cultural contexts;

(c) the respects in which the learning situation was successful; and

(d) whether the participants felt engaged and motivated to work.

The research questions which guided this research are as follows:

2) How did the students assess the appropriateness of the educational materials used in class?

2) What were the students' reactions to the change in the paradigm of teaching and learning?

3) What were the effective and ineffective learning opportunities?

Participants

A group of 41 international students participated in this study. There were 34 female and 6 male students. Participants were gathered from two universities: a. the University of Lower Silesia (ULS) in Poland (n = 10), a sub-group formed by 6 students from Poland plus three students from Spain and one

from Germany; b. The University of Málaga (UoM) (Spain) (n = 31) was also mixed, as it was made up of 24 students from Spain and one student from each of the following countries: Italy, Ukraine, Palestine, Russia, and China, plus two students from Germany. The sample was purposively selected to represent cultural and linguistic diversity. Students from both universities were in their first year of their Master programme. The participants from the ULS were studying at the Faculty of Education. Whereas one sub-group of students (n = 13) from the UoM studied intercultural linguistics, the other one (n = 18) did English philology with a teaching profile. Moreover, these specific groups were chosen as researchers' previous experience told them that these courses attract international students due to the subject matter. This is especially interesting for this research, as international students from these two courses (we refer to those students neither coming from Poland or Spain, who are considered as 'national' by the researchers of this study) (n = 11) have learnt English by using published materials for language learning, so their answers to our questions were judged as highly valuable by the researchers because their cultural and educational perspective offers a kaleidoscopic view of the coursebook under analysis herein.

All the participants provided appropriate informed written consent to participate in this study. The consent forms were constructed with the rules and regulations of the respective universities where the research was done.

Context

Units 4 and 5 from Module 2 from the aforementioned course were implemented at the UoM and the ULS in the spring semester of 2021. The authors of the study, both researchers and academic teachers, were aware of the advantages of undertaking new explorations towards building new forms of language education. The researchers had different cultural experiences and were open to new roles of teachers, learners, and language communication in the classroom.

The remote learning context in which the initial research was conducted changed the daily educational practice and the rules that guided it. The use of digital tools was not a problem, as everyone had acquired the skills to operate within them by the time the research started during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the fact that the students of both research groups were weary of studying online was clear, which might have affected the level of engagement during the classes. During the study, authors tried to exploit the potential of the online tools in teaching and learning by, for instance, creating channels on MsTeams (ULS) and Zoom (UoM) where students could connect in small groups and where the teacher could join to provide support and engage in conversation.

Results

The purpose of this preliminary study was to answer the research questions posed and to make inferences about the actualized learning potential of learning materials selected in two cultural contexts, in Spain and Poland.

An interpretive content analysis of the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaires was conducted. The authors maintain that the idea of using a scenario-based learning experience evaluation questionnaire is a valid one because the questionnaire was simple in its form in terms of language and structure, and all students declared that it was easy to follow.

In response to the first research question (RQ1): *How did the students assess the appropriateness of the educational materials used in class?*

18 participants described the activities as "having a real purpose" (S1-3) and as something "not normally taught in class" (UKR1, S3), or something that (PL1) "never thought about", (RUS1) "didn't know about before", or (PAL1), (S4-8) "never asked themselves about those issues" and, for that reason, they felt that the activities were "purposeful and engaging" (S9-10) and "thought-provoking" (S11-14).

The word cloud below (Fig. 1) represents the most frequent words used by students in answer to RQ1.

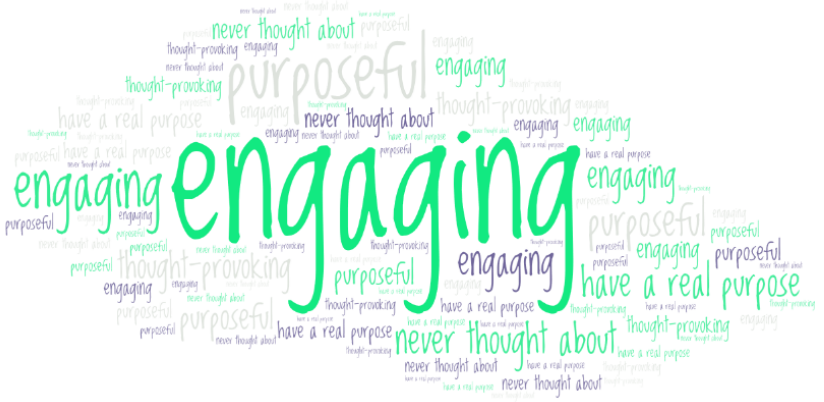


Figure 1. Word cloud of most frequent words for RQ1

As for the second research question (RQ2): *What were the students' reactions to the change in the paradigm of teaching and learning?*

Since the sessions were multilingual and multicultural, and the goal of the course was to promote diversity and inclusivity as well as critical language awareness, a lot of classroom time was devoted to issues regarding culture and language. The most common comments from students' questionnaires concerned the fact

that they had often used language or specific terminology in various classes without reflecting on it, whereas they had an opportunity to reflect on concepts of language more deeply. According to the students, our classes have given them the opportunity to (PL2-3) "investigate", (S16-24) "reflect", (I1) "keep an open mind", (S25-27) "learn about and discover", (PAL1, G2) "enrich their knowledge and understanding" about issues concerning the culture and language, but also their own identity, which was (PL5-7, S29) "inspirational", (CH1) "effective", and helped to (RUS1, S30-31) "clarify concepts and believes [sic]", (UKR1) "understand certain aspects of self", and was (G1, S28) "valid and relevant in everyday life". Thus, data indicate that students' reactions to the change in the paradigm of teaching and learning English were positive. They were willing to experiment with different forms of learning.

As for the third research question (RQ3): *What were the effective and ineffective learning opportunities?*

It is noteworthy that 12 of the participants, while describing the effectiveness of the activities, did not refer to the activities per se, but rather to their personal development.

See examples of student comments below regarding the way they reflect on the learning opportunities that these materials have offered to them, having to do with 'language identity' and how the learner relates language, culture and the understanding of one's body (PAL1), learner's awareness on the relationship of language and culture, finding themselves as representative of one specific culture (R1), and language awareness (S17) related to the context (S5):

PAL1: "The activities have given me an opportunity to reflect on my own language identity and were effective because they tell a lot about the connection between language and body and how you relate culture with language."

R1: "I have never thought about language in that way, and it made me think about my relationship with different languages and how they define me as a person as a representative of the particular culture."

S17: "Definitely, the sessions have made me to reflect on my own experience and to think about my perspective on these topics."

S5: "We could learn about our surroundings but also about ourselves."

29 of the participants referred to the effectiveness of the activities directly. See examples of student comments below, where they speak about the efficiency of practical lessons (U1), video (P9), classroom organization (S10), and theoretical learning (CH1):

U1: "In my opinion the learning process was effective, because it was a very practical lesson. The practical approach made me aware of important cultural concepts."

P9: "I think the most effective lesson was when we worked on decoding the video, because then I could work at my own pace."

S10: "The way the classes were organized has been good and effective as in each of them we had to read, listen, write and speak, so we have been able to improve in these aspects and learn new things."

CH1: "Generally speaking is effective because I acquired some interesting theories which are beneficial for my dissertation and the tasks are enjoyable."

Nevertheless, 2 students (I1 and G1) also mentioned that working online with these materials proved challenging, as the pace of work was too quick on times, and they would prefer to have had more time to dwell on some of the topics and issues a bit longer, as they were important in their lives:

I1: "I think we should have spent more time on it because it required a lot of thinking."

G1: "I would have wished to have more time to become more aware of cultural differences and how to spot prejudices or stereotypes on myself and especially why I may have them."

Only 3 students (G2, S29 and P8) described one of the activities done during the course as ineffective:

G2: "It was non-effective for me because I did not understand what exactly was the connection to it."

S29: "I feel it is a little less effective, because not everyone gets to answer as there is no time for us all to speak, and there is no guide or explanation to judge our own results."

P8: "The most stressful and ineffective lessons for me are the lessons when we have to present the effect of our work, because I can't speak or write in English so fast."

Discussion and conclusions

The approach to language teaching and learning described above has helped researchers to question and reveal assumptions underlying materials' design, language course development, and use of these materials in online lessons in terms of the role of learners, teachers, learning goals and other important issues that should be considered during planning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 20). This research has investigated the actualized potential of learning materials through adapting them to different cultural contexts, to then analyze learners' reactions to such materials in the Scenario-based Assessment for Learning Experiences questionnaire. During this study, the authors were committed to the contextualization of the learning materials and have observed how deeper

learning encourages different outcomes in the classroom that cannot be fully predicted. This is in line with Tochon's (2010) research on meaningful learning, which supports the view that language education needs to emphasize meaningful learning based on personal experience, social interaction and reflection.

As mentioned in the Results section above, a few students participating in this study felt that they needed more time to think about the issues that were important to them, 30% of participants described the activities as purposeful and engaging, and 70% of them saw the activities as effective, which may indicate that learning a language through participation in social practices, promoting social understanding, diversity and inclusivity by changing the means and purposes of learning may be effective. There was a visible shift from passive to active learning during the course. Learners were engaged in their process of learning while using their linguistic repertoire, which may indicate that bringing real-world issues and experiences into the process of learning helps to build a learning community, construct and share knowledge (Meyer et al., 2015), create a more ethical, educational and social environment for learning (Canagarajah, 2015), and provide access to higher levels of participation (Repo, 2022). We have observed that when learning involves a meaningful organization of experiences it can be more easily transferred and applied to other situations (Taba, 1962), and this is something that participating learners were genuinely interested in. Such a process also requires the activation of all communication channels to obtain a personal understanding of the acquired knowledge, moving from knowledge to action (Golębniak, 2019), which was rather challenging for us to achieve in an online course. Nevertheless, the development of learners' self-awareness of how to learn relating to one' values, beliefs and dispositions remained crucial for us throughout the course, and the result of having 30% of learners reporting that the experience led to personal growth and development rather than to the activities per se is indeed very promising. Therefore, it may be assumed that the role of the language teacher is not only to teach the language and move from one activity to another, but also to act as a mentor in the process of developing the students' critical language and cultural awareness. In order to be able to take on this role, teachers need to develop critical language awareness and sensitivity to language issues (Fairclough, 2001; Reagan & Osborn, 2002). Educators who are not reflective, generally do not provide opportunities for students to reflect on issues of linguistic diversity or critical language awareness (Reagan & Osborn, 2002, p. 84). Students' comments in this study have indicated that developing social and linguistic competences could enrich our sense of respect, tolerance and become more sensitive to issues related to race, gender, disability, environmental and social problems of their own, as well as of other cultures, which is consistent with Bulut and Arikan's research (2015, p. 19).

At present, one can observe a shift in the approaches to educational materials design by including practices that have been scientifically validated. Evidence-

based curricula and educational practices may not only help to improve educational attainment, they also contribute to the professionalization of teachers by empowering them to initiate actions that improve the quality of education, and they bridge the gap between research, theory and practice (Petty, 2009). Nevertheless, to the best knowledge of the authors of this study, there are very few studies concerning systematic procedures of materials development and adaptation (Garton & Graves, 2014). This study is an attempt to add to this pool of knowledge. Creating evidence-based learning materials is a long-term process that includes research, inquiry, design, production, adaptation, use, and evaluation of materials (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017). Regrettably, there is not much research related to the development and evaluation of educational materials based on the principals of critical pedagogy (Crookes, 2010) and CP in foreign language learning (Jordão & Fogaça, 2012).

The limitation of this study was the fact that it was conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research should concentrate on the above issues in a face to face context, and apply additional measures to validate the results, such as (non)participant observations, the analysis of students' learning logs and students' assessment of learning outcomes.

The results of this study provide a springboard for further inquiries related to the design of the language learning materials and shed new light on alternative ways of constructing evidence-based language education materials and evaluating their learning potential. The obtained results suggest that educational materials prepared on the grounds of Critical Language Pedagogy and the Pluriliteracies Approach to Teaching and Learning have the potential to support language learning in linguistically diverse educational contexts and can be characterized by their actualized learning potential.

References

Ahuvia, A. (2001). Traditional, Interpretive, and Reception Based Content Analyses: Improving the Ability of Content Analysis to Address Issues of Pragmatic and Theoretical Concern. *Social Indicators Research, 54*, 139–172. http://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011087813505

Auerbach, E. R. (1990). *Making meaning, making change: A guide to participatory curriculum development for adult ESL and family literacy.* University of Massachusetts.

Berelson, B. (1952). *Content analysis in communication research*. The Free Press.

Bulut, M., & Arikan, A. (2015). Socially responsible teaching and English coursebooks: Focus on ethnicity, sex, disability. *E-Journal of Yasar University*, *10* (39), 13-20.

Bundsgaard, J., & Thomas, H. (2011). Evaluation of learning materials: A holistic framework. *Journal of Learning Design, 4*, 31-44. http://doi.org/10.5204/jld.v4i4.87.

Canagarajah, S. (2007). The ecology of global English. *International Multilingual Research Journal,* 1 (2), 89-100.

Canagarajah, S. (2015). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. Routledge Taylor & Francis.

Coyle, D., & Meyer, O. (2021). *Playing beyond CLIL – Pluriliteracies Teaching for Deeper Learning.* Cambridge University Press.

Coyle, D., & Meyer, O. (2020). Quality Assurance in CLIL in Higher Education. In *Quality in TESOL and Teacher Education* (1st edition) edited by J. de Dios Martínes Agudo, 159-170. Routledge Taylor & Francis.

Cook, V. (1999). Going beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching. *TESOL Quarterly,* 33 (2), 185-209.

Crookes, G. (2010). The practicality and relevance of second language critical pedagogy. *Language Teaching, 43*(4), 333-348. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809990292.

Crawford, L. M. (1978). *Paulo Freire's philosophy: Derivation of curricular principles and their application to second language curriculum design (Publication No. 7911991) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota].* ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/openview/def4ecb9db41cab0c17a02e0d9bec577/1.pdf/advanced

Crawford-Lange, L. M. (1981). Redirecting foreign language curricula: Paulo Freire's contribution. *Foreign Language Annals,* 14, 257–273.

Crookes, G. (2012). Critical Pedagogy in Language Teaching. In W. L. Ortega (ed.), T*he Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, 1–9. http://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0284.

Crookes, G. (2010) The practicality and relevance of second language critical pedagogy. *Language Teaching*, 43 (3), 333-348. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444809990292.

Curran, C. (1972). *Counseling-learning: A whole person model for education.* Grune & Stratton.

Elbardan, H., & Kholeif, A. O. R. (2017). *Enterprise Resource Planning, Corporate Governance and Internal Auditing.* Springer International Publishing.

Ellis, G., & Sinclair, B. (1989). *Learning to Learn English Learner's Book: A Course in Learner Training.* Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power.* Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1999). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (4th impr.). Longman.

Hammersley, A. (2004). Action Research: a contradiction in terms? *Oxford Review of Education*, 30 (2). http://doi.org/10.1080/0305498042000215502.

Garton, S., & Graves, K. (2014). *International Perspectives on Materials in ELT*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Gattegno, C. (1972). *Teaching foreign languages in schools the silent way*. Educational Solutions.

Gołębniak, B. D. (2019). Proces kształcenia. In *Pedagogika. Podręcznik akademicki* edited by Z. Kwieciński and B. Śliwerski, 857-960. Polish Scientific Publishers *PWN* .

Haynes, S. R., Spence, L., & Lenze, L. (2009). Scenario-based assessment of learning experiences. Conference Paper in *proceedings – Frontiers in Education Conference.* http://doi.org/10.1109/FIE.2009.5350730.

Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Addison-Wesley.

Jacobs, G. M., & Farrell, T. S. (2001). Paradigm shift: Understanding and implementing change in second language education. *TESL-EJ*, 5 (1). http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume5/ej17/ej17a1/

Jordão, C. M., & Fogaça, F. C. (2012). Critical literacy in the English language classroom. *DELTA: Documentação de Estudios em Lingüistica Teórica e Aplicada*, 28 (1), 69–84. http://doi.org.10.1590/S0102-44502012000100004.

Kirk, J., & Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Sage.

Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom.* Pergamon Press.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis. An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Second Edition). Sage.

Maley, A., & Peachy N. (2010). *Creativity in the English language classroom*. British Council.

Merrill, M. D. (2007). A task-centered instructional strategy. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 40*(1), 5–22.

Meyer, O., Coyle, D., Halbach, A., Ting, Y.-L.T., & Schuck, K. (2015). A pluriliteracies approach to content and language integrated learning: developing learner progression in academic knowledge-construction and meaning-making through an additional language. *Language Culture and Curriculum, 28*. http://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2014.1000924.

Muszyńska, B. (2020). *Inclusive, Plurilingual and Pluricultural Learning Environment for English language Learning.* The Lower Silesia University Press. ISBN 978-83-65408-37-2

Nesi, H., & Gardner, S. (2012). *Genres across the disciplines: Student writing in higher education*. Cambridge University Press.

Noga, H. (2014). Analiza treści w pracy pedagogicznej. *Trendy ve vzdělávání*, *7*(1):349–352.http://tvv-journal.upol.cz/artkey/tvv-201401-0076_ANALIZA_TRE_CI_W_PRACY_PEDAGOGICZNEJ.php

Ornstein, A. C., & Hunkins, F. P. (2018). *Curriculum: Foundations, principles, and issues* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Petty, G. (2009). *Evidence-based teaching.* Oxford University Press.

Pisarek, W. (1983). *Analiza zawartości prasy*. Ośrodek Badań Prasoznawczych.

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second language pedagogy.* Oxford University Press.

Reagan, T. G., & Osborn, T. A. (2002). *The foreign language educator in society: Toward a critical pedagogy.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Repo, E. (2022). Towards Language-aware pedagogy? Experiences of students in multilingual Finnish schools. *Language and Education,* http://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2022.2116985.

Roder, T., & Rata-Skudder, N. (2012). *Moodle and the living curriculum*. ASCILITE 2012 Future Challenges / Sustainable Futures https://www.ascilite.org/conferences/Wellington12/2012/images/custom/roder%2C_tabitha_moodle.pdf

Savery, J. R. (2006). Overview of Problem-based Learning: Definitions and Distinctions. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning, 1*(1): 9-20. http://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1002.

Shin, H., & Crookes, G. (2005). Exploring the possibilities for EFL critical pedagogy in Korea –a two-part case study. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, *2*(2), 113-138.

Stenhouse, L. (1983). *Authority, Education and Emancipation: A Collection of Papers.* Heinemann Education.

Taba, H. (1962). *Curriculum Development. Theory and practice*. Harcourt Brace and World.

Thornbury, S., & Meddings, L. (2009). *Teaching unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching.* Delta.

Tochon, F. V. (2010). Deep education. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers JETT*, *1*, 1–12.

Tomlinson, B., & Masuhara, H. (2017). *The Complete Guide to the Theory and Practice of Materials Development for Language Learning.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Unitec (2010). *Mapping the Living Curriculum* [https://www.ascilite.org/conferences/Wellington12/2012/images/custom/roder%2C_tabitha_moodle.pdf]. Unitec.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Thought and language*. The MIT Press.

Weber, R. P. (1990). *Basic content analysis.* Sage.

Wester, F., Pleijter, A., & Renckstorf, K. (2004). *Exploring newspapers' portrayals: A logic for interpretive content analysis.* https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/64454/64454.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS' WELL-BEING DURING ONLINE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN INDONESIA: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

[1]Priyatno Ardi, [2]Rina Sari, [3]Luki Emiliya Hidayat, [4]Oktavia Tri Sanggala Dewi, [5]Bambang Yudi Cahyono

[1]Universitas Sanata Dharma, Indonesia; [2]Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia; [3]Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri 10 Malang, Indonesia; [4]Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia; [1,2,3,4,5]Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

Abstract: *This paper intends to scrutinize the personal and systemic factors affecting the well-being of in-service EFL teachers participating in a three-month online teacher professional education (OTPE) program in Indonesia. Moreover, it seeks to explore the resources that the teachers draw on to maintain their well-being. Six EFL teachers attending the OTPE program participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six focal participants. The data were qualitatively analyzed to find the emerging themes. The findings revealed that personal and systemic factors influenced the participants' well-being in the OTPE program. The personal factors included motivation, marital status, and spirituality, while the systemic factors encompassed the national policy on EFL teacher certification, teacher education institution, home school, and family. Moreover, the participants drew on personal resources, i.e., motivation and spirituality, and social resources, i.e., family members, colleagues, students, instructors, and fellow participants, to maintain their well-being during the OTPE program. Hence, the interplay between personal and systemic factors was quintessential to the EFL teachers' well-being in the program.*

Keywords: *Ecological perspectives, EFL teachers' well-being, in-service EFL teachers, online teacher professional education, teacher professional development*

About the author: *Priyatno Ardi is an associate professor at the English Language Education Study Program of Universitas Sanata Dharma, Indonesia, and a doctoral student in ELT at Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. He has published articles in both national and international journals. His research interests include learner autonomy, student engagement, technology in language learning, EFL teacher education, and applied linguistics.*

e-mail: *priyatnoardi@usd.ac.id* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9523-2060*

**Information about the other authors follows after the references of this study.*

Copyright © 2023 Priyatno Ardi, Rina Sari, Luki Emiliya Hidayat, Oktavia Tri Sanggala Dewi, Bambang Yudi Cahyono

Article history: Received: 22 May 2023; Reviewed: 21 June 2023; Revised: 1 July 2023; Accepted: 14 July 2023; Published: 28 August 2023

This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Ardi, P., Sari, R., Hidayat, L. E., Dewi, O. T. S., & Cahyono, B. Y. (2023). In-servıce EFL teachers' well-beıng durıng onlıne teacher professıonal development program ın Indonesıa: An ecologıcal perspectıve. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 26-45. https://doi.org/10.46687/UUHH4920.

Introduction

As teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) embraces the emotional and psychological turn, the issue of English teacher well-being has received more attention in recent years. Teachers' well-being levels strongly predict foreign language teaching enjoyment (Ergün & Dewaele, 2021), which can positively influence student well-being and achievement (Harding et al., 2019). Despite its infancy stage in language education (Nazari & Xodabande, 2022), teachers' well-being has been discussed in general education by drawing on positive psychology, highlighting how teachers flourish. Two psychological perspectives used to understand human well-being are hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The former refers to subjective well-being, emphasizing happiness and a sense of satisfaction. The latter emphasizes the individual ability to self-actualize and fully optimize the capacity as a person to attain the meaningfulness of life. The perspectives have been used extensively in studies on teacher well-being. Based on these perspectives, the emergence of well-being is due to individual and subjective factors. However, both perspectives should be integrated since the idea of well-being encompasses feeling well and living good, which is under the influence of individual and contextual factors. Mercer (2021, p. 16) defines well-being as "the dynamic sense of meaning and life satisfaction emerging from a person's subjective personal relationships with the affordances within their social ecologies." Therefore, teacher well-being is seen from the ecological perspective, considering the interplay between individual factors and collective systemic localities around the teachers.

Studies have been conducted to examine individual related factors which negatively influence teacher well-being, including stress (e.g., Aloe et al., 2014; Carroll et al., 2021; Chirico et al., 2020; MacIntyre, Ross et al., 2019) and burnout (e.g., Gregersen et al., 2023; Jin et al., 2021a; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Mercer, 2020; Nazari & Xodabande, 2022). These dominant factors have played a prominent role in attrition (Carroll et al., 2021; Chirico et al., 2020; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). However, as teacher well-being sources come from not only individual but also socio-contextual factors, studies on teachers' well-being from the ecological lens have been conducted in recent years. Mercer's (2020) study revealed that the profit-oriented business model of ELT in the private sector in Malta has led to the issue of precarity, negatively influencing English teachers' well-being. However, despite the insecurity, teachers still enjoyed their profession and felt positive due to their excellent rapport with colleagues and students and their positive working culture. Mairitsch et al. (2021) found that teacher well-being was influenced by the policies and status of foreign languages as school subjects. Jin et al. (2021a) also revealed that language teachers' psychological, social, and contextual resources help maintain their well-being. Considering the findings, it becomes evident that various systemic factors can significantly impact teachers' professional lives, well-being, and job

satisfaction (Aldrup et al., 2018; Hofstadler et al., 2020). Hence, it is clear that different contexts play a distinct and crucial role in contributing to the overall well-being of language teachers.

Due to the importance of context-dependency, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on teacher well-being by addressing the under-researched context of an online teacher professional education (OTPE, henceforth) program in Indonesia. While participating in the OTPE program, teachers are still required to teach at their respective schools. As previous studies have focused on the well-being of language teachers in work environments (e.g., Ebadijalal & Moradkhani, 2022; Jin et al., 2021b; MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2019; Mercer, 2020) and in the teacher education program (e.g., Herrera & Martínez-Alba, 2022; Mairitsch et al., 2021; Sulis et al., 2021), the interplay between simultaneous multiple identities and roles as teachers and students potentially add or detract the well-being of EFL teachers. Hence, the individual and socio-contextual factors of the OTPE program and schools where they teach are the critical determinants of their well-being.

The OTPE program seeks to educate in-service Indonesian EFL teachers with social, personal, professional, and pedagogical qualities. Its ultimate goal is to foster a growth mindset in teachers, empowering them to explore and adapt to an ever-changing environment (Novita, 2022). It comprises seminars on topic-specific pedagogy, peer-teaching, subject matter and pedagogical knowledge enrichment, and school-based teaching internships. The changes in teachers' daily professional practices may become the resource of their stress, eventually influencing their well-being (MacIntyre, Ross et al., 2019). Adopting the ecological perspectives on EFL teacher well-being, we seek to scrutinize the factors supporting or threatening the EFL teachers' well-being, and the personal and social resources they use to navigate challenging situations during the program. Two research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How do the personal and systemic factors of the OTPE program affect the well-being of EFL teachers?

2. What resources do the EFL teachers draw upon to maintain their well-being during the OTPE program?

EFL teacher well-being: Its ecology and resources

An ecological approach is a relevant framework for better understanding language teachers' individual and social well-being holistically. It considers an individual possessing the agentic power to deliberately connect to their sociopolitical, organizational, cultural, personal, and interpersonal ecological systems (Mairitsch et al., 2021; Mercer, 2020, 2021). Furthermore, since the ecological perspective implies the understanding of teachers' well-being within

the broader environments of their lives, it encompasses the interconnectedness of teachers' personal and professional lives, the contribution of the systemic and institutional factors on teacher well-being, the distinctive characteristics of the subject matters that they teach, and teachers' career stages (Jin et al., 2021b). Hence, it is emphasized in the ecological lens that personal and systemic contexts around the teachers heavily determine their well-being.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) five ecological systems have been used as a framework to explain how the systemic entities around the teachers influence their well-being. The first system is the microsystem, encompassing the connection of teachers with immediate environments, such as homes, schools, or classrooms. The second system, i.e., mesosystem, encapsulates the interrelations of different settings, such as schools and homes. Third, the exosystem refers to the contexts that indirectly influence the teachers, i.e., teacher organizations and local government's policy, while the macrosystem focuses on how socio-cultural and political settings affect the teachers. Lastly, the chronosystem accentuates the time that characterizes changes experienced by the teachers, including life transitions and significant life changes.

In the lens of ecological perspectives, well-being arises from the interplay between intrapersonal and contextual factors and adjusts to broader ecosystems. Foreign language teachers can use their social-psychological capital to boost and maintain their well-being, including social and contextual affordances and embodied psychological qualities (Jin et al., 2021b). The psychological resources include positive thinking and beliefs, gratitude, optimism, and self-awareness and the contextual affordances consist of various types of support from peer colleagues, school management, outside of school, and governments (Jin et al., 2021a). Furthermore, MacIntyre et al. (2022) reveal that hope plays a significant role in coping with stress and challenges and sustaining language teacher well-being.

Method

As this study aims to explore personal and systemic factors affecting teachers' well-being and resources drawn by Indonesian EFL teachers to maintain their well-being during the OTPE program, a qualitative research method was employed to collect subjective interpretations and produce detailed descriptions (Daniel & Harland, 2017).

Context of the study

This study was situated in the OTPE program, a required route for obtaining a teaching certificate. In-service teachers who received the certificates after completing this program were certified professional teachers who were

financially eligible to receive monthly teacher professional allowance from the government. While attending this program, teachers still accomplished their school's regular teaching activities and other administrative or extracurricular works. The program was conducted within three-month training through a Moodle-based Learning Management System platform administered by the Indonesian government. In this program, the government collaborated with several teacher education institutions.

Participants

Six EFL teachers attending the OTPE program organized by three well-known Indonesian universities were selected as the participants in this study. To deal with the ethical issues of this qualitative study, the researchers explained the study's objectives to the participants at the beginning of the recruitment process. As their involvement was entirely voluntary, they were informed that they might withdraw at any time. Furthermore, the researchers informed them that their personal information was confidently addressed using pseudonyms. The participants' demography is in Table I.

Table I.
Demography of the participants

Participant	Gender	Marital Status	Teaching Experience	Province
P1	Female	Married	9 years	West Java
P2	Female	Married	13 years	East Java
P3	Male	Single	7 years	Central Java
P4	Female	Married	15 years	South Kalimantan
P5	Female	Married	15 years	Lampung
P6	Male	Married	10 years	East Java

Data collection and analysis

In-depth interviews were employed to obtain the participants' rich narrative accounts. The one-hour interviews were conducted in Indonesian[1] and video-recorded using the Zoom application. The interviews were intended to explore the impact of personal and systemic factors on the participants' well-being, as well as to identify the resources that played a role in maintaining their overall

1. The translations of the interviews, from Indonesian to English, were conducted by the authors.

well-being (see Appendix 1 for the interview guideline). The results of the interview were transcribed and re-read to check the accuracy of the written data. A member-checking strategy was conducted to ensure the validity of the transcripts (Candela, 2019; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Then, the researchers did a thematic analysis.

Findings and discussion

Factors perceived as affecting EFL teachers' well-being in the OTPE program

Findings reveal that the EFL teachers' perceived well-being in the OTPE program was affected by the interplay between personal and systemic factors around them. The personal factors included motivation, marital status, and spirituality. Meanwhile, the systemic factors were associated with the systems and localities in teachers' participation in the program, namely the national policy on EFL teacher certification, teacher education institution, home school, and family.

Personal factors

The participants revealed that the personal factors pertinently influenced their well-being in the OTPE program. The first personal factor was motivation. They were motivated to attend the program as it was the only path that led them to become professional teachers. The program could help them achieve the best of their professionalism as EFL teachers. P5 shared:

> I had waited a long time for this TPE program. Joining the program was a path to obtaining a professional teaching certificate in our country. But, the most important thing was that I improved and made meaning of my professional self. That echoed in my mind during the program and provided me with a hope for my profession.

Drawing a sense of meaning and purpose, the EFL teachers clearly understood who they were and what they intended to achieve in the OTPE program. Such meaningfulness and purpose were quintessential to achieving eudemonic well-being (Mairitsch et al., 2021; Nazari & Xodabande, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2001), which empowered the teachers in accomplishing all the requirements of the OTPE program. In this regard, what they had done was not instrumental in getting a certificate, but it was a space to improve their professionalism and make them grow as human beings. Mairitsch et al. (2021) articulate that people having a goal for their lives are more likely to do well and have higher levels of happiness and expectancy.

Another personal factor influencing the teachers' well-being during the program was their marital status. The participants benefited from either being unmarried or married. The unmarried participants could focus on accomplishing the

assigned tasks without any interference from other family members. However, at certain times, they also needed encouragement and motivation from those closest to them. Similarly, married participants admitted that their family members supported and motivated them. However, they had to accomplish their responsibilities to their families while finishing all the assignments of the OTPE program. Hence, marital status influenced the teachers' well-being. However, each participant's marital status uniquely contributed to teachers' well-being. P3 admitted:

> Since I am not married, I could focus on my assignments without doing household chores. I cannot imagine if, at the same time, I had to play the role of a parent. However, I also missed having close people support me at some point.

Spirituality was admittedly a personal factor that contributed to the EFL teachers' well-being in the OTPE program. This finding aligns with Farrell et al. (2020), who highlighted the profound connection between spirituality and mental health as well as overall well-being. Spirituality generally refers to a relationship with a vast, omnipotent, and divine superior. When the teachers were connected to this source while accomplishing the program, they radiated the favorable energy that advanced their responsibilities and roles. As all Indonesian citizens must embrace a religion or belief, the participants revealed that the religious teachings influenced the state of their well-being, especially in their hectic schedules. P4 stated:

> While following the OTPE program, I taught myself that nothing is impossible if God wills. I'm sure God will make everything easy and smooth if I'm close to God and keep trying optimally. I have become more confident and enthusiastic about carrying out this program by upholding these beliefs.

Systemic factors

National policy on EFL teacher certification

The national policy on teacher certification undoubtedly influenced teachers' well-being in the OTPE program because it directly impacted the teachers, particularly concerning time management issues. The participants had to complete 36 credit- modules within three months (Kemendikbud, 2022). As the program was conducted during effective teaching schedules, on which most teachers were obliged by their home schools to carry out their teaching routines, this condition highly affected the teachers' well-being. P5 revealed:

> The policy and curriculum of this program really affected my daily teaching activity. I had to leave the class to join the synchronous session or to complete the assignments. Although the school principal permitted me to attend this program, I still had to do my routine activities, including teaching, completing administrative work, and participating in a teacher competition.

Despite the support from the school principal, some teachers needed help concentrating on the OTPE program because they had to be at the schools at a similar time, completing other administrative and extracurricular responsibilities. Indeed, this time management issue affected teachers' physical well-being. Therefore, they learned how to improve their time management skills and reduced negative apprehensions (Mercer, 2020).

Meanwhile, other teachers expressed their satisfaction and gratitude for the opportunity to join this program. They agreed that the curriculum of this program was very beneficial and exactly met their needs as EFL teachers. The participants reinvented their motivation in learning while working on the course modules and discussing topics with their instructors. P1 revealed:

> I learned a lot from this program. It gave me a deeper understanding of what I must do as a teacher. I could reflect on my own teaching practices that still needed improvement.

Some teachers stated that this program was efficient due to its flexibility in working through the LMS. It was also economical because they could participate in the program from the comfort of their homes without going to the city of the organizing teacher education institutions. P4 shared:

> This program was organized in an LMS that made it flexible, effective, and efficient, saving my money and energy… It exposed me to new learning habits, such as reading literature and finding new learning resources, which involved critical thinking and decision. I think it is also what my peers felt, we were motivated by the learning materials and activities in this program.

The excerpts illustrate how the participants considered time as influencing their well-being. While P5 viewed time as a stressor, P1 and P4 perceived time as a resource, which resonates with Mercer and Gregersen's (2020) idea about the role of time as a resource concept. The findings showed how the teachers spent the time wisely to sustain their motivation and boost their well-being. P1 and P4 perceived their limited time as a resource to practice their time management by producing and achieving positive outcomes, such as new learning habits, decision making and reinventing motivation to produce and achieve more beneficial outcomes.

Teacher education institution

Teacher education institutions where the participants were placed for the OTPE program played a defining role in their well-being as they were directly under the control of the institutions. Indeed, the workloads and tight schedules predetermined by the government affected their stress levels (Mairitsch et al., 2021). However, the findings reveal that organization and interconnectedness in the teacher education institutions were more pertinent to the EFL teachers' well-being.

The government chose higher education institutions to organize the OTPE program based on the availability and quality of the teacher professional education study program. The participants admitted that well-organized synchronous and asynchronous learning activities fostered them to skillfully manage their time and energy, which protected them from exhaustion, burnout, and stress (cf. Chirico et al., 2020; Gregersen et al., 2023; MacIntyre, Ross et al., 2019; Maslach et al., 2001). Furthermore, the presence of a WhatsApp group accelerated the communication between the management of the study program and participants, making them well-informed about any schedule changes. Such suitable communication was admitted to contributing to their serenity. P3 shared:

> My teacher education institution has successfully managed the OTPE program. Precise schedules and activities informed through our WhatsApp group made us keep calm. Any changes to the plans were also announced through the group.

The institutions were given the flexibility to manage the daily synchronous meetings. The instructors and participants agreed upon the time of the synchronous meetings. However, as the sudden schedule changes were frequently made, the participants admitted that they had to re-organize their schools' teaching schedules. In this regard, the changes made them feel agitated. As a result, agitation prevented them from studying and working well, leading to stress and anxiety (Aloe et al., 2014; Carroll et al., 2021; Chirico et al., 2020; MacIntyre, Ross et al., 2019).

Home school

As the EFL teachers still took their professional roles at their respective schools, the positive support from the school members was crucial in maintaining their well-being in the OTPE program. The support could bring about positive thinking, gratitude, and optimism, which triggered them to improve their professional selves in the OTPE program (Jin et al., 2021a). The participants admitted that the school leaders, colleagues, and students were paramount in supporting them in accomplishing the program. P1 said:

> I felt so glad that all the school members, such as the school principal, colleagues, administrative staff, and students, supported me in accomplishing the OTPE program. The principal also encouraged me to focus on the program and finish it, allowing me to use the school facilities.

Indeed, the school leaders' policies played an essential role in supporting the teachers in the OTPE program. Some participants also mentioned that their principals allowed them to find alternative ways when they had to teach the classes and join the OTPE program simultaneously. They might find a substitute teacher, reschedule the class meeting, and give assignments to students. The principals recognized the inherent challenges of the EFL teachers' dual roles as both educators and participants in the OTPE program. They provided valuable

support by endorsing effective time management strategies to facilitate the achievement of the program's objectives. The participants struggled with time management and workloads in the OTPE program and schools. Inadequate time management and overwhelming workloads could potentially lead to heightened stress levels for the EFL teachers (cf. Carroll et al., 2021; Chirico et al., 2020; MacIntyre, Ross et al., 2019; Mairitsch et al., 2021).

The participants also admitted that their home schools provided them with several facilities to help them deal with the various projects of the OTPE program. The supporting facilities, such as a quiet room, laptop, and wi-fi, were crucial to help the teachers fulfill all the tasks. The support given encouraged them to be more determined to do the program. However, despite the facilities, several teachers admittedly faced a challenging situation due to the unstable internet connection as they lived in remote areas. This daily hassle could lead to a higher stress level (MacIntyre, Ross et al., 2019). P5 admitted:

> I often had a bad internet connection while having asynchronous meetings. It made me anxious whether I could catch up with the materials and activities. I was really afraid of failing in this program.

Like the teacher education institutions, the schools provided the EFL teachers with organizational support, motivation, and encouragement. The positive nuances encouraged them to accomplish their professional and academic responsibilities and grow as professional teachers (Jin et al., 2021b; MacIntyre, 2021; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Malczewska-Webb, 2016). As a result, the teachers achieved higher self-efficacy, happiness, and fulfillment, which positively contributed to their well-being (Gallagher & Lopez, 2021; MacIntyre, 2021).

Family

Family support had a significant influence on the success of the participants following the OTPE program. During the program, the married participants needed to manage their time effectively to give enough attention to their family members. They also needed to do the OTPE assignments while teaching in their schools. Therefore, the family members' support and understanding help them accomplish their responsibilities in the OTPE program and at their home schools. P4 stated:

> My family members understood my being busy during the OTPE program. I had to accomplish the tasks and attend a series of synchronous meetings. I had to teach classes at school. I also had to carry out my responsibilities in the family. I had multiple roles here. They (the family members) understood my position. That made me happy and even more excited to go through this program. (P4)

Resources perceived as maintaining the EFL teachers' well-being in the OTPE program

The findings reveal that the teachers drew on the available resources to maintain and increase their well-being during the OTPE program. The resources included personal and social resources.

Personal resources

The personal resources that the participants drew on in the OTPE program included self-motivation and spirituality. The participants admitted that they needed high self-motivation to accomplish the OTPE program. They needed to have a solid commitment to attend classes regularly, do the assignments, and follow the regulation of the program. Hence, participating in the program was believed to accelerate their professional development, which would be helpful for their schools and families. P2 stated:

> I realize that my participation in this program will significantly help me in my self-development as an individual, a teacher, or a head of the family.

The motivation echoed in their minds, encouraging them to do their best despite the challenges encountered. For example, the challenges, such as the use of technology and various teaching methods, could be solved with the help of the people surrounding them. Therefore, their motivation triggered them to find strategies to overcome the challenges.

Furthermore, the participants admitted that a high workload could cause stress if it was not balanced with a solid spiritual foundation. The results showed that spirituality positively and significantly affected teachers' performance during the OTPE program. The participants often prayed to calm themselves down. Furthermore, a prayer could make them feel close to God and be grateful for their life. By doing so, the teachers could feel happy and grateful while having the OTPE program. Indeed, spirituality was a power in dealing with problems and challenges. Through prayers, the participants could make their lives meaningful and achieve happiness, which was essential for their well-being. P1 stated:

> I prayed that I would always be blessed with good health and strength in participating in the program so that I could complete the OTPE program. By praying, I became calmer and more confident in following the program though I had a lot of things to do. Also, praying made me feel meaningful and thankful.

Social resources

The social resources on which the EFL teachers drew to maintain their well-being during the OTPE program included family members, colleagues, students, instructors, and fellow participants.

Family members

The findings suggest that all participants' family members supported them in the program. They realized that participating in this program would significantly help the participants to grow as individuals and teachers. The members thus understood the consequences of participating in the OTPE program. They also encouraged, prayed, and comforted them when the participants felt tired. Their husbands or wives understood their being busy during the OTPE program. Therefore, they were willing to postpone family activities until they finished their assignments. This family support was constructive for the participants participating in the program. P5 remarked, "my family was very supportive and made me more excited and focused."

The family members' support was shown by helping the participants in the program. First, the family provided the facilities for the participants to accomplish the program's tasks. The family provided the facilities, such as a new laptop and WIFI installation, and helped take videos if they had difficulty recording the teaching practices. Second, family members helped them with household chores and cared for the children. The children also began to learn independently to do their homework. P4 admitted:

> My husband's role was extraordinary, being able to understand and help me to deal with household chores. My husband and I could take turns taking care of the children. We shared housework at home. My children provided much support, especially those related to household matters.

Colleagues

Encouraging and supportive colleagues were a resource for the teachers' well-being while joining the OTPE program. Their school's colleagues were very supportive and helpful in their willingness to be substitute teachers. Furthermore, the colleagues were willing to exchange teaching itineraries. The teachers also obtained very insightful comments from their colleagues regarding the projects of the OTPE program. In addition to discussing the OTPE materials with the teachers, the colleagues shared their experiences of participating in the OTPE program. It was significant to minimize the teachers' burden. P6 stated:

> They really cared by asking how my OTPE program was progressing. They always encouraged me when I was under pressure with many assignments by offering help in discussing projects together.

The teachers also expressed appreciation for the valuable assistance provided by the administrative staff, who supported them in fulfilling the administrative and technical tasks, including printing out the documents, preparing the tools, and editing the videos. P2 said:

> They were very responsive in providing what I needed. They even helped me to bring tools and prepare the room for teaching practices.

The excerpts exemplify the fact that those supportive relationships in the schools brought about a supportive atmosphere and had a positive impact on the teachers' well-being. In addition, the participants also admitted that the absence of colleagues would diminish their well-being. P2 said:

> I needed helpful peers to assist me in facing the OTPE program. It was not easy for me to join this program and I could not face it alone, without their assistance.

During the OTPE program, the principal also approached the teachers personally, reassured them, and looked for solutions with them. They helped the teachers to address the problems they encountered. P6 mentioned:

> My principal gave me insightful ideas and guided me in finishing the OTPE program's tasks. It was really important for me because I could achieve my target as a professional educator.

Hence, the supportive roles of colleagues could influence teachers' professional lives and well-being (Aldrup et al., 2018; Day & Gu, 2010; Hofstadler et al., 2020; Jin et al., 2021a; Tutyandari, 2022). As a result, the teachers put more effort into accomplishing the OTPE program.

Students

The teachers mainly described students as lovely, supportive, and encouraging. The students showed full support to the teachers by helping the teachers prepare a classroom and a video camera when their teachers had to conduct the teaching practices. They were also cooperative in their teaching practices. The active involvement of the students significantly contributed to the positive mental health of the teachers, thereby enhancing their ability to become high-quality professional educators. The strong connection between the teachers and students made the teachers happy and relaxed. Hence, the teachers considered the students a resource for their excitement and happiness during the program. P5 recalled:

> I was so pleased because I had exceptional students who supported me during the OTPE program. They helped me a lot with the field practice of teaching and learning. I felt excited and relaxed in my teaching practices.

The excerpt suggests that a mutual understanding and close relationship between the teachers and the students created a sense of trust and an emotional bond. Hence, helpful, encouraging, and friendly students were influential and critical in affecting the teachers' well-being during the OTPE program. MacIntyre, Ross et al. (2019) also found that the strong connections between the teachers and students positively impacted teachers' well-being.

Instructors

As the OTPE program provided them with a virtual space that affected their personal and professional growth, the interconnectedness with instructors and

fellow participants was perceived as affecting their well-being in the OTPE program. Some participants admitted that their relationship with their instructors affected their positive well-being. The participants often asked for their help during the task accomplishment. The instructors demonstrated a commendable level of support and flexibility, acknowledging the participants as adult learners and prioritizing transformative learning approaches. Moreover, they were also willing to help the participants outside the synchronous schedules. As a result, the participants felt motivated, accepted, and encouraged by their instructors. P6 remarked:

> My instructors always motivated me. They encouraged me to improve my teaching and my professional growth. They focused on my strengths and wanted me to develop my strengths.

However, P1 revealed that one of her instructors was strict, criticizing all of her work. As a result, she felt discouraged and unmotivated. All of the efforts that she made were solely aimed at fulfilling her instructors' expectations. In this regard, she experienced high levels of stress dealing with the instructors.

Indeed, the instructors' motivation, encouragement, and positive feedback on teachers' strengths instigated teachers' growth and flourishing. The teachers felt accepted, encouraged, and motivated. As a result, they focused on maximizing their potential. The findings of this study align with previous research that incorporates the principles of positive psychology. It is well-documented that cultivating positivity can enhance self-efficacy, happiness, fulfillment, enjoyment, and hope (Gallagher & Lopez, 2021; MacIntyre, 2016, 2021; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Tutyandari, 2023). These positive psychological factors empower teachers to excel and thrive in their professional endeavors (Ardi, Mukti et al., 2023; Ardi, Widyaningsih & Widiati, 2023; Jin et al., 2021b; MacIntyre, 2021; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Malczewska-Webb, 2016).

Fellow participants

The positive interconnection among the participants in the OTPE program was quintessentially paramount in maintaining the well-being of EFL teachers. The participants admitted that their fellow participants created a supportive and positive atmosphere that encouraged them to grow as EFL teachers. As a community, the members helped and learned from one another. Moreover, the interpersonal bond they built during the program fostered them to share their problems and challenges and give positive and constructive feedback (cf. Ardi, Widyaningsih & Widiati, 2023; Tutyandari et al., 2022). As the participants enacted their social selves, they experienced a profound sense of being embraced, acknowledged, and valued by their peers in the OTPE program. This feeling of social acceptance within the program appears to have had a positive impact on reducing their stress levels and boosting their self-efficacy, happiness, and overall enjoyment, all of which play a crucial role in enhancing their overall well-being (Gallagher & Lopez, 2021; MacIntyre, 2016, 2021; Mairitsch et al., 2021; Tutyandari, 2023).

Conclusions and implications

This study has revealed the personal and systemic factors affecting the well-being of EFL teachers during the OTPE program. The personal factors included motivation, marital status, and spirituality, while the systemic factors were derived from the national policy on EFL teacher certification, teacher education institution, home school, and family. The EFL teachers also drew on personal resources, including motivation and spirituality, and social resources, namely family members, colleagues, students, instructors, and fellow participants, to maintain their well-being during the program. The resources entail the importance of teachers' intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships to foster their growth and well-being. It is also interesting to find out that motivation, spirituality, and familial bonds not only served as influential factors but also functioned as valuable resources in fostering individual well-being. This underscores the significance of self-awareness and cultivation of meaningful emotional and social connections to promote teachers' well-being in the OTPE program. Overall, the EFL teachers' well-being in the program was not only the teachers' responsibility but also the responsibility of the systemic localities in which the teachers worked, studied, and lived. Indeed, the dynamic interplay between personal and systemic factors determined their well-being.

As the findings underscore that the home schools affected teachers' well-being, the teachers need to be exempted from teaching and administrative responsibilities at the schools during the OTPE program. It is also essential that the government set an agenda to maintain teachers' well-being in the OTPE program to make them achieve their optimal professional growth. Making well-being competence an integral part of the OTPE program will also benefit teachers' future professional growth and lives. As the participants of this study were only from three teacher education institutions, future studies are called to include participants from all teacher education institutions in Indonesia. In this regard, quantitative studies are employed to gauge the levels of EFL teachers' well-being and examine the correlation between teachers' well-being and ecological factors in the OTPE program in Indonesia. Hence, the results will inform policymakers about fostering the well-being of teachers attending the OTPE program.

References

Aldrup, K., Klusmann, U., Lüdtke, O., Göllner, R., & Trautwein, U. (2018). Student misbehavior and teacher well-being: Testing the mediating role of the teacher-student relationship. *Learning and Instruction*, *58*, 126–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2018.05.006.

Aloe, A. M., Shisler, S. M., Norris, B. D., Nickerson, A. B., & Rinker, T. W. (2014). A multivariate meta-analysis of student misbehavior and teacher

burnout. *Educational Research Review*, *12*, 30–44. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2014.05.003

Ardi, P., Mukti, T. W. P., Basthomi, Y., & Widiati, U. (2023). Delving into Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' professional identity configuration in teaching practicum. *rEFLections*, *30*(2), 223–246.

Ardi, P., Widyaningsih, T. L., & Widiati, U. (2023). Appreciative collaborative reflection to catalyze Indonesian EFL teachers' identity configuration in a teacher professional education program. *Education and Self Development*, *18*(2), 10–26. https://doi.org/10.26907/esd.18.2.02.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In T. Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (pp. 1643-1647). Pergamon Press.

Candela, A. G. (2019). Exploring the function of member checking. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(3), 619–628. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3726.

Carroll, A., York, A., Fynes-Clinton, S., Sanders-O'Connor, E., Flynn, L., Bower, J. M., Forrest, K., & Ziaei, M. (2021). The downstream effects of teacher well-being programs: Improvements in teachers' stress, cognition and well-being benefit their students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.689628.

Chirico, A., Lucidi, F., Galli, F., Giancamilli, F., Vitale, J., Borghi, S., La Torre, A., & Codella, R. (2020). COVID-19 outbreak and physical activity in the Italian population: A cross-sectional analysis of the underlying psychosocial mechanisms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02100.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Getting good qualitative data to improve educational practice. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(3), 124–130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2.

Daniel, B. K., & Harland, T. (2017). *Higher education research methodology: A step-by-step guide to the research process* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315149783.

Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2010). *The new lives of teachers*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203847909.

Ebadijalal, M., & Moradkhani, S. (2022). Understanding EFL teachers' wellbeing: An activity theoretic perspective. *Language Teaching Research*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221125558.

Ergün, A. L. P., & Dewaele, J. M. (2021). Do well-being and resilience predict the Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment of teachers of Italian? *System, 99*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102506.

Farrell, T. S. C., Baurain, B., & Lewis, M. (2020). 'We teach who we are': Contemplation, reflective practice and spirituality in TESOL. *RELC Journal*, *51*(3), 337–346. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688220915647.

Gallagher, M. W., & Lopez, S. (2021). Strengthening positive psychology. In C. R. Snyder, S. J. Lopez, L. M. Edwards & S. C. Marques (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (3rd ed.) (pp. 3-7). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199396511.013.71.

Gregersen, T., Mercer, S., MacIntyre, P., Talbot, K., & Banga, C. A. (2023). Understanding language teacher wellbeing: An ESM study of daily stressors and uplifts. *Language Teaching Research*, *27*(4)*,* 862–883. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820965897.

Harding, S., Morris, R., Gunnell, D., Ford, T., Hollingworth, W., Tilling, K., & Kidger, J. (2019). Is teachers' mental health and wellbeing associated with students' mental health and wellbeing? *Journal of Affective Disorders, 242*, 180–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.08.080.

Herrera, L. J. P., & Martínez-Alba, G. (2022). Emotions, well-being, and language teacher identity development in an EFL teacher preparation program. *Korea TESOL Journal*, *18*(1), 3–25.

Hofstadler, N., Talbot, K., Mercer, S., & Lämmerer, A. (2020). The thrills and ills of content and language integrated learning. In C. Gkonou, J. M. Dewaele, & J. King (Eds.), *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching* (pp. 13-30). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781788928342-006.

Jin, J., Mercer, S., Babic, S., & Mairitsch, A. (2021a). 'You just appreciate every little kindness': Chinese language teachers' wellbeing in the UK. *System, 96*, 1–12. https://doi:10.1016/j.system.2020.102400.

Jin, J., Mercer, S., Babic, S., & Mairitsch, A. (2021b). Understanding the ecology of foreign language teacher wellbeing. In K. Budzińska & O. Majchrzak (Eds.), *Positive psychology in second and foreign language education* (pp. 19–38). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64444-4_2.

Kemendikbud. (2022). *PPG dalam Jabatan (In-service teacher professional education).* https://ppg.kemdikbud.go.id/ppg-dalam-jabatan. Accessed on Oct 19, 2022

MacIntyre, P. D. (2016). So far so good: An overview of positive psychology and its contributions to SLA. In D. Gabryś-Barker & D. Gałajda (Eds.), *Positive psychology perspectives on foreign language learning and teaching* (pp. 3-20). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32954-3_1.

MacIntyre, P. D. (2021). Exploring applications of positive psychology in SLA. In K. Budzińska & O. Majchrzak (Eds.), *Positive psychology in second and foreign language education* (pp. 3-17). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64444-4_1.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Mercer, S. (2014). Introducing positive psychology to SLA. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, *4*(2), 153–172. https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.2.

MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2019). Setting an agenda for positive psychology in SLA: Theory, practice, and research. *The Modern Language Journal*, *103*(1), 262–274. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12544.

MacIntyre, P. D., Ross, J., Talbot, K., Mercer, S., Gregersen, T., & Banga, C. A. (2019). Stressors, personality and wellbeing among language teachers. *System*, *82*, 26–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.02.013.

MacIntyre, P., Mercer, S., Gregersen, T., & Hay, A. (2022). The role of hope in language teachers' changing stress, coping, and well-being. *System*, *109*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2022.102881.

Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Does teacher burnout affect students? A systematic review of its association with academic achievement and student-reported outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *105*, 101714. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101714.

Mairitsch, A., Babic, S., Mercer, S., Sulis, G., Jin, J., & King, J. (2021). Being a student, becoming a teacher: The wellbeing of pre-service language teachers in Austria and the UK. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *106*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103452.

Malczewska-Webb, B. (2016). International students in Australia: What makes them happy? Student data from the positive education perspective. In D. Gabryś-Barker & D. Gałajda (Eds.)*, Positive psychology perspectives on foreign language learning and teaching* (pp. 193–210). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32954-3_11.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 397–422. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397.

Mercer, S. (2020). The wellbeing of language teachers in the private sector: An ecological perspective. *Language Teaching Research*, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820973510.

Mercer, S. (2021). An agenda for well-being in ELT: An ecological perspective. *ELT Journal*, *75*(1), 14–21. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa062.

Mercer, S., & Gregersen, T. (2020). *Teacher wellbeing.* Oxford University Press.

Nazari, M., & Xodabande, I. (2022). English language teacher well-being and professional identity construction. In L. J. Pentón Herrera, G. Martínez-Alba, & E. Trinh (Eds.), *Teacher well-being in English language teaching: An ecological approach* (pp. 99-112.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003314936.

Novita, P. (2022). The quest for teacher education quality in Indonesia: The long and winding road. In M. S. Khine & Y. Liu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 651-673). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-9785-2_32.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 141–166. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 5–14. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5.

Struyven, K., & Vanthournout, G. (2014). Teachers' exit decisions: An investigation into the reasons why newly qualified teachers fail to enter the teaching profession or why those who do enter do not continue teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *43*, 37–45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2014.06.002.

Sulis, G., Mercer, S., Mairitsch, A., Babic, S., & Shin, S. (2021). Pre-service language teacher wellbeing as a complex dynamic system. *System*, *103*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102642.

Tutyandari, C. (2022). English language pre-service teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching: An Indonesian case. *TEFLIN Journal*, *33*(2), 367–385. https://doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v33i2/367-385.

Tutyandari, C. (2023). Exploring EFL preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching: An Indonesian case. *PASAA*, *65*, 57–78.

Tutyandari, C., Anandari, C., & Ardi, P. (2022). The implementation of virtual peer mentoring in micro teaching classes. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, *25*(2), 447–460. https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.v25i2.4213.

Appendix 1.

Interview Guideline

1. Could you please tell your personal factors that affected your well-being during the online teacher professional education program? Why do you think the factors affect your well-being? How did they impact your well-being?
2. How do you think the role of organizational support in your school (school management, colleagues, administrative staff, and the like) and in the teacher education institution (instructors, administrative staff, fellow participants) in promoting your well-being during the program? Could you please give examples of their roles?
3. How do you perceive the roles of your family members in maintaining your well-being during the program?
4. Did you encounter systemic challenges and problems during the program? How did you overcome them?
5. Could you please tell specific personal and social resources that you relied on to maintain your well-being in the program? Please explain them in detail.

About the author: *Rina Sari is an assistant professor at the English Literature Study Program of Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia, and a doctoral student in ELT at Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. Her main interests are teacher professional development, TEFL, and materials development.*
e-mail: *rinasari@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4621-6339*

About the author: *Luki Emiliya Hidayat is an English teacher at Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Negeri 10 Malang, Indonesia, and a doctoral student in ELT at Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. She is interested in materials development, ESP, literacy, and teacher professional development.*
e-mail: *luki.hidayat@gmail.com* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9424-844X*

About the author: Oktavia Tri Sanggala Dewi is an assistant professor at the English Language Education Department of Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia, and a doctoral student in ELT at Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. Her research interests are in the area of TEFL, TEYL, and ESP.
e-mail: *sanggaladewi@unipasby.ac.id* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9372-642X*

About the author: *Bambang Yudi Cahyono is a professor in applied linguistics at the Department of English of Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. He has published more than 120 articles in both national and international journals. His main research interests are English teacher professional development, ICT and ELT, and second language writing. He also serves as a reviewer in some international journals.*
e-mail: *bambang.yudi.fs@um.ac.id* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5210-5208*

SUGGESTING AN ONLINE PRACTICUM MODEL ON AN EXPLORATION OF THE LEARNING GAINS IN AN EFL REMOTE TEACHING PRACTICE COURSE: ONLINE, PRACTICUM, MODEL ETCEtera[1]

[1]Ali İlya, [2]Ayşegül Daloğlu

[1]Sakarya University, Türkiye; [2]Middle East Technical University, Türkiye

Abstract: *Despite the growing popularity of online teaching especially following the COVID-19, the research addressing online language teacher education (OLTE) is still scarce. As another contribution to the narrow OLTE literature, the current study explores a semester-long online practicum experience with a particular focus on the learning gains student teachers (STs) made. Adopting a qualitative orientation, we collected data from 14 STs and 4 school-based mentor teachers (SMTs). In addition, the field observation notes of the university-based teacher educator (UTE), who is also the first author, enriched the data sources. Based on all the participants' assessment and reflections, the learning gains were delineated. The results demonstrated that the procedures implemented in the course produced striking improvements in STs' online language teaching skills, thus they were formed into a model titled 'Online, Practicum, Model ETCEtera' to design an online practicum course in pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education programs. The model requires a close coordination between faculties of education and practice schools. It involves a repeated cycle of ETCE, i.e., exploration, teaching, collaboration, and evaluation. Throughout the whole process, the STs are involved in constant observation and reflection, which altogether lead to favourable learning outcomes.*

Keywords: *Online practicum, online language teacher education, practicum model*

About the author: *Ali İlya, PhD, is an academic in the field of English Language Teaching at Sakarya University, Türkiye. He has been teaching theoretical and applied courses at BA level. His main areas of interest are program development, teacher education, and use of technology in language teaching.*
e-mail: *ailya@sakarya.edu.tr* **ORCID ID:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9997-9244*

About the author: *Ayşegül Daloğlu is a professor of English Language Teaching at Middle East Technical University, Türkiye. She has many publications in the field of teacher education and program development. She has taught many courses at undergraduate and graduate levels, and supervised theses.*
e-mail: *daloglu@metu.edu.tr* **ORCID ID:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9274-5952*

Copyright © 2023 Ali İlya, Ayşegül Daloğlu
Article history: *Received: 22 May 2023; Reviewed: 21 June 2023; Revised: 1 July 2023; Accepted: 14 July 2023; Published: 28 August 2023*

This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): İlya, A., & Daloğlu, A. (2023). Suggestıng an onlıne practıcum model on an exploratıon of the learnıng gaıns ın an EFL remote teachıng practıce course: Onlıne, practıcum, model etcetera. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 46-70. https://doi.org/10.46687/LSNU7691.

1. The study presented here is based on Ali İlya's PhD dissertation, which was supervised by Ayşegül Daloğlu.

Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has been echoed by an equal increase in the use of technology for instructional purposes both in face-to-face and distance settings, and thus led to growing popularity of terms such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Information Communication Technology (ICT). Even two decades ago it was self-evident that technology is not supplementary but rather it is essential (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). However, only 56% of the teachers who responded to the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) from 48 countries stated that they received training on ICT in their formal teacher education programs (OECD, 2018). Many other studies also pointed to the inadequacies in teacher training on CALL (Hubbard, 2008; Kessler, 2006). When it is noted that it is not technology but teachers themselves that act as agents of change (Fisher, 2006), the need for concentrating more on training teachers on CALL is getting more apparent.

Distance learning poses further challenges to language teachers as 'teaching online requires teachers to adopt a different mindset' (Canals & Granena, 2020, p. 105). Distance education in various forms has been reported to gain popularity (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Güler, 2020; Hampel & Stickler, 2005). However, the results of the public consultation study conducted in 2020 by the European Commission with 2351 participants who were involved in the field of education from all European countries revealed that 60% of the respondents had not experienced distance education prior to the COVID-19 but 95% expressed their belief that the COVID-19 marked a point of no return regarding the use of technology in education. Although online teaching practices are in a rapidly rising trend, they '[have] not been matched with an increase in teacher training for language teachers beyond the technical and software-specific skills' (Compton, 2009, p. 73-74).

It has repeatedly been reported in the previous research that the teachers' habits of using technology for instructional purposes are constructed during their pre-service teacher education years (Batane & Ngwako, 2017; Kay, 2006; Lawrence & Tar, 2018). Thus, as indicated in the National Educational Technology Plan by the US Department of Education (2017, p. 35), 'effective use of technology is not an optional add-on or a skill that we simply can expect teachers to pick up once they get into the classroom.' Notwithstanding this reality, many pre-service teacher education programs address technology competence in standalone courses (Foulger *et al.*, 2012) but it was also reported that such isolated components are not effective in the long run (Kay, 2006). Therefore, as Enochsson and Rizza (2009, p. 8) claimed, 'it is important that student teachers [STs] have the possibility to see and experience pedagogical integration of ICT in the classroom during internship, both looking at good examples and being able to learn by doing themselves.' However, as noted earlier, both practice and

research in the area of online language teacher education (OLTE), and especially in online practicum, have still remained scarce (Enochsson & Rizza, 2009; Karam *et al*., 2020; Shin & Kang, 2018). To fill this gap, this study primarily investigates the learning gains in an online practicum course offered in an EFL pre-service teacher education program in Türkiye from the perspectives of STs, school-based mentor teachers (SMTs), and the university-based teacher educator (UTE), and suggests an online practicum model.

Literature review

Hampel (2009, p. 36) identified teacher education as a newly growing theme in CALL research and addressed two fundamental questions: 'what skills do language tutors require when teaching online and how can these skills be developed through training?' Accordingly, the literature review is presented under these two sub-titles: online language teaching and teacher education for online teaching.

Online language teaching skills

Bennett and Marsh (2002) claimed that teaching online necessitates competencies that are beyond technical skills. They classified the competencies in two groups: a) identifying the similarities and differences between face-to-face and online teaching, and b) specifying 'strategies and techniques to facilitate online learning and help students exploit the advantages in relation to both independent and collaborative learning' (Bennett & Marsh, 2002, p. 16). Even though they pointed out the competencies for teaching online in a broad form, they did not offer a framework. The first known framework formulated for online language teaching skills belongs to Hampel and Stickler (2005, p. 316), who asserted that 'simply listing the skills required for online tutoring would not do justice to the complexity of the training and development needed.' Hampel and Stickler (2005) designed their model in the form of a pyramid that consists of seven levels from the broadest skills to particular styles that inspire creativity: basic ICT competence (1), specific technical competence for the software (2), dealing with constraints and possibilities of the medium (3), online socialization (4), facilitating communicative competence (5), creativity and choice (6), and own style (7). The authors claimed that the previous stage is a prerequisite for the next one, and tutors are expected to reach the ultimate level of creating their own style upon a successful completion of the former stages. Hampel and Stickler (2005) also called attention to the marked differences between online teaching and its counterpart in terms of classroom interaction, classroom management, use of body language, and exploitation of materials, and they claimed that their model was built on these differences.

The model was revisited by Stickler and Hampel (2015) who grouped the seven competency levels in the original model into four, in a similar pyramid form. In the updated pyramid, the basic ICT competencies are marked as prerequisites rather than first-level skills. They are followed by specific technical competencies and skills in managing the affordances and limitations of online settings. The second level of competencies address strategies facilitating online socialization and development of communicative competence. The third level includes 'creativity, choice and own style' (Stickler & Hampel, 2015, p. 66). Throughout the levels, learners and tutors negotiate online spaces to acquire netiquette.

Compton (2009) proposed another framework. It was structured around three levels of expertise (i.e., novice, proficient, and expert teacher), associated with three groups of skills (i.e., technology, pedagogy, and evaluation in online language teaching). The skills in Compton's (2009) framework are not presented hierarchically but rather they could be developed either individually or concurrently. Basic ICT skills are similarly identified as prerequisites, and the other skills are constructed upon them at three levels moving from 'usage' to 'choice' and then to 'creativity.' Compton (2009, p. 92) also warns that 'language teacher education should include technology, methodology, and evaluation courses that focus solely on online language teaching issues because online language teaching is very different from traditional language teaching.' Compton (2009) pointed to the ineffectiveness of treating ICT skills as divorced from the content and pedagogy knowledge. The recent research exploring teachers or instructors' distance language teaching experience in different contexts have provided empirical evidence for Compton's (2009) arguments (Marek, Chew & Wu, 2021; Şener, Ertem & Meç, 2020; Taghizadeh & Ejtehadi, 2021). They pointed to the challenges experienced by different groups of teachers or instructors due to the distinctive nature of online teaching, such as maintaining interaction or exploiting digital resources. The major implication was the absolute need for special training and experience. The role of experience and training in favourable outcomes has also been reported in other studies (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2019; Comas-Quinn, 2011; Conrad, 2004; Kessler, 2006).

Teacher education for online teaching

Research studies on OLTE have illuminated the practice with valuable implications and insights (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2019; Canals & Granena, 2020; Comas-Quinn, 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Guichon, 2009; Güler, 2020; Hauck & Stickler, 2006; İlya & Daloğlu, 2023; Levy, Wang & Chen, 2009; Shin & Kang, 2018; Stickler, Hampel & Emke, 2020). A review of these research studies highlights several qualities that characterize an effective OLTE as involving experiential learning, fostering reflection both at individual and group levels, building an online social community, associating the content

with the trainees' prior experience, acknowledging both cognitive and affective domains, and targeting technology and pedagogy skills in a combined way. For instance, Ernest *et al.* (2013) evaluated a small-scale professional development program piloted at two different universities and the results underlined the role of experiential learning and collaboration. Similarly, Comas-Quinn (2011), in another evaluation study, pointed to the significance of experiential and collaborative learning that aimed to construct an online teacher identity as a whole.

In a recent study, Canals and Granena (2020) concluded that participatory and experiential learning produced positive results. They also demonstrated that self-reflection and co-construction of knowledge supported teachers' acquisition of online teaching skills. The authors also revealed the value of social learning, scaffolding, the use of interactive tools and video for various purposes in an effective OLTE. Güler (2020), as a contribution to the value of social learning, described the fruitful environment created through discussions among the members and stressed the fundamental role of community building in online settings for positive outcomes. Regarding the role of reflection and discussion on the trainees' online teaching implementations, Pawan (2003) states that online settings have an advantage over face-to-face environments as all acts of interactions and discussions can be recorded. Observations as the sources of input for reflection and discussion are also worth attention, and their role was elaborated in the previous research (Elmendorf & Song, 2015; Hauck & Stickler, 2006).

Wang, Chen, and Levy (2010, p. 778) proposed an e-teacher training model based on the previously explored characterizing qualities of effective OLTE. The Practice, Reflection, and Collaboration (PRC) model addressed 'the professional/skill developments of the trainees in an authentic learning and teaching context' in a holistic manner. The model consists of two stages: platform training and practice teaching, which altogether lead to professional and personal development by means of reflection and collaboration. It was emphasized by the authors that the model was specifically designed to go beyond the transmission of knowledge and skills to build a professional e-teacher identity in a supportive environment. Wang, Chen, and Levy (2010) mention the lack of modelling between the two stages as a limitation to their study, so an e-teacher training model that also involves observations and modelling was suggested as an improvement for their framework.

Despite such studies addressing OLTE, the literature on OLTE is still limited especially on online practicum and field experience (Karam *et al.*, 2020; Shin & Kang, 2018). However, especially with the forced move to the online modality upon the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, many contexts experienced remote forms of practicum. The studies have also revealed that stakeholders in

many contexts were not prepared for online teaching, and they were severely challenged (Assunçao Flores & Gago, 2020; Robinson & Rusznyak, 2020; Sepulveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020). Despite the challenges, it was also noted that the forced conditions created opportunities, and it was turned into valuable experience in terms of the development of online teaching skills (Ersin, Atay & Mede, 2020; İlya & Daloğlu, 2023; Kidd & Murray, 2020). Based on the unexpected and unwanted processes, it was concluded that online components need to get integrated into regular practices, and teacher education programs need to revise the prevailing programs to increase STs' readiness for online teaching (Güngör, 2022).

Significance and aim of the study

Especially following the COVID-19 crisis, pre-service teacher education programs act with three concerns: a fresh interest in integrating distance education components into regular programs, compensating for the deficiencies in the teachers' competencies having graduated during the pandemic without field experience, and identifying the needs of modern teachers and raising mentors and choosing practice schools accordingly (Choate, Goldhaber & Theobald, 2021). The current study serves the purpose of providing data for redesigning practicum courses in pre-service teacher education programs through the proposal of a model based on a qualitative inquiry into lived experiences of STs, SMTs, and the UTE in a particular EFL pre-service teacher education program within the framework of the Updated Skills Pyramid by Stickler and Hampel (2015).

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the STs' learning gains in an online practicum as perceived by the STs themselves, SMTs, and the UTE?

2. What are the factors underlying the learning gains?

Method

Context

The research was conducted in an online practicum course offered in the last year of a four-year undergraduate BA program in English Language Teaching (ELT) at a large-scale, state university in Türkiye. The practicum was implemented in two primary settings: the university of which the STs and the UTE were members and the practice schools, where the SMTs worked and STs attended online classes for observation and teaching. STs are required to earn 240 ECTS credits for graduation. They complete all the compulsory courses before their fourth year. Although STs have the opportunity to practice teaching both in

simulated and authentic settings in the third and fourth years, the theory or practice of online instruction is not a component of the curriculum. However, due to the school closures upon the COVID-19, the practicum courses were offered online for the first time, and the data for this study were collected in the Fall term of 2020-2021 academic year.

The practicum course has two theoretical and six practice hours. Each ST was assigned to a SMT and spent six practice hours either to observe online settings or to perform their teaching practices. Two theoretical hours were defined as seminar and managed by the UTE, who is also the first author. Three or four STs were assigned to one SMT. There were three practice schools, two of which were state schools while the third one was a private school. One of the practice schools was a high school and the other two were middle schools.

Participants

There were three groups of participants; STs, SMTs, and the UTE. The UTE was also a researcher in this study. In line with the nature of qualitative inquiry, the STs and SMTs were chosen using the maximum variation sampling strategy as a purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2007).

Fourteen STs participated in the study and they constituted the primary group of participants. While six STs were male, eight STs were female. As academic success could be a determinant of learning outcomes, variety in terms of the STs' grade point averages (GPAs) was also maintained. Three STs with a low GPA (below 2.5), three STs with a high GPA (above 3.00), and eight STs with an average GPA (between 2.5 and 3.00) took part in the study. GPAs were out of 4.00. The ages of the STs ranged between 21 and 24. An equal distribution regarding the school type was also maintained, and accordingly seven STs completed practicum at a state school while the other half was assigned to a private school. While three STs attended a high school, eleven STs attended middle schools.

The STs were assigned to four different SMTs working at the three practice schools. All the SMTs held a Master of Arts (MA) degree in a relevant field. One of the SMTs was male while the other three were female. They had experience in teaching English from four to thirteen years. They had one or two years of experience in providing mentorship.

All the STs and SMTs were informed about the research at the beginning of the semester in an online meeting. They signed an informed consent form that also guaranteed the data would remain confidential and they were free to withdraw at any time.

The UTE has been teaching undergraduate courses in an ELT department for almost ten years. He had six years of mentorship experience. He has background in ELT.

Data collection instruments

Weekly reflective journals

Each ST was asked to write a reflective journal every week based on the observations and teaching implementations. In total, every ST submitted 11 reflective journals through Google Classroom. They were encouraged to write in the freest way possible. The STs were provided with certain prompts with a notification that they were completely free to include anything else relevant to their experience.

Weekly online focus group discussions

The STs were divided into two to form two focus groups. Groups were heterogenous in terms of GPAs to promote scaffolding among STs and homogenous in terms of the practice schools attended to provide common substance for group discussions. Online focus group discussions were held to gain a deeper insight into the journal data.

Audio recordings

The STs were asked to reflect on their teaching implementations right after each performance in the form of audio recording. The STs were provided with prompts to stimulate their reflection. The UTE also recorded audio observation notes to take notes and provide feedback.

Open-ended surveys

Two online open-ended surveys were designed, one for STs and another for SMTs to ask them to evaluate the practicum and delineate the learning outcomes. The surveys consist of three sections. In the first section, the participants were asked to present some demographic information, in the second section they were requested to reflect on the online practicum experience, and in the third section the participants shared their suggestions for potential improvements in the course in the long run.

Semi-structured online interviews

The semi-structured interviews were conducted to reveal the thought processes underlying the answers in SMTs' open-ended surveys. The SMTs' answers in the surveys were delineated here to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives. The interviewees were chosen based on the distinct points of view revealed in the surveys. Four interviews were conducted and each one lasted around 30 minutes. The interviews were all online. The surveys and interview protocols were generated by the researchers upon expert opinions and piloting

procedures. The experts consisted of academics both from the field of ELT to consult on the content and from the field of Turkish Language for language editing.

Procedure

The procedure employed in the study can be grouped into three phases: pre-teaching, while teaching, and post-teaching. In total, every ST had four online teaching implementations. The procedures are detailed in Figure 1.

Data analysis

The audio data were transcribed verbatim and all the written qualitative data were first organized and labelled. The data sources were associated with the research questions. The Data Analysis Spiral suggested by Creswell (2007) was employed. As the title suggests, the model requires the researcher to go forward and backward constantly to rethink on the findings to make a meaningful sense of them. Reading and memoing were followed by describing, classifying, and interpreting, and they led to the stage of representing and visualizing the data. We used the levels of skills in the Updated Skills Pyramid (Stickler & Hampel, 2015) as the main categories. Emerging codes that matched constituted sub-categories, which came together under one of the three categories, each of which represents a level in the Pyramid. We did not report the counts of codes in order not to 'convey a quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency contrary to qualitative research' (Creswell, 2007, p. 152), and what participants meant with the same code was significantly different depending on the contexts, so counting would misguide readers. Relevant quotes from the participants were frequently used to represent their voice and illustrate an emerging code or sub-category. Moreover, the results were supported with constant references to the STs' teaching implementations to help readers better appreciate the findings.

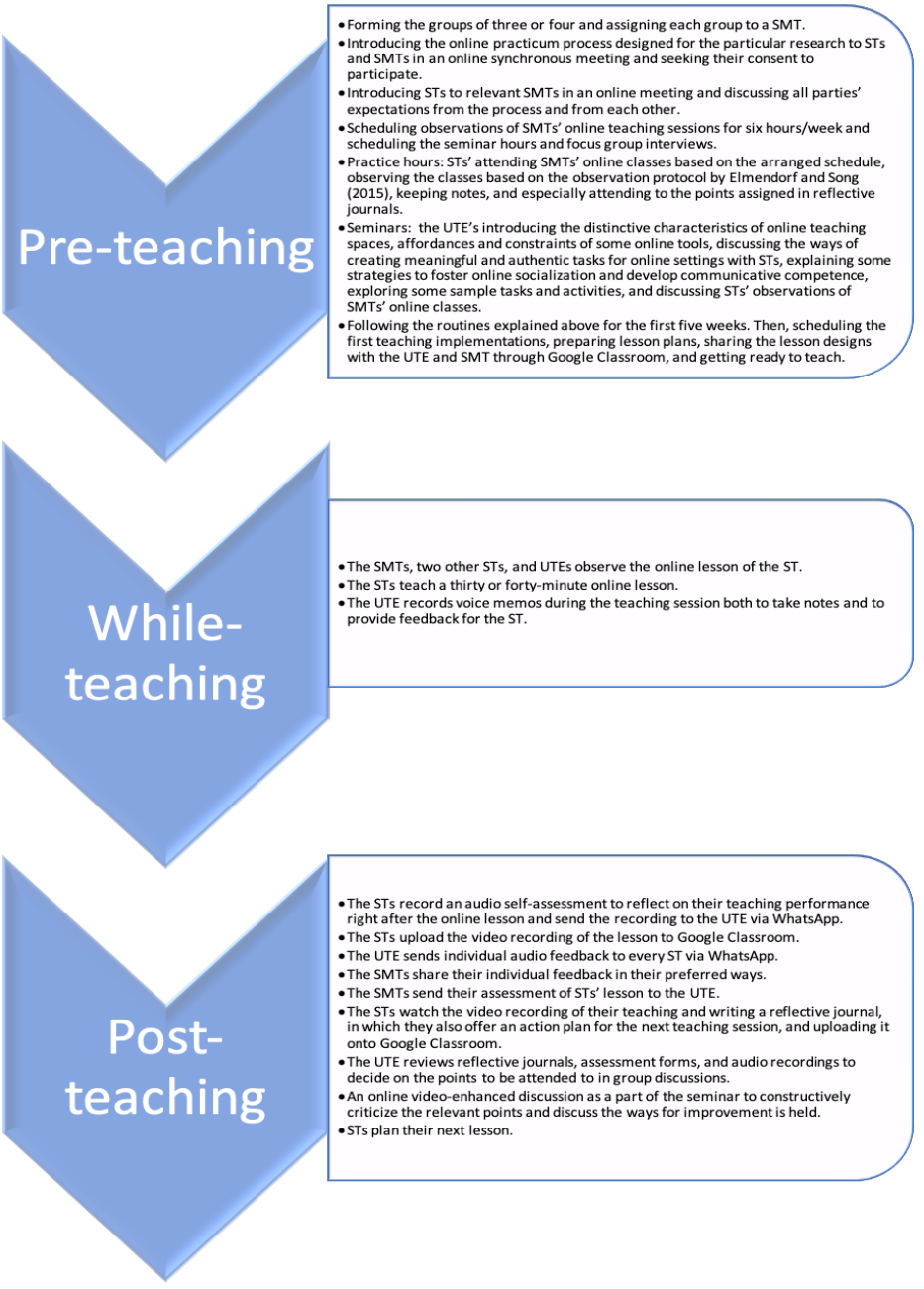


Figure 1. Procedures followed throughout the online practicum process

Results

As the main goal of this study was to explore the learning gains, and since a learning gain is broadly defined as 'distance travelled' (McGrath *et al.*, 2015, p. xi), the results of the qualitative analyses are presented to reflect the developmental process.

STs' perceived readiness before experiencing online teaching

Through the first reflective journals and focus-group discussion, the STs' initial perceived readiness was explored. Thirteen out of 14 STs stated that they did not feel ready for online teaching. The most commonly repeated identifications were 'unconfident, insecure, prejudiced, scared.' Table 1 presents the seven codes that explain 13 STs' attributions for unreadiness.

Table 1.
Thirteen STs' attributions for perceived unreadiness

STs' did not feel ready due to lack of…
training on distance education
confidence
knowledge to tackle unexpected technical problems
experience
support of body language
technology competence
interest in technology

It is apparent that STs sought *training on distance education*. They suffered from lack of *confidence* resulting from the unfamiliarity with online spaces. Almost all STs stated that they did not *experience* online instructional settings even for synchronous learning before, so they were afraid of teaching. Some STs pointed to the lack of *support of body language* as a limitation of online teaching. It was also revealed that perceived *technology competence* and *interest in technology* positively affected the STs' readiness. The following extract from ST7 illustrates the role of technology competence in perceived readiness:

> [2]Unfortunately, I don't trust myself in teaching online because of my lack of confidence in using technological tools. I am afraid of not being able to deal with any problems that may occur while teaching and any interruptions of my class. (ST7)

One ST felt ready in the very beginning and attributed his readiness to *technology knowledge:*

2. The extracts were not edited to maintain their authenticity.

> A teacher must know well how to use a computer to be efficient in distance education. I think I am good at using computers and using any program on a computer. If I do not know how to use a program, I know how to learn, therefore I think, I can teach students via computer. (ST4)

When the STs were asked to think retrospectively at the end of the term, the same ST confessed how mistaken he was at the beginning in the last focus group discussion:

> At first, I thought that I am good at technology, have computer skills, so online education would be easier for me but I have realized that it was not so. When I compare my first implementation with the last one, I can easily see the improvement. (ST4)

STs' development from the first to the last online teaching session

STs' learning gains are reported based on Stickler and Hampel's (2015) Updated Skills Pyramid. The role of basic ICT competencies, which are defined as the prerequisites, has already been revealed as technology was reported to be a primary determinant of perceived un/readiness, thus the STs' development in the following three stages, each of which constitutes a main category, are delineated below. The emerging sub-categories and codes are presented in Figure 2.

Level 1: Matching pedagogies and technologies

Doing meaningful activities, another sub-category of learning gains could be traced in the STs' performances. At first, they did mechanical drills including fill-in-the-gap, matching, true/false activities that were purely language-focused. However, they could generate meaningful activities towards the end. Many STs were able to *create authenticity*, *contextualize* activities, *identify the needs*, and *address different styles*. They were asking students to give suggestions to problems of real people introduced through the screenshots of WhatsApp group conversations or solve a problem by using hints to save a character. ST1, as an example, discussed the ways of staying safe online in the last teaching implementation. The topic was quite meaningful for the students as the COVID accelerated the use of the Internet. However, the same ST designed mechanical activities around Japanese and Chinese cuisine in the first teaching implementation, and students showed no interest in the topic. The excerpts below manifest the STs' and the SMTs' perspectives in their own words:

> The strength of the implementation was that it was unique. It was also quite interactive, the lesson revolved around the students' choices and ideas. … Also, the Instagram account that they were going to create could be a fan page or personal page. This was also determined by students. (ST3)

> The STs' adaptation was so fast once you modelled them how to create meaningful activities, I saw that they need to understand the mentality. (SMT2)

The third sub-category was **managing time properly**. The duration of class sessions was shortened in online teaching, and it initially posed a serious challenge. The STs felt under time pressure, and in order to abide by their lesson plan, they acted mechanically. Almost none of the STs could cover all activities in the earlier teaching implementations, even some STs could not move on to the main activities. SMT4 wrote the following about time management:

> Time pressure on the STs can make the natural speaking process boring. While the aim of the course is to communicate, it turned into implementing the lesson plan. (SMT4)

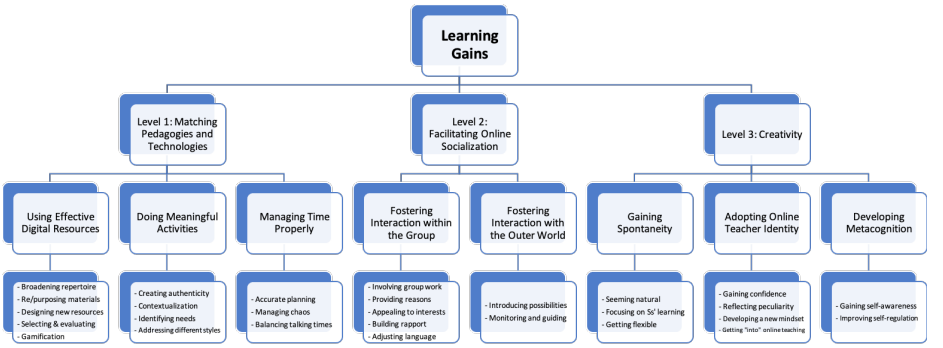


Figure 2. Emerging categories, sub-categories, and codes for the learning gains

The STs also frequently mentioned the problem of time management following their initial teaching practices. The following quote embodies the STs' perspectives.

> When the students told me that the class was over, I felt really down and the very first thing I thought of was the fact that I failed. I have never ever failed to manage the time this much. (ST8)

Many STs learnt how to manage the time after they understood the differences between face-to-face and online contexts and designed their classes accordingly. They developed skills in *accurate planning*, *managing chaos*, and *balancing the talking times* of teacher and students.

Level 2: Facilitating online socialization

The STs' learning gains at Level 2, which covers the skills in facilitating communicative competence and online socialization, created two sub-categories, i.e., **fostering interaction within the group** and **fostering interaction with the outer world**. In the first sub-category, from the first to the last teaching implementations, the STs made the greatest progress. In the beginning, the STs' classes lacked interaction, the performing ST was dominating the class discourse. In ST1's first teaching implementation, for instance, he showed a

picture of 'ramen[3]' on a slide and asked the students to name it. Both students' unfamiliarity with the Japanese culture and their lack of interest fuelled their silence. In some classes, the students' webcams and microphones were turned off and it had an adverse effect as well. In time, they began *involving group work*, *providing reasons to interact*, *appealing to interests*, and *adjusting language* according to the target profile. They also *built rapport* with students. To illustrate, ST3, in the fourth implementation, involved the students to create a fan page for Jim-in Park, which appeals to the students' interests very much as a theme. In another implementation, ST10 created a problem scenario, in which students were required to give directions based on available clues to find a lost boy to help a hypothetical character. The students collaborated as a whole group and interacted well. Some other STs created small groups on Zoom in breakout rooms and monitored the students' discussions. The following excerpt demonstrates the learning gains in this sub-category, in the STs' own words:

> My thoughts changed in some areas, for example, I thought that students would not participate in class activities but I observed that they were participating. I believe the reason is the quality of the teacher and her rapport with the students. (ST12)

SMTs also mentioned the STs' developed skills in fostering communication within the group.

> Knowing the students significantly improved classroom interactions. STs could design activities for different types of learners or tailor the contents according to their interests or deal with the constraints of some web-conferencing tools (e.g., creating separate links for group works on Google Meet) in time. (SMT2)

Fostering interaction with the outer world was the second sub-category. The STs *introduced the possibilities* of interacting with the outer world, and *monitored and guided* students. ST2, for example, created a context on Vedat Milor, who is a Turkish culinary guru. She introduced a famous controversy initiated by Vedat Milor at international level around 'menemen[4],' a Turkish dish, focusing on whether 'menemen' should be cooked with or without onion, and ST2 asked the students to visit YouTube to share their preference as a comment under the video. Many other similar tasks fostered the students' interaction. ST2 wrote the following to reflect her own perspective about this activity:

> I did a good job implementing this [technology] because I used technology in an authentic context like Twitter and YouTube to support their [students] learning. (ST2)

3. A Japanese meat or fish soup containing noodles.

4. It is a Turkish style omelet. Eggs scrambled with tomatoes and green peppers.

Level 3: Creativity

The learning gains under this category created three sub-categories, the first of which was **gaining spontaneity**. At the beginning, the STs were trying to plan each and every minute of their class and acting as if they were implementors of lesson plans. They were so self-focused that they even ignored the students' learnings at times. As STs depended so much on previously studied or even memorized instructions, they could not illustrate the original use of English, which also hindered the students' creativity. SMT4 commented on the STs' initial lack of spontaneity:

> They felt under pressure and they tried to follow the lesson plan minute by minute. For instance, the STs previously told it to me. Student made a joke but s/he laughed at it very quickly in an apparently mechanical form and moved on. (SMT4)

However, in time, STs learned to a considerable degree how to *seem natural*, *focus on the students' learning*, and *get flexible*. ST3 wrote the following about it:

> I began to prepare more flexible lesson plans, which gave me more freedom and I could steer the lesson depending on the students' answers. This way I felt more like a teacher than someone just reading through a lesson plan. (ST3)

Adopting online teacher identity emerged as the second sub-category here. It was apparent in the first teaching performances that STs tried to copy the practices of face-to-face settings, they were quite unfamiliar with the etiquette of online spaces and repetitive, and moreover they lacked energy as they could not get into the right mood. However, they covered distance and *gained confidence*, *reflected peculiarity*, *developed a new mindset*, and *got 'into' online teaching*. For instance, some STs designed materials with their own photos, which also inspired the students' creativity. The following extracts from STs are illustrative of the gains:

> Throughout the course I have learned how to be an online teacher. (ST4)

> At first, I could not see myself as a teacher but in time I started to adopt teacher identity. (ST7)

SMTs also pointed to the progress that STs made in their comments. For instance, SMT3 mentioned how confident the STs got in time, in addition to other areas in the following extract:

> After each implementation they felt more confident, created better contexts, and managed time and class in a more effective way. (SMT3)

The last sub-category was **developing metacognition**, which produced two codes; *gaining self-awareness* and *improving self-regulation*. At the beginning of the term, the STs could not do an accurate assessment of their and their peers' online teaching performances. It was obvious both in their reflections and comments in seminars. The ST5's following comment embodies the STs' initial lack of self-awareness:

> Although I watched the video recording of my teaching implementation twice, I cannot confidently say 'my problems are these!' (ST5)

Their self-reflection and feedback on teaching performances revealed that the STs went miles in terms of developing metacognition throughout the term. Initial broad and amateur comments were gradually evolved into professional and detailed ones:

> As my awareness is growing, I wondered more, I wanted to know more. We discussed in the meetings so much that I began to discuss with myself while planning my classes, I gained such a habit and I am sure it will help me in my professional life as well. (ST10)

It was also mentioned by the SMTs and the extract below exemplifies their perspective:

> I can confidently say that they showed impressive progress. Classroom management, teacher attitude, lesson preparation, and all other attributes improved greatly. They are much more aware. (SMT1)

Factors underlying the STs' learning gains

Both SMTs and STs expressed their satisfaction with the attainments of the online practicum course. They were asked to reflect on the reasons for the improvement, and Table 2 presents the emerging codes.

Table 2.
Reasons for STs' improvement in online teaching skills

Concrete feedback
Getting informed about the digital resources
Gaining experience
Seeing good examples
Group meetings
Getting to know the students and their needs
Not being assigned a topic by the SMT
Making a better sense of the UTE's expectations
Bridging the gap between theory and practice
Self-study
Observations
Peer feedback
Learning from mistakes

ST10's following words are illustrative of the emerging codes. As noted here, the STs mainly attributed their improvement to *concrete feedback* based on an exploration of the video recordings of online lessons. It was also revealed that the process introduced the distinctive nature of the online modality to them, including *digital resources* and the *students' changing needs*. Moreover, *observations*, the *peers' feedback*, and *learning from mistake*s were among the leading reasons.

> In the very beginning, I was not successful in online teaching, and I did not know what to do. However, it has changed in time thanks to feedback session and my effort. For instance, we have learned how to integrate digital tools into activities in various ways, and we had a chance to see what our weaknesses in teaching in general sense. I think the reasons are that we had lots of meetings, and we received feedback from our instructor. We had also many discussions with our group. Many ideas were created, and we helped each other. (ST10)

As exemplified in SMT8's following words, the SMTs also agreed with the STs on the progress, and they similarly attributed the improvement primarily to feedback and to the STs' acquaintance with the facilities available in the online mode.

> The last implementations were the best ones. In time, pre-service teachers improved themselves. Learning the use of tools made a big difference. Knowing the students and possibilities also made them more successful while planning the lessons and maintaining the classroom management. (ST8)

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the STs' learning gains along with the underlying reasons and suggest a model for online practicum. The results provided strong empirical evidence that STs need 'to adopt a different mindset' (Canals & Granena, 2020, p. 105) to teach online and one cannot assume that experience in face-to-face teaching leads to positive outcomes in online settings as well (Compton, 2009). Despite three years of training on teaching methodology and experience in face-to-face teaching in micro teaching implementations, the STs – except one – clearly expressed their perceived unreadiness for an online practicum in the beginning. One ST, who felt ready to teach online owing to his perceived technology competence, stated at the end of the course that he had been mistaken. The STs attributed their unreadiness mainly to lack of training and experience in online teaching. Thus, one may conclude that the STs' positive attitude or perceived readiness could primarily be explained through training, prior experience, or technology competence as previously yielded (Comas-Quinn, 2011; Kessler, 2006; Marek, Chew & Wu, 2021).

In the initial teaching implementations, STs simply tried to adapt the traditional practices from face-to-face teaching to the online medium. In other words,

they 'still use[d] the technology in predominantly 'old' ways, adapting new tools to their traditional teaching style' (Stickler & Hampel, 2015, p. 65). They perpetuated mechanical drills on some so-called new technological tools and it was proved that such endeavours did not produce desirable outcomes. In time, the STs evolved from the traditional practitioners of online teaching to novice creative online teachers, as a result of constant observations, exploration, repeated teaching implementations, reflection, feedback from the UTE and SMTs, discussions, collaboration, and evaluation. In other words, as also evidenced by Ernest *et al.* (2013), experiential learning in situated contexts led to favourable attainments. The STs acquired precious learning gains at all the levels of the Skills Pyramid (Hampel & Stickler, 2005; Stickler & Hampel, 2015). First, they discovered the affordances of online tools and learned the ways of dealing with their constraints. They also explored online materials and learned how to design and exploit meaningful activities in online spaces. Then, they developed skills in fostering online socialization and developing the students' communicative competence in authentic contexts through small and whole group work activities, guidance for students to use online platforms to communicate, and appropriate online lesson plans devised in accordance with the target profile. Towards the end, they replaced repetitive activities with more original ones that manifested their growing creativity and developing online teacher identity. It was observed that the STs' creativity fostered the students' creativity through modelling. At the end of the process, the STs, SMTs, and the UTE all agreed that the practicum was quite fruitful for all parties, especially for the STs. The results consolidated the previously confirmed role of practice, reflection, and collaboration (Wang, Chen & Levy, 2010). The contribution of using videos for reflection and web-conferencing was once again manifested in the current study (Karam *et al.*, 2020). Based on the inquiry into the reasons for the STs' progress, the exploration of the learning gains, and feedback on the procedures followed within the study, an online practicum model was generated.

A suggested model: Online, practicum, Model ETCEtera

The model constitutes unity as represented through the closed square consisting of two dotted and two solid lines. Each solid line stands for one primary group of stakeholders that physically exist, i.e., faculty of education (FED) and practice school while the dotted lines symbolize the online social community constructed together. The whole practicum process is managed in close coordination between the practice school and FED. As displayed through the equal-length vertical and horizontal axes, the roles of both parties are proportional, which denotes that SMTs and UTEs equally share responsibilities for guiding STs throughout the process. The stakeholders (STs, SMTs, and UTEs) altogether act with the online social community, in which they complete all the processes. The

STs begin the online practicum period at the pivot of the coordination between practice school and FED. The distance between the two wavy lines represents the STs' outlook. In the beginning, the STs' outlook is narrow, and as they proceed, it gets broader as represented through the two wavy lines between the horizontal and vertical axes. The two lines were wavy as STs have ups and downs throughout the process based on the lesson observations and reflections that are integral to the whole maturation process. Observations involve both the SMTs' online classes, their own and the peers' teaching implementations, and any other objects (e.g. synchronous video-enhanced feedback sessions, sample tasks and materials etc.), while reflections similarly are on every stage including teaching performances, the SMTs' modelling, feedback, and learning outcomes. Between the constant wavy lines of reflection and observation, STs are involved in a cycle of E.T.C.E. First, STs EXPLORE the online settings, interaction tools, digital materials, affordances, and constraints within the borders of the online social community. Then, STs TEACH in authentic contexts. In the third stage, STs gain a deeper understanding of their teaching in COLLABORATION with peers, UTEs, and SMTs both in one-to-one and group interactions. Lastly, STs EVALUATE the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching performances and turn to the beginning to repeat the process to improve the quality of their online teaching performance. Model ETCEtera is an acronym for the four-stage implementation cycle. The cycle may involve other dimensions as implied in its title, i.e. etcetera, based on the unique nature of each and every context. The model mainly aims to cultivate 'reflective practitioners' (Schon, 1983).

The Model primarily depends on the STs' complete active involvement. Three core elements of the Community of Inquiry Model define the nature of required involvement (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 1999). The input provided through explorations of the observations and digested through constant reflection help STs maintain cognitive presence as the first of the three elements. Upon personal implications of the reflection and observation, the STs are required to take the responsibility of designing online lessons and teach them in authentic contexts, which promotes teaching presence as the second element. The collaboration and evaluation stages in the situated learning environment serve the social presence as the third element in the Community of Inquiry Model as all the stakeholders support each other's development in an online social group.

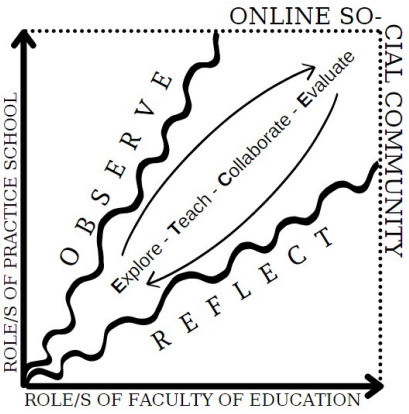


Figure 3. Visual representation of Online, Practicum, Model ETCEtera

Conclusion

The unexpected shift to the online modality forced all the stakeholders; however, the difficulties were especially felt in the applied courses. As one of such courses, the Practicum was carried out online during the lockdown period of the COVID-19. To handle the difficulties a Practicum course was designed within the current study and STs' learning gains were delineated. Based on a close exploration of the learning gains and factors underlying the gains an online practicum model was proposed to improve the quality of such courses that will most likely be essential components of regular teacher education programs. It was primarily concluded that online teaching is significantly different from its face-to-face counterpart, and it requires special practice. It was revealed that desirable improvements can be achieved in STs' readiness for online teaching through close collaboration between faculties of education and practice schools. The STs need to be encouraged to explore the peculiar aspects of the online medium, teach online lessons, collaborate both with the peers and the mentors, and evaluate all the former steps to make decisions for improvement. The suggested cycle should be supported with constant reflection and observation throughout the whole process. In the particular context of the study favourable outcomes were achieved; however, it needs to be noted that as this is a qualitative inquiry, the results are not generalizable for other contexts. The model should be tested in other settings and the outcomes should be reobserved. In addition, as the first author was also the UTE in the current study, it might have harmed the objective interpretation of the findings although all the precautions were taken. Lastly, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown period, when the whole world experienced unprecedented times and was severely affected, hence the results should be tested in regular times as well. Despite such limitations, we believe that the Online, Practicum, Model ETCEtera has the potential to guide the future practices in the process of redesigning the Practicum courses to add online components.

References

Assunção Flores, M., & Gago, M. (2020). Teacher education in times of COVID-19 pandemic in Portugal: National, institutional and pedagogical responses. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 46*(4), 507–516. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1799709.

Batane, T., & Ngwako, A. (2017). Technology use by pre-service teachers during teaching practice: Are new teachers embracing technology right away in their first teaching experience? *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 33*(1), 48–61. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.2299.

Bennett, S., & Marsh, D. (2002). Are we expecting online tutors to run before they can walk?. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 39*(1), 14–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13558000110097055.

Canals, L., & Al-Rawashdeh, A. (2019). Teacher training and teachers' attitudes towards educational technology in the deployment of online English language courses in Jordan. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 32*(7), 639–664. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2018.1531033.

Canals, L., & Granena, G. (2020). Shifting paradigms: A case of online language teacher education for online language teachers in Spain. In H.S. Kang, D.S. Shin, & T. Cimasko (Eds.), *Online education for teachers of English as a global language* (pp. 105-133). New York & London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429264900-7.

Choate, K., Goldhaber, D., & Theobald, R. (2021). The effects of COVID-19 on teacher preparation. *Phi Delta Kappan, 102*(7), 52–57. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/00317217211007340.

Comas-Quinn, A. (2011). Learning to teach online or learning to become an online teacher: An exploration of teachers' experiences in a blended learning course. *ReCALL, 23*(3), 218–232. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0958344011000152.

Compton, L.K. (2009). Preparing language teachers to teach language online: A look at skills, roles, and responsibilities. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *22*(1), 73–99. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220802613831.

Conrad, D. (2004). University instructors' reflections on their first online teaching experiences. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 8*(2), 31–44. https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v8i2.1826.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Elmendorf, D.C., & Song, L. (2015). Developing indicators for a classroom observation tool on pedagogy and technology integration: A Delphi study. *Computers in the Schools, 32*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/07380569.2014.967620.

Enochsson, A. B., & Rizza, C. (2009). ICT in initial teacher training. *Research review, 38*. https://doi.org/10.1787/220502872611.

Ernest, P., Guitert Catasús, M., Hampel, R., Heiser, S., Hopkins, J., Murphy, L., & Stickler, U. (2013). Online teacher development: Collaborating in a virtual learning environment. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 26*(4), 311–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2012.667814.

Ersin, P., Atay, D., & Mede, E. (2020). Boosting preservice teachers' competence and online teaching readiness through e-practicum during the COVID-19 outbreak. *International Journal of TESOL Studies, 2*(2), 112–124. https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2020.09.09.

Ertmer, P.A., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A.T. (2010). Teacher technology change: How knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and culture intersect. *Journal of Research on technology in Education, 42*(3), 255–284. https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2010.10782551.

Fisher, T. (2006). Educational transformation: Is it, like 'beauty', in the eye of the beholder, or will we know it when we see it?. *Education and Information Technologies, 11*(3), 293–303. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-006-9009-1.

Foulger, T. S., Buss, R. R., Wetzel, K., & Lindsey, L. (2012). Preservice teacher education benchmarking a standalone ed tech course in preparation for change. *Journal of Digital learning in Teacher Education, 29*(2), 48–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/21532974.2012.10784704.

Gao, L.X., & Zhang, L.J. (2020). Teacher learning in difficult times: Examining foreign language teachers' cognitions about online teaching to tide over COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.549653.

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (1999). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2-3), 87–105. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6.

Guichon, N. (2009). Training future language teachers to develop online tutors' competence through reflective analysis. *ReCALL, 21*(2), 166–185. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0958344009000214.

Güler, N. (2020). Preparing to teach English language learners: Effect of online courses in changing mainstream teachers' perceptions of English language learners. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 14*(1), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2018.1494736.

Güngör, M. N. (2022). The adaptation of action research into online practicum in unprecedented times: Opportunities and constraints. In J. Chen (Ed.), *Emergency remote teaching and beyond: Voices from world language teachers*

and researchers (pp. 153-171). Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84067-9_8.

Hampel, R., & Stickler, U. (2005). New skills for new classrooms: Training tutors to teach languages online. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 18*(4), 311–326. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588220500335455.

Hampel, R. (2009). Training teachers for the multimedia age: Developing teacher expertise to enhance online learner interaction and collaboration. *International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 3*(1), 35–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220802655425.

Hauck, M., & Stickler, U. (2006). What does it take to teach online?. *CALICO Journal, 23*(3), 463–475. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.v23i3.463-475.

Hubbard, P. (2008). CALL and the future of language teacher education. *CALICO Journal, 25*(2), 175–188. https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.v25i2.175-188.

İlya, A., Daloğlu, A. (2023). Adaptation of practicum in an EFL pre-service teacher education program in response to the COVID-19 crisis: A SWOT analysis. *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 13*(1), 25–41.

Karam, F.J., Warren, A.N., Kersten-Parrish, S., Lucas, J., & Talso, M. (2020). Practicums in online language teacher education: instructors' perceptions of online teaching and using video as a key practice. In H.S. Kang, D. Shin, & T. Cimasko (Eds.), *Online education for teachers of English as a global language* (pp. 39-59). New York & London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429264900-4.

Kay, R.H. (2006). Evaluating strategies used to incorporate technology into preservice education: A review of the literature. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 38*(4), 383–408. https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2006.10782466.

Kessler, G. (2006). Assessing CALL teacher training: What are we doing and what we could do better? In P. Hubbard & M. Levy (Eds.), *Teacher Education in CALL* (pp. 23–44). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Kidd, W., & Murray, J. (2020). The Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on teacher education in England: How teacher educators moved practicum learning online. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(4), 542–558. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1820480.

Lawrence, J.E., & Tar, U.A. (2018). Factors that influence teachers' adoption and integration of ICT in teaching/learning process. *Educational Media International, 55*(1), 79–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2018.1439712.

Levy, M., Wang, Y., & Chen, N.S. (2009). Developing the skills and techniques for online language teaching: A focus on the process. *International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 3*(1), 17–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220802655417.

Marek, M.W., Chew, C.S., & Wu, W.C.V. (2021). Teacher experiences in converting classes to distance learning in the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Distance Education Technologies (IJDET), 19*(1), 40–60. https://doi.org/10.4018/ijdet.20210101.oa3.

McGrath, C.H., Guerin, B., Harte, E., Frearson, M., & Manville, C. (2015). *Learning gain in higher education*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://doi.org/10.7249/rr996.

OECD. (2018). *Education at a glance 2018: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishings. https://doi.org/10.1787/eag-2018-en.

Pawan, F. (2003). Reflective teaching online. *TechTrends, 47*(4), 30. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02763509.

Robinson, M., & Rusznyak, L. (2020). Learning to teach without school-based experience: Conundrums and possibilities in a South African context. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 46*(4), 517-527. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1800408.

Schon, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* London: Temple smith. https://doi.org/10.2307/2392894.

Sepulveda-Escobar, P., & Morrison, A. (2020). Online teaching placement during the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile: challenges and opportunities. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 43*(4), 587–607. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1820981.

Shin, D.S., & Kang, H.S. (2018). Online language teacher education: Practices and possibilities. *RELC Journal*, *49*(3), 369–380. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217716535.

Stickler, U., & Hampel, R. (2015). Transforming teaching: New skills for online language learning spaces. In R. Hampel & U. Stickler (Eds.). *Developing online language teaching* (pp. 63-77). London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137412263_5.

Stickler, U., Hampel, R., & Emke, M. (2020). A developmental framework for online language teaching skills. *Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 3*(1), 133–151. https://doi.org/10.29140/ajal.v3n1.271.

Şener, B., Ertem, İ.S., & Meç, A. (2020). Online teaching experiences of ELT instructors. *Journal of Educational Technology and Online Learning, 3*(3), 340–362. https://doi.org/10.31681/jetol.770418.

Taghizadeh, M., & Ejtehadi, A. (2021). Investigating pre-service EFL teachers' and teacher educators' experience and attitudes towards online interaction tools. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2021.2011322.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, (2017). *Reimagining the Role of Technology in Education: 2017 National Education Technology Plan Update*, Washington, D.C.

Wang, Y., Chen, N.S., & Levy, M. (2010). The design and implementation of a holistic training model for language teacher education in a cyber face-to-face learning environment. *Computers & Education, 55*(2), 777–788.

VERBS DENOTING AUTHORIAL POSITION: A CONTRASTIVE BULGARIAN-ENGLISH STUDY OF MEDICAL RESEARCH ARTICLES

Ivaylo Yordanov Dagnev

University of Agribusiness and Rural Development –Plovdiv;
Medical College at Medical University, Plovdiv (Bulgaria)

Abstract: *The article addresses the issue of a specific discourse category, that of verbs expressing authorial stance in the context of the medical research article. A contrastive study is performed based on two corpora comprising original medical research articles in Bulgarian and English languages, respectively. All the articles have been excerpted from journals with high impact factors covering almost every field of medicine. All data have been processed with the help of word processing programmes to achieve a high level of accuracy. The paper looks into the most frequently used verbs both in the Bulgarian articles and the English ones. The analysis rests on a division of three types of verbs – factive, non-factive and counterfactive ones. Each of the presented verbs is analyzed in the light of this division supported by a number of exemplar sentences extracted from the corpora. One corollary that could be drawn is the fact that Bulgarian authors refrain to a large extent from expressing categorical disagreements which is not so characteristic of the authors in the English-language medical research articles.*

Keywords: *stance verbs, medical research article, contrastive study, Bulgarian, English*

About the author: *Assoc. Professor Ivaylo Yordanov Dagnev, PhD is an Associate Professor of ESP and EAP at UARD – Plovdiv and a Senior Lecturer at the Medical College of Medical University in Plovdiv. He holds a PhD in linguistics and his particular areas of interest include Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Translation Studies, Cognitive Semantics, Discourse Studies, English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes. His PhD title is: Metaphorical Terms in Anatomy: An English-Bulgarian Comparative Study. He has submitted two habilitation papers. The primary one is entitled: 'The „Scientific Medical Article" Genre in Bulgarian and English Academic Discourse' and the second one written in English is entitled: 'Medical Discourse - Implications of Inverse Translation for the Medical Research Article Genre'. He has published a book based on his PhD with a title: Metaphors and Shells in Anatomy: Bulgarian-English Cross Linguistic Study.*
e-mail: *ivaylo.dagnev@mu-plovdiv.bg* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8287-5307*

Copyright © 2023 Ivaylo Yordanov Dagnev

Article history: Received: 1 February 2023; Reviewed: 2 May 2023; Revised: 25 June 2023; Accepted: 27 June 2023; Published: 28 August 2023



This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Dagnev, I. (2023). Verbs denoting authorial position: A contrastive Bulgarian-English study of medical research articles. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 71-82. https://doi.org/10.46687/FBMA2134.

Introduction

The research article

The article and, in particular, the research article (RA) is the academic genre heavyweight, whose structure serves as the mainframe of all other genre forms. In its turn, the medical research article (MRA) has been evolving since the 18th century and is the vehicle for medicinal research. MRA took a fully-fledged form in the middle and late 20th century, adopting the IMRD structure – constituted by Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion (IMRD) sections, respectively. In their turn, the sections can be subdivided into specific subparts, which Swales (1991) calls *moves*, because they are the vehicles of information flow in a paper. *Moves* are defined as "discoursal or rhetorical units that perform a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse" (Swales, 2004, p. 228) and are identified by "text segment[s] made up of a bundle of linguistic features (lexical meaning, propositional meanings, illocutionary force, etc.) which give the segment a uniform orientation and signal the content of discourse in it" (Nwogu, 1997, p. 122). Similarly, *moves* comprise one or more *steps*, i.e., "constituent elements or slots which combine in identifiable ways to constitute information in the move" (ibid).

Stance verbs

A key feature of academic writing and the rhetorical structure of MRA is "an author's reporting and offering commentary on previous work on a topic or subject of investigation, both by himself/herself as well as by others" (Davies, 2015, p. 125). In this train of thought, it is appropriate to pay more attention to verbs with a comment function, since they are inextricably linked to the expression of a position, and hence to hedging. The latter concept, as is known, refers to a particular place in the plane of pragmatics, having the meaning of "mitigation" or reducing the power of expression (Dagnev, 2020:16). Given that MRAs put forward scientific hypotheses, which are either proven or contradicted, it is quite natural to resort to different strategies of distancing or expressing solidarity (Myers, 1989). As Davis (2015, p. 127) notes, commenting on previous research on the topic of a given study is a key factor in academic writing, and describing the achievements of other participants in the discourse invariably includes reporting verbs. These verbs in English academic discourse have been primarily investigated by Thompson and Yeh (1991) and Thomas and Hawes (1994), and more recently by Bloch (2009) and Jirapanakorn (2012), the latter two analyzing these verbs in the field of medical research. All these authors employ the division introduced by Tadros (1993, p. 5) into *factive* and *non-factive* verbs. In Tadros' terms (ibid) the former show agreement with the opinions of others, while the latter express the opposite – disagreement. Thompson and Yeh (1991, p. 372) have expanded the category of factivity by

adding a third group of verbs to the two listed above – *counter-factive verbs*. In his study Davies (2015, p. 176) uses the category of *non-factive* verbs closer to neutral as they can be used to convey a stance of agreement or disagreement depending on the context, while *counter-factive* ones communicate a negative attitude. We would adhere to his interpretation in this paper. Here are some examples of the all the three groups:

- Factive verbs: acknowledge, show, demonstrate, identify, improve, notice, prove, recognize, establish, observe, prove, recognize – present the information as true
- Counter-factive verbs: confuse, disregard, ignore, misuse – present information that the author considers false
- Non-factive verbs: argue, doubt, hypothesize, recommend, assume, estimate, imply, suggest, believe, expect, predict, suspect, claim, foresee, presume, think – with these verbs the author does not give a clear sign of the truth of their statement or opinion.

Verbs elucidating authorial position

Given the rhetorical structure of the MRA, of particular interest are verbs describing the literature review moves. Here the position of the author (authorial stance) stands out clearly, since the attitude towards a given development, experiment and procedure suggests the author's situation in the discourse of the topic (Hyland & Guinda, 2012). The interpretation of facts is never a simple matter but is "filtered through multiple lenses" (Hyland, 2009, p. 299). After all, the authorial position, as a linguistic concept, has a wider meaning than distancing from being categorical (hedging) and should include it. Many discourse analysts study the author's stance under many names: evidentiality (Chafe & Nichols, 1996), appraisal (Martin & White, 2007), evaluation (Biber, 2006), hedging (Hyland, 1998), positioning (van Langenhove & Hare, 1999). Although bearing certain differences, all the abovementioned terms relate to the same phenomenon. On the other hand, factivity is inextricably linked to the concept of authorial position, since the first is the belief of a given author in the truth of a given statement (Tadros, 1993). Factive constructions can be epistemic in that they convey the author's belief in a statement, or affective in that they refer to an attitude, opinion, or value system. In this sense, the epistemic predicate indexes the degree of certainty in the information presented in the sentence from the producing text (Field, 1997, p. 803), while also indicating the stance with respect to the referent explicated by the grammatical subject.

Research question

The aim of this paper is to present an analysis of verbs referring to stance in a comparative fashion regarding Bulgarian and English language MRAs.

Methods

Building the corpora

The corpora in the current research have been built so as to suit the purposes of the specific analysis of stance verbs. The study employs the methodology of both corpus-driven and corpus-based approaches (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001; McEnery, Xiao & Tono, 2006), aiming at the most detailed analysis of the selected language material. On the other hand, because of our desire for verification, we adhered to free access sources or those that could be obtained through institutional subscription. Desiring the highest possible representation, the paper is based on a broad-spectrum corpus of Bulgarian articles from almost every field of medicine. The English-language articles are excerpted from journals with high impact factors, published in countries such as the US, Canada, the UK, the Netherlands, etc. All English-language journals are from the Elsevier and Scopus systems and are peer reviewed. All the excerpted articles were published between 2012 and 2022.

Data processing

We have built two corpora: the first one in Bulgarian, dubbed Bulgarian language corpus (BLC) and the second has been comprised of original English-language articles (English language corpus – ELC) from foreign journals. As far as size is concerned, we have excerpted 50 articles to build BLC, while ELC incorporates 34 articles. In terms of word count, the BLC consists of 95586 words, and ELC – 105641 words. Our guiding principle with regard to size was word count, with texts being very close on that gauge if we consider both BLC and ELC corpora. For the sake of analysis, we have abstained from building very large corpora. Nevertheless, the total count of words is 201227 words, which is a formidable number and accounts for excellent representativeness by this criterion.

All articles were initially scanned into PDF files and then into word processing files for ease. For data processing, we used WordSmith, version 6.0 (Scott, 2012), freely available. To this end, the two corpora were merged into two respective files, and the sections Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion, constituting the MRAs' structure, were further separated and combined into separate files for more efficient processing. Separately, we also used a second word processing program, Antconc, due to the fact that different programs sometimes give ambiguous figures for the number of words, phrases, etc., especially when referring to "unpopular" word processing software in lesser-used in science languages like Bulgarian.

Results and Discussion

We have selected five verbs from BLC and seven from ELC that are most frequently used when commenting on both authors' own results and those of others. Table 1 presents the most often used verbs of authorial position in both corpora.

Table 1.
Most frequently used stance verbs in BLC and ELC

BLC		ELC	
Lexemes	Number of tokens in corpus	Lexemes	Number of tokens in corpus
		report	192
показвам (show)	502	find	167
установявам (establish)	407	suggest	144
доказвам (prove)	47	observe	143
считам(consider)	43	show	88
позволявам (allow)	36	indicate	65
		consider	48

The lexemes *показвам* (show) and *доказвам* (prove) in BLC are most often used when commenting on someone else's experience in the literature review which is part of the *moves* in the Introduction. More than 80% of the manifestations of *показвам* refer to *moves* and *steps* describing other scholars' research, while with *доказвам*, two-thirds of all uses (tokens) are for such a purpose. They are mainly in third person plural.

1. Редица проучвания *доказват*, че отказът от тютюнопушене може да намали смъртността до 50% след преживян миокарден инфаркт. - BLC 12[1]

Tr. A number of studies prove that quitting smoking can reduce mortality up to 50% after experiencing a myocardial infarction.[2]

2. Проучванията показват, че всички пациенти с алергичен ринит могат да страдат от бронхиална астма, но тези с умерено тежък/тежък персистиращ алергичен ринит по – често са с астма от онези, които имат лек и/или интермитентен алергичен ринит - BLC 14

Tr. Studies have shown that all patients with allergic rhinitis may suffer from bronchial asthma, but those with moderate/severe persistent allergic rhinitis more often have asthma than those with mild and/or intermittent allergic rhinitis.

1. We have provided enumeration of the excerpted articles and we present the examples in their original language. The examples taken from Bulgarian language articles are also translated for ease of analysis.

2. All translations of the examples in Bulgarian are made by the author.

Считам (consider) is another verb that is almost one hundred percent used to comment on scientific facts and common knowledge, and invariably in the impersonal reflexive verb form.

3. Счита се, че до 70% от лицата с предиабет в крайна сметка развиват и ЗД2. BLC 22

Tr. It is believed that up to 70% of individuals with prediabetes eventually develop type 2 diabetes.

4. Почти при 200 милиона души *се счита*, че заболяването все още не е разпознато. - BLC 22

Tr. Almost 200 million people are thought to have the disease as yet unrecognized

At the opposite pole in terms of usage is the lexeme *установявам*(establish), which almost always (in 80% of cases) refers to the authors' own research, found both in the *moves* in the Introduction and Discussion sections, respectively.

5. В настоящото изследване честотата на антитялопозитивност към ZnT8 е относително висока – ZnT8-Ab *се установяват* при почти половината от изследваните – 45,7%, и при повече от половината от тези с давност на захарния диабет под 1 година – 63,6%, което напълно отговаря на известните данни. - BLC 26

Tr. In the present study, the frequency of antibody positivity to ZnT8 is relatively high; ZnT8-Ab were found in almost half of the examined - 45.7%; in more than half of those with a history of diabetes mellitus less than 1 year - 63.6%, which fully corroborates the known data.

Позволявам (allow) is oriented towards commenting on one's own research results and is almost never used to describe someone else's experience. It invariably occurs in the Discussion *moves*.

6. Основен недостатък на настоящото проучване е относително малкият брой изследвани пациенти и крос-секционният дизайн на изследването, които не *позволяват* да се направи анализ на антитялопозитивността към ZnT8 по възрастови декади на изява на заболяването, както и анализ на динамиката на титъра на ZnT8-Ab във времето. – BLC 26

Tr. The main shortcoming of the present study is the relatively small number of studied patients and the cross-sectional design of the study, which do not allow the analysis of antibody positivity to ZnT8 by age decades of onset of the disease, as well as the analysis of the dynamics of the ZnT8-Ab titer in time.

Of the listed verbs, two are used with a factive function – *установявам* (establish), *доказвам* (prove), two – *считам* (consider) and *позволявам* (allow), although defined as non-factive (Tadros, 1993; Thompson & Ye, 1991; Wyse, 2009), are used as factive, and *показвам* (show) is non-factive in the studied corpus. This divergence in the opinion of the above-mentioned analysts of the

concept is due to the fact that the latter have analyzed not only academic texts, while in medical ones particular verbs have very often a more special use. All these five verbs are used to create Positive Face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), i.e. they express agreement with scientific facts or other people's opinions.

Regarding the seven cited verbs in the English corpus, the verbs *find*, *observe* and *show* are considered factive and are used as such. *Find* is very often used to show contrast, as Davis (2015, pp. 157-159) also notes.

> 7. Unlike other studies, our study did not *find* a correlation between nasal symptoms (TNSSs) and cells and cytokines that increase specifically in patients with allergic rhinitis. ELC 9

> 8. In contrast, Wetsch and colleagues [25] failed to *find* a higher success rates or faster tracheal intubation time with VL compared with DL in a manikin study involving the ice-pick position. – ELC 28

In most cases, *find* is used, as Examples 7 and 8 show, in a negative form or with a verb imparting a negative meaning (e.g. *failed*). This does not make it counterfactive, as Davies (2015, p. 159) also comments in his paper, as in many cases *find* has a non-factive meaning, thus giving impartiality to the utterance, and therefore also serving as a form of distancing from determinateness

Like *find*, *observe* is mostly used in reporting.

> 9. Eotaxin was specifically elevated only after the second challenge in our study, whereas König et al. *observed* this increase already after a single challenge. ELC 9

When referring to one's own results, *observe* is used as a factive verb, and when referring to other scholars' results, it rather has a neutral connotation (non-factive use) and is close in meaning to *report*. In some cases, a shade of counterfactivity can be detected only from the context:

> 10. However, in 1994, Van Mieghem's trial of amiodarone *observed* a higher rate than expected of ARDS in patients who underwent pneumonectomy. Their experience was believed to be caused by a high volume of IV amiodarone. However, later studies showed that lower doses of IV amiodarone followed by oral administration were safe and effective. ELC 29

The combination of the factive *observe* and the counterfactive *believe* (in Passive Voice) impart to the entire paragraph a negative connotation and the overall interpretation of the two verbs is counterfactive – i.e., the author states their disagreement with the explicit information.

Unlike *observe*, *show* was identified almost exclusively in a factive role, both in terms of own results and in view of other people's developments.

> 11. Our network meta-analysis *showed* that magnesium was inferior to b-blockers and amiodarone in preventing POAF, which is consistent with the findings in cardiac surgery.- ELC 29

12. A recent large RCT failed to *show* any benefit of perioperative rosuvastatin in preventing POAF after cardiac surgery. – ELC 29

Report is classified by Wyse (2009) as a non-factive verb, but in many cases where it is used in the English corpus, it has the status of a factive one with the meaning of *observe,* rather than *claim* or *argue* (non-factive verbs). Also, *report* is used in more than two-thirds of the cases in retelling forms to convey information about other developments, in active voice.

13. In 2009, a study by Wong et al [4] *reported* that when the appropriate equipment and personnel are available and the clinical setting permits, FFS may be a safer approach than the GlideScope for patients with cervical instability. However, Wong et al [4] also *reported* that head and neck maneuvers performed before FFS (eg, a jaw thrust) resulted in an increase in cervical spine movement compared with the C-MAC VL for elective tracheal intubation of patients with inline cervical stabilization. - ELC 28

Example 13 is interesting due to the fact that at first sight *report* is being used as non-factive in both cases, i.e., it has no bearing on the author's belief in the truth of the statement. The use of the discourse contrast marker *however* can lead us to such a judgment. However, if we analyze the meaning of *report* in both cases, it has the sense of *observe* and *find*, i.e., factively.

Example 13a Wong et al [4] *reported* [..] FFS may be a safer approach

The meaning of *reported* with the complement that follows the verb in Example 13a is comparable to the uses of *claim* and *argue* (non-factive verbs), but in the latter case, *report* is to be considered factive, since the logical induction in this proposition supports a factive situation:

Example 13б However, Wong et al [4] also *reported* [..] resulted in an increase…

In Example 13b, the verb *reported* is logically connected to *resulted*, which presents factive information, therefore *reported* has more of the meaning of *find* and *observe*.

Suggest, according to Wyse (2009), is a non-factive verb. In the corpus, it is employed in 70% of cases when commenting on other scholars' research and generally accepted facts. When referring to one's own research, it comments on experimental results. In a number of cases, the verb is also used when summarizing in the Conclusion section, to draw the readers' attention when announcing unexpected results:

14. In conclusion, the study results *suggest* that 2.5 mg of ramosetron is useful for treating female patients with IBS…. Based on this study and previous studies, ramosetron *has been shown* to be the most promising 5-HT3 antagonist for treating patients with IBS-D regardless of sex. - ELC 33

In Example 14, *suggest* carefully introduces the proposition into the subordinate clause, the information in it being confirmed by the actual use of the verb *show* in a subsequent clause.

Indicate is a non-factive verb (Wyse, 2009) and is used in most cases when presenting information about other scholars' research. However, there are also manifestations that correspond in a sense to *suggest*:

15. This study *indicates* that 2.5 mg/day of ramosetron is an effective treatment for female patients with IBS-D.- ELC 33

Indicate goes also together with the adverb *as* in the phrase *as indicated*.

16. *As indicated*, discrepancies were clarified with the principal investigator at the study site. - ELC 22

The verb repeatedly appears in a participial form with a referential meaning:

17. There were 533 PTDs: 248 (4.7%) spontaneous and 285 (5.9%) medically *indicated*. [with reference to medicine] – ELC 10

Examples 16 and 17 only reinforce the argument that *indicate* is perceived as a non-factive verb that was not chosen by authors to certify their opinion about a given fact.

The last verb we examined is *consider*, which according to Wyse (2009) is non-factive. Its use in the English-language corpus strongly confirms this role.

18. Carryover effects attributable to priming must be *considered* when designing crossover studies with allergen challenge chambers. - ELC 9

19. The methods used (5-point scale, 0–4) were compatible with those in the FDA recommendation but use of an identical 11-point (0–10) scale and independent evaluation of abdominal pain and discomfort may be *considered* in a future study. – ELC 34

In a large number of cases, *consider* is part of modal clusters, which moves it away in meaning from the simple true/false opposition, i.e., from factivity in the sense put forward by Tadros (1993) and Thompson & Ye (1991).

In our brief survey of verbs expressing position, we paid attention only to the most frequent ones, but other verbs falling into the category of factivity such as *define* and *recommend* should also be considered. The most interesting point in the analysis of the verbs, both from the point of view of hedge forms and in relation to the category of factivity, is the very weak manifestations of counterfactivity in the articles from BLC. In contrast, in the articles from ELC, both the above-mentioned seven verbs and others such as *claim* – when describing experiments in other scholars' research, *argue* – without a specific focus, *think* – with a focus on the subject of the development, are used with a counterfactive role.

Hyland and Guinda (2012, p. 7) share an interesting observation based on corpus research when comparing authors with greater authority and experience and those with less. According to the two analysts, distinguished authors disagree with the opinions of others in the field more strongly than less prominent ones. Without making any definite conclusions, based on the corpus data, we can say that it seems that Bulgarian authors refrain to a large extent from articulating categorical disagreements with the literary sources, which is not characteristic of the authors cited by the English-language texts.

Conclusion

The paper makes an attempt at delving into a particular element of discourse: verbs denoting authorial position. In a theoretical plan, it is appropriate to emphasize that this discourse element is part of the author's Ethos and identity, the degree of its presence in the text. This form of authorial expression also determines the place of the latter in the scientific discourse and in the socializing community. By examining various markers of the presence or absence of the author in the text, we can grasp not only the confidence encoded in the rhetorical persuasiveness in the architectonics of MRA, but also the most fundamental idea – the place where the author himself/herself is perceived in scientific discourse.

Of course, we should acknowledge the limitations of the study due to its short length which does not allow for a detailed analysis of the issue at hand. Further studies are needed to unravel the intricacies of the notion of stance verbs and in a broader sense – authorial position. For a successful comparative study to be performed, analyses of more diverse in terms of scholarly subject texts are necessary to be placed under scrutiny, as well as they must be aligned and juxtaposed with other discourse elements.

References

Biber, D. (2006). Stance in spoken and written university registers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 5* (2), 97–16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2006.05.001.

Bloch, J. (2009). The design of an online concordancing program for teaching about reporting verbs. *Language Learning & Technology, 13* (1), 59–78. http://dx.doi.org/10125/44168.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813085.

Chafe, W. L., & Nichols, J. (1996). *Evidentiality: the linguistic coding of epistemology*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Davis, R. (2015). A genre analysis of medical research articles. PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow.

Field, M. (1997). The role of factive predicates in the indexicalization of stance: a discourse perspective. *Journal of Pragmatics, 27* (6), 799–814. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(96)00047-1.

Hyland, K. (1998). Persuasion and context: The pragmatics of academic metadiscourse. *Journal of Pragmatics, 30*(4), 437–455. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(98)00009-5.

Hyland, K. (2009). *Academic Discourse: English in a global context*. London, New York: Continuum.

Hyland, K., & Guinda, C. (eds.) (2012). *Stance and voice in written academic genres*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137030825.

Jirapanakorn, N. (2012). How doctors report: a corpus-based contrastive analysis of reporting verbs in research article introductions published in international and Thai medical journals. *The Bangkok Medical Journal, 4.* 39–46. https://doi.org/10.31524/bkkmedj.2012.09.007.

Martin, J., & White, P. (2007). *The language of Evaluation*. *Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

McEnery, T., Xiao, R., & Tono, Y. (2006). *Corpus-based Language Studies: An Advanced Resource Book*. Routledge.

Myers, G. (1989). The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles. *Applied Linguistics 10*, 1–35. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/10.1.1.

Nwogu, K. (1997). The medical research paper: Structure and functions. *English for specific purposes, 16*(2), 119–138. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(97)85388-4.

Scott, M. (2012). WordSmith Tools version 6, Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524827.

Tadros, A. (1993). The pragmatics of text averral and attribution in academic texts. In M. Hoey (ed.), *Data, description, discourse: papers on the English language in honour of John McH Sinclair on his sixtieth birthday* (pp.98-114). London: Harper Collins.

Thomas, S., & Hawes, T. (1994). Reporting verbs in medical journal articles. *English for Specific Purposes, 13*(2), 129–148. https://doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906(94)90012-4.

Thompson, G., & Ye, Y. (1991). Evaluation in the reporting verbs used in academic papers. *Applied Linguistics, 12*(4), 365–382. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/12.4.365.

Tognini-Bonelli, E. (2001). *Corpus linguistics at work*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/scl.6.

van Langenhove, L., & Harré, R. (1999). Introducing positioning theory. In R. Harré & L. van Langenhove (eds.), *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of intentional action* (pp.14-31), Oxford: Blackwell. Downloaded from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281270456_Introducing_Positioning_Theory.

Wyse, B. (2009). *Factive/non-factive predicate recognition within question generation systems*. London: Open University, ISSN 1744-1986.

"THOUGHTS, THAT BREATHE, AND WORDS, THAT BURN," OR THE GROWTH OF A WRITER'S MIND: ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S DIARY

Yana Rowland

Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Abstract: *Published first in 1969, Diary by E. B. B. (1831–1832) has been an intersection of scholarly debates on nineteenth-century English literature, femininity, diurnal narrative, and aesthetic experience. A confessional document of the last two years of Elizabeth's life at the family estate of Hope End, the diary throws her unique self-creationist and self-revisionary impulses into relief. It is an outstanding prose-fiction piece of evidence of her overall penchant for self-acclaim by way of self-denial. This paper aims at tracing the development of the woman writer in view of the immediacy and ontological priority of an implied Other found at the core of self-writing, as Elizabeth's diary signals. A modicum of contextual references to some of E. B. Browning's poetical works brings out her self-reflexive leanings. Finally, it could be argued that self-questioning distinguishes Elizabeth Barrett Browning as a polemicist whose private diary identifies the concept of time as the kernel of her perception of identity as responsibility.*

Keywords: *Elizabeth Barrett Browning, diary, aesthetic experience, memory, Self, time, responsibility*

About the author: *Yana Rowland is Associate Professor of English literature at the English Department of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. She holds an MA in English & Russian (2000, summa cum laude) and a doctoral degree (2006) in English Literature. Her monographs, The Treatment of the Themes of Mortality in the Poetry of the Brontë Sisters (Plovdiv University Press, 2006), Movable Thresholds: On Victorian Poetry and Beyond in Nineteen Glimpses (Plovdiv University Press, 2014) and her study on the reception of Alfred Tennyson in Bulgaria (1880 – 2010) (in The Reception of Alfred Tennyson in Europe, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, pp. 267–301) reflect her research interests in the area of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English poetry. Yana Rowland teaches core and elective BA & MA modules in English which include English Literature of the Victorian Age, Modernism and Postmodernism, English-Language Children's Literature, Literary Anthropology, and Stylistics of the English Language. She has over forty publications, and she has co-edited various academic miscellanies. Since 2015 Yana Rowland has published on Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

e-mail: *yanarowland@uni-plovdiv.bg* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0906-1454*

Copyright © 2023 Yana Rowland

Article history: Received: 28 May 2023; Reviewed: 12 July 2023; Revised: 16 July 2023; Accepted: 17 July 2023; Published: 28 August 2023



This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Rowland, Y. (2023). "Thoughts, that breathe, and words, that burn," or the growth of a writer's mind: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's diary. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 83-109. https://doi.org/10.46687/HTZG4131.

Life! I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part;
...
Where'er they lay these limbs, this head,
No clod so valueless shall be,
As all that then remains of me.
...
And in this strange divorce,
Ah tell where I must seek this compound I?

Anna Laetitia Barbauld,
Life, 1812, ll. 1-12

Introduction

A crossroads between self-revelation and self-concealment, a writer's diary is an instance of autobiographical writing; it is an emblem of the writer's struggle to compose Self simultaneously from within and from without. This struggle seems to be definitive for identity-building in EBB's works. Defined by the classical scholar Hugh Stuart Boyd – also her role model – as a "funny girl", Elizabeth Barrett cherishes reading literature in anthropological terms: it provides her with that living medium which embosses her acculturation by way of developing her talent of interpretation as the hybridizing immediacy of perceiving actual people and abstract concepts together, in acts of keen self-observation and intense self-questioning. If, in reading Lamartine, she recalls Thomas Gray's *Odes* (in which "bright-eyed Fancy … / Scatters … / Thoughts, that breathe, and words, that burn;" *DEBB*, 23 Sept 1831, p. 137, n. 3)[1], which predate her diary by more than a century, she does so strategically: She defines the elusive yet concrete inter-textual premise of her imagination, just as well as the cross-citational range of her own memory in noetic, rather than noematic terms. Barrett's diary narrative works against the possibility of attaining stability of form, against the hope of working out a product empirically detachable from the current workings of her consciousness (an issue that borders on research of her juvenile autobiographical essays, which I have carried out elsewhere, and in tribute of the writer's awareness of John Locke). It is my intention to dwell on the processual essence of EBB's diary, as I hope to explore her peculiar

1. Quotations from Diary by E. B. B. (hereby abbreviated as DEBB) and from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's other works adhere to her authentic spelling and punctuation based on the authoritative editions of her works referenced accordingly for the purposes of the current research. BC refers to the Brownings' Correspondence, cited by volume, date, & page number(s). The abbreviation EBB has been employed to denote the poetess's full maiden name (as opposed to her married one, from 1846 on: Elizabeth Barrett Browning).

perception of time and space as all too human constructs. This could throw light on why she treats narrative as response and responsibility.

In *Time and Narrative* III, tracing, gradually, the inter-personal nature of the literary work and the process of literary composition, Ricoeur argues the re-inscription of "the time of narrative into the time of the world" whereby "lived time" gets "cosmologized" and "cosmic time" gets humanized (Ricoeur, 1990, pp. 108-109) through story seen as extension beyond Self, manifested in the utterance as a need for a future (protention) and a trace of the past (retention):

> On the one hand, every instant is a possible candidate for the role of axial moment. On the other hand, nothing about any particular calendar day, taken by itself, says whether it is past, present, or future. The same date may designate a future event, as in the clauses of a treaty, or a past event, as in a chronicle. To have a present, […] one must speak. The present is then indicated by the coincidence between an event and the discourse that states it. To rejoin lived time starting from chronicle time, therefore, we have to pass through linguistic time, which refers to discourse. This is why any date, however complete or explicit, cannot be said to be future or past if we do not know the date of the utterance that pronounces it.

Ricoeur suggests the impossibility of totalizing the diversity of "fictive temporal experiences" as he perceives the counter-absolutist possibilities they introduce to the story of a single man (autobiographer, in this instance) (ibid., p. 128). Yet he also admits that despite the suitability, in terms of individuation, of human beings' "tales about time" – which is what I believe a diary could be defined as, a tale about time – one remains for oneself "in the projection of '[one's] ownmost possibility" (ibid., p. 141). A projection that does not seem to be blest with the promise of fulfillment in one's own lifetime, and that may only be partially compensated for by representations of othernesses to oneself which one abides by – "mental images" which make it possible, also, for traces "left by the past" to stand for the past, as we contemplate those traces and get caught in consciousness (ibid., 143). In a diary, this delusional effect of satiety yet incompletion is doubly relevant, as that who writes is one's own reader, and that which gets produced, gets immediately sanctioned, curtailed, caviled against and escaped, for it never provides an all-encompassing adequate perception of space and time, which, as Ricoeur notes, necessitates the recognition of an implied, preliminary, envisaged Other as justification of discourse. This is one of my considerations in this paper.

Diary emblematizes the hardships of articulation, or representation of the I as the common concourse of selfhood (aloneness, separateness, or *ipse*) and sameness (coincidence with oneself in time, repetition, or *idem*). Focusing on the significance of representation as part of understanding, Emmanuel Levinas articulates his disbelief in the singularity and self-sufficiency of writing:

> When the I is identified with reason, taken as the power of thematization and objectification, it loses its very ipseity. To represent to oneself is to empty oneself of one's subjective substance and to insensibilize enjoyment. […] Every moment of life […] is in relation with an *other* than that moment itself. […] every perception is a perception of the perceived, every idea an idea of the ideate, every desire a desire of a desired, every emotion an emotion of something moving …; but every obscure thought of our being is also oriented toward *something*. Every present in its temporal nudity tends toward the future and returns upon the past or resumes that past – is prospection and retrospection. (Levinas, 1979, pp. 119, 122)

Refusing to sever experience as a process from evidence as a product, imagining from imagined, remembering from remembered, in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas perceives the impossibility of verifying language – and I would argue, by extension, narrative (including diary narrative) – as "enacted within a consciousness" but insists on it coming from "the Other" (further defined as "the Face") who questions "my" consciousness and with whom it "reverberates" (ibid., p. 204). Levinas describes this phenomenon as anti-egology, or anti-idealism, and relates it to a "surplus of signification" over representation (ibid., p. 206). In the case of diary such thinking would lead towards attesting the implied necessity of an intentional Other to whom self-writing would respond subconsciously by way of desiring to comprehend, in a story of one's own, and thus reveal, this Other, yet acknowledge the creationist impulse this Other possesses for the autobiographer. An interesting example of the same ilk surfaces at the beginning of Barrett Browning's later hybrid creation: Her novel-poem *Aurora Leigh* (1856), a fictional autobiography which employs a reflexive attitude in the treatment of writing Self as writing Other: "[…] I who have written much in prose and verse / For others' uses, will write now for mine, – / Will write my story for my better self, / As when you paint your portrait for a friend, / Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it / Long after he has ceased to love you, just / To hold together what he was and is" (I, 1–8).

The ontological value of the act of writing and the dialogic nature of narrative, articulated thus by Ricoeur and Levinas, and based on Barrett Browning's overall self-undermining attitudes, as well as her ineradicable sense of self-doubt, provide me with food for thought to see diary as a project against self-attainment or self-completion, a project which lends written discourse a contractual significance – mutual relativization yet solidification of Self and Other.

A detailed inventory of the writers and literary works quoted and considered by EBB in this diary, with exhaustive explanations about inter-textual references, is provided by Philip Kelley and Ronald Hudson in their scholarly annotation of the earliest (1969) edition of *Diary by E. B. B.*, discovered first in 1961 and barely stretching over an incomplete calendar year (4th June 1831 – 23rd April

1832). Prior to Kelley and Hudson, the existence of EBB's diary had only been alluded to in other literary compositions by the writer. The *Diary* brings to light the writer's growing faith in narrative as the cusp between truth and fiction. A figuration of the non-finalizability of Self and of the impossibility of totalizing existence, EBB's diary articulates her hope for fulfillment yet her fear of being swept away by a daunting volume of male writing and home rules. The implied presence of an immanent before, to which the autobiographer feels compelled to report in self-writing, checks her solipsistic urges yet enshrines, by way of mourning the feebleness of, the woman poet's voice.

Interpretation as a Need

Abstaining from literalism in quoting exactly from sources, EBB appears to dodge the hazards of derivativeness. Yet her diary seems visibly scaffolded against a volume of literary works whose inter-textual value points at her poignant search for a spiritual centre inside, just as well as outside, her own mind. Stranded in an ekphrastic struggle to define her own thought, she describes herself as suffering from "deficiency in historical information. This I really must correct" – to overcome this defect, she develops an argument on accuracy, profundity and stylistic perfection by way of stringing together Lamartine (*Le Tombeau d'une Mère*, DEBB, 23 – 24 Sept 1831, n. 1, pp. 137-38), Gray, Goldsmith, Shelley, and, somewhat earlier, Milton. In Gray's *Ode I*, III, 3 ('Oh! Lyre divine, what daring Spirit / Wakes thee now?…', ll. 6-7) poetic self-justification grows out of the acceptance of a higher spirit which breathes life into the poet as a mediator between eternal truth and common mortals – a task Barrett, as a writer, warily assumes. She catalogues some of her role models: Goethe's *Werther*, Euripidis's *Tragedies*, and Leonardo Da Vinci's *A Treatise on Painting*, to name but a few (DEBB, 13-14 Jul 1831, pp. 54-55). Thus emerges EBB's self-apophatic aura: she meditates on life's brevity and fleetingness – especially in view of her growing sense of smallness against the inextricable dominance of three formidable patriarchs in her life: God, her own father, and H. S. Boyd (the blind scholar and neighbor she assisted in translating from Old Greek). Her own fear for herself – of oozing through life unnoticed and unappreciated – she stealthily but genuinely declares in her mourning the demise of her Uncle Sam's wife, Mary. Her sense of the proximity of death she betrays, simultaneously, in a disquisition on family loss and on Lamartine's *Méditations Poétiques* (1820) and *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses* (1830) (Cf. DEBB, 23 Sept 1831, 23 Jul 1831, p. 64; 21 Sept 1831, p. 136). That occasional writing creates a special form of diurnal routine for EBB becomes clear in her earliest juvenile dedicatory verses – odes on the birthdays of members of her own family: *Sent to Mama on 1st May 1814* ("'Twas dark – the tempest blew aloud' (1814); *An Epistle to Henrietta* ("Thy gentle smile displays thy virtues sweet" (1814); *To Her Uncle Sam, with Her Poetry* ('Dear Sam, accept my humble

lay' (1814); *On Papa's Birthday* ('Hail dear Papa! I hail thy natal day' (1815); *To My Dearest Brother Edward* ('Hail! Brother dear! And hail this cherished day' (1816)); *To My Dearest Mama* ('From the Wide Heavens Aurora bends her flight' (1817), etc. One of EBB's early autobiographical essays, *My Own Character* (1818), expresses a genuine yet somewhat disturbing urge to know life as a performative intrusion into Other: "I have endeavoured to insinuate myself into the windings of other souls, of other characters – … to seek truth with an ardent eye, a sincere heart – … I have never, even in imagination looked into my own heart – How few indeed know themselves" (Barrett, 1974, p. 119)! The diary itself emerges as a reservoir of similar instances of parrhesia where the diarist's resolutions to study herself, to cherish and obey truth as God's word, and to care for her dearest people, form the skeleton of aesthetic self-vindication. The cited excerpt hints, also, at a peculiar blend of essentialism and nominalism: Self-cognition, albeit always partially achievable, looks like a post-facto exercise appended to recognition of observable exterior sources of knowledge which draw the contours of an individual's existence by facilitating a unique permeability between own and foreign – a trade which negotiates the image one gets of oneself by way of comprehending others.

Memory is a key factor for faithfully documenting, as well as a guarantee for fictionalizing, the writer's own life which may not be severed from the life of her family and her own reading and writing. She works out an ideal Other she needs for the sake of executing her intention to preserve and transfer time, as she perceives interpretation as a beyond-Self ontological necessity. Meticulously, Elizabeth draws a list of her rich collection of books. She translates from Old Greek, with her exacting yet caring father overseeing her comings and goings; she is mercilessly self-critical about her deficiency of intellect which she cures by hard work (DEBB, 8-11 Mar 1832, pp. 223-224):

> I forgot to say yesterday that I finished early in the morning, […] I do wish I had translated from Blomfield.[2]
>
> Getting on with my notes — for the sake of killing time & some thoughts I believe. […] I give myself unto prayer — & why should I fear? […]
>
> […] Notes again. Out walking. I don't feel quite well, — & no wonder — for my spirits are quite worn threadbare. […]
>
> I was not at church, […]. A letter from M[r]. Boyd brief enough, but to ask me to ask Papa to allow me to go to […]
>
> I asked Papa in the evening. He will not allow it. *He says that I am turning into a shadow, & looking worse & worse* […] (emphasis added)

2. She means an edition of Aeschylus's plays (DEBB, 8 Mar 1832, n. 1, p. 223).

If, as Daniel Karlin argues, autobiography aims at "conveying to posterity the sense of 'how it was'", then in her diary EBB attests the verity of the past by way of unfolding it as a peculiar instance of self-exclusion, self-denial, self-devaluation, and self-denigration (as seen above), which leads to a self-imposed accusation voiced out as a kind of unfaithfulness to an ideal (she may be viewed as a traitor-interpreter of the masculine logos in terms of her work on translating *Prometheus Bound*, which is mentioned in her diary, and which her father did not on the whole approve of) (Karlin, 1987, pp. 226, 238). She turns her writing into a "display of suffering and endurance", which throws into relief the artist's unbearable distress about "living up to her own image" – yet an image created, at that stage, very much by her own father (ibid., p. 257). Simultaneous erection and collapse of boundaries, spatial and moral sanctions and occupations (proper and improper for woman, daughter, writer and worshipper) disclose the diarist's hardships of making room for herself.

A brief excursus into Wolfgang Iser's take on translation as transposition may help one perceive an opportunity of approaching EBB's toil over reading, writing, and communicating with others as the creation of a liminal domain for herself – between subject matter (life) and perceptional register (diary). Diurnal narrative channels the space it produces: By way of reflecting on life, it urges a new form of life, to the effect that verifiable occurrences get intermingled with imaginary forms of self-expression which phantomize yet reinforce the intentional component in writing as self-modelling. The latter is visible even in the writer's reflexive attitude to her own father's persona and his opinion on her physical frailty (which threatens, also, to steal the potency and uniqueness of her own writing). As in *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), a perennial but feebly defined need for equality and reciprocity disguises the position of muteness that the female speaker assumes: "What can I give thee back, O liberal / And princely giver, […]" (Sonnet VIII, ll. 1-2); "Nay, let the silence of my womanhood / Commend my woman-love to thy belief" (Sonnet XIII, ll. 9-10). Interrogation of the purpose of one's creativity leads to a form of double coding, or facticity-fiction, whereby the diary unfolds as a record of the life of the family of the Barretts, as well as the life of literature, both primarily dependent on the writer's consciousness. Or, a kind of bidirectional exchange: a "two-way traffic … due to the fact that the register does not represent a transcendental consciousness from which the subject matter is to be judged" (Iser, 2000, p. 6) – the diarist's faculties may be limited, but they do define recollection (retrospection) just as well as prediction (prospection) in diary narrative as a record of the (in) felicities of the imagination. If interpretation is bound to the recognition of the importance and specifics of genre, and genre, such as the genre of diary, intervenes in interpretation as self-reflection (ibid., p. 7), which is bound to what is being understood as well as to the perceiver's mind, a real problem arises from the recognition of the existence of "untranslatable", elusive phenomena

which predetermine and delimit Self: Life, God, literature. For such phenomena a register such as a diary is a space at once narrow and proper. In her diary, while EBB aims at interpreting, i.e. translating, "incommensurabilities such as God, the world, and humankind", she finds out that the genre she has chosen fails to offer an adequate exegetical proportion to that which she feels exceeds the human grasp but does need explaining (ibid., pp. 7-8). The writer's philosophy of recognizing part in whole, Self in Other, private life in communal life, one's own writing in a literary past, the hidden in the revealed, exposes also her self-condescending attitude: She could never make the open-ended graspable (ibid., p. 8). Further, it could be said that a "residual "non-understanding"' (as Iser rephrases Schleiermacher, ibid., p. 47) – her own word against, yet in unison with, the word of others – is the provisionality of her status as a woman writer, which her diary illustrates.

Micro-chronology: Family, Friends, Time, Space – All Too Human…

Papa's health was of major importance to Elizabeth – as was the study of scriptural texts. Both fortified her trust in the benevolence of an original discourse, formidably masculine and threatening to eclipse the power and sincerity of her own talent which she casually and self-consciously calls the "rascally poet" (DEBB, 26 Dec 1831, p. 195). Peace at home, depth and regularity in biblical scholarship, respect for Nature, and internal equilibrium – these are all tied to EBB's view of a deserved, rather than intentionally engineered, existence. Any slight breach of the family routine, of comings and goings, of the current of correspondence that chronicles daily routines, any occasional and unexpected episode could provoke her father's antagonism and could have a traumatizing effect on her. The diarist's records get interspersed, more and more persistently, with admissions about her spiritual duties: There emerges the impression of secondariness and of others' expectations she needs to fit in through the sanction she hopes to be granted – at Hope End (lost by the family in the late summer of 1832) just as well as outside home. The more she hopes, the more she gets fixated on her own quaintness: "Now I am going down to prayers? <bell> ringing! — Read nothing but the Bible today" (DEBB, 12 Jun 1831, p. 13); "The gnats kept Arabel & me & half the house besides up half the night: witness my swelled finger — witness this eccentric writing" (13 Jul 1831, p. 14); "How I ought to love [Papa]! — ought! — how I do! …" (21 Jun 1831, p. 27). She fluctuates between the priority of her own mind and an unconditional regard for the patriarch, between spontaneity and compulsion, will and demand. Day by day she reads, "as usual", and writes letters to Papa (23 Jun 1831, p. 29) – composition is directly calibrated to the maintenance of an affinity with father who promotes her talent and has already orchestrated the publication of her juvenile imitative epic poem *The Battle of Marathon* (1820).

Other fears add themselves to the diarist's anxiety about family wholeness: a proleptic dream about losing Bro to the sea (he was to drown in early 1840 and she could never overcome her guilt in having asked him to stay longer, for her own sake, at Torquay) as she reads Euripides' *Alcestis* on 16 July; over-fatigue in playing the guitar for dearest people while longing to go to Malvern (and to Boyd) in early September 1831; taming her squirrel and hoping she could keep it for herself (out of Annie, Boyd's daughter – Elizabeth's rival for Boyd's attention; 24 Oct 1831); sadness over the unknown a new year could bring to her (31 Dec 1831); the fate of her own writings (13 Jan 1832); the haste to become enlightened through the Gospel (Luke's, on a particular occasion) by way of reading in the original and practicing her own Ancient Greek, away from the company of a seemingly polite intruder such as Eliza Cliffe (who was to paint her portrait and thus immure her as a piece of art; 20 – 22 Apr 1832). She admits to her "love of solitude growing with [her] growth", wary to return, together with her sister Arabella (Bummy), to the garden (11 Oct, 14 Oct 1831) – a place associated with her mother (who died 1828) and fictionalized, later, as a lost world of blissful infancy and spiritual satiety in poems such as *The Deserted Garden*, *Hector in the Garden*, and *The Lost Bower*. Cautiously, on 26 August 1831 (p. 103, emphasis added) she diagnoses herself:

> *<Let me consider> circumstances, while I am calm, in a degree*. I may have to leave this place where I have walked and talked & dreamt in much joy; & where I have heard most beloved voices which I can no more hear, & clasped beloved hands which I <can> no more clasp: where I have smiled with the living & wept above the dead <&> where I have read immortal books, & written pleasant thoughts, … But *let me think of it calmly*. I can take with me the dear members of my own family, — & *my recollections which, in some cases, were all that was left to me here: I <can> take with me my books and my studious tastes*, — and above all, the knowledge that "all things" whether sorrowful or joyous, "work together for good to those who love God". And my dear Papa's mind, — (*should he not be dearest to me?*) will be more tranquil perhaps when he is away from *a place so productive of anxieties*. (emphasis added)

The home at Hope End is the writer's earliest and steadiest topographic manifestation of her physical self-fulfillment and verbal self-acculturation through reading and writing. EBB's diary is her "life … [as] the life history of others – … parents, … friends, … companions in work" (Ricoeur, 1994, p. 161) – a compendium over which she could only declare co-authorship, literature being an account of time as togetherness as well as the understanding of this togetherness. The diary is also EBB's most complete prose-fiction exilic narrative which makes of her home a place of memory to be yearned for – the more sincerely now (i.e. as she was writing the diary) that her mother was no more.

An ostensibly marginal, but actually crucial component of her temporal self-topicalization could be found in the presence of rain in her diary. The entry she makes on 5 Sept 1831 (p. 117) betrays EBB's jocular attitude to the smallness of men's passions and to a single human being's lifetime by way of alluding to the clown's song in the final section of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "The rain <it> rainëd all the way" (compare: Shakespeare, 1995, p. 349, *Twelfth Night*, V, ll. 401-405, 409, 412-13, 413, 416-417). The pace of the rain gets attuned to her documenting her own reading (e.g. the Greek testament and Bunyan on 18 March 1832, p. 225), being prevented from going to Malvern to see Boyd (16 Apr 1832, p. 235-236), being riveted at home, in prayer, perusing "Gregory's ode to his soul" and despairing over the unbalance between her own sincerity of mind and honesty of devotion to others and the indifference of those on whom she depends (23 Apr 1832, pp. 240-41). The last entry, elliptical and unpunctuated, signals EBB's confusion and alienation: 'Went away in the pouring rain. Left' (ibid.).

EBB's wish to chronicle jointly family occasions and relationships and reflections on her progress with reading betrays a measure of vanity yet it seems propped against a fear of being forgotten and of forgetting. Of this controversy she warns in the initial sentences of her early essay *Glimpses into My Own Life and Literary Character* (1820) where she recognizes self-conceit and instinct to be at the heart of writing one's own life. EBB's early essays and her diary illustrate her confusion and worry over her developing awareness of her inability to complete the story of herself, a story whose beginning and end could never be her own achievement. The matter could be approached through Ricoeur's view on narrative as "anamnēsis", or a pill against forgetting through a persistently implied dialogue with an Other who the diarist addresses in various ways, seeking to justify her own worth as a human being. EBB's diary functions as "a temporal experience (Erfahrung)" which reveals also the "object-oriented side" of "memory" (Ricoeur, 2006, pp. 27, 31). One such object is the clock the family owned (and eventually took away with them upon leaving the estate) – a device measuring time, ticking in assonance with father Barrett's health and internal predisposition, a servant of the family life which the patriarch managed as he regulated his daughter's expectations and imagination (DEBB, entry of 16 Jun 1831, p. 18). God's ways, Papa's mind, brother Edward's health, Bummy's garden walks, the pet squirrel, Annie Boyd's behavior, Boyd's whims, rain – these and many more EBB observed zealously, steadfastly, willingly. The writer thus observes, also, her own mind and the process of ideation: how she produces images of, and thus consecrates, her parents. In this cohesive process, one might note the fruitful role of doubt which promotes one's resolve for communication through self-writing. Consider, for the sake of comparison, the well-known beginning of *David Copperfield*: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else,

these pages must show" (Dickens 1996, p. 9). Observation, which Elizabeth also declares to be a vital faculty for writing, inevitably merges remembrances with unforeseen impressions, to the effect of ruining the possibility for clear-cut boundaries between actuality and fictionality, so that self-narrative becomes the eerie image of one's own mind: "What else do I remember? Let me see. There comes out of the cloud, our house, not new to me, but quite familiar, in its earliest remembrance" (Dickens, 1996, p. 19). A shift occurs and is sustained: "from the perception of the duration of something to a study of the duration of perception as such" – a process which modifies the present and transforms "the phenomenology of memory to that of the consciousness of internal time"' (Ricoeur, 2006, p. 32). Such a trade gradually dissolves the limits of perceived object and perceiving subject, binding them in the writer's temporal being. A peculiar early example of this is Barrett's initial diary entry which insinuates creative self-arson. For fear of having to look into her own soul through looking on her own work and becoming ashamed of it, she could almost "burn this sheet of paper <like> most others…" or at least cover it – as did Adam who "made fig leaves necessary for the mind, as well for the body" (4 Jun 1831, p. 1). Self-disclosure requires objectification of authorial intention – sheets of paper. These testify to her physical existence, also contrived as a figuration of her intentional contact with reality. Identifying with Adam, EBB recognizes a demiurgic potency (the incentive to cover that which has been produced through comprehension) and offers a narrative of her own: her diary. Reciprocally, the diary "contribute[s] to the narrativization of' her own character" in a way which Ricoeur, in *Oneself as Another*, terms "the apprenticeship of dying" (Ricoeur, 1994, pp. 159, 162), in the sense that literature possesses the ability to grasp the provisional ends of human experience.[3]

3. The said fragment concerning Adam warns also of a danger phrased by Paul De Man thus: "[…] what is at stake here is not only the distance that shelters the author of autobiography from his experience but the possible convergence of aesthetics and of history" (De Man, 1979, p. 919). Consider Adam as a fictive Other, part of Elizabeth's private self-reflection, and Adam as an illustration of her purposeful research of Biblical history. As a character from a specifically chosen literary past, Adam precedes her and results in this self-expository episode in her diary which contains a human before. Yet as a character in a piece of writing someone else will access in the future (when she herself no longer is), Adam is promised to succeed her and become part of a human after. The question that arises is whether, as De Man asks, if diary is a mode of self-figuration, it is the case that the referent determines the figure, or the other way round (ibid., p. 920). EBB's diary offers various examples of the life-sustaining value of self-portraiture as fictitiousness in what de Man perceives not so much as "a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding" based on "a substitutive exchange that constitutes the subject" (ibid., pp. 921). As a diarist, EBB is an external and time-distanced evaluator of her life, she is someone else yet she is the subject of her own understanding and her own creator, she is her very own self. Diary is an instance of prosopopoeia which "demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization […] of [a textual system] made up of tropological susbtitu-

Self-Diagnostics

In the period 1831 – 1832, despite Wordsworth's by now undeniably visible literary presence, EBB could hardly have guessed the reverberations of *The Prelude* over the range of the epical, confessional, and life-writing streaks of the later, post-1850s poetical English 19th-century. But like the patriarch Romantic poet, she wished to stress the importance of the external and of Nature in the formation of an artist's mind. In Book I of *The Prelude* (ll. 33-38), Wordsworth admits to an overwhelming need for self-expression derived from divine inspiration: "For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven/ Was blowing on my body, felt within/ A correspondent breeze, that gently moved/ With quickening virtue, but is now become/ A tempest, a redundant energy, / Vexing its own creation." Elizabeth, "sola cum sola", alluding to Cicero's "never less lonely than when alone" (DEBB, 9 Jun 1831, n. 4, p. 8), oscillates between embarrassment over her growing need to claim her own place in the world through writing, and her sense of redundancy over her disillusionment with, as she thinks, the compromising quality of her actual work. She assumes that people's esteem of her could only ever be deserved through sincerity of mind: She must compose in service of an externally inspired Other which could sanction her talent as truth-telling for the sake of the wellbeing of humankind (ibid., p. 3). As a reader, she declares a love of Aeschylus' *Prometheus*, which she initially reads to Boyd (who therefore gradually learns it by heart). She then translates the work twice (first translation accomplished in 1833, second version published in 1850), showcasing her desire for poetic self-liberation yet her obligation to a censorious literary before. *Prometheus* (and Aeschylus), which she mentions the more the further she writes in her diary (e.g. pp. 91, 219, 229), ignites her imagination. This impulse, clad in a Neoplatonic–Christological attire, is postulated in the Preface to her first translation (Browning, 2010, vol. 4, p. 179-80):

> … we may recognize the dead, together with much of the living letter; a literal version, together with a transfusion of poetical spirit; – why should we, on that account, consider ourselves charmed away from *attempting* ***another translation***? *… We make [green hills and waving forests] subjects of contemplation, in order to abstract from them those ideas of beauty, afterwards embodied in our own productions; and above all, in order to consider their and our Creator under every manifestation of his goodness and his power.* All beauties, whether in nature or art, whether in physics or morals, whether in composition or abstract reasoning, *are multiplied reflections*, visible in ***different distances*** and under positions, of *one archetypal beauty.* (emphasis added)

tions" (ibid., p. 922) in writing as the perpetuity of self-grasp.

Barrett coyly disguises her borderline position as recipient yet producer of sense, heir yet contestant of a male logos, student yet master. The "different distances" limn experience anthropologically: a dynamic of thought and sense – in time and space as human variables. Yet a dynamic predominated by a male originary power looming over femininity so that woman is compelled to dig up a space for herself through a discontent with, yet acceptance of, a position of silence, repression and self-restriction (Blodgett, 1989, pp. 59, 63), which codifies diary as the antagonism between self-disclosure and self-concealment.

EBB comes to terms with her own strangeness, her vehement unwillingness to give up on her favourite occupation (reading and interpreting), and her imprisonment by her own family who crown her "our dear invalid". She wishes for a companion soul which would rescue her from delusional self-sufficiency: "I am of an intolerably exclusive disposition; & yet I wish some other people were like me" (p. 162). Having laid "an oath in Heaven' to be altogether sincere in <this. Journal of mine", she cavils about her own 'narrow, narrow heart' (ibid.). She seems afraid of her own body and mind, of unrealistic prospects of marriage (DEBB, 1 Sept, pp. 111-112). Her emotional stability wavers; she occasionally misses making an entry in her diary (24 Feb 1831). Torn between allegiance to family and allegiance to the liberty that thought and art provide, she sees herself gambled, spent: "another Leila" – a phrase which indicates a stylized image of her own self, of her own song of the same title (produced in 1822). Her fear of selfishness is largely self-engendered (3 Oct 1831, p. 149). Her perception of her own fallibility is a source of misery self-inflicted and potentially appeased by intellectual and physical chastisement through hard work (6 Jan 1832). "Hystericky" (as she addressed her own bizarre nature), she loses her voice through perpetual colds which debar her from visiting Malvern and Boyd – she makes up for such an incapacity by reading Alcibiades (5-15 Nov 1831). Dizziness and exhaustion through fasting (21 Mar 1832) could hardly be cured through reading sacred literature (4 Apr 1832). As in her later self-evocation, *Aurora Leigh* (1856), in her diary she narrativizes her own self-repercussions, aspirations, yet her anxiety about being aware of the external sources of creative inspiration in her life as woman and writer. Elizabeth is a Miltonic daughter who, Sarah Annes Brown argues, wishes to achieve independence (Brown, 1997, p. 729-730, 734): She acts modestly yet self-assertively. Departing from a prelapsarian garden, subsidized by a well of wisdom found in man-authored books, dreading disintegration of bodily and cultural autonomy (e.g. her dream about her teeth tumbling out; DEBB, 1-3 Jul 1831, pp. 39-41), she lives as she writes.

Recently, Rachel Isom, has noted EBB's lesser (than her Romantic female predecessors'), more regulated, not so openly fatalistic, fear of spiritual perdition, her self-control, self-sustained faith, and frank religiosity yet unabashed intellectualism – authentic yet "more acceptable, […] Victorian"

(Isom, 2019, pp. 178-179, 183). EBB transfers her attention from reading novels (in her juvenile period) to poetry, and theological and philosophical scholarship (in her adult life, beginning with the anonymous publication in 1826 of her volume *An Essay on Mind, with Other Poems*). The latter has its origin in her early interest in "learned languages" (Barrett, 1974, p. 124), which accounts also for a developing Hellenism of her own and a conviction in the educational worth of studying the ancient Past. But, as Charles LaPorte maintains, Barrett's faith in the past, in the word of God, and in precursory literary authority must not be taken as passivity: It is an evolutional conversation between minds in time, especially over the matter of subordinated, or domesticated, femininity as opposed to a more independent, albeit more staunchly adhering to religious belief, feminine thought (LaPorte, 2013, pp. 278-280).

Diary by E. B. B. diagnoses the hardships of the survival of a peculiar mongrel: Literary daughter, spinster, and woman with a will of her own – a "controversial creature who women poets by and large avoided depicting at all" (Hickok, 1981, p. 120). EBB reflects the status-conscious middle-class female experience (ibid., p. 130) – between absolute devotion to others and self-sufficiency in solitude – a dialectic sanctioned by father Barrett. The result is a sense of internal exile whereby the writer is made doubly prominent in a way which solders singularity and plurality, focus and periphery, genre and gender, and reading and writing (Benstock, 1999, p. 4). Related to this dialectic is the entity body–mind as an entity defining woman as a writer. One epitome of this is Elizabeth's ultra-sensitivity to the issue of illness. The poetess is known to have suffered from a number of not untypical for women conditions: "Continual fainting and insomnia" yet overwrought self-consciousness or ascetic indifference to pain (Hayter, 1962, p. 59); hard-to-diagnose teenage ailments (cf. Dennis, 1996, pp. 40-41); embryonic hypochondria (cf. Forster, 2004, pp. 21-23). These symptoms tend to get outlined in her sense of guilt over being physically deficient, her anxiety about marital status (and, as can be assumed, infertility), and her perception of specifically threatened organs and systems of her body (e.g. her teeth). Her sensitivity about her irregular internal constitution (physique and psyche) can also be seen as an instance of the writer's accepting response to the nineteenth century's developing interest in woman as a medical case-study (Carpenter, 2010, pp. 157-159).

Verbal Osmosis: Holy Word – Own Word

It would be a herculean task to try and summarize Elizabeth's prowess of biblical scholarship. One way to do this would be to dwell, briefly, on her humanitarian-hermeneutical perception of faith as theory and practice, especially with regard to the following aspects: Sin, predestination, charity, communication between body and soul, reason, and hard work. In her diary, Elizabeth mentions Gregory

of Nazianzus more than a dozen times. Gregory functions as a fictitious mediator of the intellectual rapport she aims to achieve between Hugh Stuart Boyd and herself. The Greek Christian father might have attracted Elizabeth with his love of simple, direct, insightful communication, his stylistic clarity, allegorical verve, and sincerity of mind, his wish to labor for the salvation of the souls of men in need of enlightenment and comfort, but also his desire to attain a symbiosis between "faith and philosophical reflection", not inconsistent with a possibility to "penetrate deeper the Christian narrative of creation and salvation and to search for a new synthesis of faith and philosophical reflection" consistent with a "Platonic understanding of reality" (Daley in: Gregory, 2006, pp. 6-7). "Mortification of the body", and "solitude and silence" are also, to a large extent, a shared spiritual domain between Elizabeth and this Greek Christian father (Gregory, 2006, *Oration 14*: *On Love of the Poor*, p. 77). While a self-punitive attitude to body may not be the only distinctive feature of Elizabeth's literary and religious enthusiasm, the value of private faith could be seen to require firmness of character, the exposure of which could for instance be found in a self-propelled sense of boundary in terms of physical space. Seclusion was also an affordable middle-class privilege: in Elizabeth's case it was motivated by her yearning for a peace of mind to write and to be accepted on equal terms in the literary profession.

EBB shares Gregory's conviction that reason and wisdom – two crucial qualities for a writer, in EBB's perception – are inspired, being attributes of heavenly grace and a foundation for accepting Christ – "God's word" – building in man an "image" of "heaven's transcendent brilliance" (Gregory, 2006, *Evening Hymn*, p. 167). Wisdom functions as an intersectional realm – a time-space both divine and mortal, as the relative cohesion between a remembered, greater before, an inevitable priority, and a created, personal after, a logical posterity – yet another way of attesting the genre of diary as one which prevents its craftsman to declare absolute agency over a beginning or an end. Diary unleashes alternatives for secular axial moments, in the sense I offered Ricoeur's reflections on chronology earlier. An inexhaustive proof of the latter could be found in EBB's regular discussions with Boyd on matters such as the necessity of spiritual enlightenment, steady mental exercise, and conscientious cultivation of patience of mind. Such frequent talks, largely initiated by the diarist herself, export the narrative I out of a state of self-certainty and physical concreteness into a dialogic dynamicity between remembering and imagining as part of a continuity of migrating between two equally unique places and chronologies: her own home at Hope End and Boyd's Ruby Cottage. Both places relate to pivotal patriarchal presences. To this should perhaps be added a persistent communication between student and teacher (EBB – Boyd), nurse and patient (EBB – Boyd), subsequent interpreter and former interpreter of Gregory's word as the word of God (EBB – Boyd). A communication whose

range attracts a diversity of literary material (from Princess Scheherezade to Byron) discovered, recorded, learned, discussed, imagined, and expected with each forthcoming meeting between EBB and Boyd as a kind of being in a parallel world. This world could be viewed as an interim between Elizabeth's feeling at the right place in her home with her dear father and the solitude she experienced at her home dominated by an exacting patriarch – her father (DEBB, 9 Sep 1831 – 22 Oct 1831, pp. 122-164). The attitude Elizabeth assumes to Papa, Boyd, Chrysostom and Gregory could also be argued to reflect a trait of nineteenth-century mentality, as Linda Anderson maintains: "a gradual alignment of autobiography with the value accorded to authorship," whereby an anxiety about revealing "the private self" shares ground with the establishment of "literary genius" through external intervention (Anderson, 2001, p. 7). The ostensible self-shielding, secrecy and independence of diary narrative in terms of the control that the author exerts in "the 'intentional' meaning or truth of the text", however, could also be seen as a trope: "prosopopoeia, […], the giving of a face, or personification" (ibid., pp. 3, 12-13), whereby self-telling "produce[s] fictions or figures in place of the self-knowledge [it] seek[s]". In other words, the autobiographer inscribes herself within her work as she strives to produce a "face", in which act she conceals "[her] own fictionalization or displacement by writing" (ibid.). This, Anderson concludes (reiterating Paul de Man), is an "epitaphic" act. Autobiography is a journey toward the attainment of an end: Its target is self-fulfillment, which implies also a sense of limit, yet it defies completion for it shows the author's chronic inability to eye-witness their own birth.

To Elizabeth, John Chrysostom proves another pivotal source of wisdom: the balance and connection between body and spirit, part and whole, one man and another. Brooding and demanding in his manner of self-expression, Chrysostom is likely to have served as a stylistic role model for EBB. In his *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* and the *Epistle to the Romans*, John Chrysostom suggests that learning could be compared to curing physical infirmities and overcoming intellectual deficits whereby more acute cases demand "more advanced subjects of instruction" (Chrysostom, 1889b, *Homily XLIX on Acts xxiii. 6-8,* p. 545). If God's holy soul "comprised the whole world" (houses, wives, children, events, cities, nations etc.; ibid., p. 546), then a conscientious perusal of his holy word would be a perusal of items constitutive of the wholeness of man's life. EBB would have been attracted by such holistic, relational hermeneutics: The co-dependence between one man and another, producer and recipient of meaning, God and his apostles, past and present, a core language of utterance and an interpretative register (e.g. the holy word – Chrysostom's commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, and then – EBB's own diary). Her self-reflective turn seems to be of religious descent. It could be assumed that Elizabeth shared a view of suffering as a steadier and more efficient means of experiential maturation and

appreciation of identity, even beyond the promise of actual recognition from others (Chrysostom, 1889a, *Homily VIII: Ephesians IV*: 1, 2, 162-163), and a belief in the laboriousness of accumulating knowledge through assuming the guilt of others upon oneself, through amassment of sadness on one's journey toward wisdom in communion with others, of whom one partakes and who partake of one's life on earth. Chrystom's directness and determination of argument, his individualized, self-respecting, yet self-interrogating style must have been contagious: In her diary, Elizabeth identifies herself through suffering. Chrysostom says: "I deem it more desirable to suffer evil for Christ's sake, than to receive honor at Christ's hands" (p. 163, emphasis added). Like Chrysostom (ibid., pp. 187-88), cautiously, Elizabeth works out a dual recognition of ostensibly disparate elements (body and spirit, one man and another, divine and human) of a discursive whole ("all things are common, and one has nothing more than another"), arguing emotional and intellectual interconnection between Self and Other to be the core of being.

In *Glimpses into My Own Life and Literary Character* (1820) a fourteen-year-old Elizabeth admits: "I worshipped God, heart and soul [,] but I forgot that my prayers should be pure & simple as the Father I adored" (Barrett, 1974, p. 126). Insincerity and illiteracy are amongst her worst fears, as her diary also reveals. John's Gospel and St. John Chrysostom's commentaries, which she herself interprets in her diary, grow to be Elizabeth's particular interest to the extent that she develops a penchant for two doctrines: "Election & perseverance" (26 Sept 1831, p. 140). EBB's worries are, ultimately and even at moments of excruciating grief for her mother, those of a follower of a paternally originating divine word. She might protest against Chrysostom's "monotony & lengthiness" in his commentary on Ephesians, yet as she plods through the Greek Christian Poets' writings a sense of subalternity emerges – she interprets under the auspices of Boyd who sets a standard for her to pursue (5 Jun, 20 Jun, 11 Sept, 27 Aug 1831, pp. 4, 24, 125). Undoubtedly, a trouble on her mind seems to be the doctrine of redemption, one aspect of which could be redemption through death. She records an episode with a woman (a Mrs. Best) who believes "that all <u>may</u> be saved; but that the blood of Christ was shed only for those who <u>are</u> saved" (12 Sept 1831, p. 125). The closing sentence of the very same day's record, however, indicates that Elizabeth may have been haunted by a sense of insufficiency and self-dissatisfaction, finding herself confined to a rigid space that Biblical studies would provide her with: "The Greek testament was all the Greek which I read today" (ibid.). Chrysostom accompanies her to Ruby Cottage, where Boyd resides: "Chrysostom Ann [sic] & I set off at about half past eight"; later that day, she explores "Holiness & Temperance" in view of Chrysostom's "heterodoxy about original sin" and the lot of the ill-fated ('δυσμορος'), as she apparently also considers the actuality of her developing infatuation with Boyd (15 Sept 1831, p. 128). When with Boyd, she seems intrigued by his reaction to Biblical

texts – sometimes more than by actual interpretation of the Bible she herself might be involved in. Such an attitude can be said to help fictionalize both holy words and Boyd as characters in a private perception of time her diary exhibits as part of the greater cosmology of natural time that her own household is also part of (21 Jun 1831, p. 26). It would define the space of a unique participant, set her apart from all the members of her own family yet make her an especially cherished team-worker in a greater, beyond the *I*, narrative that would have commenced prior to her birth, inclusive of characters such as Chrysostom or Gregory Nazianzen. She could not be happier as when sharing the experience of immersing herself into the Fathers with another person: "I do like & admire Gregory's prose!! — & I enjoy reading a beautiful style so much the more, when I can read it with one who enjoys it too — when I <ˆcan> read it with M^r^. Boyd" (19 Sept 1831, p. 132). Disclaiming Gregory as "not a great poet, scarcely a real poet" (27 Aug 1831, p. 105), she nonetheless clings to Gregory because he seems to be a preferred by Boyd source of study, Boyd being the one to sanction – certainly in the period 1828 –1832 – Elizabeth's progress with Ancient Greek and with literature.

EBB's curiosity about the 'temporal movement' ('χρουικου κωημα') is hemmed with a deeper motivation to discover the connecting tissue between herself and her tutor (Boyd), between part and whole, original text and translation, actual (written) word and imagined (oral) speech, self and non-self. She wishes to unravel, to analyze literature as an all-encompassing, life-sustaining phenomenon (DEBB, 26 Jan 1832, pp. 210 – 11):

> Began to read over Gregory's oration, — & even to translate it: not with the intention of showing my translation to M^r^ Boyd or any body else, not with the wish of competing with him; but *that by translating the whole I might have clearer idea of parts, & might save him the trouble of «thinking» on some points which appeared to both of us, obscure*. I shall not even tell him of my having translated it. (emphasis added)

Afraid of her imperfections as a translator, she postulates translation as a medium of communication not only between Present and Past but between two living individuals who use the same mother tongue. Thus, she articulates her perception of the interpreter's being as the cusp between visible and invisible discourse, as well as between temporality and a-temporality: a form, also, of trans-substantive trade between written text as masculine fact (tangibility, pastness) and interpretation as feminine fiction (intangibility, futurity). EBB's correspondence with Boyd in the period 1829 – 1832 evidences of her fascination with etymology as an intellectual pastime: discovering the connection between word and idea. Tracing origins, she encompasses literature as a dialogue in, and with, time and space (BC, 3, 1985, Jul 1832, pp. 29-32):

> I have read Hebrew regularly every day since I told you of my beginning Genesis, — and I am now more than half thro' Genesis, & began to relax a little from the lexicon. From its being a primitive language it is very interesting in a philosophical point of view. *I like to find the roots of words & ideas at the same time.* (emphasis added)

In the same letter she proceeds with a disquisition on Lord Byron's death, declaring that "the poet & his poetry are quite identified, and you could not at any time, read one, without thinking of the other" (ibid.). Others' words burn her soul indeed. EBB's literary exploits double up "the referential world" in the "act of boundary-crossing" between the experienced and the possible, the real and the fictive, Self and Other (Iser, 1993, p. xiv). This would also explain the kind of life-sustaining co-habitation between self-reflection and commentary on literary works written by various other writers in EBB's diary. In effect, and as Levinas argues in *Totality and Infinity*, "discourse is not simply a modification of intuition (or of thought), but an original relation with exterior being' whose absolute 'alterity', or 'transcendence' in respect of the viewer/writer declares a possibility, or condition of speech and discourse as such – in 'a drama that has begun outside of [interlocutors]'" (Levinas, 1979, pp. 66, 194, 202, 209). Loss of such alterity would destabilize the writer's props of being. An alterity that has been domesticated as the autobiographer's innermost givenness, or foundation of being, which creates a sense of "genus" by "calling for one another by [way of …] exclusion" (ibid., p. 194).

An Overcrowded House, or One amidst Others

In her diary EBB leaves provocative traces of her diverse, unflagging, and meticulous reading: Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Pindar, Anacreon, Sappho, Virgil, Marie de France, Boiardo, Shakespeare, Camões, Milton, La Bruyère, E. Burke, Cowper, Goldsmith, Richardson, Molière, Goethe, A. Radcliffe, R. Burns, all the major Romantics (Mary Shelley especially), J. Baillie, Letitia Landon, John Wesley and the Greek Christian Fathers. Conscious of her ambitions, EBB nonetheless tries to bridle a sense of superiority over other women of the neighbourhood which her diary describes. She narrates of some fairly frequent yet not so pleasant encounters whereby she feels like an intellectual giant amidst dwarves[4] yet she demonstrates a sense of decorum.

4. Germaine de Staël's Corinne (1807), which EBB mentions (in a letter to Boyd of 9 June 1832) to have read three times, must have fascinated the young writer with the heroine's conversationalism, power of intellect yet nostalgia over unfulfilled love (DEBB, p. 220, n. 6; BC, 3, pp. 24-27). In Book XIV, chapter I, Corinne sees herself as a Gulliver "chained" by the Lilliputians. Corinne's stepmother's pernicious and superficial ways threaten her studious nature to the effect of wasting four yours of the young poetess's life, which creates an unbridgeable existential chasm in her (De Staël, 1833, p. 240). Here is Corinne's own ex-

This duality of self-portraiture – a state of negotiation between excess of intellect yet insufficiency of self-respect – calls for the ghost of a literary role model which her diary documents: John Milton. EBB could be perceived as "Fancy's child/ … married to immortal verse/ … Untwisting all the chains that tie/ The hidden soul of harmony" (Milton, *L'Allegro*, l. 132-133, 137, 143-144) with a mind unquiet, capable of making "a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven' (Milton, *Paradise Lost*, B. I, ll. 255).[5]

Guilt, self-mourning, and fixation on physical failure, just as well as the expectation of some apocalyptic resolution of human imperfection, hover over EBB's diary. At the same time, diary permits a path for a woman's resolve to pursue spiritual integrity. From "exercise[s] in crying" through E. Young's *Night Thoughts* over past time as irrevocable loss (DEBB, 15 Jun 1831, p. 17), to a self-lacerating wish to "erase every line" of her own "heart & mind" and annihilate "the feelings, <^together> with the descriptions of them" (16 Jun, 1831, p. 19), toiling over Prometheus in translating for herself and for Boyd (6 Feb 1832, p. 214), condemning her own "weak moral sense" as a "worshipper of M^rs^. Radcliffe" (9 Jul 1831, p. 51), lamenting Keats' unhappy and unappreciated lot (18 Aug 1831, p. 93), contemplating Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control* and Richardson's *Clarissa* while "comparing scripture with scripture" (14 Sept 1831, p. 127), Elizabeth seems to be considering, if indirectly, putting a full stop to her own story – by way of referring to Sappho's supposed fatal "leap of forgetfulness", for instance (27 Sept 1831, p. 142). The diarist strives to prolong yet complete, to engender yet sum up, to promote yet delimit Self. Diary may be viewed as struggle for, and against, Self – in narratorial as well as even just in physical terms. What we have is the tactility of story contained in a book-body against the limitlessness of form and content of self-expression in real-life. An Other looms over Elizabeth's self-writing. This Other is part of the diplomacy between the accurately documented and the fictionalized. George Gusdorf indicates that diary emblematizes "the presence of spirit of a world forever gone" (Gusdorf, 1980, pp. 38-40): The diarist strives to capture that which might have been and give it continuity by way of interpreting their own place amidst the presences of others. The written text becomes an opportunity for re-assemblage of oneself "in [one's] own likeness at a certain moment of

posure of her loneliness and severe self-ostracizing dissatisfaction with her own weakness of mind (a sense which prevails over EBB's diary also): "My mind grew dull, and, in spite of me, was filled by trifles. Where no interest is taken in science, literature, and liberal pursuits, mere facts and insignificant criticisms necessarily become the themes of discourse; [….]. There was no enjoyment near me save in a certain methodical regularity, whose desire was that of reducing all things to its own level; […]. The ill will I innocently excited, joined with my sense of the void all round me, seemed to check even my breath" (ibid.).

5. See also diary entry of 19 Sept 1831, DEBB, pp. 133-34.

[one's] history" – an ontological addition of oneself to oneself as one sketches one's own 'being in time' (ibid. 43, 45).[6]

Scholars on female self-life-writing and Victorian poetry by women have stressed the female diarist's borderline position: Between mind and soul, body and spirit, external and internal world, secular discourse and devotional preaching, passivity and agency over Self, recollected and recollecting.[7] In her seminal study *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir points at woman wishing to run away from herself "in a state of distraction and mental vacancy" (Beauvoir, 1956, pp. 439, 509, 587), striving to showcase herself through speech, at the same time suppressing her own will. The interstice between self-escape and self-acceptance is where EBB's diary resides. Elizabeth is prone to mourning her own invisibility and anonymity in the patriarchal domain of Hope End: "As if I were both soulless & boneless" (DEBB, 12 Aug 1831, p. 87). The same feature could be seen as part of the author's agenda of self-promotion. She seems to be most productive when most unwell.[8] Antithetical definition of Self is a distinctive trait of female life-writing.

6. Philippe Lejeune describes diary as "the author's own search for a seductive and convincing form to express the truth of a self and a history" (Lejeune, 2009, p. 216). The possibility and legitimacy of verifying the past, with a greater or lesser dose of truthfulness or mendacity, not least in terms of the chronicle of time that diary sustains, is inextricably bound to the past history of the autobiographical text's author, but because writing itself (as process and product) is part of the diary's own genesis (ibid., pp. 214), diary promotes a peculiar form of concrete literary precedence that predates yet parallels the text itself. By Lejeune's definition, such literary precedence could be termed "avant-texte" and while fiction and poetry naturally welcome precedents (i.e. an older, prefiguring text), diaries would normally not have one (ibid.). However, EBB's diary's beginning (Adam's awareness of, and shame for, his own nakedness) clearly indicates a desire to reciprocate to an avant-texte (Genesis, 3: 7-12) as well as to her already established nihilistic self-regard preceded by a textual before (i.e. the implied burning of her other papers). The deixis of EBB's beginning ("this sheet of paper", "most others", "in the same way"; "the thoughts of my heart as well as of my head"; "And such a mind as I have"; (DEBB, 4 Jun 1831, p. 1), emphasis added) is at once introspective, escapist, and responsive. So is the ending: It is about Mr. Boyd (who asks her to spend time with him but advises her to seek Papa's permission for that), about Elizabeth's disbelief in her obtaining permission and about her leaving in the pouring rain (with an unpunctuated last "Left"). While she struggles against time, "pinning down the present" as the memory of someone else always, she "yields to time," "atomizing" it in moments which retrieve the invaluable in and from her own experience: Writing her own life, she practices a mnemonic skill which promises no absolute accuracy, as what she herself could remember properly and write about uniquely would always be something else for another reader of her diary further in time (Lejeune, 2009, p. 170).

7. See, for instance: Eakin, 1992, pp. 181, 183, 200-201; Lewis, 2005, pp. 7-8, 10; Blake, 1986, pp. 387-388, 391; Ryan, 2008, pp. 254, 269.

8. By comparison, in their autobiographical writing, both Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf display high awareness of physical and psychic disorder (headaches, toothache, heartaches, blurred vision, life-jeopardizing abstractions and day-dreaming). Dysfunction-

One prefiguration of this can be perceived in Fanny Burney's *Journals* (1768 – 1840) – a hybrid of her letters to family and friends. From the start Burney makes of her own shyness an identity card stamped uniquely by the clever invention of an imaginary interlocutor to whom she appeals: "To Nobody, then, will I write my Journal! Since to Nobody can I be wholly unreserved […]. From Nobody I have nothing to fear, […] (Burney, 2002, p. 53). The double negation in the last sentence kindles a positive affirmation: Self-displacement throws the author's identity into relief. Burney is well known to have allowed time between events and epistolary re-narrative in her journal which shows a particular sensitivity for writing as therapeutic re-experiencing of physical pain, or illness – a feature known as pathography. One peculiar instance of the latter is Burney's memoiristic account of the mastectomy she underwent in Paris on 30 September 1811 – an occasion threatening to compromise a woman's integrity of body and mind. The story emerges half a year later (ibid., pp. 298-305), thus affording a reserve of temporal distance between the primordially experienced and the aesthetically recollected. One result of this is a peak of emotionalism in the re-experienced by way of narration that works like a plot engine in a life conscientiously composed of written messages to addressees expected to confirm and preserve the author's escapist, at times self-annihilating intimations of a sense of imprisonment and despair. For instance, the incident at Kew Gardens, when Burney is pursued by an ill King George III (1 – 9 February 1789, ibid., pp. 251-254), or the episode of her considering the possibility of burning her papers (20 April 1838, ibid., p. 360).

Leafing through *Journal of Katherine Mansfield* (1928), which her husband, John Middleton Murry collated out of a myriad of notebooks (many of which barely written in) he edited, one stumbles over a curious occasion of the discrepancy between the volume of intention and the volume of achievement in terms of self-life-writing. An instance of self-narrative dependent on the sanction of the autobiographer's husband is *A Writer's Diary* (1953) – the diary of Virginia Woolf, compiled by Leonard Woolf. These two modernist autobiographical documents – Mansfield and Woolf's journals – deserve their own research, but perhaps just one or two incidental fragments could serve to contextualize Barrett's steady split between two states equally potent in defining woman's self-writing as a buffer zone between dread of finitude (counterbalanced by a sense of writing as duty) and dread of perpetuity (counterbalanced by the perishability of personal memory). The two types of dread justify self-parade while they also vindicate the priority of an axial Other. Mansfield writes: "I ought to work at [my story] all day, – all day and into the night if necessary. […]

---

ality itemizes female Self: It opens a niche for the author to emerge as an amorphous entity in need of shaping/curing by an exterior (male) artisan to whom the narrative seems to cling instinctively. In addition, head problems and infertility feature in Woolf and create a multi-faceted metaphor or writing as regeneration (e.g. Woolf, 1959, 2 Oct 1934, p. 226; 5 Jun 1938, p. 295).

But my anxious heart is eating up my body, eating up my nerves, eating up my brain;" (2 Jan 1915, 21 Jan 1915); "I am (December 15, 1919) a dead woman, and I don't' care" (15 Dec 1919) (Mansfield, 1928, pp. 19, 134). She aims at self-improvement yet her writing seems inchoate: "Everything in life that we really accept undergoes a change. So suffering must become Love. This is the mystery. This is what I must do. I must pass from personal love to greater love. I must give to the whole of life what I gave to one" (1920); "[…] what I am doing has no form" (Sept 1921) (ibid., pp. 167, 193). Similarly, dread of vanity and of inaction resides in Woolf: "Why is life so tragic; so like a strip of pavement over an abyss. I look down; I feel giddy; I wonder how I am ever to walk to the end. […] Melancholy diminishes as I write. Why then don't I write it down oftener? Well, one's vanity forbids. […]. It's having no children, living away from friends, failing to write well, […]. I think too much of whys and wheretofores; too much of myself. I don't like time to flap round me" (Woolf, 1959, 25 Oct 1920, p. 29). The writer hesitates to proclaim her exact place amidst others; she fears others might consume the room of her own she has made for herself through her diary: "The only difficulty is to hold myself back from writing others" (17 Oct 1924, p. 68); "How I interest myself! Quite set up and perky today with a mind brimming because I was so damnably depressed and smacked on the cheek by Edwin Muir in the *Listener*" (2 Apr 1937, p. 280).

As an autobiographer, EBB subjects herself to merciless religious self-contemplation through biblical studies and reading in the original from Ancient Greek and Hebrew, implying guilt almost as a condition for writing as self-expiation, disallowing herself the comfort of an ample sense of achievement, tormented, Macbeth-like, by an "Amen" stuck in her throat upon "the death of each day's life, sore labour's bath" (*Macbeth*, II, ii, ll. 33-34, 39; DEBB, 4 Jun 1831, p. 2). Sinful without a sin committed, she epitomizes the Victorian woman artist – sanctioned by prototypical masculinity at the family estate where she finds loopholes to release her genius through laborious interpretative endeavours (such as translation of classical works). She is exacerbated by the whimsical ways of H. S. Boyd who stimulates yet rebuffs her as his agent and literary amanuensis, praising her yet denying her a rightful place as translator and writer (e.g. DEBB, 4 Jun 1831, pp. 1-2).

Conclusive Reflections

Like the sonneteer Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth seems to have been guided by her own "partial Muse" who smiled "on the rugged path" she took as a writer. Nineteenth-century women poets were to taste the "delusive art" of literary composition which first "decked the head with many a rose" but reserved "the thorn" for later (*Sonnet I*, *The Partial Muse*, Charlotte Smith, 1782, ll. 1-2, 5-8). To achieve liberty of spirit and true poetic recognition, Elizabeth was to leave

home – never to win back, after her secret marriage to Robert Browning on 12 Sept 1846 and her immediate subsequent departure for Italy, her father's respect.

EBB's diary appears to be what Ricoeur would address as a sanctuary for "shared events of knowledge" where literary memory and memory of the actually experienced participate in a unique trade which blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction, as well as between oneself and another – a kind of humanitarian inter-referentiality between viewer and viewed, recollected and produced afresh via the reassemblage-genesis of Self and Other (Ricoeur, 2006, pp. 38, 165). In her later poetical works, crediting the word of others, the poet begins to feel anonymous; her sense of wholeness crumbles down (despite her confirmed by that time professional recognition). Of her own name she predicts: "Though I write books it will be read / Upon the leaves of none, / And afterward, when I am dead, / Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread, / Across my funeral-stone" (*The Pet-Name*, 1838, p. ll. 11-15). Fatalistic strokes nuance her mature poetry, from around *The Seraphim and Other Poems* (1838) onwards. Perceiving herself as a student of Theocritus, travelling across time and space on the wings of poesy, her hair getting pulled by 'a mystic Shape' (to materialize as Love, in *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, I, ll. 1, 9-14), Elizabeth was never to find peace, always conscious of the call to respond to a preliminary Other contained in authorial intention. Emmanuel Levinas describes this phenomenon as "the radical impossibility of seeing oneself from the outside and of speaking in the same sense of oneself and of the others, and consequently the impossibility of totalization," whereby memory of lived experience, including the experience of reading, would invert historical time and give birth to interiority as the time of "truth sought in the other" (Levinas, 1979, pp. 53, 56, 62): Other people, other literary voices, other species of artistic self-expression (poetic as well as prose-fiction). A hermeneutic exchange, based on the "asymmetry"' between Self and Other, in favour of Other as the core of the literary act, as Levinas propounds in *Totality and Infinity*. EBB strives for an identity of her own: In her diary, narrative emerges as a negotiation between her self-affirmative will to survive and her self-negating resolve to suffer for the sake of a higher ideal. The story of her mind is the story of her being "both for death and [of still having] time, [...] against death" (ibid., p. 235). A struggle against, and for, oneself through writing.

References

Anderson, L. (2001). *Autobiography*. London & New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203181652.

Barrett, E. (1974). Two autobiographical essays by Elizabeth Barrett. *Browning Institute Studies, 2*(March), 119–134. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0092472500000407.

BC. (1984-1985). *The Brownings' correspondence*. Vols 2-3 (1827-1837). Ph. Kelley, & R. Hudson (Eds.). Wedgestone Press.

Beauvoir, S. de. (1956). *The second sex*. H. M. Parshley, London: Jonathan Cape.

Benstock, Sh. (1999). The Female Self Engendered: Autobiographical writing and theories of Selfhood. In A. B. Kimmich, & M. W. Brownley (Eds.), *Women and autobiography*. (pp. 3-13). Rowman & Littlefield.

Blake, K. (1986). Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Wordsworth: The Romantic poet as woman. *Victorian Poetry, 24*(4), 387–398.

Blodgett, H. (1989). A woman writer's diary: Virginia Woolf revisited. *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism, 12*(1), 57–71. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01440358908586360.

Brown, S. A. (1997). Paradise Lost and Aurora Leigh. *Studies in English Literature, 1500 - 1900, 37*(4), 723–740. https://doi.org/10.2307/451068.

Browning, E. B. (1969). *Diary by E.B.B.: The unpublished diary of Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, 1831-1832*. (Ph. Kelley & R. Hudson, Eds.). Ohio University Press.

BC, 2. Browning, R., & Browning, E. B. (1984). *The Brownings' correspondence 1827-1831*, Volume 2. (Ph. Kelley & R. Hudson, Eds.). Wedgestone Press.

BC, 3. Browning, R., & Browning, E. B. (1984). *The Brownings' correspondence 1832-1837*, Volume 3. (Ph. Kelley & R. Hudson, Eds.). Wedgestone Press.

Browning, E. B. (2010). *The works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Five Volumes*. (S. Donaldson, Ed.). London: Pickering & Chatto.

Burney, F. (2002). *A known scribbler: Frances Burney on literary life*. (J. Crump, Ed.). Broadview Literary Texts.

Carpenter, M. W. (2010). *Health, medicine, and society in Victorian England*. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Chrysostom, St. I - 13. (1889a). *Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*. Series I, Vol. 13. (Ph. Schaff, Ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Retrieved 20 January, 2022, from https://www.ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf113/cache/npnf113.pdf.

Chrysostom, St. I - 11. (1889b). *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans. Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*. Series I, Vol. 11. (Ph. Schaff, Ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal. Retrieved 20 January, 2022, from https://ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf111/cache/npnf111.pdf.

Dennis, B. (1996). *Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The hope end years*. Soren.

De Man, P. (1979). Autobiography as de-facement. *MLN, 94*(5), Comparative Literature (Dec., 1979), 919–930. Retrieved 24 May, 2023, https://doi.org/10.2307/2906560.

De Staël, G. (1833). *Corinne; or, Italy*. (I. Hill, Trans.). London: Richard Bentley.

Dickens, Ch. (1996). *David Copperfield*. The Reader's Digest Association Limited.

Eakin, P. J. (1992). *Touching the world. Reference in autobiography*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400820641

Feldman, P. R. (Ed.) (2000). *British women poets of the Romantic era. An anthology*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Forster, M. (2004). *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. Vintage, 2004.

Gray, Th. *Odes.* Retrieved 16 April, 2023, from https://www.thomasgray.org/cgi-bin/view.cgi?collection=primary&edition=1757#9.

Gregory (2006). *Gregory of Nazianzus. The Early Church Fathers*. (Br. E. S. J. Daley, Ed.). London and New York: Routledge.

Gusdorf, G. (1980). Conditions and limits of autobiography. In J. Olney (Trans & Ed.), *Autobiography. Essays theoretical and critical* (pp. 28-48). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 48). https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400856312.28.

Hayter, A. (1962). *Mrs. Browning. A poet's work and its setting*. London: Faber and Faber.

Hickok, K. (1981). The spinster in Victorian England: Changing attitudes in popular poetry by women. *Journal of Popular Culture, XV*, 119–131. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1981.1503_119.x.

Iser, W. (1993). *The fictive and the imaginary. Charting literary anthropology*. Baltimore - London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.56021/9780801844980.

Iser, W. (2000). *The range of interpretation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Isom, R. (2019). The female enthusiast: Nineteenth-century women and the poetics of inspiration. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Retrieved 22 January, 2022, from https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/concern/dissertations/qr46r518r?locale=en.

Karlin, D. (1987). *The courtship of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett*. Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press.

LaPorte, Ch. (2013). Victorian literature, religion, and secularization. *Literaure Compass, 10*(3), 277–287. https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12049.

Lejeune, Ph. (2009). *On Diary*. (J. D. Popkin, Ed.).(K. Durnin, Trans.). The University of Hawai'i Press.

Lewis, L. (2005). Elizabeth Barrett Browning: A poet's quest for ultimate reality. Ultimate *Reality and Meaning, 28*(1), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.3138/uram.28.1.4.

Levinas, E. (1979). *Totality and infinity. An essay on exteriority*. (A. Lingis, Trans.). The Hague - Boston - London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-9342-6.

Mansfield, K. (1928). *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*. (J. M. Murry, Ed.). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Milton, J. (1994). *The collected poems of John Milton*. The Wordsworth Poetry Library.

Ricoeur. P. (2006). *Memory, history, forgetting*. (K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, Trans.). Chicago - London: The University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1994). *Oneself as another*. (K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, Trans.). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1990). *Time and narrative*. Vol. 3. (K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, Trans.). Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.

Ryan, Br. (2008). "Echo and reply": The elegies of Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and Elizabeth Barrett. *Victorian Poetry, 46*(3), 249–277. https://doi.org/10.1353/vp.0.0027.

Shakespeare, W. (1995). *The complete works*. (W. J. Craig, Ed.). London: Henry Pordes.

Woolf, V. (1959). *A writer's diary*. (L. Woolf, Ed.). Hogarth Press.

Wordsworth, W. (1994). *The works of William Wordsworth*. The Wordsworth Poetry Library.

THE AUTOFICTIONAL AILING SELF: DEPRESSION IN SYLVIA PLATH'S *THE BELL JAR* AND CELLA SERGHI'S *THE SPIDER'S WEB* – A COMPARISON[1]

Hristo Boev

Department of English Studies, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, Shumen, Bulgaria

Abstract: *During the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging from it many people went through depressive states, sometimes with a lethal outcome. Depression, however, can be caused by numerous factors not expressly necessitating a global cataclysm, invariably remaining a particular personal response to a perceived strong sensation of discomfort and loss of meaning in one's life. This paper will examine the major novels by two writers – the American Sylvia Plath and the Romanian Cella Serghi with the purpose of comparing the autofictional representations of depression in both, paying attention to its causes, courses, and outcomes. The comparative analysis will also establish the power of autofiction as a phenomenon and its capacity of producing texts with interdisciplinary dimensions containing a universal appeal. By examining two autofictional responses to an identical issue – the modern disease occasioned by similar causes, the paper aims to provide potential solutions that might have worked to a healing effect in the other text with the potential to transcend the texts in question and be applied to real-life situations since the described incidents have already happened not once and not only as part of the lived experience of the two writers. Last but not least, by effectuating the comparison the article seeks to help promote an author from a smaller national literature to the realms of World Literature.*

Keywords: *autofiction, World Literature, phenomenology, depression, lived experience*

About the author: *Hristo Boev, Ph.D. is an associate professor of English and American Literature at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Shumen, Bulgaria. He is the author of the published monographs: Modern(ist) Portrayals of the City in Dickens and Dos Passos: Similarities, Differences, Continuities, The Different Dobruja in the Literature between the Wars (original title in Bulgarian) and Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath's Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction. He is also a translator of English, Romanian and Bulgarian 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.*

e-mail: *h.boev@shu.bg* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6933-3167*

Copyright © 2023 Hristo Boev

Article history: Received: 5 May 2023; Reviewed: 1 July 2023; Revised: 2 July 2023; Accepted: 4 July 2023; Published: 28 August 2023

This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Boev, H. (2023). The autofictional ailing self: Depression in Sylvia Plath's The bell jar and Cella Serghi's The spider's web – A comparison. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 110-129. https://doi.org/10.46687/WTPR9075.

1. Based on the author's monograph *Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath's Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction* (2021). – a. n.

According to WHO, more than 700 000 people take their own lives every year with approximately 280 million people in the world suffering from depression. Unsurprisingly, depression has been a source of numerous autofictional explorations many of them rife with ethical issues. A major American classic from the early 1960s, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) and a less known Romanian novel from the late 1930s, Cella Serghi's *The Spider's Web* (*Pânza de păianjen*) (1938) provide different answers to dealing with the disease as part of the writers' lived experience. These works are comparable by 21-century standards since such an analysis employs a combination of approaches: *historical and geographical – different locations and times*; *thematic – comparing occurrences of a particular topic in different literary periods*; *cultures in minor languages (Romanian) become the subject of inherently acceptable comparisons in a major language such as English*; *canon vs countercanon*[2] (Hutchinson, 2018, pp. 19-34). It is interesting to note that both authors were going through a very difficult phase in their lives, being abandoned by their husbands, at the time of writing the novels, with Plath portraying an earlier episode when depression had struck harder – the summer of 1953 and with Serghi describing a much more recent event in her life. Far from glorifying or victimizing themselves, they produced accounts with poignant insights into the suffering feminine self, showcasing the potential immense capabilities of women writing in distress. In the Forward to a recent study, *Autofiction in English*, Isabelle Grell (2018) confirms these writing possibilities: "it [autofiction] can only be developed from persons, conscious of themselves and of the fact of living in a group that sustains them, denigrates them or simply ignores them, in a world where it is necessary to tell, just to tell, and tell justly, raising their own voice to divulge the flip side of life" (p. vi). Apart from claiming that autofiction tells the untellable, this also asks the question if writing as an omniscient narrator could make a case of autofiction. In the same study, Lorna Martens answers it positively and gives numerous examples of the advantages of this approach – one of which would be that the story told could be truer to life since the author would not feel the need for self-censorship (Martens, 2018, p. 49). One could even argue for writing in the second person as a sort of a dialogue with oneself or an imaginary someone else to be yet another fascinating possibility, but this is indeed rare. Both Plath and Serghi are autofictive in their novels offering the perspective of a young female first-person narrator in their 20s: *The Bell Jar* is told from

2. Cella Serghi's novel was not included in George Călinescu's monumental anthology of Romanian writers Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent (1941) containing 948 pages due to Serghi's alleged failure to send him her manuscript but has remained in print to this day through multiple reeditions where she kept modifying her text. Călinescu's work canonized some of Serghi's contemporaries together with earlier writers who have been considered canonical ever since. – a. n.

the perspective of a girl called Esther Greenwood[3], *The Spider's Web* features Diana Slavu as its principal narrator; in both the fictional element – non-lived experience is minimal and intricately incorporated in the story to the point of being unrecognizable to a reader unfamiliar with the life facts.

In their fictional forms of life writing both Plath and Serghi join other autofictive writers who have been through a personal trauma and who would like to keep it for the world through the recorded memory of the experience. Grell also has the following to say: "What makes a person an author is that this person speaks to others of a life experience, reflects on it and transforms it in style into a book" (p. vii). To this we could also add the evidence of intent – as Jon Phelan (2020) claims simply: "fiction tends to be written by an author who intended the work to be read as fiction" (Phelan, 2020, p. 9), and that undoubtedly includes autofiction. An umbrella term, life writing[4] seems to be useful and can be said to have two general modes encompassing both fiction and non-fiction: describing one's own experiences and describing someone else's accounts of lived experience – the biographical form. Academic publications nowadays insist on an interdisciplinary approach with contributors from the complete spectrum of the Humanities. The interdisciplinarity thus associated with analyzing autofictive writing is then but a reflection of its intrinsically complex nature. Writing from personal experience with emphasis on veracity invariably encounters a seemingly insurmountable problem. If we consider, for a moment, the rendition of the experience itself in a journal, for example, we will inevitably bump head-on into what has been deemed a major issue of the term *lived experience*, and namely, the capacity of language to render into text what the author has been through – Tzvetan Todorov argues that the end result could only be fiction, literature being but an imitation through language (Todorov, 1973, pp. 5-16). When we read literature, we automatically assume that the language in which we read can do so to a high degree of semblance of the real

3. Possibly after Ethel Greengrass, the latter being the family maiden name of Ethel Rosenberg who was to be electrocuted with her husband in the summer of 1953, an event that shocked Plath profoundly and in her later works (prose and poetry) she kept identifying with Jewish women, recreating imaginary holocausts for her feminine selves in prose and verse. – a. n.

4. A. Effe and H. Lawlor (2022) in the Introduction to The Autofictional: Approaches, Affordances, Forms, discuss the view that life writing may be a better term since autofiction apparently poses too many challenges as to having an uncontested definition (p. 1). For the purposes of this article, autofiction will be understood to be any piece of text whose author intends it to read as fiction and which contains substantial parts directly related to the lived experience of its author, prominently featuring places, events, times, persons that can be recognized by others regardless of their fictional names (real names are occasionally preserved). Texts that have been recognized to be autofictional are A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie (1990) by Herve Guibert, The Bell Jar (1963) by Sylvia Plath and others. – a. n.

thing. That is what makes us avid readers, but there is still the intentionality of the matter, which is what exactly the author intends to consign to paper from what has happened. Further issues could relate to Husserl's *retention* (Husserl, 1991, p. 169) – what has been consciously retained from what has happened, or simply the mood that the autofictive writer is in after the event, as Leonard Woolf succinctly comments on aspects of his wife's approach to her diaries (Woolf, 1982, p. vii). Sylvia Plath herself admits to the uncertainty of diary-keeping in her *Journals,* referring to the post-evaluation of the event which determines the importance of the incident often after the account of it has been consigned to paper (Plath, 2007, p. 24). Irresolvable as this problem appears, it would suffice to admit to certain limitations. We should not forget that the act of writing the self is inevitably linked to "reinventing the self" as Serge Doubrovsky is often quoted as having said or as Grell concludes, "in inscribing the subject in the world, it does not seek to, cannot, categorically refuses to flout the exteriority by which the 'I' is systematically unmade" (Grell, 2018, p. vii), that is, the writer refrains from pointing out where certain embellishments have been applied to the actual lived experience; therefore, there is no glorification of the autobiographical self (the writer). And by way of an indirect response to accusations of self-display that both writers' works incited[5], Grell's conclusion is that "we are very far from the narcissism which the genre has been reproached with, from the mirage of a salutary catharsis on the part of the writer" (p. vii). Even if used as treatment, as it was suggested to Anne Sexton by her therapist (Orne, 1992, p. xiii), writing could be much more useful and cathartic only for the reader – let us not forget that, whether in the confessional mode or not, writers from both sides of the Atlantic such as Plath, Sexton, London, Woolf, Hemingway, Dubarova and D. F. Wallace did commit suicide, so they were not saved or cured by their own writing. In analyzing the reasons for Plath's suicide, Al Alvarez, a Plath's contemporary and close acquaintance, also says it: "for the artist himself art is not necessarily therapeutic; he is not automatically relieved of his fantasies by expressing them. […] The result of handling it in his work may well be that he finds himself living it out" (Alvarez, 1976, p. 38). Alvarez proceeds by agreeing with Oscar Wilde: "For the artist, in short, nature often imitates art. […] when an artist holds a mirror up to nature, he finds out who and what he is; but the knowledge may change him irredeemably so that he becomes that image" (p. 39). In terms of Plath's oeuvres, her *Journals* and *Letters* certainly fall into the category of life writing while biographers have examined all the little details of hers and that of a fellow confessionalist from Boston, Anne Sexton, producing indispensable documents with an expressed author's opinion. It was a small, but very important step to be made towards her other prose – the short stories, novel, and poems – especially the very early

5. See Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath's Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction (Boev, 2021, pp. 14, 64, 242). – a. n.

and late poems where Plath by choosing the confessional mode, created genuine autofictions[6]. Her only novel has as its setting New York but was written and published for the first time in London, just some weeks before her suicide in the fiercely cold winter of 1963 so its author did not live to see its subsequent high critical acclaim or readers' warm reception sadly marred by the negative reactions of her husband Ted Hughes and her mother Aurelia, the latter having felt she had been done injustice in the autofictional representation.

In 1937 the magazine *Revista Fundațiilor* featured the first fragment of the novel *The Spider's Web* initially entitled *First Misunderstandings* (*Cele dintâi nedumeriri*) to be published in 1938. The debut was impressive, and the novel received the high appreciation of the writer Camil Petrescu who had become the man of her adoration. The debut novel was praised by the already well-established Liviu Rebreanu and Mihail Sebastian who contributed to the novel's gaining popularity by supplying a banderol which recommended it to the readers. A year after its publication Serghi won the high praise of the most acclaimed Romanian woman writer of urban literature at the time, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu followed by one of the founders of the new Romanian criticism – Eugen Lovinescu. The novel was highly autobiographical and was a raving success. Despite private protests by Petrescu and Rebreanu who disapproved of the perceived sincerity in her writing, Serghi refused to make the requested modifications (Serghi, 2018, p. 239) and continued with her autobiographical approach in *Mirona* (1975) set in Paris[7]. Another novel followed in 1983 – *The Youth, This Sweet Burden* (*Această dulce povară, tinerețea*). Her first novel, on which the author worked for 5 years, is very important to both Romanian and Bulgarian literature not only because of its memorable characters, but because it contains descriptions of several Bulgarian cities and towns, part of the description of the movements of the family as refugees during WWI. It is set mainly in Bucharest and like Plath's novel features clinical descriptions of depression as experienced by the protagonist-narrator.

In such a discourse of depression albeit mainly in fiction, a medical definition would certainly be in order. The editors of the highly detailed *Manic-Depressive*

6. A masculine counterpart to Plath's novel, J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye (1951) could be called mock autofiction since it pretends to be telling a true story, but the story is completely invented. – a. n.

7. The goal was authenticity in fiction, without turning it into autofiction or writing from experience in such a manner that it would be unrecognizable – autofiction in disguise. In his essay "Originality and Authenticity" (Originalitate și autenticitate) (1934, pp. 174-8) Mircea Eliade examines the two principles: if originality presupposes individuality, authenticity is guaranteed by universality, so he says: "Telling a personal experience does not mean using a certain formula. It means expressing and thinking in facts. The more authentic you are, more yourself, the less personal you are, the more you express a universal experience or knowledge" (Eliade, 1934, p. 177). – a. n.

Illness: Bipolar Disorder and Recurrent Depression, Frederick Goodwin and Key Jamison (2007) with their opening lines remind us of the very old general perception that "melancholia is the beginning and a part of mania", the latter being nothing but the worsening of the disease (melancholia) (Goodwin & Jamison, 2007, p. xix). The editors of the eleventh edition of *Kaplan and Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry* (2015) indicate that "although the DSM-5[8] distinguishes major depressive disorder from generalized anxiety disorder, most clinicians are aware that these are often overlapping symptoms and conditions in clinical practice" (Sadock et al., 2015, p. 2). The latter discuss *major depression* and *bipolar disorder* as two distinct psychiatric conditions (p. 347). They also provide the following succinct description of a major depressive episode; many elements of which certainly can be found in Plath's well documented depressive episodes, also present in *The Bell Jar*:

> A major depressive disorder occurs without a history of a manic, mixed, or hypomanic episode. A major depressive episode must last at least 2 weeks, and typically a person with a diagnosis of a major depressive episode also experiences at least four symptoms from a list that includes changes in appetite and weight, changes in sleep and activity, lack of energy, feelings of guilt, problems thinking and making decisions, and recurring thoughts of death or suicide (Sadock et al., 2015, p. 347).

Goodwin and Jamison in their discussion of famous patients refer to both Plath's *Journals* and her only novel, *The Bell Jar*, where they cite that Plath was aware she had a depression, but they also suggest that she might have been bipolar based on the description of the symptoms of the depression that Plath experienced and that she makes in her novel, concluding that "Sylvia Plath, probably bipolar, [was] certainly hospitalized and treated for severe depression" (Goodwin & Jamison, 2007, p. 70). If they are right, Plath could have benefited from the lithium treatment her fellow confessional from Boston, Robert Lowell received, but instead she was subjected to the cruel ECT shocks without anesthesia (also described in her novel) which were supposed to resolve her depressive episode, but which she viewed as pure torture and which did not help her stabilize her well documented moods which greatly oscillated between euphoria and dysphoria. Cella Serghi has never been so fully researched and the depression she experienced (reflected in her first novel) could be considered to have been occasioned by multiple factors involving trauma, excluding the possibility of a bipolar disorder.

In her influential *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Susan Sontag (2001) points out to the presence of certain metaphors associated with

8. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Diseases. It is the standard classification of mental disorders used by mental health professionals in the USA, the number 5 representing the 5th revision from the year 2013. – a. n.

the respective diseases. Nation-specific and period-dependent, *depression* is presented as clearly unromantic. Unsurprisingly, it "has supplanted the romantic notion of melancholy" (Sontag, 2001, p. 43). So, she defines it as "melancholy minus its charms – the animation, the fits" (p. 43). Again, from the 19th century, we have numerous fictional representations of melancholy related to depression as in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" where the main protagonist is pale, apathetic, sedentary, and suffering from an unknown undiagnosed disease. Both depression and melancholy may be the result of a totally different condition, state, or in the case of the latter – a temperament: for instance, melancholy in Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and Dimcho Debelyanov's "I Want to Remember You Like That" (*Искам да те помня все така*) where we have the beautiful melancholic aesthetics of represented sadness arising from terminal tuberculosis. Clinical depression could be the byproduct of a different disease, as Sontag also indicates, including tuberculosis, cancer, or AIDS (p. 100). We should also be aware of the enormous potential of depression to serve as a global metaphor for totalitarian oppression as demonstrated in numerous dystopian novels where the characters tend to appear apathetic, subdued, emotionless, often experiencing an early demise.

Plath's portrayal of New York in *The Bell Jar* can be termed *dystopian* (Boev, 2022, p. 356) and is of a city overwhelmingly dark, run by some hidden Gestapo-like government where the protagonist's every step is accompanied by a life-threat by known and unknown individuals. Although imbued with anxiety stemming from the surrealist description of a *sultry* New York and grimly prophetic, opening with the Rosenbergs' execution (Plath, 1966, p.1) which was to be transformed into Plath's own potential electrocution by ECT, there is not much that would suggest the inception of depression. Plath's portrayal of her depressive episode in *The Bell Jar* comes as a thunderbolt from partially overcast skies and is as clinically precise as possible with descriptions of the onset of the condition, her inability to read and concentrate, her heavy migraines and insomnia, her incapacity to articulate meaningfully how she feels; this points in the direction of a depressive episode within the bipolar experience as proposed by Goodwin and Jamison, which can also explain its extreme severity. In that Plath does not see anything romantic or melancholic and she tries to remain lucid and capture as much as possible from this lived experience so she can render it to paper. Her approach is scientific, without the slightest trace of lament or regret. Her post-depressive ironies in retrospect reflect how she felt then – August 1953, her passing into what Sontag terms "kingdom of the sick" (Sontag, 2001, p. 8.) and her perceived degradation in the eyes of the residents of the better kingdom. For example, in the pity that a nurse takes on her when she temporarily loses her eyesight in the wake of her suicide attempt: "A cheery voice spoke out of the dark. 'There are lots of blind people in the world. You'll marry a nice blind man some day'" (Plath, 1966, p. 181).

There is also her mother's condescension: "My mother took care never to tell me to do anything. She would reason with me sweetly, like one intelligent mature person with another" (p. 127). Once Esther's (Plath's) condition worsens, she can observe her mother's subsequent helplessness, how she starts treating her as a subhuman being in a Kafkaesque iteration of *The Metamorphosis* where Gregor has turned into a gigantic insect and has to watch in consternation how his family of humans are plotting his murder: "I watched my mother grow smaller and smaller until she disappeared into the door of Doctor Gordon's office building. Then I watched her grow larger and larger as she came back to the car. 'Well?' I could tell she had been crying. My mother didn't look at me. She started the car" (Plath, 1966, p. 143). Gradually the elder woman starts treating Esther like a small child: "My mother smiled. 'I knew my baby wasn't like that.' I looked at her. 'Like what?' 'Like those awful people. Those awful dead people at that hospital.' She paused. 'I knew you'd decide to be all right again'" (p. 154). Esther (Plath) also becomes paranoid, and she starts suspecting that her mother might want to kill her with the ECT therapy. Esther's conversations with a boy on the beach in Boston only confirm her worst suspicions (p. 164). With Esther's affected vision, tormented by severe depression, Boston has completely lost its pure blue magic from Plath's short stories and memories about her childhood. Instead, Esther is blinded by the sun and all the contours are blurry, very much as in Camus's *L'Étranger* where the protagonist kills an Arab on the beach without being able to see him well: "I rolled on my stomach and squinted at the view in the other direction […]. A glassy haze rippled up from the fires in the grills and the heat on the road, and through the haze, as through a curtain of clear water, I could make out a smudgy skyline of gas tanks and factory stacks and derricks and bridges" (p. 165). The inability to see is also reflected in the perceived weakening of her body and mind: "And when people found out my mind had gone, as they would have to, sooner or later, in spite of my mother's guarded tongue, they would persuade her to put me into an asylum where I could be cured. Only my case was incurable" (p. 168). Esther's suicide attempt brings out the worst in her mother who egocentrically believes it was her fault (p. 215). Esther's (Plath's) depression leads to her complete rupture with everyone she knew or cared about her, including her boyfriend who is himself convalescent from tuberculosis. Plath portrays depression as a direct descent into a black abyss and her depictions of the harrowing experience are honest, her self-analysis – merciless and unrelenting, the suicide appears to be a dignified attempt to preserve the agency of making a choice rather than be offered as a guinea pig to the doctors for their experiments.

However, Plath's description of Esther's most extreme gesture – her attempts to kill herself, which finally results in her using sedatives, is one of the most unnerving and grotesque at the same time. Plath does that with so much absurdist

humor and grim determination that she creates some of the most unforgettable moments of pure absurdism in World Literature:

> That morning I had tried to hang myself. I had taken the silk cord of my mother's yellow bathrobe as soon as she left for work, and, in the amber shade of the bedroom, fashioned it into a knot that slipped up and down on itself. It took me a long time to do this, because I was poor at knots and had no idea how to make a proper one. Then I hunted around for a place to attach the rope. The trouble was, our house had the wrong kind of ceilings. The ceilings were low, white and smoothly plastered, without a light fixture or a wood beam in sight. I thought with longing of the house my grandmother had before she sold it to come and live with us, and then with my Aunt Libby […] After a discouraging time of walking about with the silk cord dangling from my neck like a yellow cat's tail and finding no place to fasten it, I sat on the edge of my mother's bed and tried pulling the cord tight. But each time I would get the cord so tight I could feel a rushing in my ears and a flush of blood in my face, my hands would weaken and let go, and I would be all right again (Plath, 1966, p. 168).

There is nothing romantic or glorifying in Esther's pitiful attempts, the very act becoming a parody of itself. The comic effect is also completely natural, but, of course, one could not even laugh, knowing that Plath did eventually do it only weeks after *The Bell Jar* was published in England. The matter-of-fact details she adds to the passage as is the name of her aunt, as well as the *longing* for a fixture on which to hang herself, with the imminent death of its author, make this description unique.

While Plath utilizes bitter self-ironies as regards her own depression, she is resentful of the depression of others – the girl Joan whom she sees as a rival since she has had a short relationship with Buddy Willard, another scene prophetic of Assia Weevil's copycat suicide after becoming Hughes's common law partner. One has the sensation that at moments Plath would have wished to accumulate all the world's depression like a black hole so she could unleash a deadly gamma ray blast that would pitifully end so much human misery. All that attests to the fact that Plath appropriated depression and made it part of her literary and real-life self which could act up at any moment. As far as other diseases go though, for example, cancer, Plath's attitude is one of scientific curiosity, but is short-lived: "Twenty days after that mole appeared the girl was dead,' the doctor said and everybody went very quiet for a minute and then the bell rang, so I never really found out what the mole was or why the girl had died" (p. 66). When she hears of "sickle cell anaemia", Esther declares it a "depressing disease" (p. 66), but then she is her normal non-depressive self, prior to depression striking, which makes Esther appear the bright sparkling overachiever that Plath was. By contrast, the *Journals* offer human sympathy in the shape of many more words when it is about Plath's grandmother who was slowly dying of cancer in 1956: "my dearest grandmother who took care of me all my life while mother worked

is dying very slowly and bravely of cancer, and she has not even been able to have intravenous feeding for six weeks but is living on her body, which will be all sublimed away" (Plath, 2007, p. 143).

Although Plath's depression was a private thing – it was with her before her marriage and was resumed with a new vehement flare after Hughes left her – in her works it traverses and marks consistently her represented 1950s and so casts a dark shroud over the entire decade in which Eisenhower was president. For us, the readers, Plath's works present a largely depressive America of the decade of Eisenhower.

In Serghi, life before marriage was difficult as amply attested to by her *The Spider's Web* and *Memories* (*Pe firul de păianjen al memoriei*[9]), but marriage did not make it any easier, nor did it resolve the Romanian author's perennial penury; it can be considered the last straw that unlocked the author's depression since it involved experiencing humiliation and blame[10]. The marriage between Cella Serghi and the engineer Alfino Seni was not the love at first sight which brought together Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. Despite the demands that society imposed on both men and women, Serghi's account of the epoch in *Memories* tells us that: "young women fell in love and wanted to be loved with heart and imagination" (Serghi, 2018, p. 49). In her *The Spider's Web* Serghi, being true to her own life, makes it clear that Michi (Seni) was the only presentable serious choice she could make and who did not require a dowry from her. The many other gentlemen who profess to be in love with Diana (Serghi), the narrator dismisses easily as most of them appear to have done it for the sport of courting a girl and asking her hand in marriage. She loves only one – Alex Dobrescu (Camil Petrescu) but he seems to be as elusive as the sea – always somewhere there, yet out of Serghi's reach. As the Mangalia and Balchik scenes from the novel prove again and again, Serghi, born in Constanța *pe strada Mării* (on Sea Street), identified with the sea in the same way as the Bulgarian Dubarova[11] and the American Plath felt a connection to it that could never be taken away from them. In fact, one can argue that the recession of the sea from their works was detrimental to their lives (both Plath and Dubarova committed suicide with the sea gone from their last texts) since an organic connection to a mighty element of

9. Literally, On the spider's thread of the memory. – a. n.

10. Poor marriage or job is considered a depressogenic factor in young women (Brown et al, 1995, pp. 7-21). – a. n.

11. Petya Dubarova (1962-1979) was a highly original Bulgarian poet whose life was tragically curbed by suicide; her works are mainly based on personal experiences and explore topics such as school, the sea, the city of Burgas and its people during communism. For more references to this poet in the context of autofiction and the Cold War, see the author's monograph Feminine Selves in Sylvia Plath's Prose and Poetry: The Perspective of Compared Lived Experience in Fiction

identification was cut off. In her *Memories* Serghi evokes her meeting her future husband and it is rendered in *The Spider's Web* almost verbatim. So Serghi feels that a potential marriage to him would be constricting and compares it to constraining the sea in imagery reminiscent of Dubarova's "shackled sea":

> I let him speak. He spoke hurriedly, slurring over words. I listened to the sound of the sea. I knew I would always bump into life like the sea smashes into the rocks, that I would carry in me all its nostalgies and an eternal yearning for freedom. If the engineer asks me to be his wife, I will lose my freedom, but will get rid of many worries. Even the sea is not free, I was trying to console myself. It is confined by shores. Perhaps it rages so because it, too, has lost its freedom. It seems to hit its head against walls, bump into rocks and as a result, its mouth is all foam (Serghi, 2018, p. 16)[12].

Marriage as "a totalitarian state" in Plath finds its sea equivalent in Serghi – a sea that has lost its liberty. It is quite remarkable that both writers make this comment about marriage from the prism of the memory and for both it has been a sort of prison. But Serghi's getting married to the engineer is not without a compromise not only on her part: "'I'm marrying you, but my family mustn't know about it, for the time being.' 'Why not?' 'Because I'm marrying a girl without a dowry. I'm a construction engineer and a construction engineer without capital cannot construct'" (Serghi, 2018, p. 16). The drama of this insulting situation is given considerable space in *The Spider's Web*. Numerous examples are supplied testifying to the impossibility to bend this unwritten marriage law (Serghi, 1978, pp. 42, 125, 130, 147, 152, 156, 161, 164, 190). In retrospect, Diana summarizes: "I was a burden for my family. My sister had also grown up. She had yet to finish school, to marry, too, without a dowry… Marrying Michi I thought I was going to make things calm down, I was going to take a burden off my mum's shoulders. Michi signified a shelter, peace and quiet, a warm friendship, and for my family, a big relief" (Serghi, 1978, p. 190). Still, the problem with not being loved remains and as it simmers through Serghi's novel, at the end it finally explodes.

Losing Petrescu at the *ştrand*, Serghi meets him a year later, already married to Seni, and provides the following remarkable portrait of the writer in which he is very different from the towering stature and imposing personality of Ted Hughes: "He was not tall [1.61 m.] and that seemed to annoy him as much as his deafness. He had a limping gait. The shoulders in a permanent shrug, the eyes close to each other, attentive, as if he wanted to hear with them, protesting all the time vehemently against everything that was happening around him, in the country, in the world" (Serghi, 2018, p. 22). Besides being a famous writer loved by a promising woman writer, Petrescu shares another characteristic with Hughes – his first wife committed suicide (Serghi, 2018, p. 50). Serghi quotes

12. All cited translations from Bulgarian and Romanian into English are mine. – a. n.

Eugen Lovinescu almost completely agreeing with the description the literary critic provides: "an exuberant little man, irritable, always in a hurry. Peevish, full of talent, but also of fatuity" (p. 23). The physical peculiarities are smoothed out in *The Spider's Web* in the figure of Alex Dobrescu, that is, Serghi does not dwell on them, but describes the languid figure of a sea god who is too absentminded to always hear well and who is invariably surrounded by girls in scant beach attire. Petrescu's ability to swim, just like Plath's endowing Hughes with highly developed Spanish language skills in a short story of hers reflecting their honeymoon, is transposed into an accomplishment of perfect swimming in Alex.

In both her *Memories* and *The Spider's Web* Serghi provides the reasons for her marriage break-up and they could be summed up under an incompatibility of characters – the romantic side in Serghi (Diana) and the pragmatic down-to-earth Seni (Michi), but that is not all. Unlike Ted and Sylvia's marriage based on love in the 1950s, Serghi's marriage was an affair based on financial dependence which proved to be unsustainable. In the novel Diana asks herself time and again if she can settle for *security* without love in marriage, being fully aware of the harsh alternative of having love (Alex) without the possibility of marriage. In the intense psychological exploration of the reasons for the dissolution of her marriage Diana (Serghi) asks herself again and again if she can put up with the things that irritate her in Michi (Seni) and if she can continue having a double life. When she opts for leaving Michi, Diana has already been unfaithful to him (with Alex[13]), but Michi has also had an affair to Diana's dismay (Serghi, 1978, p. 303). Even though she does not admit to her own infidelity, Diana's convictions that a marriage should continue at all cost, if for nothing else, for Michi's (Seni's) sacrifice, are shattered. Diana (Serghi), just like Plath or the lyrical 'I' in the "Beekeeper's Daughter", accepts infidelity on part of her husband, but unlike Plath, who in her 11-July-1962 (Plath, 2018, 2, p. 790) letter to her psychiatrist hopelessly holds on to keeping an imaginary alfa female position, simply considers the marriage profoundly compromised by both parties and, with no real love to keep it together, untenable.

In explaining women's mystery, Serghi quotes Simone de Beauvoir, saying "all a man does not or will not understand becomes the woman's mystery" (Serghi, 2018, p. 52), but in *The Spider's Web*, just like Plath in her works containing the father figure, against the Romanian tradition of male writers of *la femme fatale*, creates *l'homme fatal*. Both Petrescu and Hughes become gods in Serghi's and Plath's autofictions while the writers' literary feminine selves juxtaposed to them are systematically demystified and demythologized, both occasionally trying to preserve something of the goddess aura of the woman which otherwise thrives. As Serghi demonstrates through her writing, it is all in men's imagination and

13. Never to be consummated with Camil Petrescu. – a. n.

it is within the powers of the woman to keep it aflame. Plath through her *The Bell Jar* and "Lady Lazarus" claims that it can triumph on its own, although her desperate post-Hughes letters to her psychiatrist disprove the fictional claims.

The underlying reason for portraying depression in both Plath's and Serghi's works may be the desire to share suffering due to the impossibility to act otherwise and thus effectively end its cause, but also it may be for the aesthetic function that the act contains. For instance, Plath, while quite young at Smith College, said in her *Journals*: "I am afraid. I am not solid, but hollow. I feel behind my eyes a numb, paralyzed cavern, a pit of hell, a mimicking nothingness. I never thought, I never wrote, I never suffered. I want to kill myself, to escape from responsibility, to crawl back abjectly into the womb. I do not know who I am, where I am going" (Plath, 2007, p. 273). In "De Profundis" Oscar Wilde writes to Alfred Douglas: "Where there is sorrow there is holy ground. Some day you will realise what that means" (Wilde, 2013, p. 1422). It is easy to understand the very young Plath who wants to connect to life-changing events and go through shattering experiences, and ironically enough she enters Wilde's paradox of the real tragedy "of getting it" in her life enwrapped in domesticity. Wilde writes from the Reading Gaol in a manner stripped of all pretenses to his signature Dandyism and cynicism and expresses in two sentences the underlying theme of his *Fairy Tales* and novel. With Plath and Wilde, it has been the necessary stimulus, the unextinguishable flame at the core of their major works. Undoubtedly, Cella Serghi also subscribes to this since her *The Spider's Web* among other things is mainly the story of a woman (herself) who suffers bitterly for being married to a man whom she does not love and loving a man she cannot marry. Their trying to find answers to a question that concerned them directly has resulted in mature works of fiction and autofiction. Going through depression, resulting from her unhappy marriage, Serghi offers a different solution to Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and to Plath's end of life which can be viewed as the autofictional experience of a *Bildungsroman*, all representable poems, letters, journals, and the novel being considered chronologically. The positive resolution of the impasse Serghi finds herself in – divorced and with no chance of becoming Petrescu's wife is based on several differences to Plath's situation. In both Plath and Serghi, especially Plath, a psychosocial treatment in combination with the correct medications could have resulted in a better course of the condition with a more favorable outcome (Goodwin & Jamison, 2007, p. 916), but unfortunately both women found themselves very much on their own in the face of adversity, and yet Serghi's situation contained all the signs for a more successful socially determined substitute as a form of self-therapy.

The *first* difference from Plath (Esther or the lyrical speaker in so many poems) is the fact that Serghi (Diana) does not seem to ever have tried to create an eternal father-figure of her husband or beloved – did not have the Electra complex Plath had. When she married, her father was still among the living.

Seni was often indifferent to her emotional world while Petrescu was often too busy to really care. A new perception of the world allowed her to see herself as her father's daughter and be proud of it, resuming her father's family name, having finally given up trying to connect to either Petrescu (Alex) or Seni (Michi). The *second* difference is Serghi's dramatic gest to leave Bucharest and everything that oppressed her in a loveless marriage, which the Romanian writer decided to dissolve and so she managed to get to Paris where she had Romanian friends and spent 30 days there in which she saw 34 spectacles, with some morning performances included (Serghi, 2018, p. 110). In *The Spider's Web* Diana shows more timidity than its creator and does not get farther than Cologne, Germany after which she comes back to Bucharest desirous to return to Michi and her marriage, but then she is served the cold shower of learning that he believes she is an easy woman who has had numerous affairs with men (Serghi, 1978, pp. 382-4). Unlike Plath who stayed in London and who needed to overcome certain Catholic prejudices in the people she communicated with, Serghi (Diana) had to fight the profoundly patriarchal attitudes of Bucharest and Romania. The *third* difference from Plath is that Serghi finally managed to find a paying job in Bucharest – becoming a literary chronicler, having previously worked as an assistant for lawyers without being paid as part of her study practice. Plath was an American immigrant in London while Serghi was only an internal immigrant making her way from Constanța to the capital. The fact that Serghi was finally working something she liked and was being paid for it cannot be overstated. Working when one feels depressed is hard, but it is the way to go, if the sufferer can do it. Performing and teaching jobs are excellent for that purpose, but Plath's teaching experience at Smith was not the happiest for her – she had found she had no time for writing. Otherwise, this could have been a solution and something to look forward to, battling depression every day. With the harsh winter conditions and no real possibility of digitized distance learning and real-time online classes, the possibilities were drastically limited. The *fourth* difference was the social involvement. Serghi was unquestionably much more integrated in the culture life of the Romanian capital, mingling with writers and being friends with some of the most promising ones of the epoch – Camil Petrescu and Mihail Sebastian. Plath seems to have been much shier and really pressed for time in the English capital. Although dreaming of becoming integrated in the cultural life of the city, one of the very few people she saw and who was part of this life, was Al Alvarez from *The Observer*. Unfortunately, she could only see him in his position of chief editor and when they met, they talked shop – only about her poems. She did not know that he was a kindred spirit and that he had had his unsuccessful suicide. She really could have received help from him with her depression, but she did not know, and neither did Alvarez. The *fifth* and most important difference was the fact that Plath had a serious medical condition while Serghi (Diana) did not have the symptoms

of severe clinical depression; it was rather a passing phase occasioned by the rejection of her husband and the unwillingness of her beloved to fully commit to a relationship. In her case it was aggravated by the fact that she was returning to an empty room since she was not sharing it with anyone and Serghi's novel features many scenes of unspeakable dejection, accompanied by the unfounded hope that the telephone will ring, and it will be Michi who wants her back. Some of the signs of depression, however, are there – persistent insomnia and a sense of despair. Her sacrifices, convictions, aspirations, and dreams – just illusions so the underlying sense of depression is triggered instantly into visibility, as it happens with Esther in New York, based on an accumulative effect of emotional shocks:

> My temples were ringing, I felt cold. I was sobbing hard. The night had crept into the window. The loneliness around me began to weigh heavy on me. I was afraid of it. I made my bed to climb under the blanket, after that I hastily undressed and turned off the lights. But the darkness frightened me. I turned it back on again. Much later I plucked up courage and I turned it off completely. Again, I was in the dark. The wind was wailing lugubriously, hitting the windowpanes, I could feel its coldness on my shoulders. I walked groping my way to the bed. There I knelt, trying to form a prayer, like I would in my childhood, when in Kniajovo[14], in the grass where I had lost my ball, or when I had lost my mum at the Mamaya train station. The wind groaned as groaned the siren at Constanța when I was a child. […] The wind wailed in desperation as if having brought all the sorrows from all over the world before the house. I remembered I was kneeling so I could pray. And I said: 'My Lord, help me! I don't know how, in what manner, but help me… Help me to get used to loneliness… to find my way, to find a sense of living…' (Serghi, 1978, pp. 383-4).

Although very young, in her early twenties, Diana (Serghi) feels depressed because of her long struggle with poverty, patriarchal prejudice, indifferent husband (living in his own world of exact sciences), constant display of coquetry on her part and all this to no avail, when she cannot even be with her beloved. This is all augmented to gigantic proportions because of the final rejection of her husband and so Serghi finds herself, like Plath, alone but without children. Just like Plath who wanted to be an all-American girl, Serghi wanted to be an all-Romanian girl and her partial Bulgarian identity[15] did not make matters any easier. In view of so many Romanian novels between the wars featuring suicide[16] – it would be hard to find even one classic from the period which does

14. Kniajevo, Sofia is where Serghi's (Diana's) family moved for a short period in her father's endless search for a job. – a. n.

15. Explored in *The Different Dobruja in the Literature between the Wars* (Различната Добруджа в литературата между войните) (p. 207). – a. n.

16. Gabriela Mihalache in her *Suicide in Romanian Literature between the Wars* (Sinuciderea în literatura română interbelică) says with conviction, "In the literature between the

not, apparently reflecting a life trend[17] – Serghi asks rhetorically: "Was suicide then a psychosis?" (Serghi, 2018, p. 257). And she turns the question to Petrescu reformulated: "Is it inconceivable that I did not kill myself for Camil Petrescu?" (p. 260).

While *The Bell Jar* ends upon a note of quiet optimism, it should be noted that Serghi's radiant depiction of a physically transforming Bucharest neighborhood is quite remarkable and in tone is reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's postwar *flaneurist* portrayal of London in *Mrs Dalloway*. In both, the perspective is certainly that of the feminine protagonist with the difference that in Serghi, the character is able to see the changing world from the same window that prior to this change has so often offered bleak views of the same place, but these views have up to this moment been devoid of clarity. We can recall the scene and admire once again its serenity, from the eyes of the new woman looking upon the world, a much brighter winter by comparison to Plath's:

> Look, the houses have become walls at irregular rows. Now and again, a little square is illuminated… then a lantern lit up. The snow on the roofs is whiter now, contrasting violently with the grayness of the coming night. An automobile, like a black animal, grows bigger, coming round the corner, on the curved road, and turns left, then comes a woman, turning right: on the same road there is a little girl running with a headscarf. And again, a light illuminates a window, then another and yet another… (Serghi, 1978, p. 398).

The very ending is of pure radiance identifying the sensation of living in the big city with an illuminating ecclesiastical experience – another, positive resurrection which does not unleash the terrible energy of Plath's "Lady Lazarus", but allows the reborn individual to reconnect to the urban animal world in a sacred communion basked in light: "Several pigeons traversed the street over the houses, white with brown spots. Church bells toll. Could it be Sunday? I find myself smiling without knowing why. A sunbeam materializes obliquely from an opening in a sky of opaque smoke, like in the icons portraying the Resurrection" (Serghi, 1978, p. 400).

Serghi's resurrection both in life and in her novel was made possible without going through actual suicide and still it feels like a genuine reawakening to life, when, suddenly, life has meaning once again. As demonstrated in the comparative analysis between Serghi's and Plath's portrayals of marriage, the two women writers were far from living in a "married bliss" and with Plath ending her own life at the very beginning of the 1960s, it is her literary selves

---

wars the number of suicidal characters is so significant that the absence of a study of this aspect would be regrettable" (Mihalache, 2017, p. 8.). – a. n.

17. Gabriela Mihalache quotes an article from 1931 according to which "only in our capital, we find that of the total number of the deceased, 30-40% arises from those who have had enough of life" (Mihalache, 2017, p. 59). – a. n.

that have transcended the epoch; as for their author, she remains, as Heather Clark has put it, "caught in a limbo between icon and cliché" (Clark, 2019, p. 360), "mythologized and pathologized, in movies, television and biographies as a high priestess of poetry, obsessed with death" (p. 360). Overcoming adversity was not easy for Serghi, either, but she found the strength in herself to go on living to the dawn of post-socialist democracy in Romania, outliving by far her fellow writers from the 1930s. Through this study its author has aimed not only to showcase comparable feminine experiences in different epochs but effectuate an analysis of the possible causes and solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems in life as represented in autofiction. Without downplaying in the least the true devastating power of depression, reading beyond one's culture can certainly yield usable solutions. Surely, Emil Cioran's words referring to meaning in life sound challenging: "Couldn't we live without this world having one?" (Cioran, 1994, p. 152), savoring Keats's sensuous reproduction of the simple joys of life from "Endymion" expressed in "sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing./[…] spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth/ Of noble natures, of the gloomy days" (Keats, 1900, p. 187). Could we add to it, as Serghi proposes from the closing pages of her novel, also the joy of reading? And read both Serghi and Plath for the pure joy of establishing a connection in our minds between two fascinating worlds?

Spoken from the horse's mouth, the words of Alvarez sound a dire warning to everyone who believes they have had enough: "I discovered for myself, in my own body and on my own nerves, that death is simply an end, a dead end, no more, no less. And I wonder if that piece of knowledge isn't in itself a form of death. After all, the youth who swallowed the sleeping pills and the man who survived are so utterly different that someone or something must have died" (Alvarez, 1976, p. 272).

The autofictions in comparison never seem to treat the depression the writer is suffering from lightly. Nor is it a mask. It is always painfully real and always transformative of the female protagonist allowing the readers to see her in a new light as a reminder to everyone that this could happen to us, too. In their portrayals of depression, both autofictive writers have shown striking sincerity as opposed to the mere authenticity usually present in good non-autofictional representations of disease. Also, as Hywel Dix (2023) reminds us about the importance of autofiction in documenting the past, "these [stories]" become embedded in the fabric of society through the workings of cultural memory" (Dix, 2023, p. 1), hence the autofictional, through fictionalizing specific moments of lived experience, turns the latter into collective consciousness through reading.

It would be a terrible understatement and an unforgivable cliché if we said that the two examined writers have shown heroism in the face of imminent

death. Although Plath wrote in such detail about her depression in 1953, she was no less depressive 10 years later. However, the frolicsome winking at the reader and the unquestionable depth of the novel as regards culture, politics, and femininity would have one also argue that Plath is never truly depressive in her novel. There are so many layers of ironies accompanying the darkest moments in it that we can clearly distinguish between Plath as a writer and Plath as a sufferer of depression. Both Plath's and Serghi's heroines try to comply and improve the skills that are demanded of them, with Esther not trying too hard since she is aware that that would mean too much compliance and compromise. With disappointment setting in, both Esther and Diana find themselves in a state of depression, much more serious in Esther. Plath's harsh criticism of the ECT therapy is yet another solid proof that she managed to turn her lived experience into powerful literature, an important personal account of a decade, in certain ways not unlike Serghi's 1920s, that also came short of women's expectations.

By deciding to become the feminine chroniclers of their respective epochs as youths, both writers took an enormous risk, and this did not go without certain injuries. The choice of the first-person narrator even if masked by another name, once the identification with the writer herself has been established, could always be a source of controversy and literary sleuthing, given the notorious unreliability of this writing mode (often used for mock autobiographies). One point that needs to be redressed here is the perceived female victimization arising from these representations. This question again is raised by Clark who says with poignancy that "Since her suicide in 1963, Plath has become a paradoxical symbol of female power and helplessness whose life has been subsumed by her afterlife" (Clark, 2019, p. 360). While the female angst with "Plath" as its badge does injustice to the American poet being reductionist of the live person and writer she was, labeling Serghi a Romanian writer worthy of doctoral dissertations on feminism does the woman of letters equal harm. In both their novels they are never melodramatic, always remaining lucid and self-analytical. In that, both authors are critical of themselves and of others for not doing enough to change a society which only invited woman's victimhood.

References

Alvarez, A. (1976). *The savage god: A study of suicide*. London: Bantam Book.

Boev, H. (2022). Sylvia Plath's dark New York vs Cella Serghi's cramped Bucharest with regards to Boston, Constanța and Balchik. *Annual of Konstantin Preslavsky University, Shumen. Faculty of Humanities, 2*, 353–364. https://doi.org/10.46687/GZGN6999.

Boev, H. (2021). *Feminine selves in Sylvia Plath's prose and poetry: The perspective of compared lived experience in fiction*. Shumen: Shumen University Press.

Brown, G. W., Harris T. O., & Hepworth, C. (1995). Loss, humiliation, and entrapment among women developing depression: A patient and non-patient comparison. *Psychological Medicine, 25*, 7-21. https://doi.org/10.1017/S003329170002804X.

Camus, A. (1971). *L'Étranger*. Paris: Gallimard.

Călinescu, G. (2003). *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent.* București: Semne.

Chopin, K. (1993). *The awakening*. (N. A. Walker, Ed.). New York and Boston: Bedford Books.

Cioran, E. (1994). *Pe culmile disperării*. București: Humanitas.

Clark, H. (2019). Plathography: Plath and her biographers. *Sylvia Plath in context*. (T. Brain, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 360-370. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108556200.035.

Debelyanov, D. (2021). *Izbrani tvorbi*. Sofia: Softpres.

Dix, H. (2023). *Autofiction and cultural memory*. Philadelphia: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003313465.

Effe, A., & Lawlor, H. (2022). From autofiction to the autofictional. *The autofictional: Approaches, affordances, forms*. (A. Effe & H. Lawlor, Eds.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78440-9.

Eliade, M. (1934). Originalitate și autenticitate. *Oceanografie*. București: Cultura poporului, 174-78.

Goodwin, F. K., & Jamison, K. R. (2007). *Manic-depressive illness: Bipolar disorder and recurrent depression*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grell, I. (2018). Forward. *Autofiction in English*. (H. Dix, Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan, v-viii.

Guibert, H. (1991). *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie*. Paris : France loisirs.

Harding, K. (2019). Woman haters were like gods: *The bell jar* and violence against women in 1950s America. *Sylvia Plath in context*. (T. Brain, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 180-190. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108556200.018.

Husserl, E. (1991). *On the phenomenology of consciousness of internal time*. (J. Barnett, Trans.). Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-3718-8.

Hutchinson, B. (2018). *Comparative literature: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198807278.001.0001.

Kafka, F. (2009). *The metamorphosis*. Classix Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/owc/9780199238552.003.0003.

Keats, J. (1900). *The complete poetical works of John Keats*. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

Martens, L. (2018). Autofiction in the third person, with a reading of Christine Brooke-Rose's remake. *Autofiction in English*. (H. Dix, Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 49-64. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89902-2_3.

Mihalache, G. (2017). *Sinuciderea în literatura română interbelică.* București: Editura Eikon.

Phelan, J. W. (2020). *Literature and understanding: The value of close reading*. London: Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429321382.

Plath, S. (2007). *The unabridged journals of Sylvia Plath: 1950-1962*. New York: Anchor Books.

Plath, S. (2018). *The letters of Sylvia Plath volume 2: 1956-1963*. (P. K. Steinberg & K. V. Kukil, Eds.). New York: Harper Collins.

Plath, S. (1966). *The bell jar*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber.

Plath, S. (2001). *Johnny Panic and the bible of dreams*. London and Boston: Faber & Faber.

Plath, S. (1981). *The collected poems of Sylvia Plath*. (T. Hughes, Ed.). New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Poe, E. A. (2010). *Complete tales and poems with selected essays*. CreateSpace Independent.

Orne, M. T. (1992). Foreword. *Anne Sexton*: *A biography*. Diane Middlebrook. New York: Vintage Books, xiii-xviii.

Sadock, B. J., Sadock V. A., & Ruiz, P. (2015). *Kaplan & Sadock's synopsis of psychiatry*. New York: Wolters Kluwer.

Serghi, C. (2020). *Această dulce povară, tinerețea*. București: Editura Hoffman.

Serghi, C. (1996). *Mirona*. București: Editura Porus M.

Serghi, C. (1978). *Pânza de păianjen*. București: Cartea Românească.

Serghi, C. (2018). *Pe firul de păianjen al memoriei*. București: Polirom.

Sontag, S. (2001). *Illness as metaphor and AIDS and its metaphors*. London: Picador.

Todorov, T. (1973). The notion of literature. *New Literary History*, *5*, 5–16. https://doi.org/10.2307/468404.

Woolf, L. (1982). Preface. *Writer's diary*: *Being extracts from the diary of Virginia Woolf*. (L. Woolf, Ed.). New York and London: Harcourt, Inc., vii-xi.

Woolf, V. (2002). *Mrs Dalloway.* (ed. 1). Project Gutenberg: eBook No.: 0200991.

(S)TALKING WOMEN: PORTRAYAL OF FEMALES IN ONLINE DISCOURSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ALBANIA

[1]Eriola Qafzezi, [2]Fabiola Kadi

[1,2]Faculty of Education and Philology, Fan S. Noli University, Korça, Albania

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to explore Albanian social media discussion threads, prioritizing the way women are portrayed. The development of social media discourse has been empowered through the increasing influence of digital media, permeating all areas of life recently. 'Privacy is no longer a social norm', and intentional abuse of media-derived power has led to malicious intentions infiltrating online social media discourse, threatening loyal and straightforward communication, and giving rise to denigration, negativity, and dismay. Based on the current view of scholars in the field of language and digital communication that text-based studies need to move forward by incorporating other modes of communication and the fact that all human communication is, after all, multimodal, we intend to bring examples to illustrate the choice of language and images by Albanians in online social media in reaction to current popular events. The common thread that unites all examples is related to the depiction of females, unfortunately, in discriminatory statements, and gendered culpability. It is hoped that the paper will raise awareness about such dominating problematic approaches toward females in Albania, as manifested in the language used.*

Keywords: *social media, Albanian, female, derogatory, online discourse*

About the author: *Dr. Eriola Qafzezi is a full-time lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education and Philology at Fan S. Noli University, Korça, Albania, where she has been teaching since the year 2005. From 2001 to 2005 she completed Bachelor Studies, to be followed by Master Studies, completed in 2011, and Doctoral Studies in 2014. She has specialized in translation of children literature. She currently teaches Translation, Text Analysis, Theory of Translation, Text Typology and Translation, and ESP. Dr. Qafzezi's research interests relate to translation, linguistics, discourse studies, media studies, technology and education, online teaching and learning, etc. As part of her ongoing research, E. Qafzezi has published several papers that focus on the interrelationship of language and culture, translation of children's literature, intertextuality, media discourse, online teaching and learning, etc.*

e-mail: *eqafzezi@unkorce.edu.al* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3874-8359*

About the author: *Dr. Fabiola Kadi is a full-time lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education and Philology at Fan S. Noli University, Korça, Albania, where she teaches French Literature, French Civilization, Stylistics, Text Analysis, and Variants of French Language. She has published several papers on translation of religious literature and analysis of poetic text. She is currently involved in translation and editing of French literature into Albanian and vice versa. Her research interests relate to literature, translation of literature, discourse, etc.*

e-mail: *fkadi@unkorce.edu.al* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4922-9059*

Copyright © 2023 Eriola Qafzezi, Fabiola Kadi

Article history: Received: 22 May 2023; Reviewed: 21 June 2023; Revised: 1 July 2023; Accepted: 14 July 2023; Published: 28 August 2023



This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Qafzezi, E., & Kadi, F. (2023). (S)Talking women: Portrayal of females in online discourse of social media in Albania. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 130-147. https://doi.org/10.46687/YDLM9850.

Literature review on digital discourse

This paper aims to shed some light on the way females are currently portrayed through discourse in social media in Albania, and, as such, contribute to digital discourse analysis. In order to fulfill such aims, we start by building a framework of recent insights for the analysis of digital discourse. We refer to recent developments in this field, quoting relevant researchers and discourse analysts who have made significant contributions in this respect. The analysis of digital discourse interrelates technology, society and linguistic as well as non-linguistic resources. As described by P. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and P. Bou-Franch, the field of digital discourse analysis, also labelled computer-mediated discourse, new media sociolinguistics or language and digital communication, can be discussed in terms of three waves:

1. The *first wave* was carried out in the 1990s and contained mainly descriptive linguistic approaches;
2. The *second wave* was carried out in the 2000s and brought into the picture socially-oriented language researchers concerned with linguistic variability, social diversity, issues of identity, and community formation and maintenance: a collection of studies more specifically concerned with the study of digital social practices;
3. The *third wave* is currently taking into consideration issues of 'translocality' (the complex ways in which diverse local practices come together in global spaces), 'transmediality' (how users transcend different media and should move toward incorporating multimodal analyses of the sociocultural practices of computer medicated communication), as well as research to develop critical and ethical agendas, focusing on ideologies about the media as enacted, challenged, and negotiated in the digital world (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2019, p. 4).

We cannot look ahead in the development of digital discourse analysis without looking back and acknowledging the work accomplished so far. The contribution of the representatives from *the first wave* can be associated to eminent researchers like Norman Fairclough, one of the pioneers of critical discourse analysis and his work on discourse and social change (1992). The primary focus of this wave was to understand the unique characteristics of language use in digital environments, with emphasis on linguistic features and structures specific to digital communication, study of interaction and social norms in digital environments, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze digital discourse. Furthermore, researchers adopted descriptive linguistic approaches and discussed medium-related patterns of language use such as acronyms, abbreviations, message sequences, turn-taking, and so on. Findings of research similar to the ones of Ferrara, Brunner and Whittemore

(1991), Murray (1988), and Baron (1984) have made are mostly related to the effects of such structural features on meaning construction.

The technological advancement in audio and video chat in addition to textual communication has broadened research scopes of the second wave to include identity, online community, and interaction management, among other things (Garcia & Jacobs, 1998; Georgakopoulou, 1997; Herring, 2004c). Susan Herring (2004a, 2004b, 2004c) stands out among the researchers of the *second wave* with her contribution (in the study of online communities, gender and language use in computer-mediated communication (CMC), as well as her studies about the impact of technology on language and social interaction, expanding the computer-mediated discourse analysis by including multi-semiotic analyses, arguing that CMC needs to become highly interdisciplinary. Herring (2004a, 2004b, 2004c) focuses on three newer phenomena: communication on interactive multimodal platforms, graphical communication and robot-mediated communication. Another influential scholar of the second wave is James Paul Gee who studied the relationship between language, identity, and social context in digital communication (Gee, 2003, 2005). He has proposed a unified theory of discourse analysis to study language, games, science and human action and interaction in the real and imaginary worlds, stating that the common thread between language and games is their multimodality and ultimate functionality (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2019, p. 6). Other research aligned with the second wave focused on the impact of technology on language use and communication patterns, including the effects of digital communication on literacy, social interaction, and language change (Baron, 1998) and on memes and their interpretation (see Yus, 2016).

The *third wave* provides more consolidated research into the multimodal nature of communication in the digital age, such as literary practices in digital contexts (Barton, 2001), analysis of visual and multimodal texts in digital contexts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), the relationship between digital media and language change, such as use of abbreviations, acronyms, and other online communication forms (Crystal, 2008), issues of identity and face (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Tagg & Seargeant, 2014; Vásquez, 2015a; Vásquez & China, 2019; Petroni, 2019; Maíz-Arévalo, 2019), issues of language and media ideologies (Georgakopoulou & Spiliotti, 2016; Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011; García-Gómez, 2019; Sifianou & Bella, 2019; Blitvich, 2019). Due to the fact that the present research reports on critical and qualitative studies, it is considered part of the third wave of digital discourse studies.

Digitally mediated discourse analysis: tools and methods

As Norris (2004) has stated, all human communication is multimodal and such a fact should not be neglected in digital genre analyses, otherwise it leads to

partial accounts of communication (Bou-Franch, Blitvich, 2019, pp. 5-6). In this part of the paper we bring some insights from current research that are of significance for digital discourse analysis in general, and for our purposes in analysing portrayal of females in Albanian online social media in particular. We start by the general observation of the researchers R. H. Jones, A. Chik and C. A. Hafner in *Discourse and Digital Practices* that interactive writing spaces such as blogs and social network sites make possible the use of forms of social interaction that are very different from those found in face-to-face conversation and traditional written texts, thus, even analytical tools designed to examine the ideological dimensions of discourse need to be adapted to contend with discursive environments in which the loci of power are much more diffuse and the instruments of ideological control and discipline are more subtle and complex (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, p. 1). Due to the wide range of social practices associated with digitally mediated discourse and the rapid pace of introduction of new technologies, it is quite challenging to provide a single framework to cover the complex relationships between discourse and digital practices. In line with the quoted researchers' contribution, we enlist below some definitions that are helpful for our study:

- *digital practices* – 'assemblages' of actions involving tools associated with digital technologies, which have come to be recognised by specific groups of people as ways of attaining particular social goals, enacting particular social identities, and reproducing particular sets of social relationships. Digital practices always transverse boundaries between the physical and the virtual, and between technological systems and social systems. (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, p. 3);

- *tools* associated with digital technologies are not limited only to software and websites, but also include hardware (physical objects) and semiotic tools (such as conventional ways of talking or writing that have grown up around digital media);

- *discourse* – the ways people build and manage their social worlds by using various semiotic systems (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, p. 4);

- *discourse analysis* – the study of the ways different 'technologies of entextualisation' (including semiotic systems like languages, as well as media like televisions and computers) affect the kinds of meanings people can make in different situations, the kinds of actions they can perform, the kinds of relationships they can form, and the kind of people they can be (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, p. 4). The same scholars argue that, in order to engage in such a study, analysts of discourse usually pay attention to four things: 1) *texts* (how different technologies allow us to combine semiotic elements to form socially recognisable texts that can be used to perform different kinds of socially recognised actions), 2) *contexts* (social

and material situations in which texts are constructed, exchanged and appropriated), 3) *actions and interactions* (what people do with texts, what they do with and to each other), and 4) *power and ideology* (how people use texts to dominate and control others and to create certain 'versions of reality') (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, p. 4). Below we explain in detail each of these elements.

1) *Texts* do not only mean texts in the traditional sense but also include written and spoken conversations, videos, photographs, drawings, paintings, street signs, websites, software interfaces, video games and any other aggregate of semiotic elements that can function as a tool for people to take social action. As all texts, digitally mediated texts are characterized by coherence and cohesion. Furthermore, such texts may have a 'tight' texture or a 'loose' texture, with the latter requiring active efforts on behalf of the readers to hold them together. Other properties of digitally mediated texts are interdiscursivity and intertextuality, depending on resources that surpass the purely linguistic ones. As Vásquez (2015b) demonstrates, intertextuality with reference to digital practice is a social process through which people not only create linkages between texts, but also create relationships between themselves and other users of texts, showing themselves to be competent members of particular communities through using the conventions of intertextuality of those communities. Another quality of digitally mediated texts is their dialogic character, with dialogism being much more dynamic than it is in conventional written texts. One of the most challenging features of digital texts is the fact that they are almost always multimodal, consisting of rich combinations of semiotic modes like writing, visual and sound (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, pp. 5-8).

2) Digital technologies have complicated all aspects of *context*: spatial and temporal aspects of context have been altered by creating complex layering of online and offline spaces, social contexts' experience has been altered by participation in synchronous and asynchronous social gatherings with different configurations of participants, and the experience of 'context of culture' has been altered by enabling new and complex global flows of cultural products and ideas. Recontextualization and contextual integrity are thus concluded to be among the defining features of digitally mediated discourse (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, pp. 8-10).

3) Researchers of digital media and the forms of discourse are currently concerned about how the new technologies and the kinds of texts they result in allowing people to *do* different things or to do old things in different ways. The term *affordances* is used to refer to particular ways digital media make certain kinds of actions possible, such as serving as complimentary between technologies and users, a form of communication between designers and users

of technologies. Digital technologies, however, like all cultural tools, are not determinative of their use. When people use technologies and texts, they are almost always acting with and/or on other people, not only online, but also in the physical spaces in which these technologies are used. The kinds of interactivity can be distinguished as the way technologies interact with humans, and, the way technologies facilitate human-to-human interaction. The distinction, however, is not always cut and dried. Another valuable point in this discussion about interaction relates to technological tools and how they act to shape the way people interact and the kinds of social relationships and social identities they produce through interactions. Actions and interactions, researchers observe, can serve as building blocks for social practices and for the formation and maintenance of communities associated with social practices (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, pp. 10-13).

4) The last component of discourse analysis has to do with the way discourse helps to construct 'versions of reality' or *ideologies* and certain relationships of *power* between individuals and groups. Places where workings of power and ideology can be observed are in the discourse that circulates through digital media permeated by ideological agendas and biases, new opportunities for peer-to-peer social networks or fandoms and celebrities, virtual worlds that require premium membership that often come with consequences that users may not be entirely aware of. Ideological assumptions and social relationships are not just inscribed in texts, but often submerged in algorithms that operate beneath the surface of texts and fundamentally affect the way we experience the world. Another place discourse analysts can look for ideologies and power relationships is in the ways digital technologies and practices are represented in public discourse, with researchers reminding us that, despite the promises that digital technologies will level the discursive playing field by putting into the hands of ordinary people the power to create and broadcast texts, the rules of the game are still set by a relatively small group of powerful players (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, pp. 13-15).

Having clarified the grounds upon which digitally mediated discourse analysis stands, we turn our attention to the 'methodological toolkit' that is used to describe the four levels of its evolution to the present date, as explained and illustrated by S. C. Herring (2019, p. 27). We present below related issues and used from the micro level to the macro level.

1. Issues at the level of *structure* are: orality, formality, efficiency, expressivity, complexity, genre characteristics, etc.; whereas phenomena include typography, orthography, morphology, syntax, discourse schemata, formatting conventions, etc. Methods at the structural level involve structural/descriptive linguistics, text analysis, corpus linguistics and stylistics.

2. Issues at the level of *meaning* raise questions such as: What is intended? What is communicated? What is accomplished? Phenomena have to do with meaning of words, utterances (speech acts), exchanges, etc., whereas methods of study involve semantics and pragmatics.
3. Issues at the level of *interaction management* relate to interactivity, timing, coherence, repair, interaction as co-constructed, etc. Phenomena studied are turns, sequences, exchanges, threads, etc., whereas methods involve conversation analysis, ethnomethodology.
4. Issues at the level of *social phenomena* are: social dynamics, power, influence, identity, community, cultural differences, etc., whereas phenomena at this level include linguistic expressions of status, conflict, negotiation, face management, play, discourse styles, etc. Methods of study quoted by Herring at this level are interactional sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, and ethnography of communication (2019, p. 27).

Portrayal of females in Albanian online discourse: case study of Facebook as social media

We agree with researchers Jones et. al. (2015) when they state that digital technologies influence the ways in which people communicate greatly, establish social interactions, and engage in discourse practices. Reading and writing have become more like having a conversation, with readers being able to 'write back' to writers, and writers shaping their texts in anticipation of an almost immediate response for readers (Jones, Chik & Hafner, 2015, p. 7). In order to fulfill the aims of our study, we have selected *Facebook* as a social media and an Interactive Multimodal Platform (IMP). By definition, IMPs are digital platforms on which two or more semiotic modes, typically, text plus audio, video, and/or graphics, are available to support interactive human-to-human communication (Herring, 2019, p. 42). Herring states that IPMs are characterized by media coactivity, i.e. users engage in multiple activities involving different semiotic modes on the same platform. Moreover, media coactivity, especially in cases of synchronous communication, raises issues such as competition for users' attention and the effects of such competition on message production and discourse processing (2019, p. 43). Moreover, as researchers have concluded, Facebook clearly demonstrates multimodality (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), intertextuality and convergence (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2015), and mash-up (cf. O'Reilly, 2007) — the coexistence of various formerly separate web spaces and media in one single platform (Lee, 2011, p. 112).

As Thurlow and Mroczek (2011, p. xxvi) discuss, digital technologies are inherently ideological regarding both "their political economies of access and

control and … their potential as mechanisms or resources for both normative and resistive representations". From such a perspective, we put forward our research questions in order to witness the way women are portrayed in Facebook:

1. What is the common thread that unites portrayal of Albanian females on Facebook? (context)
2. What is communicated and what is intended, based on the selected examples? (action and interaction)
3. What kind of social phenomena are observed? (power and ideology)

We have navigated on Facebook for a period of three months, February, March and April of year 2023 and have consistently followed posts of the most well-known journalists and bloggers in Albanian in search of a common thread that provides the *context* of all posts observed. Initially there were 225 posts under consideration, which consisted of a combination of words and images, emoji, memes, etc., i.e. multimodal texts. We have narrowed down the corpus of the study, by selecting for the current study posts that revolve around the topic of The International Women's Day, 8th March, rather than posts related to women in general. Such examples make up one third of our initial posts (i.e. a corpus of 75 posts), with the majority of them posted by females in Albania (3/4, i.e. 56 posts) and others from males (1/4, i.e. 19 posts). They represent Albanian celebrities in the field of media, arts, journalism, bloggers, etc. In Albania, the 8th March is commonly mistaken for Mother's Day, as some of the posts will show. Also, as the posts will illustrate, there is a constant call for women to fight not only for their rights, but for their life, primarily, which relates to issues of violence and abuse towards women. Such posts do not only come from females to females, but from males to females, and males to other males as well. Thus, *interaction* is, mediated by technology, and there is also a call for action, aiming at improvement of the perception of women in society. In the remaining part of the paper, we will illustrate how issues of *power and ideology* are presented in some of the Facebook posts, mainly grouped in three main areas: discrimination gendered culpability, and women's empowerment. We emphasise the fact that the examples presented here are but a few from the posts we have explored and analysed, but, due to space limitations, we aim to illustrate the social phenomena, rather than bring a full comprehensive view of all examples that we have found in Facebook posts.

Discrimination

We include in this category examples of posts in which discrimination is conveyed through the use of derogatory terms that prevail among other lexical devices. Language is a source of expressing power relations or abuse of power.

As conferred by Monica Heller in "Media, the state and linguistic authority", 'language is a terrain for working through struggles over the regulation of resources, that is, over how to organize ourselves and make that organization legitimate in the eyes of involved social actors' (2010, p. 277). Moreover, language … 'provides the raw material for re-defining and re-imagining, for opening up or closing down social relations, for debating legitimizing ideologies and their authority. The media is a space where we can see these two threads interweaving, and perhaps come to some new appreciation of how we call ourselves into being' (Heller, 2010, pp. 282-283). How are Albanian women called into being, as far as Facebook posts about them are concerned?

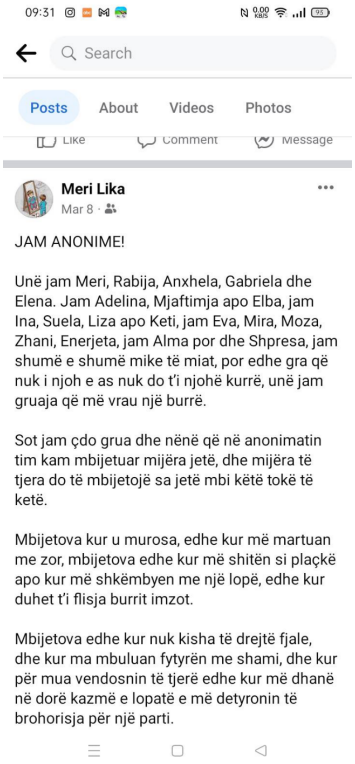
We analyze here a post from *Elma Doresi,* a famous female director in Albania, with frequent posts on social media, Facebook in particular.

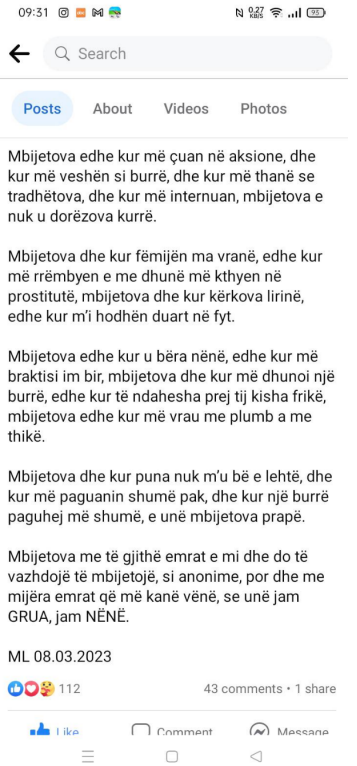


This is her own image. In yellow it is written "Last night I was afraid", whereas above her covered mouth, we see a search engine with the clause "If a woman searches for a job…" and the prompts that follow are: "…she cheats on you", "… she is not a devoted mother", "…she will give up on her family". The last line, in capital letters, sounds as an affirmation "If a woman searches for a job, she shows self-esteem". This post, as many others in our corpus, comes after a tragic event that occurred at approximately the same time in Albania, portrayed on news and social media: a man, after serving some time in prison, was released and took revenge on his first and second wife, killing the second wife, raping the sister-in-law, as well as committing many other brutal acts of violence. Thus, the statement in yellow "Last night I was afraid" shows empathy toward all women that are intimidated by such acts of violence within and beyond the family circle. The expressions in white, on the other hand, tend to show the discriminatory statements which most women face, purely because they want to have a job and feel independent, as well as raise awareness about the fact that women need to feel appreciated by others and by themselves. Since the posts on social media are never conclusive in themselves, meaning that they can always be completed by other comments, posts, and so on, we mention here some of the comments that follow this post. Most comments use the inclusive 'we' in statements such as: "We are all afraid", "We should start educating people", "We

should invest in education", "We are all guilty", with the last comment made by males. Such comments show more empathy as well as raised awareness about the problems women face in Albania and that education is one of the first steps to solve those problems.

70% of the posts on women on Facebook placed women in their traditional domestic roles or, quite the contrary, tried to oppose such patriarchal mentality. Meri Lika, legal audit and digital creator, with more that 3K followers on Facebook, makes the following post on March 8th:





The post is titled "I have no name" and it starts with the writer identifying with all women who have been killed or abused in the last few years (their names are mentioned) as well as those of other women that she does not know yet. "I am the woman killed by a man" she states. All the other lines, after stating that the writer personifies with every other woman who has survived in her anonymity, start with "I survived…when I was petrified, when I was married against my will, when I was put on sale, when I was exchanged for a cow, when I had to obey my husband, when I had no freedom to speak, when my face was covered, when my decisions were made for me, when I was obliged to clap at party meetings, when I was dressed up as a man, when I was interned, when my kid was killed, when I was kidnapped and was forced to turn into a prostitute, when I asked

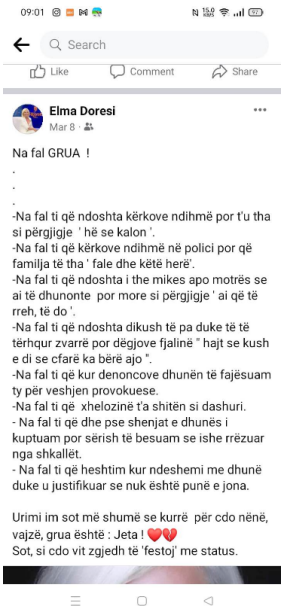
for freedom but got suffocated, when I became a mother but was abandoned by my own son, when I was raped, when I felt afraid to ask for a divorce, when I was killed, when I was slaughtered, when I was overloaded at work, when I was underpaid, when I received a lower payment than men, I survived…I survived with all my names and I will keep on surviving even without a name tag, as well as with the thousand names they have called me. I will survive, because I am a WOMAN, I am a MOTHER." Derogation in this post is related to women's value equated to that of a cow, reduced to the treatment of a prostitute, used to support party meetings, dressed up as a man, paid much less than men, but she was able to survive nonetheless. More emphasis is indicated by the typographic convention of the use of capitals for WOMAN and MOTHER, contradicting all negative associations related to women, surviving despite all that has been done to them, stating that she will survive because she is a woman and a mother. Thus the role of a mother and the identity as a woman is seen as a motif of strength and a reason to move forward, so as not to give up to all difficulties enlisted. Hence, the use of capitals for both these words, resonating also the words 'I HAVE NO NAME' in the title, reminding us that it is not the name of the woman in particular, but the woman and the mother in her that strive for survival. Reactions are mostly 'likes', 'hearts' and 'compassion', whereas in the comments again we notice the use of inclusive 'we' (We are together, We are one), lines from psalms, the Bible, showing divine appreciation and love of women, as well as highlighting the fact that the writer represents a free voice that should not go unheard. There are also comments that post images illustrating movements that support women's day internationally. Others state feelings of empathy: "You survived, we survived", compassion "We wish for more anonymous people who paint reality in all its colors", as well as bring to attention the fact that this is a day to protest and not to celebrate.



Gendered culpability

Related to the traditional roles assigned to women in Albanian society, we have also found posts that were opposed to previous posts that placed the guilt on women, just because they were women and, as such, they were the ones to be blamed. Such posts make up 80% of our corpus of study (i.e. 60 posts). It is interesting to observe that such posts, opposing gendered culpability, are written by both females and males alike. We quote here one post by *Ema Andrea,* a well-known actress and director in Albania. She states: "Mirmengjes, mirdita, mirmbrema.... Eshte masakruar nje tjeter grua! 'Natyrisht fajin e ka pas ajo!' ma kurseni" (Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening… Another woman has been massacred! Spare me the oft-quoted 'It must have been her fault, of course!').

In this post, as in many others, we observe traces of irony, through which, she brings to the foresight the fact that most Albanians would react to the news of a woman being killed, raped, or abused by assuming "It must have been her fault", or, "She must have been guilty!", thus, justifying unfairly violent or criminal behavior by males. Comments in response to the post include statements like: "We are an uncivilized country", "Let the ones who put the blame on women be cursed themselves" (posted by males) and "Strength is not shown before a woman" (posted by females), an expression used quite often in Albanian to oppose the common misconception of women as the 'weakest sex' and men as 'the strong one'.



Further we have the post from *Elma Doresi*, which is titled *Na fal GRUA!* (WOMAN, Forgive us!).

These lines are posted on 8th March and, as the writer says, she chooses to 'celebrate' Women's Day with a status on Facebook. Her lines in English ask for forgiveness for each of the cases: "…When you asked for help, but you were told: 'This too shall pass'; You went to the police, but your family said: Forgive him one more time; You complained to a friend or to a sister but they told you: 'The more he beats you, the more he loves you'. Somebody saw you when he was dragging you, but you overheard people saying: 'She must have done something to deserve it!' You went to inform the authorities about the violence but we attributed it to your provocative outfit. Forgive us for having wrongly stated that if a man is jealous, that means he loves you. Forgive us, we saw bruises on your body, but we are still convinced you fell off the stairs. Forgive us for being silent and using the excuse: 'None of our business'."

This post ends with wishing "Life" to all mothers, girls and women. As it can be noticed, the post once more tries to debunk the myth that whatever kind of violence is exerted upon women, it is their own fault. It also tries to raise awareness by making everyone understand that it is us, not women, who are at fault. It is really sad that on Women's Day, instead of wishing health, prosperity and achievements, all such wishes are put aside as more women are getting killed, and thus, "Life" would be the greatest wish and gift awarded to them. Again, we witness the use of capital letters for emphasis, as we observe in the title 'Forgive us, WOMAN', as well as the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' (in the objective case), implying shared feelings of guilt and responsibility. The comments following the posts are emojis showing the icon of respect and a bouquet of flowers, as well as a text that congratulates the writer for such lines that show how close she is to the heart of each mother, sister and wife.

Challenging society norms and advocating for gender equality and women's empowerment

We conclude our list of examples with some posts that challenge traditional society norms in Albania and call for a new era of social empowerment of women and advocate gender equality. One such post comes from *Iva Çaushaj Vaso,* a lecturer and aesthetician. She is quite active on social media, with frequent posts on current events.



Her post is a combination of text and image: "Reminder: Tomorrow is not Mother's Day but Women's Day" and a photo that follows below it. This reminder is quite significant in Albanian setting and culture as most people, as witnessed even by the posts in our corpus and context of research, continue to wish "Happy Mother's Day" rather than "Happy Women's Day", which might be due to the fact that, during communism, this celebration shifted attention from women to mothers, thus, restricting female's roles and responsibilities to motherhood. However, the post mentioned attempts to set a reminder, together with the image posted, as well as with the comments that follow it, that it is not a day to celebrate, but a day to protest, posted by men and women alike.



Another such post, in similar lines, comes from *Arjola Zadrima,* a famous poetess, who also hosts a radio and television show, and is followed by a significant number of people on Facebook, posting poetry and discussing sensitive issues.

This image posted by her is part of one protest on women's rights and on the poster we see that only two 'yes'es equal another yes, implying that on any other occasion, 'no' is enough to end it there. She accompanies this image with the text: "Në vendin tem nuk luftohet, por çdo ditë vriten gra. Çdo ditë ka

kronikë të zezë, çdo ditë mbeten fëmijë jetimë, çdo ditë abuzohen gratë, çdo ditë dhunohen gratë. E ne çirrena për lirinë e fjalës, ne çirrena për të drejtat e grave, ne vdesim çdo kohë nga pak në këto rrethana. Në vendin tem vriten çdo ditë gra e unë ende nuk e di me kë luftojmë." (*There is no war in Albania, yet, women get killed every day. Every day women are abused, violated, and their kids remain orphans. And we raise our voice for women's rights, for freedom of speech, yet, we die, bit by bit. In my country, women are killed every day, and I still do not know who we are fighting against in this war.*) This post tries to raise awareness about the high degree of violence exerted upon women in Albania and the consequences of such violence compared to the fatalities of a war. Yet, there is no war, but a lot of women get killed and all of us die bit by bit.

Other posts, not included here due to limitations of space, point out that women are not objects on display or on sale, they are not the property of their husbands or partners, but, on the contrary, they symbolize continuity of life and love, and should be cherished. More gratitude should be shown to women, this is a theme that frequently resonates in posts that we have included in our research, as well as gratitude to men who respect and support women in all their efforts. We conclude our analysis of examples with the words of *Sonila Meço,* a well-known journalist and lecturer in Albania: Without women, the world would be a filthier place.

Concluding remarks and suggestions for future research

In the light of the current study, we would like to affirm the use of digital technologies not only as an object of research but also as a research tool. In concrete terms, the posts on Facebook as an online social media provide interesting insights not only into the kind of data collected, but also into the kind of identities and social phenomena that lie beyond the posts on Facebook. They can help researchers of interdisciplinary studies explore versions of reality and identities within those realities. The undeniable fact that posts on social media possess multimodal nature and interrelate with previous or future posts or comments calls for more contemporary research tools and current waves of research within online discourse and ultimately prove that exclusively linguistic methods are insufficient to address all kinds of phenomena that are related to digitally mediated discourse.

With special reference to the examples of the posts treated in this paper, we conclude that, based on the corpus of study, the language used, together with some other audiovisual elements that characterize online discourse on social media, the image of Albanian women suffers from its description in derogatory terms and gendered culpability. However, we do observe real attempts to challenge such attitudes through posts by males and females alike that tend to express empathy and raise awareness about the value of women in our society.

Comments in response to posts are also interesting to be studied linguistically and pragmatically as they include examples of inclusive 'we', use of capital letters for emphasis, traces of irony, impoliteness, etc., that can be explored in other papers in the future.

References

Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). Towards a 'third wave' of digital discourse studies: Audience practices on Twitter. Unpublished Plenary talk delivered at the 1st International Conference Approaches to Digital Discourse Analysis - ADDA, Valencia, 18-10 November, 2015.

Baron, N. S. (1984). Computer mediated communication as a force in language change. *Visible Language, 18*(2), 118–141.

Baron, N. S. (1998). Letters by phone or speech by other means: The linguistics of email. *Language and Communication, 18*, 133–170. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(98)00005-6.

Baron, N. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195313055.003.0002.

Barton, D. (2001). Directions for literacy research: Analyzing language and social practices in a textually mediated world. *Language and Education, 15*(2-3), 92–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780108666803.

Bou-Franch, P., & Blitvich, P. C. (eds) (2019). *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6.

Crystal, D. (2008). *Txtng: The Gr8 Db8*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ferrara, K., Brunner, H., & Whittemore, G. (1991). Interactive written discourse as an emergent register. *Written Communication, 8*(1), 8–34. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088391008001002.

Garcia, A. C., & Jacobs, J. B. (1998). The interactional organization of computer mediated communication in the college classroom. *Qualitative Sociology, 21*(3), 299–317. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022146620473.

García-Gómez, A. (2019). Sexting and Hegemonic Masculinity: Interrogating Male Sexual Agency, Empowerment and Dominant Gendered Norms. In P. Bou-Franch & P. C. Blitvich (eds), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 313-339). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_11.

Gee, J. P. (2003). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1145/950566.950595.

Gee, J. P. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*. London: Routledge.

Georgakopoulou, A. (1997). Self-presentation and interactional alliances in e-mail discourse: The style and code-switches of Greek messages. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 7*, 141–164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.1997.tb00112.x.

Georgakopoulou, A., & Spiliotti, T. (2016). Introduction. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (eds), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 1-16). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315694344.

Heller, M. (2010). Media, the state and linguistic authority. In S. Johnson & T. M. Milani (eds.) *Language Ideologies and media discourse: Texts, practices, politics* (pp. 277-282). New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Herring, S. C. (2019). The coevolution of computer-mediated communication and computer-mediated discourse analysis. In P. Bou-Franch & P. Blitvich (eds), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 25-67). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_2.

Herring, S. C. (2004a). Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online behavior. In S. A. Barab, R. Kling, & J. H. Gray (Eds.), *Designing for virtual communities in the service of learning* (pp. 338-376). New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805080.016.

Herring, S. C. (2004b). Online communication: Through the lens of discourse. In M. Consalvo, N. Baym, J. Hunsinger, K. B. Jensen, J. Logie, M. Murero, & L. R. Shade (Eds.), *Internet research annual* (Vol. 1, pp. 65-76). New York: Peter Lang.

Herring, S. C. (2004c). Slouching toward the ordinary: Current trends in computer-mediated communication. *New Media & Society, 6*(1), 26–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444804039906.

Johnson, S., & Milani, T. M. (eds.) (2010). *Language Ideologies and media discourse: Texts, practices, politics*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Jones, R. H., Chik, A., & Hafner, C. A. (eds.) (2015). *Discourse and digital practices: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315726465.

Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold.

Lee, C. K. M. (2011). Micro-Blogging and Status Updates on Facebook: Texts and Practices. In C. Thurlow, K. Mroczek (Eds.) *Digital discourse: Language*

in the new media (pp. 110-128). New York: Oxford University Press Inc. New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137029317_8.

Maíz-Arévalo, C. (2019). Losing face on Facebook: Linguistic strategies to repair face in a Spanish common interest group. In P. Bou-Franch & Blitvich, P. C. (eds.), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 283-309). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_10.

Murray, D. E. (1988). The context of oral and written language: A framework for mode and medium switching. *Language in Society, 17*, 351–373. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740450001294X.

Norris, S. (2004). *Analyzing multimodal interaction: A methodological framework*. New York, NY: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203379493

Petroni, S. (2019). How social media shape identities and discourses in professional digital settings: Self-communication or self-branding? In P. Bou-Franch & P. C. Blitvich (eds.), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 251-281). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_9.

Roeder, R., Miller, E., & Blitvich, P. G. (2019). Pedagogy, audience, and attitudes: Influencing university students' metalinguistic awareness about texting practices. In P. Bou-Franch & P. C. Blitvich (eds.), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 367-389). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_13.

Sifianou, M., & Bella, S. (2019). Twitter, politeness, self-presentation. In P. Bou-Franch & P. C. Blitvich (eds.), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 341-365). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_12.

Tagg, C., & Seargeant, P. (2014). Audience design and language choice in the construction and maintenance of translocal communities on social network sites. In P. Seargeant & C. Tagg (eds.), *The language of social media: Identity and community on the internet* (pp. 161-185). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thurlow, C., Mroczek, K. (eds.) (2011). *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc. New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137029317_8.

Vásquez, C. (2015a). "Don't even get me started…": Interactive metadiscourse in online consumer reviews. In E. Darics (ed.), *Digital business discourse* (pp. 19-39). London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137405579_2.

Vásquez, C. (2015b). Intertextuality and interdiscursivity in online consumer reviews. In R. H. Jones et al. (eds.), *Discourse and digital practices: Doing*

discourse analysis in the digital age (pp. 66-80). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315726465-5.

Vásquez, C., & China, A. S. (2019). From "My Manly Husband…" to "… Sitting Down to Take a Pee"… In P. Bou-Franch & P. C. Blitvich (eds.), *Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions* (pp. 193-218). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-92663-6_7.

Yus, F. (2016). *Humour and relevance*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/thr.4.

BOOK REVIEW: TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Antony Hoyte-West

Independent scholar, United Kingdom

More than three years since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in early 2020, a semblance of normality has returned and there is the cautious hope that the worrying times of lockdowns, quarantines, and other restrictions have been consigned to history. Yet some adaptations appear to have become permanent fixtures, such as moves towards remote working from home, increased digitalisation, as well as changing employment patterns across many professional domains.

Translation and Interpreting in the Age of COVID-19 brings together contributions from twenty-five authors representing institutions in nine countries across three continents. As highlighted at the outset by co-editors Kanglong Liu and Andrew K.F. Cheung (both based at Hong Kong Polytechnic University), the fundamental importance of language and communication during the pandemic and the role of translation and interpreting therein makes this volume a key addition to the literature on the topic (see also Blumczynski & Wilson, 2022; Lee & Wang, 2022; etc.). With the subtitle of "Challenges and Opportunities", Liu and Cheung's opening chapter therefore offers a synthesis of the main issues and demarcates the book's scope, which profiles new ways that translation and interpreting responded to new modes of working, teaching, and learning imposed by the pandemic. A tripartite format is adopted, comprising a five-chapter section on translation, six chapters on interpreting, and five further chapters devoted to translator and interpreter pedagogy during that unprecedented time.

About the author: *Antony Hoyte-West is an interdisciplinary researcher focusing on linguistics, literature, and translation studies. He is particularly interested in historical and contemporary language policy, sociological aspects of the translation and interpreting professions, literary translation studies, and institutional translation and interpreting. A qualified translator and conference interpreter from several languages into his native English, he holds a doctorate in linguistics and postgraduate degrees in languages and social sciences from the universities of St Andrews, Oxford, Galway, and Silesia, as well as two diplomas in piano performance. He is the author of fifty-one publications and has presented his research at international conferences in a range of countries.*

e-mail: *antony.hoyte.west@gmail.com* **ORCID iD:** *https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4410-6520*

Copyright © 2023 Antony Hoyte-West

Article history: Received: 27 July 2023; Reviewed: 29 July 2023; Revised: 28 July 2023; Accepted: 31 July 2023; Published: 28 August 2023

This open access article is published and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Citation (APA): Hoyte-West, A. (2023). Book review: Translation and interpreting in the age of COVID-19. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture, and FLT, 11*(2), 148-151. https://doi.org/10.46687/NFQR6069.

Entitled "Reconceptualising Translation in the Age of COVID-19", the contributions in the first section of the book (Chapters 2-5) all centre on the Chinese linguistic or cultural context. As such, Yufeng Liu and Dechao Li's chapter provides a comparative analysis of the translation of metaphors in media reports on COVID-19 from Chinese and Western perspectives, which is followed by Chonglong Gu's study of translation and multilingualism related to the pandemic as reflected in Hong Kong's unique linguistic landscape. Chapter 4 shifts to the United Kingdom, where Yu Kit Cheung presents a detailed mixed-methods case study of how British government guidelines pertaining to COVID-19 were translated into Chinese, evaluating the selection criteria, script choices, and translation quality. In the section's closing chapter, Sai Cheong Siu analyses the effectiveness of machine translation models when dealing with material relating to COVID-19 in the English/Chinese language pair.

Interpreting is the focus of the second section (Chapters 6-11), and one of the seminal professional shifts during the pandemic was the transition from face-to-face to remote (i.e. offsite) interpreting. With numbers often seen as potentially problematic in simultaneous interpreting, volume co-editor Andrew K.F. Cheung's comparative study presents and analyses the results of an experiment involving 43 experienced English/ Chinese interpreters who were working remotely either at home or were based at interpreting hubs. In Chapter 7, Marta Buján and Camille Collard highlight the findings of a large-scale survey on experienced conference interpreters' views and working habits concerning the pandemic-related uptake of remote simultaneous interpreting. With the questionnaire comprising 61 questions and receiving over 800 responses, the results offer a comprehensive panorama of the profession as a whole. The notion of an evolving profession is also highlighted in Marie Diur and Lucía Ruiz Rosendo's study at the United Nations, which places attention on how the shift to remote interpreting impacted working life and recruitment testing at the institutional level. Chapter 9 discusses the nascent discipline of humanitarian interpreting, which Lucía Ruiz Rosendo and Maura Radicioni locate both within crisis communication/ translation more generally, and with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic more specifically. Returning to remote simultaneous interpreting, the contribution by Márta Seresi and Petra Lea Láncos delves into the results of ten semi-structured interviews with Hungarian conference interpreters on their professional experiences of teamwork and cooperation in virtual settings. In the final chapter of this section, Deborah Giustini conducts an in-depth literature-based analysis of the interrelationship between remote interpreting and technology from a sociological standpoint.

The last section of the book (Chapters 12-17) focuses on pedagogical aspects and opens with a report by Kanglong Liu, Ho Ling Kwok, and Wenjing Li on a mixed-method survey and interview-based study regarding student perspectives on the hybrid teaching of translation subjects at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In

Nancy Tsai and Damien Fan's chapter, some positive aspects of online translator training with regard to the Chinese cultural context are uncovered as the result of data obtained through course evaluations and student feedback at both an American and a Taiwanese institution. Chapter 14 highlights how translator and interpreter pedagogy in Slovakia adapted to the new realities caused by the pandemic, as Soňa Hodáková and Emília Perez offer analyses obtained not only via a nationwide student questionnaire but also through interview data with staff members responsible for the relevant training. Based on focus groups with students and staff of the postgraduate translation and interpreting programme at the University of Maryland, David B. Sawyer's contribution presents a case study of the pandemic-mandated shift from in-person to online teaching at that institution. A case study approach is also utilised by Chen-En Ho and Yuan Zou, who analyse the results of a student survey conducted at Queen's University Belfast to examine the use of the online platform Gather as a potential aid for distance interpreter training. Finally, in the closing chapter of the section (and of the book as a whole), Nan Zhao profiles several computer-assisted interpreting tools and outlines their pedagogical and practical applications.

This book is an impactful resource examining translation and interpreting during the COVID-19 pandemic in a comprehensive manner. It draws together studies from scholars and practitioners at various universities and international institutions, utilising a diversity of approaches to provide useful and well-articulated insights from different linguistic, disciplinary, and methodological viewpoints. As with many other spheres of professional activity, it is certain that translation and interpreting will undergo wide-ranging changes in order to adapt to society's changing needs in the post-pandemic era (see also Hoyte-West, 2022; Eszenyi, Bednárová-Gibová & Robin, 2023). As such developments continue to influence academia and the labour market, *Translation and Interpreting in the Age of COVID-19* will undoubtedly be an invaluable resource for the academic and professional practice of translation and interpreting as the current century progresses.

References

Blumczynski, P., & Wilson, S. (Eds.) (2022). *The languages of COVID-19: Translational and multilingual perspectives on global healthcare*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003267843.

Eszenyi, R., Bednárová-Gibová, K., & Robin, E. (2023). Artificial intelligence, machine translation & cyborg translators: A clash of utopian and dystopian visions. *Ezikov Svyat (Orbis Linguarum),* 21(2), 102-113. https://doi.org/10.37708/ezs.swu.bg.v21i2.13.

Hoyte-West, A. (2022). No longer elite? Observations on conference interpreting, COVID-19, and the status of the post-pandemic profession. *Ezikov Svyat (Orbis Linguarum)*, 20(1), 71-77. https://doi.org/10.37708/ezs.swu.bg.v20i1.9.

Lee, T. K. & Wang, D. (Eds.) (2022). *Translation and social media communication in the age of the pandemic.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003183907.

Liu, K., & Cheung, A. K. F. (Eds.) (2022). *Translation and interpreting in the age of COVID-19.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-6680-4.