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Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies

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Things do not change; we change: *Introduction to Hradec Králové Journal of Anglophone Studies*

Unlike the pandemic, this is going to be relatively short. I refer to both this introduction as well as the entire “double volume” you are currently holding in your hands or reading online. Inarguably, the last year has brought many changes to our lives. Some two years ago it would have been unimaginable to speak about a pandemic, lockdowns, travel restrictions, endless prohibitions, or compulsory vaccinations, to name just a few of the ongoing interventions to our pre-COVID 19 lives. It seems like a few weeks ago when, in my introduction to the last year’s volume, I expressed hopes that 2021 “will bring some positive vibrations to our current, difficult times, which try our souls.” Contrariwise, who could have possibly guessed the situation would be even more miserable, grim, and indeed absurd.

Yet, I firmly and perhaps naively & (ampersand intended) personally believe the present crisis should be embraced not collectively (although I am in no way advocating against our collective responsibilities to each other as human beings), as the media and politicians keep emphasizing, but rather individually; I believe each of us must approach the coming year ahead by looking within and making choices. I can see the key to overcoming the present situation via performativity. To support my tentative thesis, I will draw two parallels from American literature of the mid-19th century, both dealing with a certain crisis by two seemingly distant approaches: one by taking radical action, the other by radically refusing to do anything.

Let me start with the former: in his seminal important work *Walden*, the American Transcendentalist thinker Henry David Thoreau, on his path to spiritual liberation, embarked upon his famous 2+-year project living in a self-built house at the Walden Pond. His project, a spiritual quest itself, to live deliberately, to experience the outside which should lead to the (re)discovery of his inside, to cherish sense, sensibility, and common sense or intuition should perhaps resonate with the current situation somewhat profoundly.

Thoreau’s ecological thoughts, consumerism critique, and the rejection of top-down control perhaps resonates with the topical trend of downshifting, a localised approach to life, stressing the importance of self-importance, self-reliance, and in short, one’s individuality.

In the opposite direction, there lies one of the most discussion-provoking and irritating texts of the Western literary canon, *Bartleby the Scrivener* by Herman Melville, published a few years later than Thoreau’s *Walden*. The short story portrays a copy-making clerk who at a certain point inexplicably refuses to do anything. Bartleby’s famous “I would prefer not to” seems highly symptomatic of our current cultural limbo. Bartleby’s decision not to act is a canvas, or a plane (in Deleuzean words), which lacks any contents: identity as a process. As much as Bartleby wants to escape the symbolic order of language and social practices, we try to navigate ourselves in the pedestrian sublime of the covid-stricken streets of our lives.

In a sense, it seems to me, we have stopped talking in the ways we once did, so communication with one another has become something other than it was before. Thus, we substitute our interpretations of the real with our interpretations of new, imagined entities. Bartleby’s proposition therefore becomes enticing. Simply preferring not to do seems an all too simple solution to the Sisyphean endeavour of constantly doing something in the face of a seemingly unchanging and never-ending situation. While

the choice may, ultimately, prove to be selfish, irresponsible, and even foolhardy, the very act of choosing in an atmosphere of restriction and forced isolation can feel revolutionary.

Thoreau, however, emphasises that the world outside us does not necessarily change; it must be us who change. The volume in front of you is the result of such a transformation. Indeed, we are changing. With an increased editorial board and more thorough review process, the journal lists only a few carefully-chosen, accepted essays. Through a process of careful discussion and meticulously redrafting, we are proud to present a high quality double-volume. It is quality that matters to us, and it is the depth of the articles printed which we are keen on preserving. In this way, we are rejecting the dichotomy of the opposing examples of Thoreau and Melville. We choose instead to embrace; to both change and do nothing. Our process and approach may have changed, but our focus on the preservation of quality discourse remains unwavering. We may not be able to change the world around us right now, and we clearly all need to adapt and work to retain our individuality whilst also remembering our collective responsibilities. However, we can refuse to let the world force us to change; we can all still take our stands when we simply prefer not to.

Finally, let me approach the present volume. It opens with a paper *The Distribution of Semantic Roles inside the Nominalized Projection* by Markéta Blažková. Her paper exemplifies that the complementarity between prenominal possessive DPs and postnominal genitive as well as their semantic interpretation resulting from the application of thematic hierarchy is determined in large part by syntax regardless of the semantic type of noun.

The signalling of a change from semantic interpretation towards pedagogy is brought forth by Helena Zitková, who in her paper entitled *Assessment and Grading - Perception of Pre-Service English Teachers* explores test evaluation through the eyes of future English teachers. Her findings demonstrates that the investigated pre-service teachers find evaluation a complex and difficult process and based on their experience of assessing and grading the identical test, they feel the urge to reconsider their current perception.

The next paper called *Purpose-Built or Accidental? Exploring the Plausibility of John Seeley's Stance Regarding the Birth of the British Empire* by Ahlem Fidouh and Belkacem Belmekki introduces a certain caesura to the volume by introducing a set of cultural/literary contributions. The article discusses a somewhat controversial issue regarding the birth of the British Empire. According to this outlook, the birth of this huge Empire was the product of a set of circumstances in distant places that impelled the British to move forward and conquer territories. Hence, the aim in this paper is to check the veracity of this latter assumption by considering the case of British India.

Another stimulating paper called *Sarcasm?: Quality Flouting as a Humorous Tool in the sitcom The Big Bang Theory* by Markéta Dančová analyses how exactly the characters use Maxim non-observance in humorous conversations, especially the previously mentioned type of Quality non-observance, and whether there are any character-specific tendencies and deviations from what might be generally assumed.

The article section of the journal closes with again a twin-author duo, Filip Krajník, Michaela Weiss who in their contribution titled *"Their hour will be his hour": Margaret Atwood's Hag-Seed and the Conventions of Renaissance Revenge Plays* argue that to emphasise her interpretation of the Shakespeare play, Atwood employs a number of conventional elements of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge plays—such as the metatheatrical techniques, the strong character of the avenger, the presence of the ghost, and the avenger's death—making her novel not only a modernised version of Shakespeare's

The Tempest, but also a revival, of a kind, of a whole dramatic genre whose popularity peaked in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and whose conventions permeate the structure of Hag-Seed's narrative.

The double volume closes with David Livingstone's review of *Howard Jacobson's Novels in the Context of Contemporary British Jewish Literature* by Petr Anténe as well as a call for an interdisciplinary conference held at Charles University called *Culture as Interface and Dialogue*. Clearly, ours is indeed a situation which can be seen as a certain dialectical interface: a liminal phase, neither here, nor there; a face in motion, a face that is changing. As Thoreau in *Walden* would put it "things do not change; we change."

This introduction wishes to motivate its readers to go on to read how Anglophone studies across the globe have been reacting towards the events experienced, researched, and written about throughout 2021. I am hopeful some of the findings will be, if not life-changing, at least uplifting. I will stop short of expressing platitudes about my optimism for the coming year. Not because I am particularly pessimistic about it, but I fear we are all tired of hearing them. Instead, I would ask everyone who has stuck with me this far to keep making choices, for even if that choice is to do nothing, it is ultimately the choice that matters. Rather than let COVID and these times *define* us, rather I hope we will all make the choices that *refine* us. In closing, therefore, allow me to humbly and respectfully recommend your first choice be to turn the page and keep reading.



LINGUISTICS AND METHODOLOGY

The Distribution of Semantic Roles inside the Nominalized Projection

Abstract: This article will show that there are parallels between verbal and nominal semantic roles and therefore it is possible to apply thematic hierarchy for the interpretation of DPs of various semantic types of nominals. First, the one common structure for various semantic types of nominals introduced by Alexiadou (2001) and developed in her later studies, will be discussed (Functional Structure 19). My main claim will be that only nouns that inherit Argument Structure (AS) from verbal base are capable of licensing arguments and thematic hierarchy can be applied to them. The primary focus will be on the so-called picture nouns which are problematic because they do not have AS as defined by Grimshaw (1990) but despite that inherit eventuality from predication and actualize argument structure in some contexts. Moreover, picture nouns which share the feature (+ ABSTRACT) exhibit strong eventivity as stipulated by Roy and Soare (2013) which might be a signal for the internal source of eventivity ("Event Related" 127). Finally, it will be exemplified that the complementarity between prenominal possessive DPs and postnominal genitive as well as their semantic interpretation resulting from the application of thematic hierarchy is determined in large part by syntax regardless of the semantic type of noun.

Terminology

I will adopt the following terminology used in Barker ("Partitives" 683):

Prenominal possessive	<i>(John's) friend is nice.</i>
Genitive of-phrase	<i>I met a friend (of_{GEN} John).</i>
Double genitive	<i>I met (a friend of John's)</i>
POSSESSOR/POSS	Possessor semantic role

In order to isolate constituents that express strictly possessor relations the small capitals POSSESSOR sometimes abbreviated POSS will be used. Also, the double genitive (iii) is a label for the postnominal of-phrase that can contain the DP marked with a possessive morpheme *'s*.

Thematic hierarchy in the verbal domain

If we want to derive semantic meaning for possessive and genitive elements in English, we can apply the thematic hierarchy which constraints their interpretation. The thematic hierarchy has been traditionally applied to verbal clauses. Each verb is associated with an argument structure which states the number of arguments that a verb requires. This argument structure is referred to as a subcategorization or c-selection frame. To illustrate this:

- (1) *John gave Mary a book.*
 (1<N>, 2 <NP>, 3 <NP>)

(Adapted from Aarts 93)

The verb *give* in sentence (1) takes three arguments with corresponding sentence functions: a subject (*John*), indirect object (*Mary*), direct object (*book*). The argument which precedes the verb (*John*) is called the external argument, the arguments which are inside VP and follow the verb are the internal arguments (*Mary*, *book*).

From a semantic point of view, we can imagine this situation as the little drama where the scene is set by the verb *giving*. Obviously, there will be participants in this scene and each participant will be assigned a role. In linguistics, these semantic roles are known as thematic roles or theta roles. If we add the thematic information to our example (1) we derive the following result:

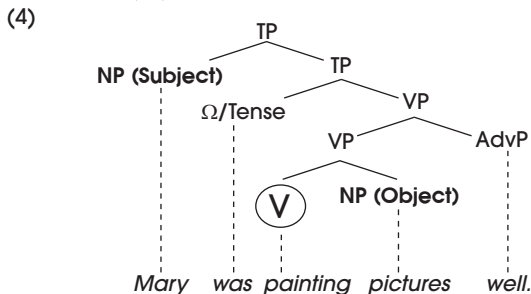
- (2) *give* (verb)
 (1 <NP, Agent>, 2 <NP, Benefactive>, 3 <NP, Theme>)

(Adapted from Aarts 96)

Both semantic roles as well as arguments with sentence functions can form a hierarchy as can be seen below:

(3)	Semantic hierarchy			Hierarchy of arguments
	Agent	↑	↑	Subject
	Patient/ Theme			Direct object
	Recipient/Beneficiary			Indirect object or PP
	Direction/ Manner			PP or Adv

These two hierarchies can be linked. The linking rules are rather complex but broadly speaking syntactically higher constituents correspond to higher semantic roles. The first to formulate a hierarchy of cases was Fillmore (1968) who has stated the preference for subjects in higher syntactic positions over objects (55). Let us demonstrate this linking in the verbal domain with the syntactic tree in (4):



The subject *Helen* in (4) is hierarchically higher than the object *picture*. Consequently, it will be linked with semantic Agent interpretation rather than Patient/Theme interpretation.

Nominalization

The question which arises is whether nouns are like verbs in their argument taking capacity. This matter has provoked a great deal of controversy. In this sub-section two approaches to nominalization will be introduced which will allow us to categorize nouns and describe their semantic behavior.

Some researchers, for example Grimshaw (1990) stipulate that nouns can be divided into two types: the group of nouns that have an argument structure (AS) and the group of nouns which have a lack of it (65). The former group is represented by complex event nominals, e.g. (5a).

- (5) *Caesar's destruction of the city*
Caesar destroyed the city.

With this type of nouns, the semantic roles of verb are parallel to the semantic roles of noun. In both (5a) and (5b) *Caesar* is the Agent and the *city* is the Theme. Despite this similarity, there is one crucial difference. The arguments of nouns are not obligatory in order to be grammatical in the sentence. On the other hand, verbs as suggested above require their arguments to be realized in the sentence.

The second group of nouns consists of simple events (*race, trip*) and result nominals (*exam*). Result nominals comprise both derived or non-derived from verbs (*cat, dog, house*). Both these groups do not take arguments in Grimshaw (1990)'s framework. Table 1 summarizes the criteria introduced in Grimshaw (1990) to distinguish between two groups of nominals:

Table 1: Result vs Complex event nominals

(6)	Result nominals /R-nominals	Complex event nominals
	Non- θ -assigner, No obligatory arguments	θ -assigners, Obligatory arguments
	No event reading	Event reading
	No agent-oriented modifiers	Agent-oriented modifiers
	Subjects are possessives	Subjects are arguments
	By-phrases are non-arguments	By-phrases are arguments
	No implicit argument control	Implicit argument control
	No aspectual modifiers	Aspectual modifiers
	Modifiers like <i>frequent, constant</i> only with plural	Modifiers like <i>frequent, constant</i> appear with singular
	May be plural	Must be singular
(Source: Borer 45)		

Let me illustrate what predicts licensing AS. There is connection between argument structure and complex event structure that can be broken down to aspectual subparts:

Complex event structure:



(Source: Grimshaw 26)

It means that argument that participates in the first sub-event (Activity) is more prominent than argument that participates in the second sub-event (Result). In addition, there is a thematic hierarchy that together with aspectual hierarchy determines AS. The proposal put forward by Grimshaw (1990) is

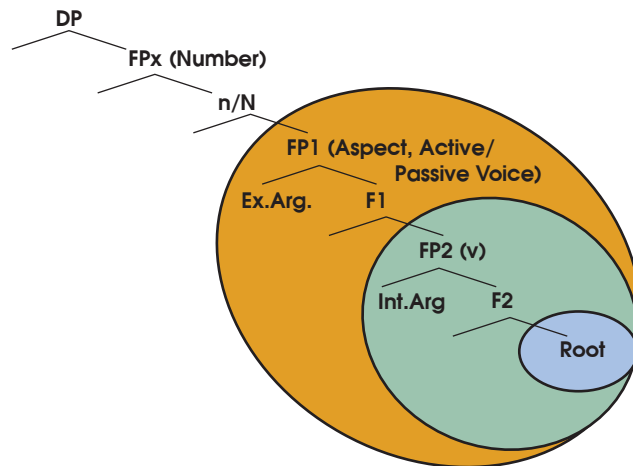
that any nominal that will lack a complex event structure will also lack argument structure. Grimshaw (1990)'s view and the criteria stipulated in Table 1 can be seen as a starting point but it has been challenged in many ways. For example, Alexiadou observes that nominals need not be eventive but can be stative and still license AS, see example (8a) ("Statives" 28). The stativity is reflected in the fact that it does not form passive nominals (8b). Quite clearly, complex event structure is lacking in these cases.

- (8) *Knowledge of that fact*
**the fact's knowledge*

(Source: Alexiadou, „Statives“ 28)

Alexiadou's approach was inspired by framework developed by Marantz (1999) within the model referred to as Distributed Morphology (DM). Marantz suggests that abstract roots enter into relations with higher functional heads (v, n, a etc.) which categorized them as verbs, nouns or adjectives. Alexiadou introduces the following structure for licensing arguments in nominals ("Nominalization" 14):

- (9) Functional structure in nominals



(Adapted from Alexiadou, "Nominalization" 14)

As can be seen in functional structure (9), there is a nominal functional head n/N which selects a verbal projection FP1 and closes off the verbal part of structure (Aspect, Voice and a verbal layer v). In other words, it is verbal below that point and nominal above. The nominal projection is labeled FPx in our graph. On the basis of the height of attachment of this nominalizing head (n) various nominals can be created. When the nominalizing head is attached directly to the root, the nominal will not be eventive and will not inherit the argument structure.

When the nominalizing head is not root-attached, nominals with verbal properties will be created and the presence of arguments will correlate with the amount of verbal properties. The following correlation statement can be expressed. The more verbal the properties, the more likely it is that both FP1 (with an external argument) and FP2 (with an internal argument) will be included. To illustrate this, see the description of functional projections within different type of nominals below:

(10)		Nominal type	FP1 _{ex.Arg}	FP2 _{int.Arg}	Example and syntactic structure
	a.	Verbal Gerund	✓	✓	<i>John's destroying the manuscript shocked his publisher.</i> (DP (AspP (VoiceP (vP(√))))))
	b.	Nominal gerund	✓	✓	<i>John's destroying of the manuscript shocked his publisher.</i> (D (NumP (nP (VoiceP (vP (√))))))
	c.	-ation nominal	X	✓	<i>The destruction of the manuscript shocked the publisher.</i> (D (NumberP (nP (VoiceP (Passive) (vP (√))))))
	d.	Eventive -er nominal	X	✓	<i>That reckless driver of the stolen car.</i> (D (NumberP (nP (VoiceP (Passive) (vP (√))))))
	e.	Result nominal	X	X	<i>Hurricane Dorian leaves a terrible destruction in Bahamas.</i> (D (NumberP (nP (vP (√))))))
	f.	Simple event nominal	X	X	<i>The trip lasted several hours.</i> (D (NumberP (nP (√))))
	g.	Concrete nominal	X	X	<i>The dog shocked the publisher.</i> (D (NumP (nP (√))))

(Adapted from Alexiadou, "Nominalization" 16)

Whereas verbal gerund (10a) is the most verbal type of the nominal comprising both FP1 and FP2 projections, concrete nominal (10g) is only root-attached and subsequently FP1 and FP2 projections will be missing.

If we look at the description of functional projections in (10) closely, we can see that we are hardly able to draw a dividing line between argument and non-argument taking nouns. The problem is that result nominals in (10e) and repeated in (11b) can contain a verbal layer v. This v can also be present within simple events as example (11a) instantiates. Obviously, -ation suffix can attach only to verbal forms but otherwise these nominals behave as referential nominals:

- (11) *the examination lasted for hours* simple event
the examination was on the table result nominal
- The supportive evidence for

Alexiadou for the functional projection *v* within result and simple nominals comes from the study of Roßdeutscher (2007) (“On the Role” 272). In this study it is observed that while the nouns in (12a-b) themselves have result/object reading, the adjectives *rapid* and *rough* modify the event of delivering, estimating and measuring signaling that adjectives can have access to the *v* layer in these nouns.

- (12) *the rapid delivery*
the rough estimation/ the rough measurement

(Source: Alexiadou, „On the Role“ 272)

But if they have a verbal source, their AS should be present. To solve this, Alexiadou divorces the verbalizers and argument licensers and claims that *v* layer is not a prerequisite for AS (“On the Role” 256). Alexiadou’s conclusion, however, complicates the puzzle concerning the licensing of AS even more. She proposes that we need to separate layers that introduce arguments and layers that function as simple verbalizers (“On the Role” 273).

Regarding the issue of argument introduction, we can start with external arguments. The crucial factor for the licensing of external arguments is whether nominalizing morphology attaches on top of VoiceP (nominal and verbal gerunds, *-ation* nominals as well as eventive *-er* nominals) or lower. Nevertheless, the Voice can be passive as in *-ation* nominals. Alexiadou compares *-ation* nominals cross-linguistically and suggests that they are rather intransitive (*Functional Structure* 77). They do not project Agents and when Agents are syntactically realized they occur as PPs. Also, they often bear the role of Affecter/Instrument. That means that their Agents are of different nature from Agents that can be found with verbal passives. This conclusion does not strictly hold for English:

- (13) *the/John's destruction of the city*
the/ judge's reversal of the decision

(Source: Alexiadou, *Functional Structure* 80)

Here, the nominalization in (13) can be transitive. However, such transitive nominalizations are limited and not acceptable with all nominals (14):

- (14) *the growth of tomatoes*
**John's growth of tomatoes*

(Source: Alexiadou, *Functional Structure* 80)

Another diagnostic for the presence of Voice is a *self-action* interpretation. Compare the sentences in (15):

- (15) a. *The children were being registered.*
 i. *Th=Ag: *The children registered themselves.*
 ii. Th ≠ Ag: *The children were registered by someone.*
 b. *The reported mentioned the painfully slow registering of children.*
 i. *Th=Ag
 ii. Th ≠ Ag

- c. *The report mentioned the painfully slow registration of the children.*
 i. Th=Ag
 ii. Th ≠ Ag

(Source: Alexiadou and Lohndal 218)

Obviously, the derived nominals in (15c) are compatible with *self-action* signaling lack of Voice. By contrast *ing-of gerund* (15b) and verbal passive (15a) pattern together and do not allow *self-action* interpretation. For these reasons, Alexiadou suggest that *-ation* nominals have an intransitive base and their external arguments are realized as Possessors (*Functional Structure* 153). These prenominal possessives are generated in Spec(DP) directly and can be thematically interpreted as an Agent because in English Spec(DP) is considered as an A-position (since Abney 1987).

Internal arguments, in contrast are not special as there are several options for their introduction in the structure: *v*, roots (in her earlier work, Alexiadou *Functional Structure* 19), particles/PP and small clauses (in her later work, Alexiadou, "A Probe" 515). Also, notice that if there is a verbal layer *v* or underspecified roots that are responsible for introduction of internal arguments, nothing prevents result nominals/ simple event nominals to sometimes appear with internal arguments. This is exactly the kind of approach Alexiadou embraces and it distinguishes her from Grimshaw (1990) who assumes that internal arguments do not surface with non-argument taking nouns at all (*Functional Structure* 20).

What enforces then fully fledged AS in nominalizations? Alexiadou points out that it is related to the presence of Number in combination with aspectual type of verbal structure ("On the Role" 277). Since verbal gerunds do not have Number, they cannot be pluralized and cannot receive non-argument interpretation as in (16):

- (16) *John's pushing(*s) the cart to New York.*

(Source: Alexiadou, „A Probe“ 518)

The fact that aspect is related to number can be observed in the following examples:

- (17) a. *There was a capsizing of a boat by Mary.*
 b. **There was a pushing of the cart by John.*
 c. *There was at least one pushing of the cart to New York by John.*

(Source: Alexiadou, „A Probe“ 518)

Recall that in Grimshaw (1990)'s framework AS nouns can never be pluralized. Alexiadou challenges this view and implies that a subtype of AS nouns can form plurals, namely *telic/bounded* nominals, without losing their AS ("On the role" 278). On the other hand, *atelic/unbounded* nominals cannot pluralize while preserving their AS. This is due to the fact that the function of pluralization is to introduce unboundedness. In the structures that are already unbounded via Aspect realized in AspP or Aktionsart in Voice(P) pluralization would be nonsensical. This is presumably the case with verbal gerunds that are already unbounded through AspP.

The other option is marking *atelicity* through Voice(P). These nominals can undergo pluralization but only when they lose their AS. Alexiadou expects that this shift can be reduced to switching on and off the particular projection, e.g. Number ("On the Role" 280).

Weak and Strong Eventivity- Criteria from Table 1 (revised)

Having analyzed different types of nominals, we have seen that some nominals can be eventive but do not project AS. Therefore, the criterion (6b) from our Table 1 is not a reliable sign of AS. We have also challenged the criterion (6i) concerning pluralization. The criterion (6c) is also only weak. This criterion is related to agent-oriented modifiers such as *intentional* or *deliberate* that can confirm the presence of external arguments. The reason why (6c) is only weak is that it can appear with expressions that are clearly not derived nominals such as *deliberate fire*. According to Roy and Soare, these criteria lead only to weak eventivity (“Nominalizations” 8).

In contrast, Roy and Soare (“Nominalizations” 15) and Roy and Soare (“Event Related” 127) indicate that the criteria for strong eventivity are: the projection of obligatory argument structure (6a), the availability of adverbial aspectual modifiers such as *in X time*, *for X time* (criterion 6g), modification by *frequent* in combination with singular (6h), control into purpose clauses (6f). They argue that these are linked to the presence of aspectual structure.

If we take this claim seriously, it seems that aspect is the key factor in licensing AS. This is in compliance with Alexiadou’s discussion about the importance of aspectual dimension for fully-fledged AS (“On the Role” 277). In Roy and Soare’s framework, however, argument realization and aspect are tightly connected. In their view, the absence of external arguments and aspectual structure implies that all AS is excluded. This is slightly distinct from Alexiadou where internal arguments are independent of external ones. Nevertheless, if nominals comply with strict version of Roy and Soare’s strong eventuality, it should not run counter to conclusions that would be drawn from Alexiadou’s approach. Thus, I will focus on these four strong criteria and apply them to picture nouns.

Picture-nouns

The term picture-noun is standardly used in generative linguistics but it is rarely defined and poorly analyzed within the Distributed Morphology approach. This class includes items such as *picture*, *photograph*, *sketch*, *portrait*, *story*, *anecdote*, *joke*, *poem*, *novel*, *book*, *movie*, *rumor*, *lie* and others (Perlmutter 293). Under Grimshaw (1990)’s terminology they would be classified as result nouns.

Picture nouns, indeed, do not reveal typical characteristics for AS nouns. They actually resemble eventive *-er* nominals that are considered as argument taking but their eventive structure is degraded (Roy and Soare, “Event Related” 14-19). Both groups do not fulfill the criterion (6g) defined in table 1. Specifically, they do not allow PP aspectual modifiers like *in/for x time*:

- | | | | |
|------|----|---|------------------------------|
| (18) | a. | <i>*(John’s) picture (of Mary) for three hours/ in an hour</i> | Picture nouns |
| | b. | <i>*the painter of the room in three days</i> | Eventive <i>-er</i> nominals |
| | c. | <i>the meeting of the President with the Prime minister for three hours</i> | (AS-Ns) |
| | d. | <i>*the meeting for three hours</i> | (SENs) |
| | e. | <i>*the table for three hours</i> | (R-Ns) |

(Adapted from Roy and Soare, “Event Related” 124; 131; 143)

Neither control into purpose clauses (criterion (6f)) is grammatical for both groups (19):

- | | | | |
|------|----|---|------------------------------|
| (19) | a. | <i>*(John's) picture of Mary in order to win the medal.</i> | Picture nouns |
| | b. | <i>*the painter of the room in order to win the medal</i> | Eventive -er nominals |
| | c. | <i>John's playing cello in order to win a medal</i> | (AS-Ns) |
| | d. | <i>*John's cello concert in order to win a medal</i> | (SENs) |
| | e. | <i>*the table in order to win the medal</i> | (R-Ns) |

(Adapted from Roy and Soare, „Nominalisation“ 11)

Nevertheless, picture nouns do not reveal typical characteristics of result nouns either. In fact, similarly to eventive -er nominals and AS nominals, they pass the criterion (6h) defined in Table 1. This criterion concerns the behavior that nominals exhibit when modified by *frequent*. Namely that the frequency adjectives are possible with the singular:

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|------------------------------|
| (20) | a. | <i>a frequent picture of Mary</i> | Picture nouns |
| | b. | <i>frequent pictures of Mary</i> | Picture nouns |
| | c. | <i>the constant defenders *(of human rights)</i> | Eventive -er nominals |
| | d. | <i>this frequent consumer *(of tobacco)</i> | Eventive -er nominals |
| | e. | <i>*the frequent destructions of the city by the enemy</i> | AS-Ns |
| | f. | <i>the frequent concert*(s); the frequent movie*(s)</i> | SENs |
| | g. | <i>frequent exam* (s)</i> | R-Ns |

(Adapted from Roy and Soare, „Event Related“ 127; 131; 134)

As can be observed above, when *frequent* co-occurs with SENs (20f) and R-Ns (20g), it leads to pluralization. Therefore, Roy and Soare assume that only when *frequent* occurs with singular noun it modifies the strong/grammatical event (*Event Related* 147).

As far as criterion of obligatory arguments (6a) is concerned, I will follow Roy and Soare's hypothesis based on French data that *of*-phrases that can be classified as true arguments are not substitutable (“On the Internal” 153). They distinguish between instrument -er nominals whose modifiers are not arguments and substitutable by other prepositions and eventive -er nominals where arguments can be optional but substitution does not hold. If we apply this test to picture nouns, we can see that at least in some cases their arguments are not substitutable which testifies in favor of their argument status.

- | | | |
|------|----|--|
| (21) | a. | <i>My mother recalls the frequent picture of Mr.Lincoln going down the street.</i> |
| | b. | <i>??My mother recalls the frequent picture with/for/about Mr.Lincoln going down the street.</i> |

(Source:enTenTen 2015)

However, unlike eventive -er nominals, where modification by *frequent* is always combined with obligatory arguments, picture nouns do not satisfy this criterion, see below:

- | | |
|------|--|
| (22) | <i>I am probably the only man in the world who has a vivid recollection of old Wetherby. Vivid, yes, it was a frequent picture in his mind, that summer day.....</i> |
|------|--|

(Source: enTenTen 2018)

Also, the criteria for strong eventuality apply most prototypically to picture nouns that share the feature (+ ABSTRACT). Picture nouns which denote the outcome of some activity and can be described with feature (+ RESULT) do not occur with modifier *frequent*. Nevertheless, they also exhibit some type of eventuality. They can be modified by Big-type adjectives (BAs) such as *big, small, happy, old, skillful, quick*, etc. as defined by Roy and Soare (“On the Internal” 143).

- (23) a. *This **quick** picture of an albatross, done in our cabin before breakfast, shows the style of painting....*
 b. *Today I drew a **quick** picture of Nob Mouse, inked it with my trust inking pen...*
 c. *And here is a **quick** picture of the inside of that amazing cake.*

(Source: enTenTen 2015, enTenTen 2018) |

BAs have been argued to be systematically ambiguous between an intersective and non-intersective reading. For instance, the well-known example in (24) shows the two readings. The non-intersective reading has been argued to be akin to VP adverbial modifiers and consequently analyzed as modifier of events.

- (24) *Olga is a beautiful dancer.*
 a. *Olga is a dancer and Olga is beautiful.* Intersective
 b. *Olga is beautiful as a dancer. Olga dances beautifully.* Non-intersective

The non-intersective reading can be further divided into internal (when it applies to some event inside the nominal) or external (when it applies to some level above NP). The external reading of non-intersective reading usually leads to generic interpretation which imposes determiner restriction where the generic determiner *this* is excluded. Thus, I conclude that our example (23a) has non-intersective reading which is not generic.

Roy and Soare cite similar cases of non-derived nominals which reveal non-intersective reading and they propose that they might be either internal or arise from predication which is associated with event variable, see (25).

- (25) *Ce diplomate habile a résolu la crise*
this diplomat skillful has resolved the crisis
This skillful diplomat resolved the crisis.

(Source: Roy and Soare, “On the Internal” 147)

The same approach is adopted by Alexiadou and Lohndal who argue that AS of picture nouns does not come from inside the nominal but is inherited from outside (22). Thus, it does not have to be always actualized.⁽¹⁾ In this respect, it resembles de-adjectival nominalizations which seem to license arguments in the absence of verbal source. This argument was originally proposed by Roy who argues that only predicative (intersective) adjectives are able to derive nominalizations (123). His observations from French can be carried over to English as well. Compare examples in (26):

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|----------------------------------|
| (26) | a. | <i>the nasal vowel</i>
<i>the nasal cavity</i> | Intersective
Non-intersective |
| | b. | <i>That vowel is nasal.</i>
<i>#That cavity is nasal.</i> | |
| | c. | <i>The nasality of the vowel (surprised the phonetician).</i>
<i>#The nasality of the cavity (surprised the anatomist).</i> | |

(Source: Baker and Gondo 28)

The data in (26a) explicate that the adjective *nasal* can have both intersective and non-intersective reading but only intersective reading is available in predicative position (26b). Similarly, the nominal in (26c) is possible only with intersective reading. On basis of these facts, Roy concludes that the predicative head found in copular constructions is also found in nominalizations (141). She treats *of the vowel* in (26c) as an argument of the nominal, analogously to internal arguments that are realized in Grimshaw's (1990) complex event nominals. Alexiadou and Lohndal assume that comparable issue arises with picture nouns and propose that the possessor is introduced in Spec(nP) and can further raise to Spec(DP) (22). I further assume that Spec(nP) can attach to lower v which is capable of introducing internal arguments as mentioned above.

In addition, it is hard to prove that the eventuality comes from inside the nominal or predication. Both types of picture nouns (+ ABSTRACT) and (+ RESULT) could have the internal eventuality but the former group reveals more characteristics that would lead to this conclusion. Alexiadou and Lohndal do not distinguish between picture nouns with feature (+ ABSTRACT) and (+ RESULT) and suggest predication as a source of eventuality. These fine-grained distinctions do not have an impact on our future analysis as we can conclude that some type of eventuality is present within picture nouns.

Thematic hierarchy in the nominal domain

Thematic hierarchy has traditionally been applied to arguments within the verbal domain as described in section 2. Assuming parallelism between verbal and nominal domain, I will exemplify that thematic hierarchy is also applicable in the nominal domain. Having introduced one common functional structure for various types of nominals, I will suggest that thematic hierarchy can be related only to nouns that have some inherited verbal base and the ability to take arguments. Recall that I have redefined picture nouns from Grimshaw (1990)'s result nouns to the type of nouns with strong eventuality in some contexts as defined by Roy and Soare ("Event Related" 127). I expect that nouns that do not have an inherited verbal base, e.g. concrete nouns are not capable of licensing arguments and thematic hierarchy does not have an effect on them:

- (27) **John's dog/table of Mary*

Alexiadou et al. stipulate the thematic hierarchy ordering and the thematic hierarchy hypothesis (Noun Phrase 585):

- **Thematic hierarchy:** (POSS (Agent (Experiencer (Goal/Source/Location (Theme))))))
- **Thematic hierarchy hypothesis** (Kolliakou 714): The Agent can be extracted only if the POSS is not present, and the Theme can be extracted only if neither the Agent nor the POSS is present.

They correlate this phenomenon with extraction and pronominalization and suppose that the possessive element has to transit through the highest position in the hierarchy (Alexiadou et al., *Noun Phrase* 586). In other words, Spec(DP) can serve as an escape hatch for movement.⁽²⁾

Since Fillmore (1968) it has been known that the thematic hierarchy states the preference for subjects in higher syntactic positions over objects (55). I will exemplify that this also applies in the nominal domain where subjects/possessive elements are generated higher when co-occurring with objects/genitive and subsequently can move through Spec(DP). In order to demonstrate that, we will use the labels: POSS, A1 for agent-like and A2 for patient-like roles. Let us begin our explanation with picture nouns (28). If there is a co-occurring possessive DP and the genitive, an unambiguous reading, will be forced. The possible and impossible readings are listed below:

(28)	<i>John's</i> _{POSS, A1} <i>picture of Mary</i> _{A2}	
	John	Mary
I.	POSSESSOR	Creator (A1)/ Theme (A2)
II.	Creator (A1)	Theme (A2)
III.	*Theme (A2)	POSSESSOR
IV.	*Theme (A2)	Creator (A1)
V.	*Creator	POSSESSOR

We can see that *John* in (28) can be POSSESSOR or Agent but not Theme. In contrast, when the possessor occurs alone as in (29), it can be interpreted as POSSESSOR, Creator or Theme.

(29) *John's picture*

By analogy, the same would apply to *-ation* nominals and gerunds in (30):

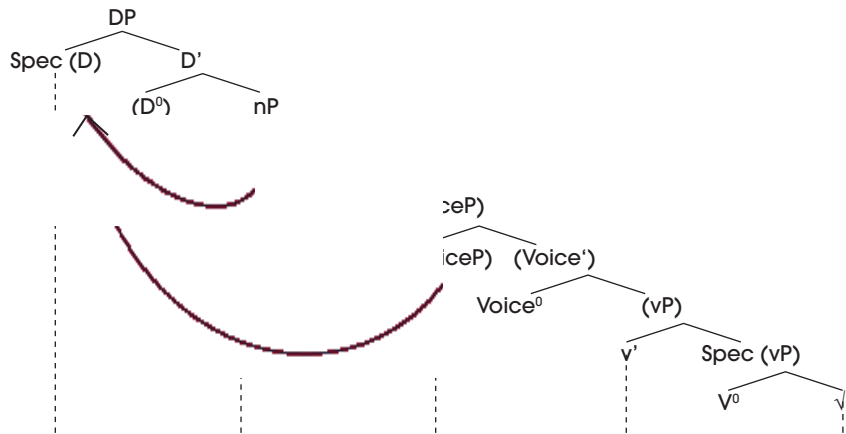
(30)	a.	<i>Caesar's</i> _{A1} <i>destruction of the city</i> _{A2'}	
	b.	<i>Caesar's</i> _{A1} <i>destroying of the city</i> _{A2'}	
		Caesar	City
I.		* POSSESSOR	Agent (A1)/ Theme (A2)
II.		Agent (A1)	Theme (A2)
III.		*Theme (A2)	POSSESSOR
IV.		*Theme (A2)	Agent (A1)
V.		*Agent (A1)	POSSESSOR

Here, *Caesar* cannot be semantic POSSESSOR and the only option remaining is (ii). And again, when *city* is the only argument of the noun, the interpretation is wider, see (31):

(31) *City's*_{A1/A2} *destruction*

The corresponding syntactic structure for both (28) and (30) is visible below. It can be clearly observed that the prenominal possessor is always structurally higher than the genitive. The only difference is that the prenominal possessor *Caesar* in (30a) is merged in the Spec(DP) directly while *Caesar* in (30b) and *John* in (28) raise there from their base positions in Spec(Voice) and Spec(nP) respectively. In case of picture nouns (28), the functional head Voice is not projected.

(32) Syntactic structure: Complementarity between prenominal possessives and genitive



(28)	<i>John's</i>	<i>(John)</i>		<i>of Mary</i>	<i>PICTURE</i>
(30a)	<i>Caesar's</i>			<i>of city</i>	<i>DESTROY</i>
(30b)			<i>(Caesar)</i>	<i>of city</i>	<i>DESTROY</i>

So, despite the fact that the external arguments of various nominals have different syntactic point of origin they pattern alike when they co-occur with genitive.

Double genitive

We have not discussed the permissible combination POSSESSOR-Agent. According to our hierarchy, both (33a) and (33b) could receive this interpretation.

- (33) *John's picture of Mary*
John's picture of Mary's

The *of*-phrases, however, do not seem to compete together. Barker explains that *of* in double genitive is not the possessive *of* ("Handbook" 1126). He follows Jackendoff (1968) and highlights that double genitive is a kind of partitive construction as it exhibits anti-uniqueness effect:

- (34) *The one of John's book * (that I like the best).*
*The book of John's * (that I like the best).*
The friend of John's children that I like the best.

(Source: Barker, „Handbook“ 1126)

The partitive construction (34b) can then be paraphrased as one friend out of the set of friends. It cannot refer to an individual or a set of individuals. Of_{PART} DP needs to have at least two individuals or sets of individuals in its extension which causes a certain degree of indefiniteness. Therefore, the standard partitive as well as double genitive are compatible with definite determiner only when there is a relative clause which renders the construction unique.

It also explains why it can co-occur with prenominal possessive in (35)

- (35) *My*_{POSS} *favourite book of *Mary*_{*POSS/*A1} / *Mary*_{A2}
*John's*_{POSS} *most recently purchased book of Mary's*_{A1/*A2}
 (Source: Barker, „Handbook“ 1126; „Partitives“ 684)

Barker derives his explanation from thematic uniqueness according to which the nominal can have only one syntactically specified possessor (“Partitives” 683). So, he states that *Mary* in (35a) could only be an internal argument with A2 interpretation but not the _{POSSESSOR}. On the other hand, prenominal possessor and partitive *of* are different and nothing prevents them appearing together. Notice that the interpretation of *Mary's* in (35b) as A2 is excluded.

Barker also mentions that the postnominal genitive *of* comprises the relation denoted by the head noun (“Partitives” 684). In our case (36a) can only be the picture that depicts *Mary* (A2). Conversely, in (36b) there is no genitive *of* present that would place constraint on the possession relation. Subsequently, (36b) can express wider range of meanings, e.g. a picture that *Mary* owns (_{POSSESSOR}), that he holds in his hand (A1) etc.

- (36) *A picture of Mary*_{A2}
*A picture of Mary's*_{POS/A1}

It is necessary to mention that if there is only one argument of the noun, it does not always have to be Patient. It is rather dependent on the semantics of the head noun. For example, in case of inalienable possessors, it can be a _{POSSESSOR}⁽³⁾. Alexiadou proposes that in case of alienable possession the _{POSSESSOR} is introduced as the complement of the noun (“Some Notes” 179). Inalienable possessors are special, they are capable of expressing only one semantic role and do not appear in constructions such as (37b):

- (37) *nose of Mary*_{POSS}
 **John's nose of Mary*

Barker's analyses also predict the distribution of semantic roles in (38a). The sentence (38b) is ungrammatical which supports the syntactic analysis where double genitive occupies syntactically higher position:

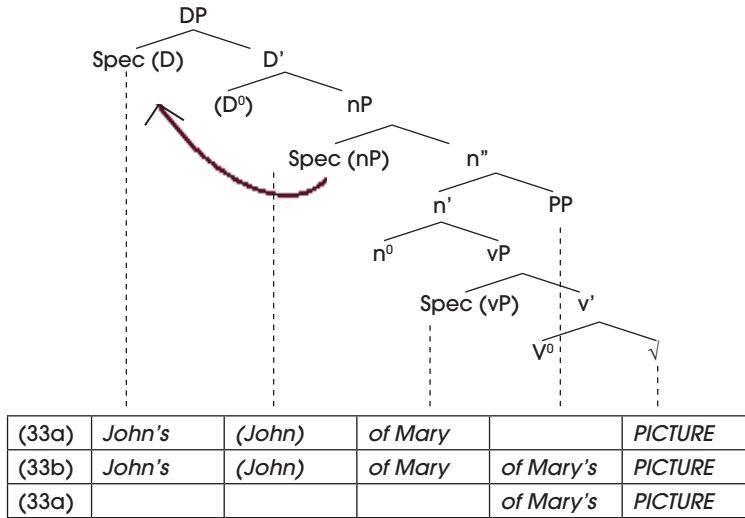
- (38) *a picture of John*_{A2} *of Mary's*_{POS/A1}
 **a picture of Mary's of John*

Let us turn to *-ation* nominals and gerunds. These are not permissible with double genitive and will not be discussed. Abney points out that *of* NP's have only concrete possession reading and process nominals do not occur with it (75):

- (39) *Caesar's destruction of the city's
 *Caesar's destroying of the city's

The syntactic tree below in (40) represents hierarchical positions for the examples discussed above. It depicts clearly that prenominal possessive is located in the highest position, double genitive is in an intermediate position and thematic element is lowest.

(40) Syntactic structure -Double genitive



Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that there are parallels between verbal and nominal semantic roles and therefore it is possible to apply thematic hierarchy for the interpretation of DPs of various semantic types of nominals. For this purpose, one common structure for nominals introduced by Alexiadou (2001) and developed in her later studies was used (*Functional Structure* 19). Due to this structure, it was exemplified that differences between nominals relate to the number of functional layers which are contained within them. It has been argued that only nouns that have an inherited verbal base are capable of licensing arguments and as a result thematic hierarchy can be applied to them. The main focus was on picture-nouns which are special as they do not take arguments in Grimshaw's (1990) terminology. Nevertheless, their eventuality is associated with predication and the subclass of picture nouns which share the feature (+ ABSTRACT) fulfills the criteria of strong eventivity as defined by Roy and Soare (2013) ("Event Related" 127). Thus, they have a potential to actualize argument structure in some contexts. Finally, it was illustrated that the semantic interpretation of various nominals is guided in large part by the syntactic structure and by co-occurrence of elements in this structure.

Notes

- (1) I assume that the subject can be implicit in the form of PRO as Chomsky posits for picture nouns (166–167).
- (2) In English, possessor extraction is prohibited due to Left Branch Condition (Corver 1990) but Alexiadou et al. assume split DP as there is some evidence for split CP in Rizzi (1997) (577; 607).
- (3) The eventuality in case of alienable possession comes also from predication (Alexiadou and Lohndal 22).

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Assessment and Grading - Perception of Pre-Service English Teachers

Abstract: This article aims to explore test evaluation through the eyes of future English teachers. Firstly, the topic is linked to the wider context of modern approaches to future teacher education and school evaluation and then narrowed to test evaluation itself. Secondly, a survey, whose participants were second-year undergraduate prospective teachers, is introduced. As a part of developing their assessment literacy, they were asked to assess and grade a progress test, discuss it in the class and then reflect on the experience. The analysis of the data from the respondents' handouts and open-ended questionnaire items followed a constant comparative analysis and the result is an empirically grounded theoretical framework on pre-service teacher perception of assessing and grading. The findings show that the investigated pre-service teachers find evaluation a complex and difficult process and based on their experience of assessing and grading the identical test, they feel the urge to reconsider their current perception.

Introduction

School assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Traditionally, assessment and grading were intertwined and inseparable parts of school practice. In recent years, however, some changes in this perception have been noticeable. With the awareness of the importance of developing assessment literacy in pre-service teachers and the need for research on pre-service teachers in the field of school assessment (Brown and Remesal 13-14), a survey of future English teachers in their second year of bachelor study program was conducted. To broaden their horizons in assessing, the pre-service teachers were asked to assess an identical test and then reflect on the experience. Since emotions and emotional states play an important role in teacher preparation and are core to reflexive processes (Holmes 147, Shoffner 783), the feelings and emotions of the pre-service teachers will be explored in the study as well. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to first find out how the student teachers will evaluate one identical test and, secondly, to get an insight into how future teachers perceive assessment and how they think about it.

Stepping outside one's comfort zone in reflection is an inseparable part of the process of ongoing learning and plays a significant role in professional development of pre-service teachers. Through reflection, the prospective teachers are encouraged to mindfully mirror their experience, become aware of the implicit influences that affect their perceptions and make them explicit (Calderhead and Gates 3), and to "consciously choose what kind of teacher they want to be" (Korthagen 84). Thence, they take responsibility for their own professional growth, which may empower them to influence future directions in education (Calderhead and Gates 3).

In the present paper, the terms pre-service teachers, prospective teachers, student teachers and future teachers will be used interchangeably. The same applies to the terms referring to future teachers education, i.e. teacher training, future teacher training and teacher education will be used as synonyms. In the context of education, some authors distinguish between the terms "assessment" and "evaluation" (Astin and Antonio, 2012), or sometimes the terms "assessment" and "evaluation" are used together as one term "assessment and evaluation" (Gullan, D.F., 2005). However, these terms will be used interchangeably

in correspondence with, for example, Ur's (1991) or Harmer's (2007) notion within the scope of this paper. Finally, to prevent misunderstanding, the term "grade", and not "mark", will be used to refer to grades (grade '1' through '5') throughout the whole paper.

Teacher Education and the Role of Reflection

In teacher education, reflection is considered one of the key factors of professional growth. The ability to reflect on previous experience and the active role of pre-service teachers in the process of reflection are emphasized to help them become reflective practitioners (see Schön, 1983) or, in other words, grow into teachers who develop their teaching process through reflective practice and are able to consciously structure situations in the classroom and thus learn from their teaching experience in a mindful and systematic manner (DeLuca et al. 22, Spilková and Tomková 11, Korthagen et al. 138-139, Janík et al. 144).

In their reflective practice, teachers have a chance to stop and look back at the situations in the classroom, and give a deeper thought to their teaching in the broader contexts of their professional values, attitudes and intentions (Spilková and Tomková 12). Then, the process of reflection enables them to analyze, discuss, critically examine or reconsider their beliefs about good teaching (Calderhead and Gates 3). Furthermore, when reflecting, teachers may better understand their feelings and emotions related to their practice (Spilková and Tomková 12). Demetriou and Wilson are convinced that "without reflection, teachers cannot modify their practice in a controlled or deliberate way" (939). For them, reflection is "a cognitive process that helps teachers to rethink their practice, learn from their experiences and help them to cope with similar situations in the future" (938-939). Likewise, according to Zembylas (210), reflection improves the quality and effectiveness of teaching and, similarly, Korthagen et al. state that reflective practitioners are "better teachers" (149). They see a direct link between reflection and teacher behavior since "human behavior is based on mental structures which are not static, but at least in part are created or changed through experiences or confrontations with situations [...] and their reflection" (Korthagen et al. 68, 71).

In addition, the focus on the role of feelings and emotions in the process of reflection has become the centre of interest in recent years. It is argued that reflection and emotions are closely intertwined and that emotional states related to professional practice contribute to building teacher attitudes and identities (Mackenzie 186, Zembylas 210-211). Thus, the role of reflection in teacher education is crucial. If exposed to reflection in their teacher training, the pre-service teachers will get used to the process, will be aware of its importance and can become reflective practitioners.

Assessment in Education

Assessment is a natural and inseparable part of learning, thus it plays an important role in school education. Traditionally, school assessment was "used as a measure of school progress and teacher effectiveness within the accountability context of education" (DeLuca et al. 9) so the purpose and function of assessment was to grade and communicate learners' performance and achievements (Brunker 91, Spilková and Tomková 21). This approach to assessment of learning (also called summative assessment) is retrospective and refers to a concluding evaluation usually consisting of scores or grades that summarize the outcomes of learning (Green 1). However, in terms of improvement, "summative assessment does not provide opportunities to extend or enhance understanding, and is not the best representation of overall learning" (Crockett and Churches 11).

A Shift from Assessment of Learning to Assessment for Learning

In modern approaches to learning and education, a shift from focus on assessment of learning based on grades to the assessment for learning (also called formative assessment) based on meaningful and high-quality feedback may be observed. In the context of Czech school system, the principal curricular documents require “changes in the assessment of the pupils towards diagnostics on an ongoing basis, [...] and a wider use of verbal assessment”, and demand assessment built on “evaluation of the pupil’s individual development and on the capacity to make finely-tuned, positive evaluative judgements” (FEP BE 8, 10). Hence, not only is summative assessment not in correspondence with current curricular documents, but also, many scholars and educational experts recommend using formative type of assessment over the summative one to promote learning and to help learners improve (see e.g. Crockett and Churches 11, William and Leahy 5, Macpherson and Hendrick 24, Volante and Fazio 751–752, Spilková et al. 12–13, or Košťálová et al. 15). It is believed that adapting teaching to fit individual learner’s needs, providing meaningful feedback during the process of learning and involving learners into the process of assessment in a form of peer feedback or self-assessment (FEP BE 7–10, Spilková and Tomková 11, Crockett and Churches 9, William and Leahy 135) helps develop learners’ abilities and leads to personal growth (Green 1). In other words, formative assessment serving as a tool for improvement in learning is accentuated nowadays.

Furthermore, criterion-based assessment is, by some authors, incorporated into the learning oriented assessment (Brunker et al. 89) as it may support the process of learning, but only if it is realized through high-quality feedback (see e.g. William and Leahy 11). Yet, if realized by giving grades “without the opportunity to discuss, revise, and improve”, the criterion-based assessment just becomes the assessment of learning, not for learning (Crockett and Churches 11). It means that a grade, though based on clear criteria, still does not provide quality feedback for the learning process.

In Czech schools, however, summative assessment in the form of grades continues to dominate (ČŠI 113), whereas, from the learner’s point of view, getting a simple grade without having the space to think about one’s learning and its outcomes, and discuss them either with the teacher or peers, without the chance to find supporting evidence for one’s answers, analyze mistakes, and come up with the ideas to correct them, makes the assessment useless. As Crockett and Churches point out (2-3) “a number... means little and accomplishes even less”.

Nevertheless, although teachers need to adopt and implement the improvement-oriented assessment, the purpose of summative evaluation must be accomplished as well because the final results are an integral part of a learner’s academic record (DeLuca et al. 9). In the Czech Republic, final summative evaluation is even prescribed by law. The school reports that learners get after each semester are legally binding documents, where the evaluation of the outcomes can be expressed either by a grade (on a scale from 1 to 5), a form of verbal assessment, or by a combination of both (školský zákon § 51, vyhláška § 15).

Assessment criteria and subjectivity in school assessment

To meet the legal requirements, every school has its own classification set of criteria that are to be followed by teachers when assessing. However, they are formulated too generally to fit the widest possible content of several school subjects and so vaguely that everyone can perceive them in their own way as shown in the example of formulated assessment criteria for foreign languages for grade ‘3’:

The learner shows shortcomings in performing the required intellectual and motor activities. The learner makes mistakes when applying the acquired knowledge and skills. The learner's thinking is quite correct, but not very creative; there are mistakes in his logic. The written outcomes are less aesthetic and show some imperfections. (Classification set of criteria of a randomly selected primary school in the CR)

It is not possible for all teachers to perceive these criteria in the same way. Everyone has a different aesthetic feeling, everyone judges creativity in thinking and imperfections differently, and everyone can have different requirements for written and graphic outcomes. Hence, every teacher can manipulate the criteria freely, which results in low objectivity of the assessment. The teacher's perception of the meaning of the criteria and the 'value' of grades is then just a matter of the individual and personal point of view, consequently assessment is "intuitive and subjective" (Slavík 62), and therefore, the grade given to the learner depends solely on the teacher. The causes of low objectivity of evaluation in schools were defined by Slavík (62) who refers to the values of the teachers that can be considered relative and subjective, unreliability in data collection, unintentional or even intentional inaccuracy of the assessors, or the inappropriate and unsuitable criteria selected for assessing.

To conclude, the same learner's performance may be assessed differently by different teachers because different teachers will have a differing conception of assessment. If the exam or the test is not standardized, which is not common in the daily practice in schools (Slavík 62), the sets of criteria, distribution of points in assessment scales, and grading scales can be perceived and operated diversely. When assessing, different teachers may take different aspects of the subject matter into consideration, they may have different sets of criteria and different grading scales. Then, the evaluation procedures depend only on the decision and subjective perception of each teacher.

Developing Assessment Literacy of Pre-Service Teachers

Learning to assess (assessment literacy) is one of the competencies pre-service teachers need to develop in their teacher training. Assessment literacy is defined as "the knowledge of how to assess what students know and can do, interpret the results from these assessments, and apply these results to improve student learning and program effectiveness" (Webb 1). DeLuca, et al. (22) recognise the importance of teacher education as "primary sites for developing teachers' initial beliefs about assessment" (22).

It is believed that the initial professional conceptions and knowledge of prospective teachers arise primarily from their experiences as students (Pajares in Brown and Remesal 3, Harrison 256), however, it is likely that their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and behavior may change in teaching practice (Brown and Remesal 12). In the context of teacher education, to develop pre-service teachers' assessment literacy, they need to be exposed to topics and course work focused on assessment and learn through practice-based assignments (Kahl et al. 3). It means that pre-service teachers need to be provided with real-life opportunities to challenge their conceptions and to enable them to apply what they have learned (ibid.).

Moreover, since the actual behavior can be influenced by reflection (Korthagen et al. 68, 71), pre-service teachers may start questioning their initial attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning and reconsider them through involvement in assessing experiences and their reflection. Price et al. assume that "strategies that require students to actively engage with assessment will result in deeper and longer-term development of assessment literacy" (10).

In agreement with the theoretical background, the following methodological part of this paper presents a research focused on developing pre-service teachers' assessment literacy through real-world based assignment and its reflection.

Methodology

The present study is based on exploring pre-service teachers' sole experience of assessing and grading a progress test (Harmer 380) and investigating their feelings, emotions and reasoning related to it. Hence, the aim of the study is to examine the actual perception of pre-service teachers of assessment and grading.

The following research questions were formulated accordingly:

1. How do the future English teachers assess and grade the identical test?
2. How do the future English teachers perceive the process of assessing and grading a test?

To get a profound insight into the perceptions of pre-service teachers a qualitative research design, specifically the grounded theory approach, was applied.

Context of the study and its participants

The survey was conducted in November 2020. The respondents in this study were students in the second year of bachelor's study program English for Education preparing them to become English teachers. None of them had any school teaching experience, therefore no practice with evaluating and grading tests. The group of respondents was ethnically and racially homogenous since they all were of the Czech origin. In total, 19 students in their third semester of teacher training voluntarily participated in the study.

In their prior semesters, the investigated pre-service candidates had completed several courses where they came across the topic of assessment and its implications for learning. Specifically, all the participants of the study took introductory courses of Psychology and Educational Psychology, which are offered in the first and second semester of the teacher education program respectively. The syllabi of these courses cover the topic of learning and teaching, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and include grading as a learning topic as well. In the first year of their study program, all the participants were also introduced to Education Sciences with a special focus on modern approaches to teaching and learning as well as the issue of rewards and punishments and their influence on learning. At the end of this two-term course, they were asked to elaborate on the possibilities of assessment in schooling contexts in their final critical essay the topic of which was "The ideal assessment at school".

All the mentioned courses in the first year of future teacher training aim to intentionally challenge the student teachers reasoning about the purpose of school assessment and shift their perspective towards improvement oriented assessment, that is to consider assessment as an effective tool for learning (Crockett and Churches 20, William and Leahy 9, Košťálová et al. 14, FEP BE 8). To develop assessment literacy of pre-service teachers even more, the second-year students enroll in an ELT methodology course that consists, next to the others, of the topics related to assessment, such as learner differences, evaluation and assessment and giving feedback. Since the participants of the study were recently students, they may still be influenced by their previous experience as learners. Nevertheless, there is an assumption that during their teacher education, the prospective teachers will get out of their comfort zone and develop their own assessment philosophy within their evolving teacher identity based on professional knowledge and teaching practice (Calderhead and Gates 3, Brown and Remesal 12, Korthagen et al. 68). Thus, in compliance with modern approaches to future teacher education (see

e.g. Schön, Spilková and Tomková, Korthagen et al.), not only are they provided with the theoretical input to construct their knowledge but they also build their beliefs and attitudes towards assessment through practical tasks and self-reflection.

Further information about the participants, such as their age or gender are considered irrelevant for this study.

Data Collection

The pre-service teachers were surveyed within the ELT methodology course in the third semester of their teacher training. The survey consisted of two phases.

The first phase took place in class as a part of the regular classroom instruction and was focused on experiential test evaluating and grading. All 30 students who signed up for the course were present and actively participated. Each student teacher was given a handout with the assigned task together with a sample of a short completed progress test. All students got the same handout with the same test and were asked to assess it.

The progress test (inspired by Ur 251) to be assessed and graded looked like this:

Test on vocabulary and relative clauses, written during the lesson.

Define the following words, using *who / which / that / whose / when / where*.

For example: a deserted house = a house where nobody lives

- 1 courage: a man who not have any fear
- 2 an illusion: a false sight.
- 3 sweat: its like terrible but more than this
- 4 a virus: a thing which make people sick
- 5 a paw: a part of a animal
- 6 a temple: a house where religious people lives in

The task for the students was formulated as follows: There is a revision test that was completed by a ninth-grader (approximately A2 level) in front of you. It is aimed at determining the knowledge of the meaning of particular words and the ability to use relative pronouns correctly in the definition of the words. Your task is

1. to create a set of criteria for assessing the test
2. to determine the number of points for fulfilling each criterion
3. to design a grading scale
4. to assess the test and grade it (by grade from 1 to 5)

The sets of criteria with corresponding points, the grading scales with given points and grades and the whole class discussion about them were the basis for subsequent reflection.

In the collected handouts, some attempts to describe and explain the decision-making process behind awarding the points were indicated, but not all the respondents included them. Therefore these data were not considered relevant for the study and were omitted from the analysis.

In the second phase, the participants were asked to complete a self-reflective questionnaire. Notwithstanding that the responses in a questionnaire are subjective and the researcher cannot ask any additional questions, still this research tool has a benefit in addressing a large number of respondents and gaining a substantial amount of data in a short period of time (Chráska 158). The questionnaire was administered online after the class, after the first phase of the survey. It was sent to all 30 students enrolled in the course and present in the class, and only those who were willing to, filled it in.

The questionnaire was anonymous but each completed questionnaire was encrypted with a secret code by the respondent, which made it possible to match it with the lists of criteria and grading scales accordingly. Predominantly, it comprised a series of open-ended questions through which the student teachers reflected on the experience they had in the process of evaluating and grading the test in the class. Only one question was closed but served only as an opening to the topic and was followed by an open-ended question to extend the space for reflection. Since open-ended questions promote the motivation to reveal respondents' ideas freely in their own words (Züll 2), they allow them to explore their actual feelings, emotions, thoughts and opinions.

The respondents were asked the following questions:

What feelings and emotions did I have when evaluating and grading the test?

What influenced me when evaluating and grading the test?

How did I feel and what did I think when the criteria, points, grading scales, grades and individual test questions were analyzed in the class?

During or after the analysis in the class, did I feel that I should evaluate the test differently? And if so, how and why?

What did I realize about assessment?

The reflective questions were designed to evoke students' retrospective feelings, emotions and thoughts both about their recent experience with the process of assessing and grading the test and the subsequent discussion about it in the class. On top of that, the set of questions had a potential to induce and influence the students' prospective standpoints and attitudes towards assessment and grading. Such a strategy corresponds with a modern paradigm in teacher education, i.e. the importance of reflection in constructing and reconstructing mental structures and attitudes of pre-service teachers (see Korthagen et al. 2011).

The questionnaire did not include questions regarding the respondents' age, sex or gender, as they were not considered relevant for the study.

Data Analysis

In initial purposive sampling (Chun Tie et al. 3), the materials from respondents (handouts and questionnaires) were collected. In the first phase of the survey, all 30 students present in the class were willing to share their handouts with a set of criteria, a final number of given points and grading scales with the final grade. In the second phase, only 19 respondents out of 30 completed the self-reflective questionnaire. Subsequently, the materials were sorted out by the encryption in order to gain the ultimate sample of data. It means that each handout with a set of criteria and a grading scale was put

together with the fitting questionnaire according to the same secret code. The handouts that did not fit any questionnaire secret code were not used for further analysis. Hence, the data from 19 respondents were the subject of the successive analysis.

After the initial purposive sampling, first the data from handouts were analyzed and described using frequencies and percentages to get an answer for the first research question. Then, the constant comparative analysis based on the principle of repeated comparing (Švaříček et al. 207; Chun Tie et al. 5) was used to find similarities and differences in the data gained from the questionnaires using the open, axial and selective coding within the applied grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 373) to answer the second research question.

In the open coding, the responses were systematically analyzed and coded with the aim to develop thematically relevant categories. The codes in a form of short labels were assigned directly in the margins of each questionnaire, comparing incident to incident. This initial analysis allowed me to detect the thematic similarities across the student teachers' responses. In the advanced axial coding, the categories were interconnected and built into new meaningful groups through exploring the relationships between them (Corbin and Strauss 373). Then, the core categories were identified to form a structure for building a theoretical explanation in the selective coding phase (Corbin and Strauss 15).

Findings and Discussion

In this part of the paper, the findings from the analysis of the data gained from both phases of the survey will be presented and discussed.

Findings from the first survey phase

Sets of Criteria and Corresponding Points

In respondents' handouts, various combinations of the following criteria appeared: "a correct relative pronoun used in the definition", "a meaningful definition", "an accurate and meaningful definition", "grammatical accuracy" and "correct spelling". Each criterion was allocated either a half point or one point.

All sets of criteria designed by the respondents and allocated number of points are presented in the table below:

	Sets of criteria	Points / criterion	Points/ test item	Maximum test points
1.	o correct relative pronoun	0.5	1	6
	o accurate and meaningful definition	0.5		
2.	o correct relative pronoun	1	2	12
	o accurate and meaningful definition	1		
3.	o meaningful definition	1	2	
	o correct relative pronoun	0.5		
	o grammatical accuracy	0.5		
4.	o correct relative pronoun	1	2.5	15
	o meaningful definition	1		
	o grammatical accuracy and correct spelling	0.5		
5.	o correct relative pronoun	1	3	18
	o meaningful definition	1		
	o grammatical accuracy	1		

Table 1: Sets of criteria with corresponding points

As Table 1 shows, the respondents designed five different sets of criteria for the identical test. The first two sets displayed are actually analogous because they consist of two identical criteria and just differ in the number of points allocated to each criterion. In the first set, a half point is assigned to each criterion whereas in the second set, one point is allocated to each criterion, ergo the maximum score (number of points) for the whole test is doubled from six points to twelve in the latter set. The third and fifth set comprise three criteria formulated in the same way but the points allocated to each criterion are different. In the third set of criteria, “meaningful definition” is awarded one point and the other two, “correct relative pronoun” and “grammatical accuracy”, are assigned just a half point, while the fifth set operates simply with one point for each criterion. Therefore, the score for a test item is also different together with the maximum number of points for the whole test, which is twelve, respectively eighteen points. The fourth set of criteria contains the same criteria listed in the third and fifth set, but “grammatical accuracy” is further extended by “correct spelling”. The number of points allocated to one test item is two and a half, so the whole test can be awarded fifteen points at maximum.

It is obvious from the evidence above that the same performance could be awarded different scores depending on the assessor’s subjective perception and decision. With no doubt, “the correct relative pronoun used in a definition” and “correct spelling” are the criteria that can be measured precisely. On the other hand, we can only assume what „a meaningful definition“, “an accurate and meaningful definition” and “grammatical accuracy” mean since no measurable descriptions were given. Moreover, it is not clear whether or not the criterion of “grammatical accuracy” includes “correct spelling”. That is why the identified sets of criteria imply that an identical test can be awarded different scores, not only due to different maximum number of points for the whole test, but also due to different criteria as well as due to the arrangement of points for each criterion. What is more, different pre-service teachers may perceive some of the criteria, for instance “meaningfulness of the definition” or “grammatical accuracy”, differently, because they are not specific and measurable enough. As a matter of fact, they can use some of the criteria more intuitively than based on precise objective “measurement”, which, however corresponds to common practice in schools where intuitive and subjective evaluation takes place (Slavík 62).

Grading Scales and Grades

From the whole survey sample, 12 different grading scales emerged. They are all displayed in three tables below according to the number of maximum possible points. In Table 1, there are grading scales with 6 maximum points, Table 2 presents grading scales with 12 maximum points, and in Table 3 grading scales with 15 and 18 maximum points are displayed.

The most common grading scale was designed by 6 student teachers. It is marked dark grey in Table 2. Grading scales marked light grey in Table 1 and Table 2 were both represented twice, i.e. in both cases 2 student teachers designed them that way. Grading scales marked white in all tables were represented just once.

In addition, not only do the grading scales differ in the number of maximum possible points that can be given to the test, they also diverge in the distribution of points to grades from 1 to 5. In the following tables, all the grading scales designed by the respondents and corresponding grades are presented:

Grade	Grading Scales – 6 points		
1	6	6-5.5	6-5
2	5.5-5	5-4	4.5 – 3.5
3	4.5-4	3.5-2	3-2.5
4	3.5-3	1.5-0.5	2-1
5	2.5-0	0	0.5 - 0

Table 2: Grading scales with 6 points at maximum and corresponding grades

Table 2 demonstrates the differences of point distribution within grading scales with 6 maximum points. As can be seen, the identical test can be awarded a different grade depending on the grading scale used. For example, a test that would be awarded 2 points would get three different grades (5, 3 and 4) from three different assessors. In fact, it means that a learner could get three different grades from three different teachers for exactly the same performance.

Grade	Grading Scales – 12 points					
1	12	12	12-11	12-10	12-10	12-10.5
2	11	11-10	10-9	9-7	9.5-8.5	10-8.5
3	10	9-8	8-7	6-4	8-7	8-6.5
4	9	7-6	6-5	3-2	6.5-5.5	6-4
5	8-0	5-0	4-0	1-0	5-0	3.5-0

Table 3: Grading scales with 12 points at maximum and corresponding grades

As can be seen from Table 3, the same principle about awarding different grades to the identical test applies in the grading scales with 12 maximum points. For instance, a test with 8 points would be given three different grades (5, 3 and 2).

Grade	Grading Scales – 15 points		Grading Scale – 18 points
1	15-14	15-12	18-16
2	13.5-10.5	11.5-9.5	15-12
3	10-8	9-6	11-8
4	7.5-5.5	5.5-2.5	7-4
5	5-0	2-0	3-0

Table 4: Grading scales with maximum 15 and 18 points and corresponding grades

Table 4 shows that when using the grading scales with 15 maximum points, the identical test would not be assigned the same grade either. In this case, the difference would always be just one grade. Compared to the grading scale with 18 maximum points, it is noticeable that a test with 8 points would be given the same grade regardless of whether the maximum number of points for the whole test was 15 or 18.

To sum up, the following table demonstrates the percentage range for individual grades:

Grade	Range in %
1	100 - 80
2	92 - 58
3	83 - 33
4	75 - 8
5	67 - 0

Table 5: **Percentage Range for Individual Grades**

As illustrated in Table 5, the percentage ranges of individual grades overlap diversely and there is a remarkable disproportion in the range of the percentages for each grade.

The rich diversity in the percentage range for individual grades also results in a variety of grades given to one identical test. The following table presents how the respondents rated the test on a scale from 0 to 100% and which grades they awarded.

Points in %	33	40	42	44	50	53	54	58	67
Given Grades	5,5,5	3	4,5	3	3,3,3, 4,4,4,4	3	4	2,3	2

Table 6: **Variety of percentage range and grades given to one identical test**

The findings presented in Table 6 uncovered that when assessed by 19 respondents, the identical test falls into the wide range from 33% to 67% and is awarded four different grades. A distribution of given grades in total for one identical test among the respondents is demonstrated in the figure below:

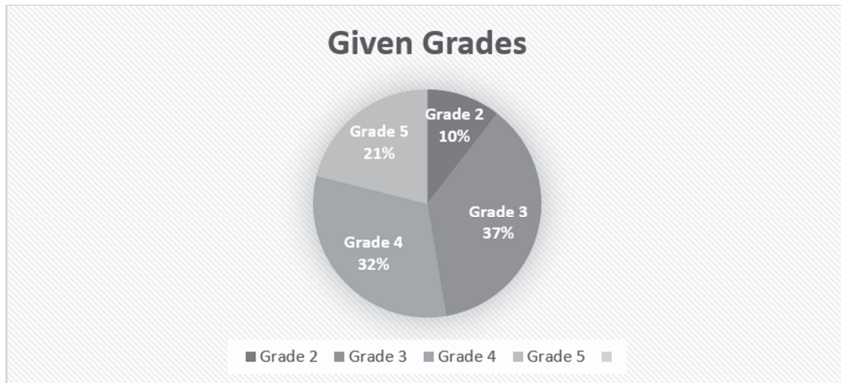


Figure 1: **The distribution of given grades**

As Figure 1 displays, the distribution of all grades given to the same test by the respondents varied. Seven respondents (which is 37%) awarded the test grade 3, six respondents (32%) gave it grade 4, four respondents (21%) offered grade 5 and two respondents (10%) offered grade 2. Grade 1 did not

appear in the responses at all. It means that one identical test was most often given grade 3, however, it was also awarded all the other grades except grade 1.

Findings from the second survey phase

Through the inductive coding, the thematic similarities across the respondents' responses were detected. Subsequently, thematically relevant categories were formed. Thus, the findings related to the reflection of the respondents' sole experience in assessing and grading a progress test can be categorized into: (i) Aspects influencing the perception of assessing and grading (ii) Feelings and emotions connected to assessing and grading a test, (iii) Reconsideration and reflection-based realization about assessing and grading.

Aspects Influencing the Perception of Assessing and Grading

The findings related to the influential aspects of assessing and grading were connected predominantly to the process of designing assessment criteria and distribution of points within the grading scales. The prospective teachers' responses concerning the influential aspects were thematically in concord. All the respondents claimed they were influenced by their previous school experience as learners:

- (1) *I was probably influenced by my own experience from school, when the range of points for grade 1 was usually smaller than for other grades.*
- (2) *This type of test evoked memories from school in me. When asked to define words or terms in a test, the answers were always awarded 2 points - 1 point for a meaningful definition and 1 point for correct grammar.*
- (3) *I was mainly influenced by my own experience from school. I tried to evaluate the test with regard to how my assessment system would be understood by my "student-self".*
- (4) *It was the first time I have ever graded a test and I was worried about doing it properly, so I applied the same grading system my teachers did at secondary school.*

The respondents' statements indicate that, in the middle of their regular bachelor studies, they are still principally influenced by their learner experience when assessing and grading. This phenomenon is understandable since they have never assessed and graded a test before. These findings correspond with Harrison's viewpoint (256). Yet, an exclusive influential aspect occurred among the answers when one of the respondents considered a learner's perspective when grading the test:

- (5) *I tried to get into the learner's shoes and see the mistakes with their eyes. For example, it could have been just a slip when the learner used the word "think" instead of "thing".*

The response may imply the respondent's reasoning in terms of learners' differences and needs. This attitude is closely related to the importance of individualization in school assessment described by many authors (see e.g. Spilková and Tomková, Helus, or Harmer) and demanded by current curricular documents (see e.g. FEP BE).

Feelings and Emotions Connected to Assessing and Grading a Test

Feelings and emotions played an important role both in the process of assessing and grading the test, as well as in the follow-up reflection in the class discussion.

The respondents revealed the following feelings and emotions they encountered during assessing and grading the test:

- (6) I was **nervous**. I **speculated** whether I should add or subtract some points and **couldn't decide**.
- (7) I **felt under pressure** when designing the set of assessment criteria because it is very difficult to create measurable and specific enough descriptors to match all possible answers in the test.
- (8) When assessing I was **in a mess and worried**. I didn't want to be unfair towards students.
- (9) I was **stressed** because I wanted to be fair and do it right.
- (10) In some cases, it happened that I understood what the learner wanted to say in the answer, but I had to follow the criteria I'd set. **It was difficult and I didn't like this feeling at all**.
- (11) When evaluating I became **frustrated and uneasy**. It was **hard to decide** how many points I should give to an answer even though the criteria I set seemed explicit and unambiguous.
- (12) I **felt very uncomfortable** because I wasn't sure at all how to evaluate the test. The learner generally seemed to understand the words, but the answer didn't meet the criteria I set.
- (13) I know for sure that I felt **unsure, anxious and strange** because I didn't know how to proceed properly. I **hesitated** when giving the points - is it ok to give only one point, or should I add half a point more?

These answers show that the respondents' prevailing feelings and emotions during assessing and grading the test were described as unpleasant and can be summarized into these labels: Doubts and Hesitation - Stress and Frustration - Discomfort and Uneasiness - and Fear and Anxiety. The last three labels can be further gathered into a hypernymous label Mental Strain.

Apart from the unpleasant feelings, nine respondents felt enthusiastic (label: Enthusiasm), yet only at the beginning of the test evaluation process; and one respondent claimed she felt neutral and unbiased because she knew the test and the evaluation of it was not real, as shown in the following quotes:

- (14) At first, I was **excited and looking forward** to a new experience.
- (15) To be honest, I felt **relaxed and fair-minded** because it was just "a mock test". However, if it was **a real test** of a real learner and me a real evaluator, I **wouldn't feel comfortable** about giving the learner a bad grade.

Besides the feelings and emotions experienced during the process of assessing and grading the test, the respondents expressed their feelings and emotions that appeared in the follow-up whole class discussion. These feelings and emotions were different from those the respondents experienced when assessing and grading the test. At the beginning of sharing their lists of criteria and assessing first test items, some respondents felt relieved and satisfied as they perceived similarities in their attitudes and assessment systems:

- (16) I was **glad** that some people created nearly the same criteria as I did.
- (17) At first, I thought that assessing a test would be a **"piece of cake"** because I evaluated the first two test answers in the same way as my classmates.

After the first differences in awarding the points to the test answers appeared in the discussion, the respondents were surprised:

- (18) I was **shocked** there were so many grading scales!
- (19) I was **surprised** that everyone had a different idea of which mistake is more or less "serious". But then, when our viewpoints varied I got to the point where I **began to doubt** my strategy and started **feeling uncertain**.

(20) I felt like a fool! It seemed everyone was used to a different system of assessing and grading and I appeared to be the most strict evaluator!

As the responses indicate, variations in the assessment and grading scales contributed to the feelings of uncertainty and puzzlement among the respondents. They described they were mainly puzzled about distinguishing between mistakes in terms of a meaningful definition, i.e. they were not sure what mistakes they could or should ignore as they did not prevent understanding.

(21) When reflecting the feelings and emotions they had when discussing the points and grades they awarded the identical test, the respondents admitted that they often hesitated. They were not sure about *either* the number of points or the proper grade to be given:

(22) I really did not know whether I was too strict or too forgiving. Which mistakes should I have overlooked because the definition still made sense?!

(23) Being in the middle of the discussion about the grades, I felt I should find at least half a point to be able to give the “learner” a better grade.

(24) When I heard the others talking about the number of points they gave to individual test items, I re-evaluated my assessing strategy at least a thousand times!

These doubts led the respondents to the need of revision of their assessment and grading strategies, as described in these respondents' quotes:

(25) I was **confused** because I realized my mistake in the logic of assessing according to my set of criteria. I should have designed them differently.

(26) Based on our discussion I came to a conclusion that if I were to assess the test again I would **reconsider** some issues, for example, what mistakes are still acceptable for me in terms of the meaning.

Out of nineteen respondents, only one did not feel the urge to reconsider anything in the process of assessment or grading. She said:

(27) I know that some teachers wouldn't even grade the test, but I definitely would. And I **wouldn't change anything** in my evaluation system and **would stick to what I know** from my teachers at secondary school.

However, on the basis of the similarities detected in respondents' answers in the analysis, the following thematically linked labels can be identified: Satisfaction and Relief - Surprise - Uncertainty and Puzzlement - Doubts and Hesitation - and the Urge to Revise the Assessment and Grading Process.

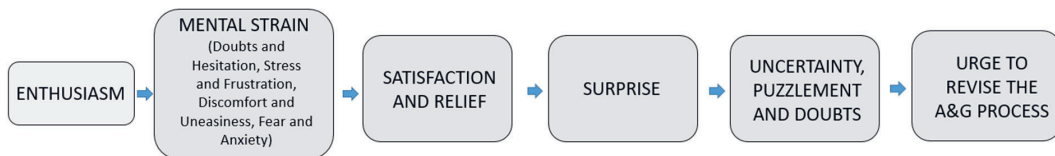


Figure 2: The Development of Feelings and Emotions during Assessing and Grading the Test and the Follow-Up Class Discussion

To sum it up (see Figure 2), during assessing and grading the test and the follow-up whole class discussion there was a noticeable progress and development in the respondents' feelings and emotions. Their feelings and emotions evolved from less represented Enthusiasm and largely represented Doubts and Hesitation through Mental Strain followed by Satisfaction and Relief, then Surprise and Uncertainty, Puzzlement and Doubts again to the final Urge to Revise the Assessment and Grading (A&G) Process.

Reconsideration and Reflection-Based Realization about Assessing and Grading Reconsideration about Assessing and Grading

The prevailing respondents' need for revision of their assessment and grading strategies resulted in potential changes in assessment and grading scales. All the respondents but one agreed that they would reconsider their set of criteria and the process of assessing and grading the test after the experience they had. They stated that mental strain, uncertainty and frustration in particular, was the main reason for the change of their prior attitude:

- (28) *Several times, when assessing and, especially during our discussion, I had this "urgent" feeling that I should have **evaluated the test differently**.*
- (29) *I was **really frustrated** when I saw that I **couldn't decide** which mistake was just a slip and which mistake was "serious". At the end, I had a feeling of **complete futility**.*
- (30) *If I evaluated the test again, I would **definitely change** the set of criteria (I would add some more) and I would give more points to each test answer.*
- (31) *I would be **more forgiving** in terms of grammar accuracy. After the discussion, I concluded that accuracy in grammar was not the main aim and that's why I would just focus on the message in the definitions.*
- (32) *In relation to my frustration when evaluating the test, I would **change my set of criteria, for sure**. I would **think** about the actual aim of the test **more**. And probably, I would make **some amendments** in my grading scale as well. When grading the test, I **wasn't sure** about the "right level" of strictness, but now I think I was far too strict.*

The conscious reconsideration of assessing and grading the test on the basis of their experience and its reflection brought the respondents a new view they probably had never come across before. They had to deal with their negative feelings of uncertainty and frustration, and tried to improve their assessment strategies. In their questionnaire answers, five of the respondents even analyzed and criticized the form of the test they were supposed to assess. They mentioned they had found the test poorly designed, as too many aspects of language were tested at once. The following quote summarizes their thoughts and speculations about it:

- (33) *If I were the teacher, I would **design the entire test differently**. Cutting of the points for a grammatically incorrect definition is wrong in this case, I think, because it was obvious that the learner knew the meaning of most words and probably had his/her own definition in his/her head. Therefore, I wouldn't push the learners into creating relative clauses when defining the words, but I would probably test this particular grammar separately. In addition, the words seemed completely unrelated and too abstract for a 9th grader. And what is more, I realized that I had experienced a lot of such meaningless tests at school.*

The respondents' answers suggest that the whole experience opened up a space for reflecting their feelings related to assessing and grading the test. This finding corresponds to the notion of Korthagen

et al. who mention that “the process of reflection can be activated by emotional signals, such as a feeling of frustration” (75). Subsequently, the respondents’ answers uncovered a possibility of potential changes in their attitudes and perception of school evaluation.

Reflection-Based Realization about Assessing and Grading

The findings in this part of the paper will be discussed in terms of the identified thematic labels, which are Complexity and Difficulty, Subjectivity, and the Power of the Teacher and Responsibility.

The investigated student teachers found the process of assessing and grading the test complex and difficult. In their answers, they mentioned difficulty of deciding on the correctness of test answers, the appropriate number of points as well as the corresponding grade, as can be seen in the following examples:

- (34) *I realized **how difficult it is to assess and grade one short and simple test. Even with the set of criteria, it was hard to decide which test answer was correct and which mistakes didn’t influence the meaning of the definition.***
- (35) *I realized that **the whole issue of assessment is even more complex than I thought. It is not only about giving “a tick” or “a cross” next to the right, respectively wrong answer, and assigning points and giving grades. It’s far more complex. Deciding on the points to give was the most difficult for me in the whole process of evaluation.***
- (36) *I think evaluating is extremely important and **extremely difficult** at the same time, and I still have to learn a lot about this process.*

Furthermore, it appears the respondents, to their surprise, realized that assessing and grading depends on individual teachers’ point of view and therefore is rather subjective:

- (37) *Surprisingly for me, I understood that evaluating a test by assigning grades **can never be fair and objective. Everyone can have a different point of view of what is right or wrong, especially when it comes to the meaningfulness of a definition, but also when distinguishing between “small” and “serious” grammar mistakes.***
- (38) *I got the idea of **how subjective the assessment is. It never occurred to me before! There were so many differences in assessment and grading scales among us.***
- (39) *Since I myself would probably evaluate this test in **another way a little later, just as well someone else could evaluate it completely differently. It’s so subjective!***
- (40) *The criteria for assessing can be **very subjective** and, given the variety of mistakes, it is **difficult for a teacher to design a logical system that can be applied to all of them.***
- (41) *I got the feeling that assessing and grading a test is **not objective at all! Every teacher can have his/her own assessment scale and nobody cares.***

In addition to the subjectivity in assessing and grading, the power of the teacher and his/her responsibility related to the process of evaluation turned out to be a shared topic for the respondents. They pointed out several aspects that may influence the grade a test would be awarded, such as awareness of the aim; specific and measurable criteria set and communicated to the learners; the design of the grading scale; and personality of the teacher and other subjective determinants influencing the teacher when evaluating. Implicitly stated in the respondents’ answers, these aspects may have consequences for the learner and affect his/her life:

- (42) *In particular, I realized that assessing is first and foremost **a matter of responsibility. It is necessary to set accurate and measurable criteria, however, I am not sure whether this is possible in all cases.***

- (43) *I realized that the evaluation system and the design of both the list of criteria and grading scale is in full **control of the teacher**.*
- (44) *Now I know that it is **very important to think** about the aim of the test and the assessment criteria **in advance**. A teacher needs to **determine what s/he actually wants to test and evaluate**, also needs to think about the weight of individual criteria, and make them clear for the learners.*
- (45) *I realized that assessing a test **depends on many factors**. It **primarily depends on the teacher**, on his/her knowledge, attitude, personality and even mood. And this is what scares me the most - a teacher in a bad mood would/could give bad grades!*
- (46) *I realized that **a teacher actually has a great power**, which is manifested, for example, in evaluation. As a teacher, I can decide whether to give one point, a half point, or zero points for a definition with a wrong word. It's completely up to me, but it **influences the life of a learner**. And that is disturbing.*

It seems that assessing and grading the identical test together with the follow-up whole class sharing and discussion served as "an eye-opener" for the student teachers. Through the reflection, they appear to realize the complexity and difficulty of the evaluation process and the power together with the responsibility of the teacher stemming from the subjectivity of assessing and grading.

Moreover, out of the nineteen respondents, five revealed that the experience brought back their memories from primary school and led to further doubts about testing and assessment. According to these respondents, the grade seems to be a very poor form of feedback with uninformative value for the learner, and even the question of preferring and using other forms of assessment has been raised in their responses:

- (47) *I was **wondering** how many test results and grades were actually somehow **affected by the mood or other aspects influencing my teachers**, and how many grades really corresponded to my knowledge at that time?*
- (48) *It made me **speculate whether I would just repeat the same "patterns" as my school teachers without giving it more thoughts**. Now I know, I wouldn't.*
- (49) *Since the evaluation was limited to points and grades only, it **didn't provide the learner with the necessary and meaningful feedback**.*
- (50) *In my opinion, we, as teachers, should **help the learners in learning rather than just assess the correctness of test answers and give them "some meaningless number"**.*
- (51) *I think it is very important **not to end the evaluation process at a grade**. It is necessary to **go through the test together** with the learner and focus on the parts that were wrong. It would be even better, if the learners could **compare and discuss their answers** in pairs or groups so they can learn from their mistakes. In this case, I think that **giving grades wouldn't be a good idea**. All in all, from the learning point of view, grades are not necessary.*

In summary, for the investigated pre-service teachers, assessing and grading a test seems a challenging and demanding process in terms of setting the goal, criteria and grading scale; diversity of potential mistakes a learner can make; difficulty in deciding on the correctness of test answers, the appropriate number of points and the fitting grade; the influence of subjective factors affecting the teacher and related responsibility and power of the teacher. Some of the respondents considered peer and formative assessment to provide better feedback than grades.

Building-up a theory

In the process of constant comparative analysis (Švařiček et al. 2017; Chun Tie et al. 3), all the three categories characterized above were further examined, interconnected and built into new meaningful groups through exploring the relationships between them. With the help of the axial coding paradigm (Hendl 252-254), *A model of the process of change in the perception of assessment and grading in pre-service teachers* was designed (see Figure 3). School Assessment was identified as the core category that interconnects all the other categories: Teacher Education; Learner Experience; Assessing and Grading a Test; Sharing, Discussion and Reflection; and Change in Perception.

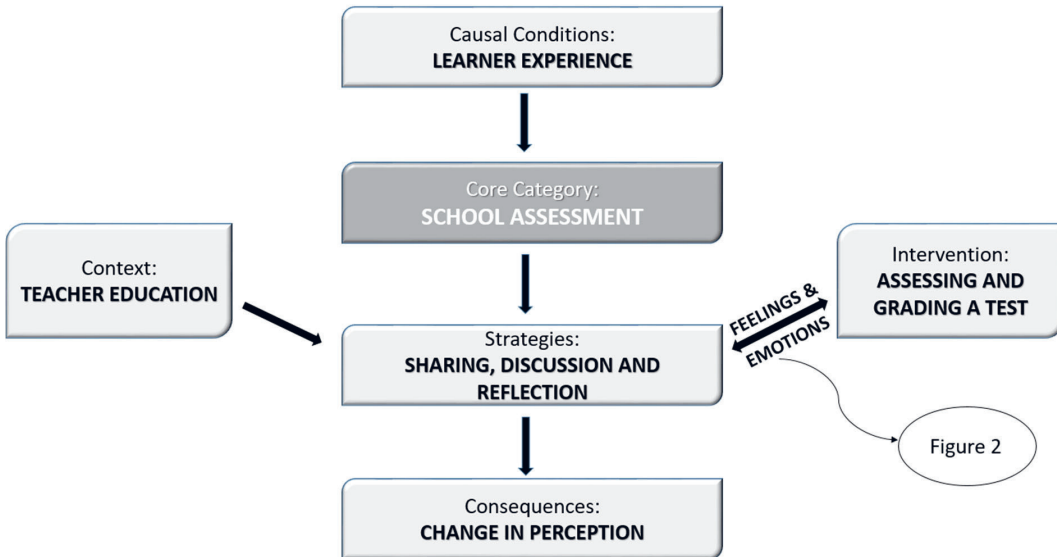


Figure 3: A model of the process of change in the perception of assessment and grading in pre-service teachers

The Model presented in the diagram provides a structure for building up a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon of school assessment through the eyes of the investigated pre-service teachers. Based on the analysis, a theory⁽¹⁾ emerging from the gathered data was constructed:

When assessing and grading a test for the first time, the investigated pre-service teachers rely on their prior school experience as learners. In a situation that is new for them, assessing and grading a test in this case, they are likely to follow and stick to procedures they know. This may be considered a preconcept in their perception of school assessment. When confronted with their own feelings and emotions related to assessing and grading the test in a class discussion and reflection, the pre-service teachers are likely to step out of their comfort zone. Through their conscious realization based on reflection, they may start a process of rethinking and subsequent rebuilding of their preconcepts, and thus consider some changes in their perception and attitudes.

Conclusion

This grounded theory study attempted to explore the pre-service teachers' perception of assessing and grading in the early stages of their teacher training. Two research questions were formulated at the beginning of the survey.

In response to the first research question, the outcomes of the study uncovered variations in the pre-service teachers' perceptions and conceptions. The future English teachers assessed and graded one identical test in different ways. The diversity was identified in different sets of criteria and distribution of points in grading scales, as well as in a different number of points given to the test. As a result of this diversification the same test was awarded four different grades by the pre-service teachers.

One possible explanation for the differences could be the lack of experience of the respondents. Another source of the differences, however, could be that evaluation is a highly subjective process even when carried out by experienced teachers (Slavík 62). Since the assessment criteria stated in curricular documents (classification rules) are too vague and hard to measure (Zitková, Hezká), the decision about the criteria, corresponding points, grading scales and the distribution of points in the grading scale is utterly up to the assessor. Although some recommendations may be given by the school principal or the head of the subject commission at school, still the evaluation is subjective. and just a matter of agreement among the teachers, but not compulsory.

As for the second research question, it may be concluded that the future English teachers in the present study perceive the process of assessing and grading a test as a complex and difficult process. Based on their self-reflection, the respondents realized that they were "trapped" by their past experience as learners and that it is quite difficult to get out of it. Although at first some respondents felt enthusiastic about a new experience, during the task of assessing and grading, their feelings changed to less pleasant. They felt stressed, uneasy, puzzled, anxious, even frustrated. The results of the study showed that their experience and related feelings and emotions were a starting point for speculating about school evaluation and realizing that there are more possibilities of assessing and grading, not just the one they were used to at their primary school.

Besides, there were respondents who proceeded even further in their thoughts when pondering about the design of a test and applying other forms of assessment. It is worth noting that some of them came to a concluding impression that a test in this particular form is pointless and grading it has no particular learning value, and more than grades demands formative assessment in the form of a meaningful feedback and discussion about the answers. This belief corresponds to current concepts of evaluation that consider summative feedback in a form of a grade not beneficial to learning because it prevents learners from participating in the feedback process, which is valued in learning (Volante and Fazio 751, William and Leahy 103, Crockett and Churches 2-3, Kolář and Šikulová 54).

The final developed theory grounded in the data gained from the student teachers is a dynamic outcome since stepping outside their comfort zones and subsequent changes in their perception, attitudes and beliefs are likely to occur during their further professional development.

Some questions may be raised about how the students would approach assessment when being in-service once since various factors, such as the school policy, professional philosophies of their future colleagues, or even the attitudes of learners' parents (Kolář and Šikulová 54, Slavík 87, Crockett and Churches 3), may influence them.

Yet, due to the fact that the respondents were pre-service teachers in their third semester, further investigations at the end of their teacher training would be beneficial. To gain even deeper insight into the student teachers' perception - to survey the decision making process behind awarding points in

the test items – supposedly even more differences in the perception of assessment would be revealed. It would be also interesting and beneficial to survey in-service teachers, explore their perception of the phenomenon of assessing and grading, and compare it with the result of pre-service teachers to get a more complex picture of the phenomenon.

It is important to be aware of the limitations of small-scale research, thus, the conclusions drawn in this study cannot be generalized. A small number of respondents and the applied research tool unquestionably limit the findings. Since the survey was done by means of a questionnaire, it was impossible to ask for further clarification in case of any misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the results illustrate that, while extremely speculative, given the lack of longitudinal data from more respondents, the possibility that perception about assessing and grading might change depending on reflection is quite possible.

Notes

(1) The theory was constructed in consistency with Birks and Mills who refer to grounded theory as a “research with an overtly interpretative component” where the researcher constructs the theory according to his own underlying philosophical assumptions about the world and in turn personal methodological position (4-8).

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LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Purpose-Built or Accidental? Exploring the Plausibility of John Seeley's Stance Regarding the Birth of the British Empire⁽¹⁾

Abstract: One of the major controversial themes discussed among scholars concerned with imperial studies is the one related to the origin of the British Empire. Whereas some assume that the British had in mind the intention to set up an imperial project in an act of imitation of other contemporary empires, mainly Spanish and Portuguese, another school of thought, led by the nineteenth-century British imperial scholar, John Seeley, proposes a different interpretation by claiming that Britain's acquisition of overseas possessions was by no means planned, but rather accidental. According to this outlook, the birth of this huge Empire was the product of a set of circumstances in far places that impelled the British to move forward and conquer territories. Hence, the aim in this paper is to check the veracity of this latter assumption, by considering the case of British India.

Studies about the creation of Britain's imperial project around the seventeenth century have been dominated essentially by two main divergent trends. On the one hand, a group of scholars put forward the claim that this empire was purpose-built, that is, Britain's acquisition of the largest empire that history has ever recorded was indeed carried out intentionally. This line of reasoning suggests that the British had the intention to build an empire of their own in an act of imitation of the other contemporaneous European colonial powers, notably Spain and Portugal. Prominent among the advocates of this trend is Niall Ferguson, who asserted that "the expansion of England was far from inadvertent" but rather "a conscious act of imitation." (Ferguson 2002, 2) At the opposite end, however, another group of scholars contested this view by advancing the theory that the British Empire was born accidentally, that is, the British had no intention to conquer far lands with a view to building a colonial empire, but instead, they went to remote places in Africa and Asia simply for the sake of trading in exotic commodities. In line with this school of thought, it is argued that very often circumstances in those regions impelled the British to change their mission from trading to colonizing. It is worth noting at this point that at the origin of this interpretation was the late nineteenth-century British imperial historian, Sir John Seeley, who famously contended in his *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (1883): "We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." (Seeley 1883, 8) This article, therefore, seeks to display how tenable this claim could be by considering the case of British involvement in the Indian Subcontinent starting from the seventeenth century.

The Arrival of the British in India:

The first English contact with the Indian Subcontinent occurred in the early seventeenth century thanks to a group of London merchants who formed an association for direct trade with the Indies, namely the Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies, which later became the English East India Company. There were several reasons that prompted the emergence of this association. Besides the need to find new foreign markets to sell England's staple export of woollen cloth, (Keay 1993, 52) perhaps the major catalyst was the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the English in 1588, which put an end to the myth of Spanish invincibility at sea. Also of equal importance was the fact that the English were fascinated by the contents of a Portuguese ship coming from the East Indies, captured

by English seafarers in 1592, and “stuffed full of jewels, spices, porcelain, silks and other luxuries”, as well as the discovery on board of a register of the “Government and Trade of the Portuguese in the East Indies.” (Wild 2000, 14) Regarding spices, they were among the most expensive exotic commodities in Europe due to their unavailability in the continent. As confirmed by J. H. Parry who states that “a merchant could ship six cargoes and lose five, but still make profit when the sixth was sold.” (Parry 1966, 33-34)

Thus, against this background, and as a first step, this group of London merchants – about 218 subscribers – petitioned Queen Elizabeth I for a royal charter that would allow them to capitalize on the lucrative trade in spices in the East Indies, a request that the Queen too readily signed. (Wild 2000, 10-11) This official document gave the Company a monopoly on all English trade to the East of the Cape of Good Hope and, naturally, the Crown expected “vigorous and profitable action” in return. (Parry 1966, 80)

At the very beginning of their entry in the East Indies, the English managed to have a foothold in the region, exactly in the Banda Islands, the nutmeg-producing part of the Moluccas⁽²⁾; however, their presence in the area soon incurred the displeasure of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*), which had already chased away the Portuguese by the end of the sixteenth century. The Dutch did not wish to have any rival who could share with them the monopoly over the spice trade and made the region off-limits to foreigners by intimidating local rulers into signing exclusive trading treaties. (Wild 2000, 26) Furthermore, the Dutch regarded any trade that the islanders held with others than the Dutch as treason. (Keay 1993, 34) Accordingly, since the English arrival in the Spice Islands, the Dutch had done everything to thwart their progress. This Anglo-Dutch tension culminated in the massacre of Amboyna⁽³⁾ in 1623, in which the Dutch seized the English factory⁽⁴⁾ there and executed its employees. (1993, 47-51)

It is important to mention that the Indian Subcontinent had never been the primary purpose of the English Company in the East. Actually, its trade was confined to the Spice Islands, and it went to India only for the secondary purpose of procuring cotton to be sold to spice growers in that region. (Bowele 1974, 30) Therefore, being frustrated in the Spice Islands, the John Company, as the East India Company was informally known, decided to think of other ways to make the most of its charter, and the choice fell on India.

As a matter of fact, even before being ousted from the Spice Islands, the English had attempted successfully to take part in the existing commerce in Gujerat, in western India. It was thanks to Captain James Lancaster who, having captured a Portuguese ship containing Indian cloths in 1603, had shown the English the possibility of making profits from India’s Indian Ocean textile trade. (Wild 2000, 22) Nonetheless, even there the John Company faced fierce opposition from the Portuguese who had been in the Subcontinent conducting commerce since 1510. The English did their best to ingratiate themselves with the Mughals⁽⁵⁾ in order to allow them to carry out trade without any hurdles, yet all their efforts were to no avail. This was due to the fact that the Portuguese were not willing to surrender any part of the “lucrative Mughal trade to newcomers, friend or foe.” (Keay 1993, 77) Furthermore, the Portuguese were enjoying Mughal recognition for the simple reason that the latter, having no naval force of their own, depended on the Portuguese to escort their annual pilgrim voyages across the Arabian Sea to Mecca. (Wild 2000, 20)

Yet, a metamorphosis in the course of events took place in 1612, which led to a complete change of attitude of the Mughal Court in favour of the East India Company. This took place when the Company troops defeated the Portuguese fleet in a series of battles in the harbour of Surat. The then Mughal Emperor, Jehangir (1569-1627), was impressed by the naval might and performance of the English and as a result, he decided to turn to them for protection at sea. (Judd 2004, 12) Describing this decisive circumstance, Anthony Wild wrote:

... these victories did not go unnoticed by Jehangir. The Portuguese had always relied on naval supremacy to enforce their control of shipping in the Arabian sea and their decline created a power vacuum; Indian vessels, whether full of merchandise or pilgrims to Mecca, needed protection from pirates, and if the Portuguese could no longer provide it, perhaps the (English) Company could. (Wild 2000, 20)

In an attempt to make the most of this opportunity, the English Company solicited Queen Elizabeth's successor, King James I, to send an ambassador to the Mughal Court, a request that the Monarch swiftly approved since the Company decided to meet all ambassadorial expenses. (Keay 1993, 99) Eventually, in 1615, Sir Thomas Roe was sent as an ambassador to the Court of Jehangir and successfully managed to cajole the latter into granting the English permission to reside at Surat, besides other trading privileges. In return, the Company became the maritime auxiliary of the Mughal Empire. (Spear 1990, 66-67)

The British fully capitalized on this change in Mughal attitude towards their presence. Actually, it was under the protection of this powerful Empire that the Company would, thenceforth, carry out its trade. The result could be felt during the seventeenth century, which witnessed a steady and significant development of English activities in the Subcontinent. In particular, besides Surat, the Company acquired three principal centres for trade known as 'Presidencies'⁽⁶⁾: Madras, Bombay and Calcutta in 1639, 1668 and 1690 respectively. It is interesting to note that Bombay was a wedding gift of the Portuguese Queen Catherine of Braganza to the English King Charles II, being transferred to the Company. (1990, 67)

In a nutshell, the beginnings of English venture in the East Indies trade were not smooth as the Company encountered various setbacks in the process. This could be explained by the fact that the English were latecomers in the region, and hence, unfamiliar with it. This condition was further exacerbated by the presence of other European rivals, namely the Portuguese and the Dutch, who wanted to have exclusive control over trade in their respective spheres of influence. Yet, the English had, hitherto, behaved themselves well and managed to get a foothold in the Indian Subcontinent, but still much trouble lay in store for them.

From Trade to Conquest:

Unlike the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century was going to be very troublesome for the John Company, a situation brought about by a significant change in the political context of the Subcontinent which compelled the British to reconsider their position there, and get involved in internal conflicts for the sake of their survival.

The Decline of the Mughal Empire:

The Mughals, nomad warriors from central Asia, descendants of the Turks and Mongols, were a Muslim dynasty who had been ruling a large part of the Indian Subcontinent from the sixteenth century, whose inhabitants were overwhelmingly of Hindu faith. (Read and Fisher 1998, 11) Despite that, an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding reigned, and few instances were known of conflicts between the Muslim rulers and their Hindu subjects. In fact, from the early times of its existence, the Mughal Empire had flourished, and until the beginning of the eighteenth century, it attained its widest expanse. This success could be attributed to the stability of the political structure which largely depended on the support of the local community, the military strength of the Mughal army and the cultural fusion--though limited-- between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority. According to Bisheshwar Prasad, religious toleration was the bedrock of the Mughal policy and therefore, as long as the Muslim rulers behaved

impartially in the matter of faith, the willing submission of the Hindu majority was a recognized fact. (Prasad 1981, 1)

Nevertheless, a wind of change started blowing by 1707, the year when the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb⁽⁷⁾, passed away. Most historians regard this year as the beginning of the downfall of Muslim hegemony in India, especially since all forces of the disintegration of the huge Empire were set in motion. (Hazewell 1857, 88) Actually, the unity of India depended essentially on the slender thread of the personality of the emperor (Prasad 1981, 2) and stability hinged upon how far the emperor could be tolerant towards his subjects—knowing that at least two-thirds of the latter were Hindus. Yet, Aurangzeb flouted this important aspect. He was an intolerant, fanatic Sunnite Muslim, notoriously known for his abhorrence of non-Muslims who he qualified as *Kafirs*, meaning infidels. Thus, upon his accession to power in 1658, he proceeded with a stringent policy that alienated most of his subjects. His blind fanaticism led him to the extent of removing the Muslim confession of faith from all coins for fear of being defiled by the '*Kafirs*'. Another example illustrating his religious extremism could be seen in the fact that courtiers were not allowed to salute in the Hindu fashion, and because of his iconoclastic tendency, Hindu idols and worshipping places were often destroyed. (Spear) Describing Aurangzeb's bigotry, A. Read and D. Fisher wrote:

A puritanical Muslim, he began his reign by banishing wine, song and dance from the court. He went on to impose strict Muslim laws throughout the empire, on Muslim and non-Muslim alike, appointing censors of public morals in every large city to enforce his decrees. These included bans not only on gambling and illicit sex, but also on Hindu festivals and the building and repair of temples... (Read and Fisher 1998, 15)

In addition to his intolerance, Aurangzeb pursued a policy of expansionism in the southern part of the Subcontinent, in Deccan and Hyderabad. This embroiled the Mughal army in unnecessary intermittent wars, a condition that culminated in the exhaustion of the imperial coffers. Lawrence James put it in this way:

Aurangzeb overstepped himself by undertaking a series of campaigns to extend and consolidate his rule in Deccan and Hyderabad. They became a war of attrition which stretched imperial resources beyond their breaking point, and by 1707, after nearly twenty years of intermittent fighting, the empire was exhausted. (James 1997, 7)

Consequently, to compensate for the huge deficit in the sinews of war, Aurangzeb resorted to the extortion of money by discriminatively imposing heavy taxes on his non-Muslim subjects. In this respect, A. Read and D. Fisher pointed out that Hindu merchants were forced to pay more than twice as much excise duty in comparison with their Muslim fellows on the same goods. (Read and Fisher 1998, 15) To add insult to injury, by 1679, Aurangzeb went so far as to re-impose the *jizya*, or poll tax, on non-Muslims, an unpopular measure among the Hindus that had already been abolished by the even-handed Emperor, Akbar⁽⁸⁾ by the end of the sixteenth century. (Avari 2012, 115)

As a logical outcome of this method of extorting money, a large section of the Indian population dipped far below poverty line. Even the peasants, because of overtaxation, could hardly manage to support themselves and their dependents in terms of food, let alone get the seeds destined for cultivation of the land. This situation only made millions prone to destitution and starvation, as confirmed by as A. Read and D. Fisher, who asserted that Aurangzeb "bled his Hindu subjects dry" in order to fund his war machine. (Read and Fisher 1998, 15)

Furthermore, even when the latter protested against ruinous taxes, Aurangzeb reacted with harshness by resorting to an iron-fist policy. As an illustration of such repressiveness, A. Read and D. Fisher bear

witness to the fact that when disgruntled Hindu merchants assembled outside the Red Fort – the main residence of Mughal emperors – in Agra⁽⁹⁾ to express their disaffection with this excessive taxation, Aurangzeb “sent the imperial war elephants out to trample them to death.” (15) In such circumstances, could Aurangzeb still expect loyalty from his Hindu subjects, who represented the overwhelming majority of India’s inhabitants? Predictably, Aurangzeb’s behaviour incurred only hatred from them, and as a result, fitful outbursts of rebellions were not uncommon throughout the Empire. Furthermore, during Aurangzeb’s reign, many local elements, such as the Rajputs in the north, the Jats and Sikhs in the north-west and the Marathas in the south, sought their independence from Delhi. (Prasad 1981, 2)

Additionally, in the wake of Aurangzeb’s passing, the Indian scene witnessed the outbreak of conflict amongst the Emperor’s seventeen sons and daughters, ferociously fighting to inherit their father’s legacy. Unsurprisingly, the upshot of this state of affairs meant that the very foundations of the Mughal Empire grew more fragile, a sign that signified a bleak future for the continuity of Muslim greatness in India. (Read and Fisher 1998, 16)

In the eyes of those who had been alienated by Aurangzeb’s unpopular policies and those who envied or bore a grudge against the Mughal Court, this chaotic atmosphere was a good opportunity worth seizing in that they saw that the conditions were ripe to fulfil their intentions. Thus, from within the far-flung Empire, local chiefs and kings began carving out their little kingdoms without even caring about Delhi’s⁽¹⁰⁾ reaction, as corroborated by John Plumb, who states that “these chiefs and kings paid only lip-service to the titular Emperor at Delhi.” (Plumb 1990, 172) Eventually, by the mid-eighteenth century, these chiefs and kings, by extending their little princely states, had changed the political map of India. The outcome was that the once Mughal giant that ruled almost the whole Subcontinent was transformed into several principalities: Mysore and Hyderabad in central and most of southern India, the Maratha principalities which formed the Maratha confederation in the south-west; and Bengal, Oudh, Sind, Punjab and several other small political units in the north. (James 1997, 8)

Indeed, the passing of Emperor Aurangzeb left the whole imperial edifice in a state of anarchy and lawlessness. In addition to internecine fighting, the Empire became exposed to several foreign invasions. Between 1739 and 1761 there were five successful invasions of northern India, an aspect that reflected Mughal fragility. Probably the most dramatic of these forays was the one led by Nadir Shah of Persia who, in 1739, sacked Delhi and took the famous Mughal’s Peacock Throne⁽¹¹⁾ with him to Teheran. As depicted by P. Hardy:

In 1739 the Turkoman Nadir Shah, ruler of Persia, brushed aside the inadequate Mughal forces belatedly mustered, and sacked Delhi, carrying off fifteen crore of rupees in cash besides vast quantities of jewels and the Mughal Peacock Throne itself. (Hardy 1972, 22)

Necessity of Change:

Against such gloomy backdrop, characterized by the growing weakness of the Mughal Empire which was gradually heading towards its total collapse, the English Company found itself, inevitably, in a state of insecurity and vulnerability. According to J. H. Parry, it was under the protection of the Mughal Court that the East India Company carried out its trade, (Parry 1966, 92) naturally, the demise of the former would undoubtedly affect the continuity – if not the very existence – of the latter. This was the main root reason behind the metamorphosis that the John Company was going to undergo during the eighteenth century.

Actually, as the process of the disintegration of the Mughal central power gained momentum, the English company, until recently the *protégé* of the Muslim dynasty, faced serious challenges which

made it at the mercy of the self-proclaimed rulers of the autonomous princely states, to whom the Mughal authority thenceforth meant nothing more than a symbol of the past. Consequently, the Company's interests and privileges were in jeopardy. In this atmosphere, the ailing Mughals could not even protect themselves, let alone protect the English Company. Depicting the anarchic conditions in post-Mughal India at the time, John Seeley wrote:

The imperial authority having everywhere lost its force over so vast a territory, this general law began to operate. Everywhere the minor organised powers began to make themselves supreme. These powers ... were most commonly mercenary bands of soldiers, commanded either by some provincial governor of the falling Empire, or by some adventurer who seized an opportunity of rising to the command of them, or lastly by some local power which had existed before the establishment of the Mogul supremacy and had never completely yielded to it. (Seeley 1883, 208-209)

As a sign of the Mughal weakness, in 1740, the Company saw its 1717 *farman*⁽¹²⁾, namely grants and privileges which had been granted by the former Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar (1683-1719), put into question by Alivardi Khan, the *nawab*⁽¹³⁾ of Bengal, who had a special dislike for Europeans, mainly the British. (Spear 1990, 81) His anti-British attitude led him to the extent of putting deliberate constraints on the fulfilment of the *farman* in question. Depicting Alivardi's attitude towards the Europeans, P. Spear mentions that he "regarded European merchants with a mixture of suspicion and wariness, and maintained a running controversy with them over dues, privileges, and the interpretation of the Mughal *farmans*." (81) For instance, among the clauses of the latter document was the one stating that a *dastak*, or a pass, could be issued by the Company's officials whereby all goods were exempted from being stopped, examined or taxed anywhere within Bengal, and on the other hand, the Company would offer 3000 rupees per annum to the Mughal Emperor in Delhi. Nevertheless, Alivardi vehemently contested this clause and did not take it into consideration; as a result, all English goods were subjected to customs check-up and eventually to taxation. (Keay 1993, 232)

Meanwhile, conscious of their inability to have the last word in such issues, the Company officials decided to resort to other means, like bribery, to solve them. Corroborating this statement, J. Keay wrote that "the Company always chose to pay up rather than square up." (233)

Yet, the first serious threat to the Company's trade privileges, or rather its very existence in India, took place in the mid-eighteenth century, when Siraj-ud-daula⁽¹⁴⁾, who succeeded Alivardi in 1756 as governor, or *nawab*, of Bengal, grew uneasy about British presence there. In fact, shortly after assuming power, he demanded that the English Company should reduce its fortifications in his province. (Spear 1990, 82) To justify his hostile attitude towards the British, Siraj used three pretexts. The first of these pretexts was the fact that the Company merchants misused the privileges contained in the 1717 *farman* for their personal ends. (Keay 1993, 300) J. Keay further confirmed this fact by claiming that there were "instances of *dastak* (or passes) coverage being sold to complete outsiders." (235)

The second pretext was that Siraj-ud-Daula was incensed by the recent erection of new fortifications by the British. In fact, having a considerable stake in Bengal at that time, the English Company decided unilaterally to fortify its factory there for fear of French attacks, as the Seven Years War⁽¹⁵⁾ was approaching. (Spear 1990, 82)

The last one was that the Company was providing shelter in Calcutta to dissident members of the *Nawab's* family, as well as to Hindu notables who were growing restless under a Muslim minority government. (82)

The British, nevertheless, refused to comply with the demands of Siraj. This reaction was reason enough to impel the latter *Nawab* to mount an attack upon Calcutta and seize the Company's factory there, besides the tearing down of British defences. (Read and Fisher 1998, 19) Above all, Siraj's attack dealt a heavy blow to the British morale in India. In fact, being failed by their worm-eaten ammunition and damp powder, 146 British soldiers, including one woman and 12 wounded officers, were locked up by Siraj's army in an airless dungeon measuring 18 feet by 14 from which only 23 people emerged alive the following morning. (Keay 1993, 302) Joseph Zephaniah Holwell⁽¹⁶⁾, who was one of the survivors and the only one who wrote about this event, described the dungeon as a "tiny, airless room, stifling temperatures, crushed bodies and gruesome suffocation..." (Wild 2000, 139) However, these figures have been put into question in recent historical scholarship. As a matter of fact, a great number of scholars have contested the veracity of the account provided by Holwell. For instance, Denis Judd believes that this infamous incident, which became known as the 'Black Hole', was not premeditated but rather an accident attributable to Indian carelessness. (Judd 2004, 40) Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, along the same line of argument, asserted that the "black hole story was hugely exaggerated and that it was more an accident than a deliberate act of cruelty." (Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal 2004, 47) As for the figures mentioned by Holwell, A. Wild himself reported on an Indian historian disputing them by claiming that only "nine went in and six came out, three having died from wounds previously received." (Wild 2000, 139-40)

On the other hand, the British, still struggling to come to terms with the notorious episode of the 'Black Hole', forgot the idea of appealing to the already fragile central authority in Delhi for help and, instead, braced themselves to courageously face up to this issue. Hence, it was under such circumstances that Robert Clive⁽¹⁷⁾, the highly acclaimed personage who set the stage for the British conquest of India, entered the scene.

Indeed, following the tragedy of the 'Black Hole' of Calcutta, the British were determined to take revenge, and the choice fell on Robert Clive to fulfil this mission. In mid-1757, Clive led an army composed of 900 Europeans and 1,500 sepoys--i.e.: Indian troops in the service of the English East India Company--and defeated the army of Siraj-ud-Daula in the battle of Plassey⁽¹⁸⁾, whose duration did not last more than few hours. In reality, the outcome of the battle had been determined long before the soldiers came to the battlefield owing to a conspiracy concocted between Clive and an aspirant to the *Nawab's* throne, Mir Jafar⁽¹⁹⁾, by bribing the *Nawab's* soldiers in order to throw away their weapons, surrender prematurely and even use their arms against their superiors. (Read and Fisher 1998, 19-20) All the plotters were to have their rewards: Mir Jafar would be nominated for the *nawabship* of Bengal, the European community in Calcutta which suffered Siraj's army looting would receive £550,000 and the Hindu community, Clive's army and members of the Company's Council would receive £200,000, £275,000 and £275,000, respectively. (James 1997, 34)

This Anglo-Indian encounter had a long-lasting impact on the political context of India. In fact, the most decisive result of this violent confrontation was that the British, represented by the East India Company, entered a new chapter in the history of their presence in India in the sense that by their ousting of Siraj-ud-Daula, the Company officials became the *de facto* 'kingmakers'. According to A. Wild, it was Clive who personally escorted Mir Jafar to the throne, and after three years, that is, in 1760, he replaced him by another pro-British *Nawab*, Mir Kasim. Describing this situation, the same scholar wrote that this "successful outcome cast the Company in the role of kingmaker, and their effortless overthrow of Mir Jafar when he had outlived his usefulness, in 1760, confirmed them in this all-powerful role." (Wild 2000, 140)

Another significant outcome, perhaps the most important one, was that the English Company, besides the huge compensations that it had received, was offered the *diwani*⁽²⁰⁾ of Bengal, which gave it the right to collect its revenues and thus effectively govern it. (141)

It is interesting to note that the Battle of Plassey paved the way for the emergence of a new category of British subjects in India: the *nabobs*⁽²¹⁾, who made fortunes out of the status quo in Bengal. In reality, the 'credit' of the emergence of this class of Britons goes to Robert Clive who set the trend in this field. For instance, the fact that the Bengal ruler, Mir Jafar, was replaced by Mir Kasim led to substantial 'gifts'. (95) In this regard, J. Keay mentioned that Clive returned to Britain with a fortune estimated at £234,000 as well as a *jagir*, a land grant worth £30,000 per annum for life. (Keay 1993, 322) Again in the same respect, A. Wild stated that between 1757 and 1765, an estimated total of £2,000,000 was paid out in the form of gifts by various native leaders in their race for the thrones. (Wild 2000, 95-96) Some scholars, by contrast, disputed the sum given by A. Wild. Christopher Hill, for instance, declared that the total of gifts offered to the Company and its employees amounted to £6,000,000 instead of only £2,000,000. (Hill 1992, 237) In addition, gifts from grateful rulers was not the only way of making money in India. In point of fact, most of the Company servants, by abusing the Company trade privileges, notably the *dastak* (custom-free passes), resorted to trading on their own account in the countryside. (Keay 1993, 259)

In Britain, on the other hand, the *nabobs* provoked a great deal of animosity, particularly from the English aristocracy. This was due to the fact that the former, being capable of purchasing large estates with the fortunes acquired in India, set themselves up like the country noblemen. (Wild 2000, 72-73) Even politicians grew anxious about these *arrivistes* who were growing into a strong political lobby "by buying up 'rotten boroughs' to obtain a seat in parliament." (73) Corroborating this statement, C. Hill wrote that "the great wealth won by the plunder of India enabled the plunderers to buy their way into English politics." (Hill 1992, 237) For instance, upon his return to Britain, Clive won seats in Parliament, not only for himself, but also for his friends and relatives. (Wild 2000, 99)

In other terms, the English East India Company, as L. James points out, had turned into a sort of Frankenstein monster, uncontrollable and with enough influence to cause a great deal of trouble both in India and Britain, especially since its agents enjoyed enormous resources and, therefore, were answerable to no one. (James 1997, 49)

This phenomenon, incongruous to the British political landscape at the time, was seen as a serious aberration which became a source of annoyance and displeasure for many government officials in London. Eventually, the Government decided to bring the whole thing to a halt. Nevertheless, this move could only be fulfilled by 1772, when the John Company had its back to the wall due to financial difficulties. In fact, barely a few years before, the Company had found itself in dire straits because of monsoon failure in Bengal which engendered full-scale-famine in the region. Revealing the impact of this famine, A. Read and D. Fisher state that one third of the peasantry died, and many survivors were forced to resort to cannibalism. (Read and Fisher 1998, 21) Ultimately, this condition led to a sharp fall in the Company's income, a dramatic situation that had, in turn, negative repercussions on its economy. Unsurprisingly, the upshot of this financial shortage made the Company renege on the payment of its annual tax amounting to £400,000. (21)

Indeed, the East India Company was on the verge of going bankrupt, and in an attempt to weather the storm safely, it solicited the British Government for a loan of £1,500,000. The Government, represented by its Prime Minister, Lord North, agreed to provide such a help with the proviso that the Company meet certain conditions. Thus, the time was ripe for the authorities in London to take action. (21)

As a token of its willingness to redress the corrupt situation in India, the Government passed two important Acts: the Judicature and Regulating Acts of 1773. The former established a supreme court in Calcutta whose judges were British jurists and from which appeals could be made to the Privy Council in London. It also made the Company's accounts to the Treasury liable for scrutiny. (James 1997, 51) On the other hand, the Regulating Act gave the British Government a direct involvement in India for the first time. This took the form of setting up a new administrative structure through which it could legally interfere in the Company's affairs. Besides that, the Government of Bengal was to be vested in the governor-general, who would be Warren Hastings, and a council of four members. Regarding the other British presidencies in India, namely Madras and Bombay, the Act decreed that they should come under the control of the Governor-General in Calcutta. (Read and Fisher 1998, 21) Commenting on the Regulating Act A. Wild wrote:

The Act was an attempt to reimpose some order on the Company's behaviour in India, particularly to control those Company servants who had amassed, or were in the process of amassing, huge fortunes on the back of the Company at the expense of the Indian kingdoms they were milking. (Wild 2000, 98)

Nevertheless, apart from forbidding the Company's officials from receiving any form of gifts or rewards from Indian princes, little was done to reform the local administration of India. As a result, nine years later, the issue of corrupt Company servants cropped up again, an aspect that led to the intervention of William Pitt the Younger, then Prime Minister. Upon the latter's request, the British Parliament passed another important Act, the India Act of 1784, whose chief provision was to establish a dual system of control by giving executive control of Indian affairs to the newly created Board of Control in London. Most importantly, the President of this board was a Cabinet minister and, therefore, answerable to Parliament. As far as the Company was concerned, the Act decreed that it retained only the control of commerce and day-to-day administration. (Read and Fisher 1998, 23)

The Extension of British Power in India:

The period after the 1784 India Act saw the arrival of a long succession of governors-general nominated directly from London. Every one of these contributed significantly to the expansion of British hegemony through the annexation of territories in the Subcontinent, a task that, admittedly, was not always accomplished purely by force. In this respect, Burjor Avari wrote:

The force of arms was not the principal method employed by the Company in its desire for greater territorial and political control. While that remained the ultimate weapon, the preferred method was diplomatic enticement, known as Subsidiary Alliance. (Avari 2012, 152)

To put it another way, sometimes, the weakest princely states sought to sign an alliance with the British whereby the native ruler would be in charge of the domestic affairs of his state while British troops would shoulder the responsibility of protecting him from foreign attacks. In exchange for such protection, the ruler would meet the expenses incurred by the presence of the Company troops on his territory and, above all, accept a British Resident serving as an adviser at the court—but in reality, a 'Trojan Horse', in the words of Burjor Avari. (152) Besides that, the 'Subsidiary Alliance' entailed that the ruler vow not to sign any treaties with other native rulers. (Lowe, 1998, 143) The British in India, it needs to be stressed, were all too willing to provide such help within the framework of these alliances as they proved very lucrative.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that, very often, the British had to react in self-defence, especially since they had become so vulnerable in the chaotic situation that prevailed in the Subcontinent in the wake of the disintegration of the Mughal authority. According to R. A. Huttenback, the expansion of empires could be prompted by the existence of disorder in a neighbouring territory. (Huttenback 1966, 76) In other words, when an empire is surrounded by an area of instability, the former is impelled to conquer the latter for the sake of its own security. The British Empire in India did fit this situation. In fact, as has been mentioned previously, the British restricted their activities to trading stations – such as Bombay and Madras – so long as the Mughal Empire was the protector. Nevertheless, once the latter collapsed, the East India Company was compelled to raise its own military force and intervene in the surrounding areas where disorder prevailed, and in the process, it ended up conquering them. About this expansionism, B. Ward observed that it was not “a planned, stage-by-stage effort of conquest but a largely spontaneous response to the collapse of local authority.” (Ward 1959, 96) For instance, upon his becoming Governor-General of India in 1798, Lord Wellesley⁽²²⁾ took action against the perpetually troublesome Sultan Tipu⁽²³⁾ in the south, an Indian prince known for his anti-British sentiment, who allied himself with the French, Britain’s archenemy at the time, for no other reason than to upset the English Company. This culminated in the annexation of the Carnatic, Tipu’s territory, a move that set the stage for the extension of British power to the southern part of the Subcontinent. (Read and Fisher 1998, 27)

Another local threat to British presence in India cropped up in 1813, the year Lord Moira (1754-1826) acceded to the general-governorship. This threat was posed by the Marathas who, not only had they failed to impose domestic order, but also went on harassing and plundering in neighbouring territories considered as British ‘turf’.⁽²⁴⁾ As a reaction, Lord Moira sent 100,000 troops and managed to subdue them by 1817, a defeat that led to the annexation of the Maratha territory, a huge chunk in the south-western area of the Subcontinent. By this, except the north-west, almost the whole of India came under British suzerainty. (Lowe, 1998, 143-144)

Interestingly, the governors-general, acting partly in self-defence and partly out of ambition and avidity for the acquisition of more territories, carried out most of these annexations without seeking prior approval from London. As a matter of fact, following the acquisition of Bengal in the wake of the Battle of Plassey (1757), the British Government made it clear that it did not wish to have any further territorial expansion for fear of the heavy responsibility, let alone the financial burden of management that could be incurred. Corroborating this statement, B. Ward remarked:

I often think that if in the earlier phases of the occupation of India, men like Lord Wellesley had been obliged to cable: ‘Would you like me to take over the rest of Bengal?’ the expansion of British power in India might have taken a very different course. (Ward 1959, 96)

In other terms, the Government in the metropolis was not well-informed about the conditions on the ground, which were a minefield for the English Company. Actually, the parts of India under British control were constantly under threat of attacks from outside, a thread emanating not only from local princes but also from other European rivals, notably the French – represented by the *Compagnie Française des Indes Orientales* – who, as will be seen further on, competed ferociously against the English Company to extend their hegemony in the Subcontinent. This reality was exacerbated by the fact that it took much time to seek advice, or permission, from London. According to R. A. Huttenback, it usually took two and a half years to send and receive a reply to a letter from India to England. (Huttenback 1966, 120) Men-on-the-spot, such as Wellesley, could not wait for a long time to get an answer from London while confronted with an immediate issue. In a period of crisis, these men had to act swiftly.

Foreign Threat:

The British were perfectly aware of the extent to which their European rivals, namely the French and the Russians, envied their possessions in the Indian Subcontinent. As a result, the East India Company officials were permanently beset with fears of invasion. The first threat came from the French, when Napoleon Bonaparte succeeded in invading Egypt in 1798. The French Emperor had, in fact, been planning to invade England by the end of the eighteenth century, but he soon abandoned the idea as too premature and decided, instead, to engage Britain through its most valuable and precious possession in Asia, India. Thus, in Bonaparte's view, the acquisition of Egypt would, strategically speaking, serve as a stepping-stone to India. (Breunig 1971, 53-54) This threat was aggravated by the presence of French factories in southern India, where the latter received favours and special treatment dispensed by the reputedly anti-British native prince, Tipu Sultan, with whom the *Companie Française des Indes Orientales* had signed an alliance. In due course, the British were lucky enough to have the French Emperor drop his dream of invading India when his troops suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the English Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805) in the Battle of the Nile in Egypt. (54) John Seeley summed up the seriousness of the French threat in the following terms:

The English conquest of India began not in some quarrel between the Company and a native Power. It began in an alarming attempt made by the French to get control over the Deccan, and so among other things to destroy the English settlements at Madras and Bombay, by interfering in the question of the Hyderabad succession. Our first military step in the East was to defend ourselves against the French attack. (Seeley 1883, 212)

On the other hand, after the French threat there appeared another more serious one: Tsarist Russia. What came to be known among British officials as 'Russo-phobia' was initially triggered off by Sir Robert Wilson (1777-1849), a distinguished British soldier, when he claimed that the Russian Emperor Alexander I, was planning to lay his hands on Constantinople and then invade India by way of Persia. (Meyer and Brysac 2001, 116-117) This claim was coupled with a warning statement made by the British intelligence officer, Captain Arthur Conolly (1807-1842), following his excursions to the Caspian Sea, where he confirmed that it was perfectly feasible for the Russian army to invade India, either through Afghanistan or Persia. (James 1997, 81)

Meanwhile, British apprehension was deepened by Russia's seemingly insatiable appetite for territory. In this respect, K. E. Meyer and S. B. Brysac maintained that no one could ignore "the Russian ambition to secure an overland passage to India, for purposes of commerce and possible conquest – an abiding British nightmare." (Meyer and Brysac 2001, 121) It is worth recalling at this juncture the fact that such fears were justified on the ground since between 1721 and 1809, Russia had extended its influence over Asia Minor, half of Europe and much of Central Asia, and by the 1830's, the Russian army, as the British officials in India were well aware, was moving deeper and deeper into Central Asia. Furthermore, the Russo-phobic Governor General, Lord Auckland, who served in India between 1836 and 1842, learned—worryingly—from his spying agents in Kabul about the *rapprochement* which was taking place between the Russians and Dost Mohammed, the then ruler of Afghanistan. (Wild 2000, 170) On top of that, Russia was encouraging Persia to expand southwards in order to divert the latter's attention from its northern borders, hence, indirectly threatening the British position in India. (Lenczowski 1980, 48)

In such a context, British officials became fully certain about the Tsars' design to expand their empire at the expense of British India, a conviction that prompted them to try and find a way to ward off this danger. Describing this situation, L. James wrote:

...a handful of ministers, proconsuls, generals and intelligence had been wracking their brains to devise policies and strategies to counter a Russian march across Asia which would end with an invasion of India. For nearly everyone involved, it was not a question of would the Russians come, but when and how. (James 1997, 81)

Thus, the fact of being conscious of the gravity of the threat posed by the Russians, on the one hand, and so complacent about their invincibility in the region, on the other, prompted the 'paranoiac' British in India to move into action through the invasion of Afghanistan in 1838. To their dismay, this venture was doomed to failure due to the very strong resistance they encountered from the local population. As confirmed by A. Wild, who depicted Afghanistan as "another kind of country: unruly, harsh, and peopled by tribes of proud, brave fighting men." (Wild 2000, 170) The war lasted for four years and, eventually, ended with British retreat.

Nonetheless, despite their failure to subdue Afghanistan, the British were determined to take preemptive measures in order to nip in the bud any attempt made by the Russians to fulfil their plan. Perhaps the most important among these measures was the creation of a *cordon sanitaire* to protect India. Therefore, by the mid-1840's, British troops invaded the hitherto independent Indian provinces bordering Afghanistan, namely the Punjab and the Sind, whose strategic location could serve as a springboard the Russian enemy could use to threaten British India. (Huttenback 1966, 116-124) In the words of R. A. Huttenback, the "Sind was to be . . . a buffer against a possible Russian attack on India." (124)

Thus, by the end of the 1840's, following the annexation of the Punjab and the Sind, the British Empire in India had expanded until it had reached its great natural barriers, namely the coastal areas in the south and the Himalayas in the north. At this point, the English East India Company was directly ruling two thirds of the Indian Subcontinent on behalf of the British Government, and the remaining one third represented the princely states, controlled by Indian princes, who had long recognized the Company as the paramount power in the region.

To conclude, though it would perhaps seem less objective from an academic standpoint to adhere wholeheartedly to John Seeley's statement – which claims that the acquisition of the British Empire was fulfilled 'in a fit of absence of mind' –, it would also be too subjective to deny it against such evidence as is seen in the case of British India. Indeed, the series of conquests carried out by the John Company on the Indian scene for almost a century, from the Battle of Plassey (1757) to the mid-nineteenth century, were often prompted by that feeling of insecurity and vulnerability engulfing the Company servants, which was created as a result of the demise of the Mughal Empire and the political instability that ensued. This climate of uncertainty posed a serious threat to British interests and prevented the Company from conducting trade in an orderly way. As B. Ward succinctly put it: "Had the Mogul Empire survived to the nineteenth century, it is safe to say there would have been no British Empire in India." (Ward 1959, 95)

Notes

- (1) We would like to thank the Algerian Directorate General for Scientific Research and Technological Development (DGRSDT) for their financial support.
- (2) The Moluccas, alternatively known as the Spice Islands, are situated in the eastern part of present-day Indonesia.
- (3) Amboyna is an island in the easterly part of the Spice Islands. Its clove trade had first attracted the Portuguese, who named the island and founded a settlement there in 1521. Almost a century later,

the Dutch captured the Portuguese Fort, took over the spice trade, and in 1623 destroyed the recently founded British settlement.

- (4) 'Factory' was an appellation used to denote an overseas base for mercantile agents or 'factors'.
- (5) The Mughals were a Muslim dynasty who ruled over a large part of the Indian subcontinent from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.
- (6) The Company's principal trading centres, or 'factories', in India were called 'Presidencies' because their Chief Factors were designated 'Presidents'.
- (7) Aurangzeb (1618-1707) used to be called 'Alamgir', meaning 'World Conqueror'.
- (8) Akbar was the greatest of the Mughal Emperors of India who ruled between 1556 and 1605. He extended the Mughal Empire over most of the Indian subcontinent and in order to preserve its unity, he adopted programs that won the loyalty of the non-Muslim majority.
- (9) Agra was founded in 1566 and used to be the capital of the Mughal Empire until 1658. Later on, the capital was transferred to Delhi.
- (10) Delhi became the capital of the Mughal Empire in 1658.
- (11) The Peacock Throne was a famous jewelled throne designed in the early seventeenth century for Shah Jahan, the then Mughal Emperor. Contemporaries bear witness to the fact that it was one of the most magnificent and impressive thrones ever made in history.
- (12) Besides grants and privileges, the *farman* also included the possession of several lands in many parts of India. (Keay 1993, 230)
- (13) A 'nawab' is a native provincial governor during the time of the Mughal Empire. 'Nawab' is the plural form of 'na'ib' in Arabic, which means a deputy. The deputy referred to the emperor and the plural form was adopted as an honorific title. (Spear 1990, 81)
- (14) Siraj-ud-daula (1727-1757) governed Bengal in 1756 (for only one year). He was killed shortly after the Battle of Plassey, namely in 1757.
- (15) The Seven Years War (1756-1763) was waged between France and Great Britain over the control of the vast colonial territory of North America. This war was also extended to overseas territories where both British and French settled such as the Indian subcontinent.
- (16) Joseph Zephaniah Holwell was a member of the Calcutta Council, and was among those who survived the 'Black Hole of Calcutta'. His account of this event, entitled: *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentleman and others who were suffocated in the Black Hole* (London, 1758), was the sole contemporary narrative. (Keay 1993, 301-305)
- (17) Robert Clive (1725-1774), son of a modest family, joined the East India Company in 1742 in search of a job in India.
- (18) Plassey is a small village close to Calcutta.
- (19) Mir Jafar was a nobleman and one of Siraj's high-ranking commanders in the army.
- (20) *Diwani* was a department in charge of collecting tax revenues.
- (21) 'Nabob' was a corruption of the Hindi word 'nawab'. It was used in Britain to describe someone who had come back home from India with a fortune.
- (22) Richard Colley Wellesley was Governor-General of India from 1797 to 1805. He greatly enlarged the British Empire in India.
- (23) Tipu was the Sultan of Mysore, the area of the Carnatic, in the southern part of India. He was the most powerful threat to British hegemony by the end of the eighteenth century.
- (24) The British territories in India were often ransacked by pindaris, robber bands of Maratha tribesmen.

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Sarcasm?: Quality Flouting as a Humorous Tool in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*

Abstract: What kind of humor is frequently used in the genre of sitcom? What types of verbal humor can be created when the Quality Maxim is not observed? The present paper examines humor in the genre of sitcom from the pragmatic point of view, more specifically, it analyzes the verbal jokes based on the Cooperative Principle and the Maxims of Conversations defined by H. P. Grice and applies his theory on the data from a popular American sitcom The Big Bang Theory. Quality flouting is often associated with irony and sarcasm, and as we know, ironic and sarcastic jokes go hand in hand with the genre of sitcom, and the viewers of this particular show must have noticed their frequent use for humorous purposes. But is every Quality flouting in sitcoms used for creating sarcastic and ironic jokes? Or is it used as a device for creating verbal humor based on some other type of jokes? The aim of this paper is to analyze how exactly the characters use Maxim non-observance in humorous conversations, especially the previously mentioned type of Quality non-observance, and whether there are any character-specific tendencies and deviations from what might be generally assumed.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine humor in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* from a pragmatic perspective. It focuses on verbal humor created by so-called Maxim non-observance, with greater focus on the Quality Maxim and its possible flouting. Utterances containing this type of non-observance will be analyzed and subcategorized with the aim of finding whether Quality flouting is used for the purpose of creating humorous sarcastic and ironic utterances only, or whether there is a possible link to other types of jokes. Character-specific deviations are expected, as one of the main characters is claimed to be unable of sarcasm production and comprehension, therefore, it is assumed that this character does not use verbal humor based on Quality flouting, and in cases he does, it is assumed that he uses it for other purposes than sarcasm production.

Theoretical background

The theoretical pillar of this paper stems from the work of Herbert Paul Grice, who proposed the ideal conditions for a successful conversation, known as the Cooperative Principle and Maxims of Conversations. The Maxims are concerned with four areas of conversation: the truthfulness of the utterances (Quality), the amount of information provided (Quantity), the complexity and understandability of the utterances (Manner), and the relation to the topic being currently discussed (Relation). Sticking to the four Maxims should lead to a conversation that is effective for all participants (Grice 45-46). This paper focuses on the Quality Maxim, which can be paraphrased as "Try to make your contribution one that is true", and can be divided into two sub-maxims: the speaker should not say anything that s/he believes to be false, and s/he should not say anything for which he lacks evidence (Grice 46).

Grice was aware that speakers do not always follow the abovementioned Maxims, and therefore he defined several ways of possible breaking, i.e. types of Maxim non-observance: violation, opting out, clash, flouting (Thomas 72; Grice 49), and infringement, which he added in his later work (Thomas 72). With regards to the scope of this paper, only *flouting* will be described.

When a speaker flouts a Maxim, s/he breaks it intentionally and wants the recipient to recognize that s/he did so. In addition, the speaker wants the recipient to identify so-called implicature, which according to Grice's theory, is an "additional meaning" occurring in utterances as a part of speaker's meaning (Horn 3). In case of Quality flouting, the speaker deliberately makes an utterance that s/he does not believe to be true or for which s/he lacks evidence, which are the sub-maxims of the Quality Maxim, and subsequently, s/he believes the non-observance to be so obvious that the recipient successfully recognizes that the Maxim was broken. In addition, the recipient should recognize the speaker's intended meaning. Thus, an example of an utterance flouting the Quality Maxim is: *Queen Victoria was made of iron*. The recipient cannot rely on the semantics only, as the speaker uttered "a falsehood", as Queen Victoria was not made of iron, i.e. s/he cannot interpret the meaning literally. The recipient has to interpret the utterance figuratively, i.e. search for a different meaning (implicature) – Queen Victoria had properties similar to iron (e.g. hardness) (Levinson 109-110). From Levinson's example it follows that Quality flouting may be linked to figures of speech, as in case of figurative language the speaker does not produce an utterance which is completely truthful, and the recipient cannot rely on semantics only. Commonly used examples of figures of speech include: metaphor (transferring one meaning or properties of a thing to another thing via personal experience), metonymy (a thing is named by its smaller part), simile (a comparison in which one element is visibly compared to another, usually linked by *like* or *as*) or hyperbole (an exaggeration) (Dupriez 276; 281; 416; 215).

Another common use of Quality flouting is for giving rise to irony and sarcasm. When a speaker utters something that does not meet the expectations of the recipient and flouts Grice's Maxim, i.e. s/he creates an utterance that does not meet the social norms, expected reaction, etc. we can understand it as irony (Colston 126). Colston even states that flouting a Maxim is a "necessary condition for verbal irony" (126). Irony is sometimes even treated as a figure of speech (Dupriez 243), however, in this paper it is not considered as a part of figurative language, rather as a separate category on its own. The term *irony* can be defined in various ways, and it is often described as saying the opposite of what the speaker believes while wanting the recipient to understand that the utterance is not believed to be truthful (Blakemore 164) and in a broader sense, it is defined as an unexpected reaction in the given situation, usually conveying negative emotions (Simpson 36-39). The recipient should identify that the utterance cannot be interpreted literally (or rather "taken seriously") and should look for the speaker's meaning. The difference between irony and sarcasm is hard to define, as both are connected to speaker's aggression. Generally, it is said that sarcasm is "more aggressive" towards the recipient and that irony can be unintentional while sarcasm cannot (Attardo, *Intentionality and Irony* 40).

Many linguists see Maxim non-observance as potentially humorous, and there are various theories and studies focused on the connection between non-observance and jokes, from which Attardo and Raskin's theory is seen as the most influential one (Attardo, *The General Theory of Verbal Humor*, 180; Ruiz Gurillo and Avarado Ortega 4). Both figurative language and sarcasm/irony have humorous potential, as by producing an utterance based on flouting, the speaker provides the recipient with an utterance which seems contextually suitable, reliable and "normal", however, there is a "second sense" (or implicature) in the utterance that has to be recognized by the recipient (Attardo, *Linguistic Theories of Humor* 276). The humorous situation arises when the receiver realizes the second sense, which is usually somehow in opposition to the previously identified sense (Raskin 110). Attardo and Raskin call these senses *script*, and they further work with the notion of scripts in their theory of humor called *General Theory of Verbal Humor*, however, given the scope of this paper, it is not possible to explain their

theory in detail. The revisited version can be found in Attardo's monograph *Humorous Texts* (Attardo, *The General Theory of Verbal Humor* 126).

As for the second script which should be identified by the recipient, in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, the characters sometimes fail to successfully recognize it, especially when the intended meaning is linked to irony or sarcasm. One of the characters, Sheldon Cooper, is described from the very beginning of the sitcom as a person struggling with sarcasm identification, which leads to misunderstanding and humor, as the viewer of the sitcom is, unlike this character, able to recognize the speaker's intention and capable of sarcasm recognition. The other characters are presented as being able to produce and identify sarcastic and ironic comments, however there might be some rare cases in which they fail to do so.

Aim and research method

The present paper focuses on Maxim non-observance in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, with special focus on the Quality Maxim. The goal is to examine whether jokes based on Quality flouting are mostly of sarcastic nature or whether some other types of jokes can be created with the use of this type of Maxim non-observance. There are three hypotheses which will be examined: the first hypothesis is that most of the jokes in this sitcom created via Quality flouting will be linked to sarcasm and irony, and only minority of jokes will be connected to figurative language, for example metaphors.

The second hypothesis is that in case of one of the characters - Sheldon - Quality flouting will be used rarely, as this character is presented from the very beginning of the sitcom as a character struggling with recognizing sarcasm, and therefore, it is expected that his humorous utterances will be based on other types of Maxim non-observance (e.g. Manner infringing, or Quantity infringing).

The third hypothesis is linked to the second: for Sheldon's jokes based on Quality flouting, it is expected that this type of non-observant utterances will be used to give rise to figurative language, while all the other characters will use Quality flouting for creating sarcastic or ironic comments (and jokes). This would show that using Quality flouting in humorous utterances is highly character-specific, not only genre specific, although in case of sitcoms, humorous situations are often linked to the use of irony and sarcasm. This hypothesis stems from the general assumption that in case of constructed dialogues created for the purpose of humorous conversations (such as in sitcoms), there is very often a character that sometimes misinterprets irony and sarcasm, which the viewer of a show sees as even more entertaining, as s/he is able to recognize it - unlike the character (Kapogianni 2011, 64). In case of *The Big Bang Theory* the character would be in many cases Sheldon, which means that his utterances should not be related to sarcasm.

For the overall analysis conducted with the aim of analyzing a range of verbal humor produced in this sitcom (i.e. an analysis focusing on every type of Maxim non-observance), a corpus of 250 conversations was created. The conversations were randomly selected from online *The Big Bang Theory* scripts, available on the website <https://bigbangtrans.wordpress.com/>. Then, with regards to the context of the utterance, Maxim non-observant utterances were selected, and a qualitative analysis was made. The non-observant utterances were categorized into the following subcategories: which character breaks the Maxim, what Maxim is broken, and how it is broken, so that the results provide not only a description of selected conversations, but also show whether there are any prevailing tendencies or even differences between the usage of Maxim non-observance among the characters. For a correct categorization regarding which Maxim and how it was broken, the definitions of H.P. Grice and Thomas were used.

The number of Maxim non-observant instances was counted, and the utterances that were based on non-observance of more Maxims at the same time were counted proportionally in the given categories so that the instance number is equal to 1 (i.e. an utterance based on Quality flouting and Quantity flouting was counted as 0.5 for the former and 0.5 for the latter). This paper presents and further analyzes only the data in which the Quality Maxim was not observed due to flouting.

All the utterances in which the jokes were based on Quality flouting were further divided into two categories: figurative language, and sarcasm and irony, which is the scope of this paper. The utterances were divided into the abovementioned categories based on the following criteria: in case there was exaggeration (hyperbole), simile, metaphor, metonymy, or any other figure of speech in the utterance, it was categorized as *figurative language*. In case the aim of the utterance was to mock other characters, criticize (in)directly, etc. it was categorized as *sarcasm/irony*. In borderline cases, i.e. when there were two possible categorizations of an utterance, one of the categories was selected based on the subjective reasoning in the given utterance.

Data analysis

Before proceeding to the part in which only Quality flouting is analyzed, the author will briefly describe the overall results of the analysis to provide the reader with a short comparison to other Maxims, so that the reader could see the prominence of Quality-based jokes in this sitcom.

In the created corpus consisting of conversations from *The Big Bang Theory*, there were 608 Maxim non-observant utterances of all types. The Quality Maxim was the Maxim with the highest number of instances: 44 per cent of all jokes (267.5 utterances) were based on breaking this Maxim. Jokes based on Manner non-observance were used in 23 per cent of all the instances, Relation non-observant jokes in 17 per cent, and humor based on Quantity had the lowest ratio (16 per cent):

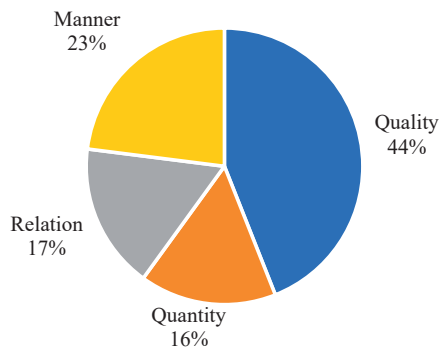


Figure 1: Maxim non-observance according to the type of broken Maxim

From the 267.5 Quality non-observant utterances, those based on flouting were the most common ones; 184.5 instances, that is 30.3 per cent of all jokes, were based on this type of non-observance, which is the focus of this paper.

When a speaker uses Quality flouting, he deliberately utters such an utterance that is untruthful (or for which s/he lacks evidence), yet the speaker still hopes that the recipient successfully recognizes the speaker's intention and the hidden meaning behind the utterance. However, as previously stated, in

case of sitcoms the characters may misidentify the hidden meaning (or even fail to identify that there was supposed to be an additional meaning), which leads to humorous situations.

As one of the hypotheses aims to examine character-specific use of Quality flouting, it is necessary to divide the instances of this Maxim non-observance according to the characters, which is provided in Table 1 below:

Character	Sheldon	Leonard	Howard	Rajesh	Penny	Others	Total
No. of instances	50	42	36	12	29	15.5	184.5

Table 1: Instances of Quality flouting

The table shows that the speaker with the highest occurrence of Quality flouting is Sheldon, then followed by Leonard, Howard, and Penny. Thus, the hypothesis that Sheldon does not use Quality flouting, or that he uses it rarely (as it is stated from the very beginning of the sitcom that he is struggling with recognizing sarcasm and irony) might seem to be incorrect.

Let us have a closer look on how the characters use Quality flouting in humorous situations and whether there are any differences in the use. In the following example (1) there are three humorous utterances based on his type of Maxim non-observance:

- (1) Scene: Sheldon saw Penny's apartment, which was a messy place. He could not sleep at night because he is obsessed with cleanness, and decided to break into Penny's apartment and clean it. Leonard has just found out and tries to show disapproval of Sheldon's action.

Sheldon: Morning.

Leonard: Morning.

Sheldon: I have to say, I slept splendidly. Granted, not long, but just deeply and well.

Leonard: I'm not surprised. **A well-known folk cure for insomnia is to break into your neighbor's apartment and clean.**

Sheldon: Sarcasm?

Leonard: You think?

Sheldon: Granted, my methods may have been somewhat unorthodox, but I think the end result will be a measurable enhancement of Penny's quality of life.

Leonard: You know what, **you've convinced me, maybe tonight we should sneak in and shampoo her carpet.**

Sheldon: You don't think that crosses a line?

Leonard: Yes! For God's sake, Sheldon, **do I have to hold up a sarcasm sign every time I open my mouth.**

Sheldon: You have a sarcasm sign?

Leonard: No, I do not have a sarcasm sign.

(S01E02)

In the example (1) Leonard is saying something which he does not believe to be true, and in addition, based on his intonation and other paralinguistic features, he wants Sheldon to recognize his untruthfulness. The problem arises when the recipient, Sheldon, is not able to identify the speaker's intention, thus fails to decode that sarcasm is conveyed. Leonard's remarks may be categorized as sarcastic irony, as the speaker does not agree with the opinion that he uttered (Blakemore 108; Grice 53) and the aim is a direct criticism of the recipient's behavior by speaker's (biting) remarks (Dynel 291; 309).

Humor in this utterance stems not only from Leonard's sarcastic comments but also from the fact that Sheldon is not able to successfully identify it (unlike the viewers). Therefore, in case of (1) Quality flouting is used by Leonard for the purpose of uttering a sarcastic note towards Sheldon.

Sarcasm and irony are not the only types of jokes based on Quality flouting. The implicature arising from this type of Maxim non-observance may also be linked to something else than sarcasm:

(2) Scene: The guys are talking in the cafeteria.

Raj: You guys know the new Discovery class missions that NASA's been working on?

Leonard: Yeah.

Raj: Well, they're looking to include a message from Earth in case one of them is encountered by alien life.

Leonard: **Oh, when I encountered alien life, I discovered that the key thing was not to sit in its spot.**

Sheldon: All right, you can't breathe our air without an inhaler, he's allergic to Earth nuts, but I'm the alien.

(S08E21)

In (2), Leonard uses the Quality flouting in a different way than in (1). In (1) it was used for creating a sarcastic comment with the aim to criticize Sheldon's behavior. In (2) Leonard calls Sheldon indirectly *an alien*. Although this joke is also meant to be biting and has a specific target, which is a feature of sarcasm, Leonard is not criticizing Sheldon here (note: even though this utterance might be considered as a general criticism of Sheldon's behavior), so the utterance was said with a different aim. Leonard implies that Sheldon, as well as aliens, has behavior and manners that might be considered peculiar by other people. As this joke is created via comparing Sheldon's behavior to that of an extraterrestrial person, this utterance could be categorized as a joke created via figurative language, namely a metaphor, as Leonard is taking features, behavior, and manners of one person and applying them to the other (Grice 53), in other words, in (2) Quality flouting was used for expressing resemblance, therefore for creating a figure of speech.

It was expected that in case of Sheldon Cooper, Quality flouting is used for figurative language. In comparison to (2), in the following example (3) the untruthfulness is used for the same purpose, i.e. for figurative language. Sheldon's utterance is clearly an example of a metaphor:

(3) Scene: The guys are waiting in a line for the Indiana Jones movie, and Wil Wheaton, Sheldon's enemy, is passing by.

Wil Wheaton: Hey, look who's here! Hey, buddies!

Sheldon: Well, if it isn't Wil Wheaton, **the Jar Jar Binks of the Star Trek universe.**

(S04E08)

In (3) Sheldon uses Quality flouting for the purpose of creating a metaphor; Jar Jar Binks is known as a rather unpopular Star Wars character. Therefore, comparing Will Wheaton, or rather the character that this actor performed in the Star Trek series, to Jar Jar Binks is obviously meant as an insult based on the resembling features of the two characters. For identifying the conveyed meaning, the recipient (Will as well as the viewer of the sitcom) has to know the character Jar Jar Binks otherwise the metaphor and its meaning cannot be decoded.

As stated previously, Sheldon is presented as a character incapable of decoding, or even producing ironical and sarcastic utterances. Therefore, it could be (mistakenly) concluded that all Sheldon's instances of Quality flouting are similar to (3), i.e. it is used for figurative language only. However, the following example (4) shows that it is not the case:

- (1) Scene: The boys just met Penny with her new boyfriend. She and Leonard broke up few months ago.
Leonard: You know what, I'm happy that Penny's moving on. It gives me the freedom to move on myself.
Howard: Are you saying that you've been holding back?
Leonard: Of course. Out of respect.
Howard: So, how do you explain the ten years before Penny?
Raj: Who were you respecting then?
Leonard: What? I've dated plenty of women. There was Joyce Kim, Leslie Winkle.
Sheldon: **Notify the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary, the word plenty has been redefined to mean two.**

(S02E02)

Sheldon's utterance in (4) clearly bears signs of sarcasm rather than figurative language. The aim of the utterance is to mock Leonard's use of the word *plenty*, which, according to Dynel's definition of sarcasm, is a biting remark aimed at a specific target. This conversation was taken from the second season of the sitcom, and it might be expected that there was some character development, however, the viewer is still presented with the fact that Sheldon does not understand sarcasm and irony, even in the second season of the sitcom, although (4) proves his capability of sarcasm production.

Therefore, the abovementioned incorrect conclusion based on Sheldon's description in the sitcom has to be reanalyzed, and changed into stating that Sheldon, as well as the other characters, uses Quality flouting for both, creating sarcastic utterances and creating figures of speech.

Discussion

It was expected that in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*, jokes based on Quality flouting will be prevalent, which proved to be correct. Also, given the genre of sitcom, it was expected that Quality flouting will be used in vast majority of cases for creating utterances which are sarcastic or ironic in nature. In addition, it was expected to find character-specific deviations, as one of the characters is stated to be incapable of sarcasm production and comprehension, and therefore it was assumed that this character does not use Quality flouting often, and in case he does, he does not use it for the abovementioned purpose, but rather for giving rise to figurative language.

The data analysis and the results in Table 1 has shown that although Sheldon, the character claimed not to be capable of understanding (and producing) sarcasm, has the highest number of instances of Quality flouting. This disproves the hypothesis that Sheldon does not use Quality flouting-based jokes, as he was expected to use some other type of Maxim non-observance.

It can be mistakenly concluded that in Sheldon's case the high number of instances arises from Quality flouting being used for jokes based on other means than sarcasm and irony but example (4) in the analysis has proven that even this character uses Quality flouting for the creation of the abovementioned type of jokes, as well as for creating jokes based on figurative language - example (3). A question arises what the ratio between the use of Quality flouting used for figurative language, and for irony and sarcasm is, and whether this ratio is different in this character's case or not.

The following table provides a more detailed analysis of Quality flouting utterances, more specifically it provides the split into two categories: figurative language, and sarcasm and irony:

Character	Sheldon	Leonard	Howard	Rajesh	Penny	Others	Total
Figurative language	27.5	11	10	5	7.5	8	69
Irony, sarcasm	22.5	31	26	7	21.5	7.5	115.5
Total	50	42	36	12	29	15.5	184.5

Table 2: Instances of Quality flouting (detailed)

For easier comprehension, the data from Table 2 were also transformed into the following figure:

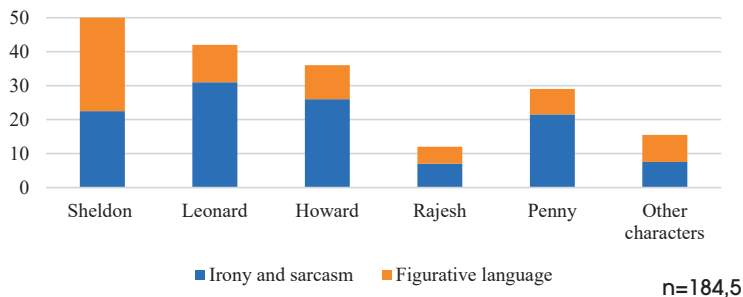


Figure 2: Instances of Quality flouting (detailed)

As shown in the Table 2 and Figure 2, jokes which are based on Quality flouting can be further categorized into jokes created with the purpose of conveying sarcasm or irony, and jokes based on figurative language. The hypothesis claimed that all characters but Sheldon use Quality flouting for the former, and that only Sheldon uses Quality flouting for the latter (which was expected to be of low number of instances), with some minor exceptions. The data analysis shows this hypothesis to be partially incorrect. Although Sheldon is the character with the highest ratio of figurative language use, which was part of the hypothesis, the difference between his use of sarcasm/irony and figurative language is not as significant, as originally expected. The results show that this character produces sarcastic utterances almost as often as figures of speech.

In comparison to Sheldon, the other characters use Quality flouting as expected, which means mostly for creating verbal humor based on sarcasm and irony, and sometimes for the purpose of creating a figure of speech. A surprising result is that they actually have such a high number of instances of figurative language-based verbal humor. Even if we omit Sheldon's utterances, figurative language creates almost half of all the jokes in this sitcom. The humorous utterances connected to figurative language include mostly hyperboles, metaphors, and similes, and it is often used as a mockery of some character property (e.g. Wolowitz's mother is corpulent, therefore he often uses figurative language to exaggerate weight- and size-related descriptions of her).

To link the results to the hypotheses, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis which said that Quality flouting is used mostly for creating utterances linked to sarcasm and irony proved to be correct from the overall point of view. In Sheldon's case, this hypothesis was disproven, as in case of this character, Quality flouting is not used mostly for creating sarcastic utterances but for creating figurative language.

The second hypothesis stating that Sheldon will have a low number of instances of Quality flouting proved to be incorrect, as Sheldon has the highest number of utterances using Quality flouting. This finding is linked to the third hypothesis saying that in cases in which Sheldon uses Quality flouting, it is for the purpose of creating a figure of speech, not sarcasm. As discussed previously, this hypothesis was also proven to be incorrect – Sheldon uses Quality flouting not only frequently with the purpose of giving rise to a figure of speech but also for sarcastic utterances, which is in conflict with the description of his character, as it is stated several times throughout the sitcom that Sheldon struggles with sarcasm comprehension and production that the viewer might easily accept this fact and overlook the scenes in which Sheldon actually uses sarcasm to mock and ridicule others.

Conclusion

The paper focused on verbal humor based on Quality flouting in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*. It was expected that in the genre of sitcom the use of Quality flouting would be linked mostly to create humorous sarcastic and ironic utterances, which, in case of majority of characters, proved to be correct. It was also assumed that in case of one character – Sheldon Cooper – the use of Quality flouting would be sporadic and in addition, the use would be for other purposes than sarcasm due to the personality traits and behavior of this character, which proved to be incorrect. The analysis has shown that this type of non-observance is frequently used in this particular sitcom not only for verbal humor based on sarcasm and irony, but also for utterances in which figures of speech are crucial for creating a humorous situation. Further research might focus on the use of figurative language with the purpose of giving rise to humorous utterances in the genre of sitcom, and additional comparison to other types of jokes which are used in this genre.

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“Their hour will be his hour”: Margaret Atwood’s *Hag-Seed* and the Conventions of Renaissance Revenge Plays

Abstract: Although an openly radical re-imagining of Shakespeare’s The Tempest, Margaret Atwood’s Hag-Seed (2016) is in many ways faithful to the Renaissance roots of its model. Streamlining the convoluted plot of the original and narrating it chiefly from the perspective of the story’s protagonist, Felix Phillips (the “Prospero” of the novel), Atwood’s text is centred on the motifs of (in)justice and personal revenge. This article argues that to emphasise her interpretation of the Shakespeare play, Atwood employs a number of conventional elements of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge plays – such as the metatheatrical techniques, the strong character of the avenger, the presence of the ghost and the avenger’s death – making her novel not only a modernised version of Shakespeare’s The Tempest, but also a revival, of a kind, of a whole dramatic genre, whose popularity peaked in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and whose conventions permeate the structure of Hag-Seed’s narrative.

When in 2013 Random House revealed its Hogarth Shakespeare project, an effort to retell Shakespeare’s dramatic canon in a series of novels by contemporary best-selling writers, one of the first volumes announced was *Hag-Seed* by Margaret Atwood – a modern re-imagining of *The Tempest*, symbolically scheduled to appear in 2016 to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. The chief goal of the project (which was shut down after seven published novels) was to re-imagine Shakespeare for a 21st-century audience and reframe his plays into current cultural and political discourse. By doing this, the project followed a broader trend of radically re-shaping Shakespeare for modern times that had become prominent by the end of the 20th century. As Kidnie has noted, Shakespeare’s oeuvre “cannot remain exactly what it was four hundred years ago, or even twenty years ago, in part because the audiences who must discursively apprehend it by means of its instances have been conditioned to ‘see’ differently” (126).

For contemporary authors who want to venture their own take on *The Tempest* (ca 1611), the unique status of the play within Shakespeare’s canon entails a list of benefits, as well as drawbacks. On the one hand, the wide array of existing scholarship allows for virtually limitless interpretation of the original piece. As Hulme and Sherman point out, *The Tempest* “has been classified as every genre and no genre, located in every place and no place, and enlisted in support of colonial, anti-colonial and apolitical views” (xi). This would theoretically mean that modern authors are given an almost infinite space for a deployment of Shakespeare’s text in order to explore whatever theme or idea they desire. On the other hand, however, the aforementioned thematic fluidity and the “mysterious qualities of *The Tempest* ... have given it a richer afterlife in drama, literature, and other arts than almost any other Shakespeare play, as subsequent writers and artists have sought to explain, supplement, and extend it” (Davies 472). Indeed, the notoriety of the play, and some of its interpretations, ultimately mean that any new retelling will possibly be measured against the body of pre-existing works that might have already formed the reading audience’s expectations as to what issues the new piece will, or should, address and through what interpretative lens Shakespeare’s model will, or should, be seen.

For instance, throughout the 20th century (especially its latter part), colonialist readings of *The Tempest* were preferred. While Prospero presents himself as a refugee in the Shakespeare original, he has been

mostly viewed as the privileged coloniser by modern scholars, writers and theatre directors. A number of authors and their rewritings of the play from recent decades are thus “inspired by New World concerns, and even are written from the point of view of the oppressed” (Garber 855). This is also the case of the 1992 novel *Indigo*, in which the author and feminist critic Marina Warner is, in the words of one of the reviewers of her book, “(i)nvading and colonizing *The Tempest*” to foreground the wrongs of Britain’s colonial past both on the thematic and structural levels (the novel partly takes place in the 17th-century Caribbean and in 20th-century London) of her narrative (“*Indigo*” 39). Similarly, one of the latest re-imaginings of (or, rather, a sequel to) the play, Katharine Duckett’s *Miranda in Milan* (2019), is also clearly marked by “postcolonialist talk”, conveyed in the form of a “rescue fantasy” and “violent Gothic” (“*Miranda in Milan*” 63). Valdivieso has praised the postcolonial approach in modern revivals of the play for uncovering the underlying narrative of “the white master that subjugates a savage and deformed slave” (301), since, as she believes, such critical readings bring to light (though without any further exploration) other problematic areas of Shakespeare’s story, namely the representation and oppressive treatment of female characters.

Atwood’s choice of *The Tempest* might seem somewhat surprising, as she had become known predominantly for her dystopian, eco-feminist novels, while the Shakespeare play, with the exception of *Miranda*, does not feature any significant (and present) female character, nor an obvious ecological crisis. Even in her treatment of the original material, Atwood decided to divert from the aforementioned mainstream trends to see the story through a feminist or post-colonial lens. On the other hand, in her *Hag-Seed*, Atwood instead focuses on the issues of power, social and personal justice, and revenge. All these motifs are germane to Atwood’s previous work, as they had already strongly resonated in her earlier novels, such as *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985), *Alias Grace* (1996) and *The Heart Goes Last* (2015).

As Anténe has pointed out, revenge as one of the key themes had appeared in another volume of the Hogarth Shakespeare series, Howard Jacobson’s *Shylock Is My Name* (2016, published about eight months before *Hag-Seed*). However, while Jacobson “transposes the universal themes of intolerance, revenge and mercy into a contemporary British setting” (Anténe 122), Atwood makes vengeance a supremely personal issue, devoid of particular geographical settings, politics or ideology, getting thus closer to the tradition of Renaissance revenge drama, started in the late 1580s by Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* and taken on in later decades by playwrights such as Shakespeare, John Marston, and Thomas Middleton. The argument of this study will be that, apart from the obvious treatment of revenge as one of the key topics in *The Tempest* (which itself has been called a “revenge play” by some critics, see Garber 871, and Bigliuzzi and Calvi 1), Atwood’s text deliberately employs a number of tropes of the genre of Renaissance revenge tragedies, making *Hag-Seed* part of the wave of the genre’s modern revival, similarly to, for instance, Quentin Tarantino’s 2003 blockbuster *Kill Bill* (see Matuska).

Hallett and Hallett open their seminal study on English Renaissance revenge plays with the observation that “(r)evenge tragedy is noted (or notorious) for its theatricality” (3). Indeed, apart from the obvious Senecan influence, the dramaturgy of Elizabethan revenge plays was heavily informed by medieval Corpus Christi pageants and suppressed Catholic rituals, as Goodland has demonstrated. Kiss notes that, in Renaissance revenge tragedies, a metatheatrical framework was frequently used to “comment on the multilayeredness of the entire dramatic action”, in which “(t)he world of the revenger is the highest level because he is the most cunning actor and pretender: his strategies will finally overcome everybody” (46, original italics). At some point of the prototypical revenge play, the avenger becomes the literal author and director of the fates of others by means of creating a world distinct from the

enveloping reality, “a reflection of *his* mental state” that allows him to take the desired action (Hallett and Hallett 90, original italics). While in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1580s), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (ca 1600) and Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (ca 1601), this is achieved by the play-within-the-play technique introduced at a later stage of the plot, Atwood extends the metatheatrical framework to the entire plot of her novel by making her protagonist a theatre manager named Felix Phillips, who is ousted from the position of artistic director of the fictitious Makeshiweg theatre festival by his right-hand man, Tony Price. Shakespeare's Prospero, an exiled Duke of Milan and a powerful magician, thus becomes, in Atwood's recasting, “a cloud-riding enchanter” with an aim to “create the lushest, the most beautiful, the most awe-inspiring, the most inventive, the most numinous theatrical experience ever” (Atwood 12). His previous acting rôles and directorial experience with dark Shakespearian tragedies (“Julius Caesar. The tartan king. Lear. Titus Andronicus. Triumphs for him, every one of those roles! And every one of his productions!” – Atwood 13) clearly establish the referential frame of Phillips's endeavours throughout the story, lending Atwood's novel a markedly theatrical feel from the very beginning.

Ultimately, Phillips does stage a proper play-within-a-play to execute his revenge – or, rather, two plays-within-a-play that run simultaneously: a pre-recorded production of *The Tempest* for the staff and security of the Fletcher County Correctional Institute, where he teaches a literacy programme through staging Shakespeare with the inmates, and a secret “interactive” version of the play for his former colleagues, who betrayed him years ago and now, unaware of Phillips's presence, are visitors to the prison. Just like the revenge scheme in the Renaissance dramatic tradition, Phillips's vendetta is “accomplished terribly, fittingly, with irony and deceit” (Bowers 72). Kydian rather than Shakespearian in nature, Phillips's theatrical production, which marks the climax of the novel, involves not the killing of his enemies (neither *The Tempest* nor *Hag-Seed* is about blood-revenge), but rather stripping them of their positions and reinstating Phillips as artistic director of the Makeshiweg Festival.

Hallett and Hallett note that the technique of the play-within-the-play not only creates an opportunity for the revenger to act, but also serves as “a symbol of the revenger's subjective reality” (10). By letting Phillips stage *The Tempest* within the prison walls, outside both the ordinary world and the reach of the prison security that would impede the revenger's authority to act, Atwood deploys the motif of “a sealed-off space”, a commonplace of revenge tragedies, filled by “an obsessive concern with the offence” and ultimately creating “the event for which revenge is desired” (Hallett and Hallett 92). When Phillips finally appears before his audiences, after having them tortured (both physically and mentally) by his actors, he gives them the list of their sins in a fashion similar to Hieronimo spelling the doom over the participants of his pantomime at the end of *The Spanish Tragedy*. The play in Atwood's novel thus becomes not only the arena in which justice, otherwise not possible in the outside world, is served – it is also a metaphorical space where the revenger's grievances get to be fully articulated and enacted for the first time before others.

The key element of any revenge story is, of course, the person of the avenger himself. Be it Hieronimo, Hamlet, Antonio – or Felix Phillips – they all share certain features that make them appropriate for the conventions of the genre and the rôle that they play in it. The revenger has to be passionate about his vengeance to the extent that this “(p)assion must consume his entire being” (Hallett and Hallett 9). Kiss maintains that in Renaissance plays the theme of revenge serves as “a kind of laboratory to create situations for the human subject in which problems of identity-formation, self-forgetting, and self-fashioning can be tested” (40). In order to get his justice, the revenger has to surrender his rationality (“To act, he must pass beyond the rational world to dwell in the inner recesses of his own mind, where nothing takes precedence over his craving for revenge” – Hallett and Hallett 9), but also often his identity, either

metaphorically, under the disguise of madness (Hieronimo, Hamlet), or literally, disguised as someone else (Antonio, Vindice in Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606)).

Unlike in Shakespeare's play, where we learn little about Prospero's everyday life during the years on the island, Atwood spends significant amounts of time giving the readers a picture of how Phillips copes with his semi-voluntary exile and how he gradually casts off his identity, assuming a new persona that could protect him from the hostile environment:

Felix moved his bank account to a branch in Wilmot, two towns away, where he also rented a post office box for himself. ... He opened a second bank account in the name of F. Duke, claiming this was a nom de plume. He was, he explained to the bank, a writer. It pleased him to have an alter ego, one without his own melancholy history. Felix Phillips was washed up, but F. Duke might still have a chance; though at what he could not yet say. (Atwood 37)

By focusing on the everyday life of Phillips and his perspective of the events, and by jettisoning the possible sub-plots of the story's secondary characters, Atwood foregrounds what Bowers calls "the fundamental motive" for Phillips's action (72) and emphasises the motif of revenge, which becomes the central force behind the development of the plot. While in *The Tempest*, the word "revenge" is only uttered a single time by Caliban, who wishes Prospero dead (3.2.52), in *Hag-Seed*, the reader can observe how Phillips, under the new identity, stylises himself into an archetypal revenger from Renaissance plays:

How would it work? Would he lure Tony down into a dank cellar with the promise of a cask of Amontillado, then brick him up in the wall? ... Would Felix seduce Tony's wife or, better, hint that some young stud had seduced her? ... Would he sneak into Tony's house/office/favorite restaurant and spike Tony's lunch with a toxic agent that would give Tony an incurable illness or inflict upon him a lingering and painful death? Then Felix could disguise himself as a doctor and appear in Tony's hospital room and gloat. ... No, no. Mere fantasizing. Such revenges were far too melodramatic, and in any case well beyond his capabilities. He would have to be more subtle. (Atwood 42-43)

This craving for vendetta culminates when Phillips learns about his former colleagues' (and traitors') visit to Fletcher Correctional to see the new production of "Mr Duke". He immediately recognises this as an opportunity for his vengeance and, in the vein of Hamlet's resolution "from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth" (4.4.64-65), he adopts the passion of a would-be Senecan tragic hero, otherwise untypical of the aging theatre manager:

Though he's been tracking Tony and Sal on the Net, they've always been out of his reach. But now they'll be entering his space, his sphere. How to grasp them, how to enclose them, how to ambush them? Suddenly revenge is so close he can actually taste it. It tastes like steak, rare. Oh, to watch their two faces! Oh, to twist the wire! He wants to see pain. (Atwood 72)

As has been already mentioned, for a Renaissance revenger, "nothing takes precedence over his craving for revenge". According to Hallett and Hallett, this key passion of the avenger, which typically borders on (or, indeed, crosses the borders of) insanity, is embodied by the ghost, which "speaks, in general, as the spirit of revenge" and is itself "a reflection of the passion that is within the avenger" (21).

In *Hag-Seed*, Atwood introduces the ghost of Phillips's daughter Miranda, who died of meningitis at the age of three and who plays the rôle of the constant reminder of Phillips's ambitions, both past and future. Although Phillips is aware of the fact that the spirit is only a figment of his imagination, at times he himself doubts his sanity:

One day he heard her singing, right outside the window. He didn't daydream it, the way he'd been semi-daydreaming up to then. It wasn't one of his whimsical yet despairing fabrications. He actually heard a voice. It was not a consolation. Instead, it frightened him. (Atwood 47)

Despite some surface similarities with Renaissance ghosts, however, Atwood's Miranda is far from the Kydian (or Shakespearian, for that matter) archetype of "a vengeance-seeking ghost" that Bowers describes (71). In fact, a more straightforward candidate for the spectre of revenge would be Felix Phillips himself, who has metaphorically killed off his previous identity only to preserve its memories as a driving force for his subsequent action. Comparing the employment of the ghost motif in a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies, Pannen maintains that one of the key features of prototypical revenge ghosts is to enter the stage "to see exaggerated justice committed before they will find peace" (190-91). Kiss calls such spectres "the meta-agents of revenge", whose authority transcends that of the revenger (43). In Atwood's novel, however, there is no obvious metaphysical layer that would surpass the human world of the avenger and that could serve as the centre of justice and authority. By focusing solely on Felix Phillips and his perspective, Atwood makes it clear that there is no external impulse for revenge outside her protagonist's mind and the rôle of the ghost is fulfilled by Phillips himself. In a way, Atwood's Phillips is imbued with similar metaphysical qualities (albeit of different nature) to those of Shakespeare's Prospero, which, too, fill the supernatural void (in the Christian moral-religious sense) of the story: "Arguably, Prospero manifests God - via his knowledge, words, and illusion creating the whole 'dream world' on the island" (Suk 181). This fact is highlighted when Phillips finally appears during the play-within-the play in Prospero's costume, to the shock of the spectators. Rejecting both his former identity and questioning his own material existence, he usurps the metaphysical authority of Renaissance apparitions:

All four of them stare at him as if he's mad, or as if they are. "Felix Phillips?" says Sal. "Am I dreaming? Where did you come from?"

"The same," says Felix. "Though my name is Mr. Duke, in here."

"You vanished so completely I thought you must've died," says Lonnie.

"What's going on?," (sic) says Sal. "What have you done with Freddie? Are you real?"

"A good question," says Felix. "Maybe I'm an enchanted vision generated by this magic island. You'll sort it out in time. Welcome, my friends all!" (Atwood 233)

In fact, the Renaissance dramatic tradition distinguished between a hero-revenger, one "who is led (one might almost say dragged) to revenge by forces outside himself", and a villain-revenger, "a man prompted to his actions by nothing more than his own cravings" (Hallett and Hallett 6). Applying this dichotomy mechanically to Atwood's novel would, perhaps, be an act of over-interpretation; however, bearing this in mind might be an impulse for a broader consideration of the morality of Phillips's character, as well as the legitimacy of his grievances and his desire to avenge his professional fall. The reader may start asking whether Phillips's deposition was really a betrayal on the part of his overly

ambitious colleagues or he was replaced for legitimate reasons. In other words, if he is a wronged hero or a self-absorbed villain of the story. This issue is never explicitly raised in the novel, though it is hinted that Phillips's stagings for the festival were indeed wildly extravagant, perhaps even bordering on preposterous:

His Ariel, he'd decided, would be played by a transvestite on stilts who'd transform into a giant firefly at significant moments. His Caliban would be a scabby street person – black or maybe Native – and a paraplegic as well, pushing himself around the stage on an oversized skateboard. Stephano and Trinculo? He hadn't worked them out, but bowler hats and codpieces would be involved. And juggling: Trinculo could juggle some things he might pick up on the beach of the magic island, such as squids. (Atwood 16)

The overblown approach to Shakespeare, together with Felix's guilt and mourning of his daughter's death and his consequent communication with her "ghost", makes it impossible for the reader to determine Phillips's morality or sanity. This is further complicated by the fact that the whole story is presented exclusively from Felix's perspective, with other possible aspects of the events being effectively silenced.

The last conventional element of the plot of the revenge play is the revenger's own death (with some notable exceptions, for instance, *Antonio's Revenge*), be it by his own hand or by that of his enemy during the execution of his plan (Hallett and Hallett 8). Since Shakespeare's *The Tempest* ends with the triumphant restoration of Prospero to his throne, Atwood could not let her Prospero-like protagonist die in the literal sense. However, with Felix Phillips's return to his previous position, there is no more need for "Mr. Duke", who has avenged the crime committed against Phillips twelve years earlier. Indeed, "Mr. Duke" brings Phillips "back in", which means that the former needs to disappear so that the latter can resume his previous life:

He got his revenge, such as it was. His enemies had suffered, which had been a pleasure. Then Felix had strewn forgiveness around while listening to the clenching of Tony's teeth, which had been a greater pleasure. ... Tony is out and Felix is back in, which is as it should be. (Atwood 279–80)

The reinstating of Phillips's former self and jettisoning of his temporal identity could easily be seen as in the same vein as the destruction of the Renaissance avenger – albeit here in a metaphorical sense – not entirely dissimilar to Kyd's Hieronimo, who takes his own life after staging his play and explaining his motivation before the Spanish court.

While re-imagining Shakespeare's *The Tempest* for a 21st-century audience, Margaret Atwood stays remarkably faithful to the Renaissance roots of her model and its early-modern dramatic context. By streamlining the plot of the Shakespeare play and focusing chiefly on the character of the protagonist (Shakespeare's Prospero, Atwood's Felix Phillips) and his inner life and motivation, Atwood's story clearly gains the contours of the Renaissance revenge drama – something that can already be found in the Shakespeare play, although in a much less prominent form. To foreground this particular interpretation of the story, Atwood deploys common tropes of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedies, namely the strong metatheatrical framework, the centrality of the character of the avenger, whose passion for vendetta borders on insanity, the ghost motif, as well as the avenger's "death" once the justice has been served. However, Atwood does not make use of these tropes mechanically, just for the sole purpose

of the development of her story. By making the protagonist of her novel a theatre manager and Shakespearian director, whose life and professional experience are blurred, she enters into a playful intertextual relationship with the Renaissance theatre tradition as a whole. As a result, Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* is not only a modern retelling of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, challenging the positions of the power and justice systems in our society, but also an example of a contemporary work of fiction whose structure is openly informed by the conventions of popular early-modern dramatic genres.

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REVIEWS

Review of Howard Jacobson's *Novels in the Context of Contemporary British Jewish Literature* by Petr Anténe

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Most readers are well aware of the rich tradition of contemporary Jewish American writing, but who can say the same for a similar legacy in British literature. This title begins to fill the gap. Howard Jacobson is a Jewish novelist from Manchester with fifteen novels under his belt. Petr Anténe's book, entitled *Howard Jacobson's Novels in the Context of Contemporary British Jewish Literature*, is only the second to provide a comprehensive analysis of Jacobson's oeuvre.

Anténe works at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Education at Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. He teaches English and American literature and cultural studies. He received his doctorate from the Department of English and American Studies of the Faculty of Arts of the same university. He also has a Master's degree in English from Texas A&M. His dissertation was published as a monograph with Palacký University Press and is entitled *Campus Novel Variations: A Comparative Study of an Anglo-American Genre*. He has also edited and contributed to the volume *"Route CZ-AT" to the USA: Perceiving American Culture in Central Europe* and written a number of chapters in monographs focused on Scottish literature. He has published a range of papers on authors ranging from Ishmael Reed, Michael Chabon to Philip Roth, to name but a few.

This current volume begins with the premise that Jewish British writing, despite the definite increasing interest in multiculturalism, has flown under the radar. Anténe argues that Jacobson should not be pigeon-holed as a mere chronicler of things Jewish, as his focus is considerably wider.

On closer inspection, the novels thus provide a more complex portrayal of ethnic and gender relations as well as the interplay between bearers of Jewishness and Britishness. It is one of the aims of the present monograph to explore in detail these dynamics and its chronological development across Jacobson's oeuvre. (Anténe, 10)

Although often referred to as the British Philip Roth, Jacobson prefers thinking of himself (perhaps partially tongue-in-cheek) as the Jewish Jane Austen. In line with this assessment, Anténe attempts to demonstrate that Jacobson's fiction is part and parcel of the British literary tradition and needs to be read accordingly. This is shown, among other things, by the fact that Jacobson consistently makes reference to canonized texts in his books. There is also a focus on the comic aspect of Jacobson's writing. 'My aim in this book is to examine to what degree the comic elements in Jacobson's writing are consistent with the tradition of Jewish as well as English humour.' (Anténe, 12).

Jacobson's work is analysed chronologically. The first chapter "University Settings and Intertextual Perspectives in the Novels of the 1980s" begins with his debut work *Coming From Behind*. Although Jacobson ventures into the campus novel in the first phase of his writing, Anténe argues that Jacobson provides a new view of the genre as his protagonists are outsiders due to their Jewish heritage. He also discusses the novel *Peeping Tom* and how the author was coming to terms with his own identity and where the protagonist 'Barney consequently comes to understand both Englishness and Jewishness as

becoming less oppressive and more inclusive.' (Anténe, 28). One aspect which seems to slightly contradict the claim that Jacobson is grounded in the tradition of English literature is the observation that Jacobson had difficulty relating to the pastoral tradition, which contributed to his initial 'writer's block' as he was also reluctant to imaginatively explore his own Mancunian urban background. 'Apart from voicing the Jewish people's distance from the English pastoral, Jacobson also demonstrates his knowledge of and, by implication, respect for it.' (Anténe, 35) *Redback*, his third novel, is a satire on Australia (where Jacobson spent several years as a university lecturer), gender, sexual politics and academia. This book seems to have a harder edge, a style he has returned to in his most recent books.

The second chapter "Revisiting the Old Testament in The Very Model of a Man" focuses on one novel which took Jacobson on a new trajectory. Published in 1992, *The Very Model of a Man* deals with the biblical figure of Cain and met with a negative response. Anténe defends the book, however, and expresses admiration for Jacobson's versatility. I would point out one seeming inaccuracy in this particular chapter where Anténe has seemingly conflated two stories concerning the personage of Naaman in the Bible, the fictional character from the time of the Tower of Babel and the general who is cured by Elisha at a later point in history.

Although the third chapter has the catchy title "Sex, Class and the Erasure of Jewishness in No More Mr Nice Guy and Who's Sorry Now?", the books do not sound all that interesting or at least that is the impression provided by Anténe. He argues persuasively that this is because Jacobson was somehow out of his own comfort zone thematically.

It is perhaps not surprising that the depiction of the secluded social world of the upper-middle classes, where any sign of otherness tends to be erased like in Kreitman's case, did not significantly contribute to Jacobson's reputation as a British Jewish novelist writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century. (Anténe, 77)

I am not wholly convinced, however, about the validity of Anténe's statement that *No More Mr Nice Guy* 'is thus another of Jacobson's novels that idealize the wild sexual life from the male point of view before the advent of feminism.' (Anténe, 64) The picture provided of a Finnish female student sleeping around and smoking during intercourse would seem to provide evidence of just the opposite.

In chapter four "Variations on Jewish Themes", Anténe argues, rightly in my opinion, that Jacobson truly found his voice and subject matter. The focus is on three novels which all have Jewish-related themes and characters: *The Mighty Walzer* (1999), *Kalooki Nights* (2006) and *The Finkler Question* (2010) the last of which won the Man Booker Prize. *The Mighty Walzer* is autobiographical, takes place in Manchester, Jacobson's home town, and makes occasional use of Yiddish for the first time. It focuses on ping-pong and the main protagonist Oliver absurdly initially uses his copy of Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* for a bat. Anténe points out certain affinities with Philip Roth's highly controversial *Portnoy's Complaint*, specifically in terms of the amusing treatment of adolescent masturbation,

While Barney Fugleman, the protagonist of Jacobson's early novel *Peeping Tom*, shares with his friend pages from Nazi atrocity books, which were the only place where they could see naked women, Oliver secretly masturbates in the bathroom while looking at the photographs of his female relatives' faces pasted onto bodies from pornographic magazines. (Anténe, 83-84)

The book also contains aspects of the comic campus novel when Oliver comes up with a 'brilliant' dissertation title: 'Eventually, Oliver decides to stay in academia, completing a Ph.D. thesis entitled *The Wound Re-Opened: A Comparative Study of Shyness and Other Social Excruciations in the Novels of Edith Wharton and Virginia Woolf*. When he attempts to get his work published, however, it is considered "too old-fashioned".' (Anténe, 86).

Jacobson himself called *Kalooki Nights* (again tongue-in-cheek) 'the most Jewish novel that has ever been written by anybody, anywhere.' (Anténe, 89). Unlike the previous novel, the Holocaust and other historical events, central to the establishment of the state of Israel, become a central theme and topic. *Kalooki Nights* also makes reference to a number of other Jewish writers, as if Jacobson were asserting his own place at the table. *The Finkler Question*, Jacobson's most critically acclaimed work, is a roman à clef connected with current events in the UK with prominent Jews experiencing liberal guilt particularly in relation to the state of Israel and Palestine. Interestingly, a Czech Jew, Libor Sevcik, figures prominently in the narrative. The book is controversial to say the least with one of the other main characters Treslove establishing 'an anti-Zionist group of similarly minded people called ASHamed Jews who meet at the Groucho Club in Soho and voice their shame in the media whenever they are asked to present their opinion on any topic.' (Anténe, 101). The issues raised in the book are particularly relevant in light of the recent accusations of widespread anti-Semitism within the Labour party.

The fifth chapter "Lives in and Beyond Fiction in The Act of Love and Zoo Time" lags somewhat, this being partially due to the subject matter of the books. In contrast, the sixth chapter "Imagining the Future, Reimagining the Past" displays Jacobson back in high form. The first novel chronologically, *Shylock Is My Name* (2016), was part of a project initiated by Hogarth Press involving a series of retellings of Shakespeare's plays. The novel places Shylock and the other characters from the play (with various degrees of parallels in terms of characterization) into modern Britain. It deals not only with anti-Semitism, but racism as a whole. Anténe suggestively argues that 'Jacobson's novel instead emphasizes that Jews are far from being the only minority in contemporary multicultural Britain and that they inevitably come into contact with members of other ethnic minorities who may be upper as well as lower in the social hierarchy than themselves.' (Anténe, 131). Unlike some contemporary adaptations of *The Merchant of Venice* which go out of their way to rectify former wrongs, this novel strikes a particularly relevant tone.

J (2014) is a dystopian novel set in the late twenty-first century after an apocalypse of some kind. Jacobson himself views the genre of the dystopia as consistent with his own overall vision as a Jewish writer. Anténe also comments on the perhaps surprising consistency with his overall oeuvre: 'J is a disturbing novel, yet also one that shares Jewish themes and the focus on the relationship between the sexes with the vast majority of Jacobson's oeuvre.' (Anténe, 119-120). Jacobson's novel *Pussy* from 2017 is obviously also topical. There is little subtlety to the characterization of Prince Fracassus, the Trumpish character in the novel. Anténe puts it as follows: 'While the early novels feature protagonists who, despite their faults, earn the readers' sympathies, in *Pussy*, a tone of satirical exaggeration is established from the very beginning of the text.' (Anténe, 133). Surprisingly, this was one of the first satirical treatments of Donald Trump and his presidency. Jacobson also does not hesitate to draw attention to some of the causes behind the rise to power of a populist of this kind, including criticism of certain liberal attitudes. 'Trump's critics are not only invited to laugh at a man who defies all their values, but also indirectly asked to evaluate their own behaviour and decide whether they have not been guilty of the unconscious elitism of the educated.' (Anténe, 142).

The final chapter "Aging, Gender and Memory in The Making of Henry and Live a Little", the former from 2004 and the latter his latest novel from 2019, seems somewhat hurried and does not contribute all that much. Anténe chooses to place them together in his analysis as they both focus on ageing.

If I were to criticise anything about the book, it would have to be Anténe's occasional preachiness at times, with a tendency towards generalizations, especially at the conclusion of the chapters. In addition, the final conclusion is merely a summary, not much of a final statement. I would have also appreciated the author's views concerning Jacobson's legacy. Has he been criticized by feminists, by Jews on either the left or the right, Orthodox Jews, for example. How has he developed as a writer, either for good or for bad. Which novels does Anténe personally view as his best and his most important?

On the whole, however, the book is a valuable contribution to contemporary literary theory, providing a well-deserved boost to the reputation of Jacobson. Anténe demonstrates successfully the importance of the author not only as a Jewish writer, but also in a wider perspective. He argues persuasively for Jacobson's impressive breadth and range of interests, very much in tune with the heartbeat of the times. Anténe puts it succinctly as follows:

This chronological and thematic overview of Howard Jacobson's fiction has illustrated that he is a writer concentrating primarily on the situation of the British Jewish minority, which, at the same time, often leads him to addressing issues that concern society at large, such as the presentation of history and current events in the globalized world. (Anténe, 149)

As with any good book of this kind, Anténe's summation of Howard Jacobson's production encourages readers (myself included) to further explore his often underappreciated novels.

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CALLS



Call for Papers

Culture as Interface and Dialogue: An Interdisciplinary Conference

Charles University, Prague (Faculty of Arts)
27-29 May 2022

Nowadays, nations and ethnic groups face a crucial political and cultural challenge: to supplant traditional concepts of identity based on national mythology, exclusivity and political sovereignty with new ones stemming from the plurality of identifications and richness of inter- and transcultural communication based on dialogue. This change is becoming increasingly necessary because of the rise of aggressive ethnic nationalism responsible for the surge of manipulative propaganda on social networks, the growth of political divisions within individual countries and the escalation of international conflicts.

The main objective of the conference is to discuss alternatives to essentialist notions of cultural identity. We invite the reconceptualization of cultures as interfaces of transcultural communication which engender dialogue and use fictions to enable and facilitate sharing knowledge, emotions, attitudes, beliefs and values.

This approach may be viewed as parallel to ecocriticism, complementing its nature-based and largely material notion of environment with a pragmatic understanding of culture as human-made habitable and sustainable surroundings.

Suggested paper topics:

- Culture as an emergent phenomenon
- Uses of cybernetic concepts (e.g., recursivity, feedback, entropy) in theorizing culture
- Culture as interface in perceptual systems, information space, inter- and transcultural communication
- Fictions as protocols in the process of interfacing
- Dialogue and recursivity – functional approximation
- Dialogue and interfacing – fictions and conflict resolution
- Dialogue as a means of cultural communication and a catalyst of cultural diversity

Abstracts of 300 words with bio-notes of 100 words should be submitted by **28 February 2022** to **Dr Martina Pranić** (martina.pranic@ff.cuni.cz). Selected presenters will be notified by **15 March 2022**. Conference registration will start on **31 March 2022**. Registration fee will be specified at the beginning of February 2022.

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Professor Clare Wallace and Professor Martin Procházka, Conference Convenors



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