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# The Semantics and Syntax of Prepositional Constructions with the Lexical Verb *Go* in Written and Spoken Discourse

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## Abstract

A prepositional construction consists of a lexical verb followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/ or syntactically linked. The main focus of this analysis is the lexical verb *go* occurring within prepositional constructions. The aim of this paper is to present the frequency and distribution of prepositional verbs in written and spoken discourse. We will also determine all prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go*, and present their practical use and distribution in different registers. Given that when distinguishing prepositional verbs, the semantic criteria of idiomaticity must be supplemented by syntactic criteria, we will also show all possible meanings of each prepositional construction found in the analyzed material, and determine the type of transitivity of each meaning. Furthermore, we will compare the distribution and syntactic features of each prepositional construction with the lexical verb *go* in different registers, and show similarities, disimilarities and all characteristics of their practical use in written and spoken discourse.

**Keywords:** prepositional verbs, semantics, syntax, distribution, meaning

## 1. Introduction

Prepositional verbs consist of a verb and a preposition which are closely syntactically linked with each other. As with other multi-word verbs, fronting of the prepositional complement is not normally possible (Carter, 2006, p. 434).

In using the term *prepositional verb* we indicate that we regard the second noun phrase in a sentence as the complement of the preposition, and not as the direct object of the lexical verb. The noun phrase following the preposition in such constructions is termed a *prepositional object* (Quirk, 1985, p. 1156).

Furthermore, Quirk states that in distinguishing prepositional verbs from other verb + preposition sequences, the semantic criteria of idiomaticity must be supplemented by syntactic criteria.

Đorđević divides prepositional verbs into monotransitive without the direct object and ditransitive with the direct object (Đorđević, 2007, p. 596).

Monotransitive prepositional verbs are those combinations where a preposition and the complement behave as a unit, i.e., the noun phrase that follows the preposition is not the direct

but prepositional complement. That means that these verbs could be intransitive. Noun phrases that follow prepositions are called prepositional objects.

Unlike them, ditransitive prepositional verbs with direct objects occur with two objects - a direct and the prepositional object.

In this paper, we will analyze all possible meanings of prepositional verbs and represent their frequency and distribution in written and spoken discourse. Also, we will determine the type of transitivity of each meaning.

## 2. Methodology

The corpus used for this research consists of 300 000 words and is made of three registers. The analyzed corpus is made of newspaper columns in The Guardian (politics, economy, culture, technology, and sports) analyzed during the period 2017-2019, as well as the selections of texts from American and British novels and finally, the transcriptions of various celebrities from the film industry, political scene and sports (2015-2019) which are taken from the official BBC website. The list of all materials used can be found in the Reference section. During the analysis, we combined qualitative, quantitative, and comparative methods. Qualitative and quantitative methods provide results regarding the frequency while the qualitative method enables us to see differences and similarities between analyzed register, and their syntactic features.

## 3. Results and Discussion

In analyzed registers, there are 138 examples of prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go* found. They are frequently used in speech (57), and less frequently in novels (35), and The Guardian (33). Table 1 represents the list and frequency of all prepositional verbs found.

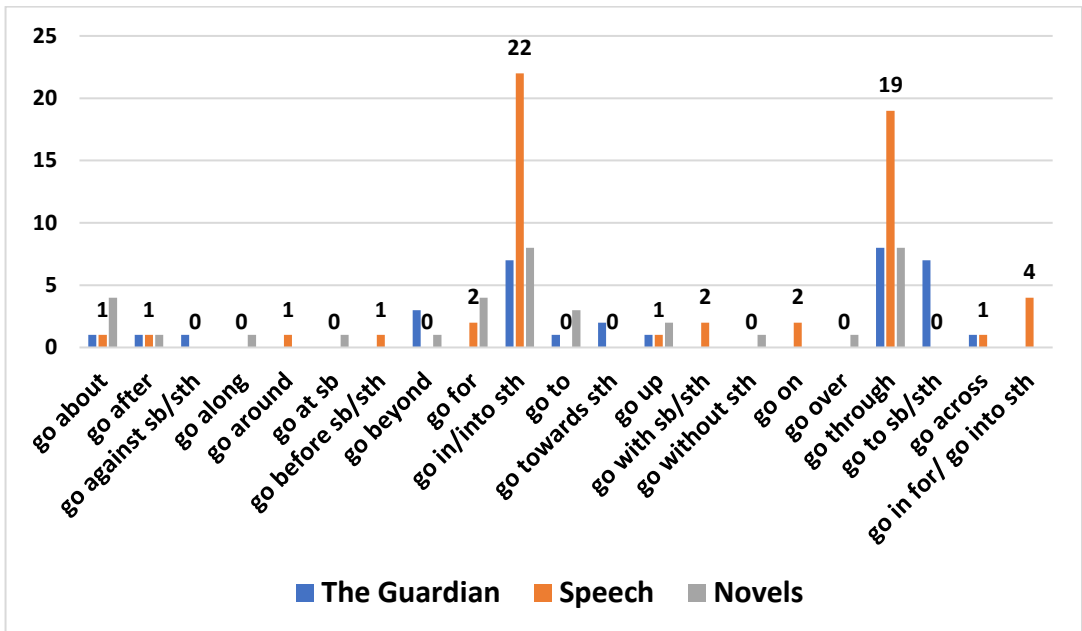


Table 1: Frequency of prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go*

As it can be seen from Table 1, the most dominant prepositional verbs are the verbs *go through* (48 examples found), and *go in/into sth* (37). Less frequent are prepositional verbs *go to sb/sth* (7), *go about* (6), and *go for* (6), while we registered only 4 examples of the following verbs respectively: *go beyond*, *go to*, *go up*, and *go in for/ go into sth*. The combination *go after* occurs with 3 examples, while we registered 2 examples of the following verbs: *go up*. The following prepositional verbs occur with only one example in the corpus: *go against sb/sth*, *go along*, *go around*, *go at sb*, *go before sb/sth*, *go without sth*, and *go over*.

When talking about polysemy of prepositional combinations with the lexical verb *go*, they also vary. Table 2 shows all varieties in the number of meanings all found prepositional verbs show across the analyzed corpus.

PREPOSITIONAL VERBS	
	MEANINGS
go about	3
go after	1
go against sb/sth	1
go along	1
go around	1
go at sb	1
go before sb/sth	1
go beyond	1
go for	3
go in/into sth	1
go into	5
go to	2
go towards sth	1
go up	1
go with sb/sth	1
go without sth	1
go on	1
go over	1
go through	7
go to sb/sth	1
go across	1
go in for/ go into sth	1

Table 2: Meanings of prepositional constructions with lexical verb *go*

### 3.1 The Semantics of Prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go*

Prepositional verbs can be monotransitive without the direct object and ditransitive with the direct object. In the analyzed corpus, monotransitive prepositional verbs are more frequent, although, we found that the verbs with the same meaning behave mono- and ditransitively depending on the complementation in the clause.



## 3.2 Monotransitive prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go* without the direct object

Monotransitive prepositional verbs are those combinations where a preposition and the complement behave as a single unit, i.e., the noun phrase that follows the preposition is not the direct but prepositional complement. That means that these verbs could be intransitive. Noun phrases that follow prepositions are called prepositional objects (Đorđević, 2007, p. 596).

### 3.2.1 Go through

This prepositional verb expresses the greatest number of meanings (7), and the most frequent one is *to experience or suffer sth*, which is found in speech (5), The Guardian (3), and only one example in novels. Interestingly, this prepositional verb usually has compound noun phrases with another preposition as a modifier in the function of the prepositional object (a), and somewhat less frequent is universal pronoun functions as a head of the noun phrase (b):

When they **are going through** something important in the life of this nation, a general election, show their support for each other.

Yes, but if we end up **going through** each of the reliefs.

Apart from that, in speech, this verb also occurs within the *wh*-relative clause that functions as a subject in the simple sentence of SVC type:

No, because obviously what the UK **is going through** is a big constitutional change.

The meaning *to look at, check or examine something closely and carefully, especially in order to find something* is found in speech (5), The Guardian (2), and novels (1):

They said they had “concerns about Mr Assange’s fitness” to **go through** the full extradition hearing, which is set for February.

In speech, the function of the prepositional complement has interrogative *wh*-clause combined with the *let's* imperative:

Well, let's just **go through** what the process is.

The meaning *to perform a series of actions; to follow a method* occurs in speech (4), and novels (1):

Now, **having gone through** that sifting process, the next stage will be even more scrutiny er, when we get to the next short list which I'll be announcing soon, but finally, the final ten will have to be subject to planning permission at the local level and all the rules that apply to any development will apply at that stage.

The next meaning *if a law, a contract, bill, etc. goes through, it is officially approved, accepted or completed* is less frequent, and it is registered in speech (2), and The Guardian (1).

And on Monday, the Welfare Reform Bill **goes through** its final stages and I think I'm right in saying something like the 16th piece of legislation since Labour came in to power in 1997, dealing with some aspects of welfare reform.

The following meanings occur only with one example, i.e., the meaning ***if you go an event, a period of time, etc., you pass through it from the beginning to the end*** in The Guardian (a), and the meaning ***to pass through sth from one end to the other (figurative)*** in speech (b):

I know for a fact we're **going through** a golden age right now," he says.

I mean I've **gone through** this in my mind so many times.

### 3.2.2 Go into sth

This verb occurs with 5 meanings, the most dominant of which is ***to begin to be in a particular state or situation***, which is almost equally used in speech (4), and novels (3). Unlike the previous prepositional verb, this one almost always occurs with the simple noun phrase in the function of the prepositional object:

Let's support that, let's suppose that you lose this election, that there is a referendum, you may say it is a rigged question, let's say we **go into** the euro, you could find yourself leading a party which would support leadership of the euro, you can imagine that can you?

In the Guardian, this verb is combined with the central modal *will*, while the lexical verb *go* is premodified by focusing subjunct *largely*, which has the function of particularizer:

Johnson set aside an extra £2.9bn a year by the end of the parliament that **will largely go into** more nurses, GP appointments and free childcare, while Jeremy Corbyn set out an extra £83bn a year for a programme of free broadband, scrapping university fees, reversing benefit cuts and extra funding for the NHS and social care.

Equally used meaning ***to begin to act or behave in a particular way*** is registered in speech (3), and The Guardian (2):

They **would have to go into** that, they would have to obey that law and it hasn't happened.

The meaning ***to examine or discuss sth carefully*** is found only in speech (3), and novels (1). Interestingly, all examples in speech are within negative sentences (a), while the only example in novels is in the interrogative form (b):

a) I have met them twice, they have asked me **not to go into** details, but everybody knows I have met with them, so that is not a secret.

b) **Does he go into** detail about that?

The meaning ***to start taking part in an exam, competition, election, etc.*** occurs only in speech (2), and in both examples, this prepositional verb is combined with the semi-auxiliary *be going to*:

Any politician in my position, **going into** an election campaign, is out and hungry for every piece of support.

### 3.2.3 Go about

This verb has three meanings, and the most frequent one is ***to approach or deal with sth***, which occurs three times in speech, and only once in The Guardian and novels respectively. In speech, this prepositional verb is used with the central modal verbs (a), and semi-auxiliaries equally (b), while in The Guardian, it is combined with the central modal verb *would* within the modal perfective phrase (c):

a) If you look at the work done by Iain Duncan-Smith for us, his policy group, this summer, he produced the most comprehensive set of recommendations, far more detailed than anything that I think any major party has brought forward in recent years, has given us a real blue-print as to how we **could go about** doing this.

b) Prime Minister: Well, I think that it's **going about** as well as could be, especially, if not slightly better.

c) I never reported any of these because I had no idea how I **would have gone about** it, and even if I did would have had no faith in the university to take my experiences seriously.

The meaning ***to continue to do something*** is only found in novels (2), and it is used within adverbial clauses of time:

I was obliged, as I was saying, to spend some uncomfortable minutes standing in the drawing room yesterday afternoon while Mr Farraday **went about** his bantering.

We registered only one example of the meaning ***to begin to do something (to continue to do sth in your usual way especially after sth unusual has happened)*** in novels that occurs within the adverbial clause of time introduced with the subordinator *as*:

He wakes, or he thinks he does, to the sound of her hairdryer and a murmuring voice repeating a phrase, and later, after he's sunk again, he hears the solid clunk of her wardrobe door opening, the vast built-in wardrobe, one of a pair, with automatic lights and intricate interior of lacquered veneer and deep, scented recesses; later still, as she crosses and re-crosses the bedroom in her bare feet, the silky whisper of her petticoat, surely the black one with the raised tulip pattern he bought in Milan; then the business-like tap of her boot heels on the bathroom's marble floor as she **goes about** her final preparations in front of the mirror, applying perfume, brushing out her hair; and all the while, the plastic radio in the form of a leaping blue dolphin, attached by suckers to the mosaic wall in the shower, plays that same phrase, until he begins to sense a religious content as its significance swells - there is grandeur in this view of life, it says, over and again.

### 3.2.4 Go for

This verb occurs with three meanings in the analyzed corpus, and the most dominant one is **to like or prefer sb/sth** represented only in novels (3):

In a really good mood he'll **go for** the looser interpretations of Glenn Gould.

The meaning **to apply to sb/st** is found only in novels (1), and speech (1), while this meaning is not registered in The Guardian:

Would you like **to go for** the Scottish example where MSPs, more or less have to declare everything.

Only one example of the meaning **to go to get sth** is found in speech, while it is not used in the other two registers. Multi-word verb *go for* with this meaning occurs in the negative form within the open conditional clause:

If she **doesn't go for** MMR, the individual injections are better than nothing.

### 3.2.5 Go to

The prepositional verb *go to* occurs with two meanings, which are almost equally represented. The meaning **to start doing a particular activity or being in a particular state** is found in The Guardian (1), and novels (1). Interestingly, in both examples, the head of the noun phrase in the function of a prepositional object is the noun *sleep*:

As a girl, Glenconner spent years away from her mother and father, having been evacuated during the war; they left her with a nanny who tied her by the wrists to her bed every night before she **went to sleep**.

The meaning **to approach to sb/sth for help or information** is found only in speech (2), while it doesn't occur in the other two registers:

So if he still had allergic rhinitis, I **went to** an expert and he said: 'Yep, he's on maximal treatment - antihistamines, nasal steroids, eye drops, his asthma is on the normal asthma medication but he's still got significant allergic rhinitis.'

### 3.2.6 Go after

The only meaning of this prepositional verb is **to try to get or obtain sb/sth**, and it occurs only once in each register respectively. In the Guardian, this verb occurs within headlines (a), while in speech it has the form of the gerund with the compound noun phrase in the function of the prepositional object (b):

a) War of words breaks out after YA novelist's fans **go after** critical reader

b) If you end up **going after** those people who are the most wealthy in society, what you actually end up doing is in fact not even helping those at the bottom end.

### 3.2.7 Go against sb/sth

The prepositional verb *go against sb/sth* has only the meaning **to resist or opposes/sth**, and it occurs in The Guardian and novels with one example respectively:

However, much of what is proposed **goes against** the evidence of what works when attempting to reduce crime and reoffending.

In novels, this verb occurs in the form of a gerund:

And Omar Khayyam, who had picked Rodrigues for a father, never once considered **going against** his tutor's wishes.

### 3.2.8 Go along

This prepositional verb occurs with the meaning **to move forward of from one end of sth towards the other** and is found only in novels (1):

Let the defectors **go along** the corridor or across town.

### 3.2.9 Go around

This verb is found only in speech with the meaning **to travel in a country or a place and visit lots of different things**:

As I **go around** the country, I find people utterly fed up by the Labour Party.

### 3.2.10 Go at sb

The prepositional verb *go at sb* expresses the meaning **to attack somebody**, and it is found only in novels (1), while in other corpora this meaning doesn't occur at all:

Through inefficient chick-blinds he spied on the couplings of the postman Ibadalla with the widow Balloch, and also, in another place, with her best friend Zeenat Kabuli, so that the notorious occasion on which the postman, the leather-goods merchant and the loud-mouthed Bilal **went at** one another with knives in a gully and ended up stone dead, all three of them, was no mystery to him; but he was too young to understand why Zeenat and Farida, who should by rights have hated each other like poison once it all came out, shackled up together instead and lived, after that triple killing, in unbreakable friendship and celibacy for the rest of their days.

### 3.2.11 Go before sb/sth

This verb occurs with the meaning **to be presented to somebody/something for discussion, decision or judgement**, and is found only in speech combined with the central modal *could*:

He **could go before** the Treasury Select Committee for example, which I know is investigating these issues.

### 3.2.12 Go beyond

This verb expresses the meaning **to be greater, better, etc. than sth**, and occurs in The Guardian (3), and novels (2). In the Guardian, this verb occurs within headlines (a), while in novels, it is used within nominal relative *that*-clause in the function of a postmodifier in a noun phrase (b):

a) Can art advance science? Researchers on the hunt for extraterrestrial intelligence are using videos, music and more **to go beyond** the final frontier

b) More than 90bn audio streams were listened to by British music fans last year but Furniss's three-year-old consultancy, which focuses on closer collaboration between the music and tourism sectors, is one of a number of new businesses tapping into a growing generation of people who seek a musical experience that **goes beyond** a playlist.

### 3.2.13 Go in/into sth

The prepositional verb *go in/into sth* expresses the meaning **to join an organization, especially in order to have a career in it**, and it occurs in speech (5), The Guardian (4), and novels (4). Interestingly, in speech, this verb occurs within open conditional sentences (a), and in The Guardian within nominal relative clauses in the function of the direct object (b):

a) If you **go into** a job centre today in this country, once you're back in work, once you've paid one month's national insurance contribution, that's a tick in the box, that's a job created.

b) There is Team Sky and BC claiming to be standing up for clean cycling and they can't even prove what **was going in** and out of the medical storeroom.

### 3.2.14 Go towards sth

This verb has the meaning **to be used as part of the payment for something**, and it is registered only in The Guardian. In both examples, this verb occurs within the nominal *that*-clause in the function of the postmodifier in a noun phrase:

Under a package of policies for victims of crime, the party said it would increase by 25% the victims surcharge – a fine on offenders that **goes towards** refuges and community support for victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

### 3.2.15 Go up

The prepositional verb *go up* expresses the meaning **to move from a lower position to a higher one or upstairs in a building**, that is found in novels (2), and only one example in The Guardian and speech respectively:

You got to have a good pair of legs and a good pair of lungs **to go up** there.

In novels and The Guardian, this verb occurs within adverbial clauses of time with subordinator *as*, but while in Guardian, this clause is in the initial position (a), in novels is parenthetically embedded in the medial position (b):

a) As the umpire's finger **went up**, England could start reflecting on an innings defeat to rank alongside similar such reversals in Barbados, Auckland, Perth, Sydney, Mumbai and Chennai during recent times.

b) He feels feeble in his knees, in the quadriceps, as he **goes up** the stairs, making use of the handrail.

### 3.2.16 Go with sb/sth

This verb has the meaning **to support a plan, an idea, etc. or the person suggesting it**, and it is found only in speech (1):

Well I think we **should go with** the proposals that are on the table.

### 3.2.17 Go without sth

The prepositional verb *go without sth* occurs with the meaning **to manage without something that you usually have or need**, and it is registered only in novels (1):

It was too wide a tract of land to rope; he **had to go without** moorings.

### 3.2.18 Go on

This verb occurs with the meaning **to begin doing, following, enjoying or using sth** in speech only:

If we let people come out of work, **go on** to the dole, on to incapacity benefit, as the Tories used to, that would be disastrous.

### 3.2.19 Go over

The prepositional verb *go over* expresses the meaning **to study something carefully, especially by repeating it**, and we found only one example in novels:

Now, in these quiet moments as I wait for the world about to awake, I find myself going over in my mind again passages from Miss Kenton's letter.

### 3.2.20 Go to sb/sth

This verb occurs with the meaning **to be given to sb/sth** in The Guardian (7). Interestingly, all examples found combine with the central modal verb *will*:

The book **will go to** the Brontë Parsonage Museum, the former family home in Haworth, Yorkshire, which already holds the other four surviving miniature books entitled "The Young Men's Magazines".

### 3.3 Monotransitive and ditransitive prepositional combinations with the lexical verb *go*

As we already stated, prepositional verbs without the direct object are structures where prepositional particles and the complement behaves as a single unit, that is, the noun is the prepositional complement, not the direct, but the prepositional object. Unlike them, ditransitive prepositional verbs with direct objects occur with two objects- a direct and the prepositional object. In our corpus, we didn't find not even one ditransitive verb exclusively, but two verbs can fall into both categories.

#### 3.3.1 Go across

This verb occurs with the meaning **to cross a room, a road, a river, etc. in order to get to the other side**. In The Guardian, this verb occurs with the monotransitive complement (a), but in speech, it occurs with ditransitive complement with the direct object (b):

a) Some of the churches are so remote that they involve hours of hiking after hours of driving, said Rickerby: Typically, roads are washed out, you get diverted, you're **going across** country, there are no signposts.

b) Half the sub prime mortgages **went across** to Britain from America and landed people with worthless assets that they didn't wholly understand.

#### 3.3.2 Go in for/ go into sth

This verb has the meaning **to join an organization, especially in order to have a career in it**, and occurs only in speech (4), where it is equally represented as monotransitive (a), and ditransitive with the direct object (b):

a) He worked for Team Sky... then he **went into** BC management, which in my opinion and others he perhaps wasn't best skilled at.

b) But you know, you **don't go into** politics **for** an easy ride.

### 4. Discussion

Based on the frequency of prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go*, it is obvious that they are not very frequent and are mostly used in colloquial language. Interestingly, there is a big difference in the number of examples found between the two most frequently used prepositional verbs and the rest of these constructions in the analyzed material. Also, it has to be emphasized that all highly polysemic prepositional verbs are not the most frequent ones.

Except for the prepositional verbs *go through* and *go into*, prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go* are not polysemic, which means that their use is limited only to certain meanings.

Based on the results, prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go* are almost always followed by monotransitive complementation, and except for two verbs that are used with mono- and ditransitive complementation, there is not even one prepositional verb that is followed by ditransitive complementation pattern exclusively.

Prepositional verbs are very complex subject in the English language and they have to be analysed including both the semantic and syntactic perspective in further research.

## Conclusion

A prepositional verb consists of a lexical verb followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/or syntactically associated. Fronting of the prepositional complement is not normally possible.

The second noun phrase in a sentence is considered the complement of preposition, not the direct object of the lexical verb. Prepositional verbs can be monotransitive without the direct object and ditransitive with the direct object.

In our material, prepositional constructions with the lexical verb *go* are frequently used, and it is registered 138 examples of such constructions. They are dominant in speech (57), and less used in novels (35), and *The Guardian* (33).

The most frequent prepositional verbs are *go through* (48 examples found), and *go in/into sth* (37). Less frequent are prepositional verbs *go to sb/sth* (7), *go about* (6), and *go for* (6), while we registered only 4 examples of the following verbs respectively: *go beyond*, *go to*, *go up*, and *go in for/ go into sth*. The combination *go after* occurs with 3 examples, while we registered 2 example of the following verbs: *go up*. The following prepositional verbs occur with only one example in the corpus: *go against sb/sth*, *go along*, *go around*, *go at sb*, *go before sb/sth*, *go without sth*, and *go over*.

The number of meanings of prepositional verbs also vary. The prepositional verb *go through* express 7 meanings, while the verb *go into* occurs with 5 meanings. Verbs *go about* and *go for* have 3 meanings, and the prepositional verb *go to* occurs with 2 meanings. The following verbs express only one meaning in analyzed registers: *go after*, *go against sb/sth*, *go along*, *go around*, *go at sb*, *go before sb/sth*, *go beyond*, *go in/into sth*, *go towards sth*, *go up*, *go with sb/sth*, *go without sth*, *go on*, *go over*, *go to sb/sth*, *go across*, *go in for/ go into sth*.

As for transitivity, monotransitive prepositional verbs without the direct object are more dominant, although we registered that the verbs with the same meaning behave mono- and ditransitively depending on the complementation in the clause (*go across* & *go in for/ go into sth*).

The list of all prepositional verbs found along with their meanings and frequency is listed in the paper.

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# Social Distancing v. Physical Distancing – Why is the Term Social Distancing Globally Accepted in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic?

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## Abstract

Many measures are being taken during the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. One of the primary concepts that appeared throughout the media was “social distancing”. Over the months, this term rose to become an omnipresent catchword, used over and over in the news on TV, the radio, in newspapers and journals as well as in everyday communication. In this article the term “social distancing” will be examined in relation to the term “physical distancing”. Is it “social distancing” or “physical distancing” that is preventing us from being infected with the virus? The term “social distancing” is analysed from a linguistic, socio-historical and psychological point of view and its use is questioned in the context of the dominant imperative. Furthermore, an attempt will be made to uncover when and in which context the term “social distance” was established and why it has been adopted worldwide during the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas the term “physical distancing”, which the author considers to be more appropriate within the context of the recommended measures, was neglected, even though this is the term the WHO is using in their instructions and guidelines.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, social distancing, physical distancing, imperative, pandemic

## Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic one term among an array of slogans such as *flatten the curve*, *wash your hands*, *be responsible/stay responsible*, *wear a mask*, *new normal* has gone viral globally: *social distancing*. It was one of the initial and imperative measures for preventing the spread of the virus issued by the health ministers and the Crisis Management Committees around the world.

Countries worldwide introduced this term and adopted it: *soziale Distanz* (German), *socijalna distanca* (Croatian/Serbian/Bosnian), *distance sociale* (French), *distanca sociale* (Italian), *distancia social* (Spanish), *distância social* (Portuguese), *социальная дистанция* (Russian), *dystans społeczny* (Polish) and the list goes on. But why exactly is it termed *social* distance and is it possible to utilize a term such as this in all languages and cultures for the same purpose?

Nowadays, it is easy to spread the word through social media and media in general. A picture, slogan or even fake news goes viral within seconds and considering that the English language is used as a lingua franca, most of the things we see and read in social media, or the media in

general, are precisely in this language. More often than not, certain terms are not even translated. However, the rules seem to differ with regards to the term *social distancing*, as it was translated into plenty of languages all over the world. This was supposedly done to make sure that everyone, including the older population and those who do not speak English, understand it.

Yet, this raises the question of whether the term was transferred/translated correctly to the other languages. Does it really signify the same meaning if we speak of *social distancing*, *soziale Distanz* or *socijalna distanca*?

When consulting the web concerning the term *social distancing*, one will uncover plenty of definitions and explanations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the result of the current hype regarding the pandemic additionally being pumped up by the media<sup>1</sup>:

*"Social distancing, also called "physical distancing," means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not from your household.*

*To practice social or physical distancing, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people who are not from your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces.*

*Social distancing should be practiced in combination with other everyday preventive actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including wearing masks, avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands, and frequently washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds."*

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/social-distancing.html>)

The confusion with respect to this term began at the very moment it was spread all over the media. Thus, various authors and academics reacted to this immediately, one of which was the legal expert Wolfgang Mazal from the University in Vienna:

*"Social distancing" ist eine Wendung der Fachsprache unter anderem der Epidemiologie, die in den letzten Tagen in die öffentliche Debatte Eingang gefunden hat; allerdings wäre da semantisch mehr Sorgfalt geboten, weil in der Fachsprache andere gedankliche Assoziationen ablaufen als in der Alltagssprache. Stimmt es wirklich, dass "social distancing" das Gebot der Stunde ist, um katastrophale Bilder, wie wir sie aus Italien und Spanien sehen, in Österreich nicht Realität werden. [...] Fest steht jedenfalls, dass vor dem Hintergrund des lateinischen Wortstamms "soc", der "Verbundenheit" signalisiert, eher das Gegenteil von sozialer Distanz zu beobachten ist: Familien, Freund\*innen, Kolleg\*innen, fühlen sich in den letzten Tagen stärker denn je für einander verantwortlich und rücken gedanklich immer näher zusammen. [...] Ich finde daher, wir sollten das Wording wechseln und ab nun eher von "physical distancing" sprechen. Diese Wendung trifft die tatsächlichen Gegebenheiten besser und ist auch zukunftsfester: Gerade in den auf uns zukommenden Monaten wäre es nämlich fatal, wenn sich die Denkfigur von der sozialen Distanz im Denken eingependelt hat, selbst wenn physische Nähe wieder möglich sein wird! (<https://medienportal.univie.ac.at/uniview/wissenschaftsgesellschaft/detailansicht/artikel/soziale-distanz-das-falsche-wording>)*

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<sup>1</sup> It was very interesting to see that it is completely impossible to find the term *social distance* or *social distancing* in any other context but in the COVID-19 context on Google. No matter what you type, how you try to find another context, it is just impossible, the results are always the same and always relating to the present pandemic. In order to find literature on social distancing in the socio-historical context other search engines but Google had to be consulted.

("Social distancing" is a technical term used in epidemiology, among other fields, which has entered the public debate in recent days. However, semantically it should be treated with more care, as the occurring associations in technical language are different from those in everyday language. Is it true that "social distancing" is the order of the day to prevent catastrophic images, such as in Italy and Spain, from becoming reality in Austria? [...] In any case, it is clear that given the fact that the Latin word stem "soc" signals "solidarity", the opposite of social distance can be observed: families, friends and colleagues feel responsible for each other more than ever before and are moving closer together in their thoughts. [...] I therefore think we should, from now on, change the wording and rather speak of "physical distancing". This term is better suited to the actual circumstances and is also more future-proof: Especially in the months ahead, it would be fatal if the mental figure of social distance became embedded in the thoughts, even if physical proximity will be possible again!<sup>1</sup>)

The term *social distancing* IS used as technical term in the medical field as can be found in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

"Social distancing, noun, definition of social distancing, medical: the practice of maintaining a greater than usual physical distance (such as six feet or more) from other people or of avoiding direct contact with people or objects in public places during the outbreak of a contagious disease in order to minimize exposure and reduce the transmission of infection: PHYSICAL DISTANCING." (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20distancing#h1>)

It also states that the first known use of the term in the sense described above was in 2004 during the swine flu pandemic and has obviously been transferred to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The term *social distancing* was not used prior to this during other pandemics. According to Furedi, the sociologist Karl Mannheim was the first to use the aforementioned term in a similar context in the 1950s:

*"Mannheim was probably the first sociologist to explore the relationship between social distance and what today is characterised as "safe space". Writing in the 1930s and preoccupied by the threat of totalitarian movements, Mannheim referred to safe space in his discussion of social distance, which he claimed could signify both "an external or spatial distance" or an "internal or mental distance". Mannheim believed that the impulse towards distancing was bound up with the need to regulate and control anxiety. [...] It was in the context of the fears that emerged in the inter-war era that Mannheim located the aspiration for a safe space."* (Furedi 2020: 393)

Even Wikipedia attempts to indicate that differences exist between the terms *social distancing* and *social distance* or *social isolation* and seeks to clarify them:

*"Not to be confused with Social distance or Social isolation.*

*In public health, social distancing, also called physical distancing,[2][3][4] is a set of non-pharmaceutical interventions or measures intended to prevent the spread of a contagious disease by maintaining a physical distance between people and reducing the number of times people come into close contact with each other.[2][5] It typically involves keeping a certain distance from others (the distance specified may differ from time to time and country to country) and avoiding gathering together in large groups."*

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<sup>1</sup> Free translation by the author.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_distancing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_distancing))

But why then is it deemed *social* distancing and not *physical* distancing? It surely does not mean the same if you distance yourself socially or physically, yet the two terms are used synonymously all over the media. Moreover, the term *physical distancing* is used very seldomly or not at all.

On the other hand, when consulting the web pages of the World Health Organization they, interestingly enough, do NOT use the term *social distancing* but state the following:

*“Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and others. Why? When someone coughs, sneezes, or speaks they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person has the disease.*

*Avoid going to crowded places. Why? Where people come together in crowds, you are more likely to come into close contact with someone that has COVID-19 and it is more difficult to maintain **physical distance** of 1 metre (3 feet).”*

(<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>)

The World Health Organization does, in fact, use the (proper) term *physical distance*, as opposed to that which is used by politicians and the mass media.

## Methodology

This research is a qualitative research. The purpose of this research was to study the use of the term *social distancing* versus the term *physical distancing* in times of the Covid-19 pandemic in the English, German and Croatian language with regards to the historical, socio-economic and psychological implications it has. In addition, the attempt was made to explore when the term *social distancing* was introduced and why it was accepted in all three languages. Data was collected and analysis performed based on available material, i.e. research articles and newspaper articles as well as information available on government and institutional web pages.

## Social distancing v. physical distancing – a definition of terms

Let us look at the term *social distancing* from a linguistic point of view. In the German language<sup>1</sup> especially, the word *sozial* has a deeper and more significant meaning than the English word *social*.

If we look up synonyms for the word *social* in English, the most relevant ones are: civil, communal, collective, common, community, cordial, familiar, general, group, nice, sociable, societal, amusing, communicative, companionable, convivial, diverting, entertaining, gracious, gregarious, hospitable, organized, pleasant, pleasurable, popular etc. (<https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/social>)

Hence, this term may work in the English-speaking world, as it can be used to express the avoidance of crowded places and close contact with other individuals, yet, the term *physical distancing* conveys, in a better sense, what is intended. When we look up the term *physical* in the same sources, the thesaurus gives us the following synonyms in English: *environmental*,

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<sup>1</sup> The author will limit comments to the German and the Croatian language as these are her native languages.

*natural, real, substantial, concrete, corporeal, gross, materialistic, objective, palpable, phenomenal, ponderable, sensible, solid, somatic, visible.*

(<https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/physical?s=t>)

Therefore, this instead refers to spatial distance which is (or is not?) what is implied by the term *social distancing* in times of the pandemic.

If we search for the synonyms of the word *sozial* in German it is apparent that they differ somewhat from the English term: *uneigennützig, mitleidig, Anteilnehmend, mitfühlend, sanftmütig, sanft, barmherzig, mildtätig, menschlich, gutherzig, menschenfreundlich, altruistisch etc.* (<https://www.synonyme.de/sozial>)

This connotation is intended to more or less signify a sense of *compassion* or *sympathy*, which does not highlight the intended meaning, but rather leads us in another direction: should people distance themselves from being humane and not empathize with others? Do health ministers and other politicians really want us to be compassionless and selfish amid the pandemic?

If we consider the term *physisch*, the corresponding synonyms are i.a.: *körperlich, leiblich, leibhaftig, greifbar, gegenständlich, natürlich, organisch, materiell, körperhaft, inhaltlich, körperhaft, wirklich, etc.* (<https://www.synonyme.de/physisch/>) Again, we can observe that the connotation for *physische Distanz* would be intended to suggest a sense of spatial and bodily distance, as opposed to the connotation *soziale Distanz*, which it originally has in German. As a matter of fact, in German the term *körperlich* exists which more precisely describes this *bodily* distance and yet it is not used.

Let us have a look at a third language, Croatian, in which the term *socijalna distanca* was also adopted. The synonyms we uncover, depending on context, are: *društveno, klasno, kulturalno, intelektualno, moralno, nacionalno, razvojno, ekonomsko, rodno, materijalno, životno, emocionalno, političko, jezično etc.* (<https://www.kontekst.io/hrvatski/socijalno>)

It is evident that the word *socijalno* has a very wide range of meanings in the Croatian language, ranging from political to emotional and economical, i.a. meaning *cultural, emotional, political national, economical* and even referring to *class affiliation*. Again, it does not bear the same meaning as the English word *social* considering that an array of areas can be covered by this term thus rendering it unclear to the average person. One cannot assume that everyone is familiar with technical medical terms used in epidemiology.

The term *fizičko* is synonymous with the following: *tjelesno, praktički, mentalno, očito, praktično, tehnički etc.* (<https://www.kontekst.io/hrvatski/fizicki>) In Croatian as well, the synonym of *fizičko* is *tjelesno*, referring to bodily distance, i.e. two bodies keeping distance between each other or in English *physical* distancing. Still, the Croats, as in all the other countries, adopted the term *socijalna distanca*.

The German author Regula Venske gets to the heart of it in a newspaper article:

„Während wir im Deutschen mit dem Wort "sozial" einen sehr aufgeladenen Begriff haben. Wenn wir an unsere Parteien denken, von der Sozialdemokratie bis zur Christlich-Sozialen Union, die Soziale Marktwirtschaft - da ist "sozial" immer assoziiert mit gesellschaftlicher Solidarität, mit Verantwortung, mit Fürsorge und Gemeinsinn. Wenn wir jetzt von "sozialer Distanz" sprechen, dann könnte das ein ganz falsches Signal geben. Es könnte Menschen, die sich sowieso schon an

*der Einkommensgrenze befinden oder die sich abgehängt fühlen und jetzt große Ängste haben, in diesem Gefühl der Mutlosigkeit oder der Panik bestärken. Statt "sozialer Distanz" sollten wir eher "physische" oder "räumliche Distanz" sagen, oder "körperlicher Abstand". Es gibt schlichte deutsche Worte, die jetzt viel passender sind.*" (<https://www.ndr.de/kultur/Corona-Die-Wirkung-von-Sprache-in-Krisenzeiten,venske118.html>)

(In German, the word "social" is a very strong, emotionally charged term. When we think of our parties, from the Social Democrats to the Christian Social Union, or the social market economy - "social" is always associated with social solidarity, responsibility, care and public spirit. If we now speak of "social distance", this could send a completely wrong signal. It could encourage people who are already at the income limit or who feel abandoned and are in great fear, to feel discouraged or panicky. Instead of "social distance" we should rather say "physical" or "spatial distance". There are simple German words that are much more appropriate now<sup>1</sup>.)

In conclusion, it can be said that the meaning of the English word *social* does not correspond to the meaning of the German word *sozial* or that of the Croatian word *socijalno*. Hence, it would have been more appropriate to use the term *physical distancing* rather than *social distancing* in, at least, the German and the Croatian language in order to avoid confusion. Of course, one can argue that this term is used as a technical term in epidemiology and other scientific fields, but is it appropriate to use it for the broader masses who are not familiar with these sciences? The term *social* is considered new in technical medical language as well, as it was not introduced prior to 2004 or during any other pandemic. In the author's opinion, the usage of this specific and ambiguous term leads to confusion, uncertainty and even greater panic among the population, which is counterproductive in the current scenario of a worldwide pandemic.

### **Social distancing –from the socio-historical point of view**

If we look at the omnipresent term *social distancing* or *social distance* from a socio-historical perspective, one comes to the understanding that it was formerly used to define class distinction and was even used to address race as the term *social distancing* has a long history and, one might assert, has lived several lives:

*"It and its precursor, 'social distance', had long been used in a variety of colloquial and academic contexts, both as prescriptions and descriptions, before being taken up by epidemiologists in this century. In the nineteenth century, "social distance" was a polite euphemism used by the British to talk about class and by Americans to talk about race."* (Scherlis 2020:1)

Furthermore, in her article, Scherlis illustrates the socio-historical aspect as well as the connotations attached to the term *social distancing* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglophone world which, back then, was used to refer to social class as well as to racism. It was usual practice to separate the noblesse from working people and the term *social distancing* or *social distance* had dual meanings:

*"Social distance is both a prescription for interpersonal behavior and a way to figure mass inequality."* (Scherlis 2020:3)

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<sup>1</sup> Free translation by the author.

In addition, the term was used in the United States to express the continuing superiority of white people after the abolition of slavery:

*"The term's softness glossed over the realities of slavery and later anti-black violence, as well as the challenges formerly enslaved people faced in making a livelihood." (ibid.)*

A closer definition of *social distancing* in the sense of racism is to be found in Park and Burgess' book *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* from 1921:

*"The simplest and most fundamental types of behavior of individuals and of groups are represented in these contrasting tendencies to approach an object or to withdraw from it. If instead of thinking of these two tendencies as unrelated, they are thought of as conflicting responses to the same situation, where the tendency to approach is modified and complicated by a tendency to withdraw, we get the phenomenon of social distance. There is the tendency to approach, but not too near. There is a feeling of interest and sympathy of A for B, but only when B remains at a certain distance. Thus, the Negro in the southern states is "all right in his place." The northern philanthropist is interested in the advancement of the Negro but wants him to remain in the South. At least he does not want him for a neighbor. The southern white man likes the Negro as an individual, but he is not willing to treat him as an equal. The northern white man is willing to treat the Negro as an equal but he does not want him too near. The wishes are in both cases essentially the same but the attitudes are different." (Park/Burgess 1921: 440)*

Sadly, even today many people still tend to garner these beliefs. In the United States, coloured people might still be an issue to some whites and in Europe there are other races that are not regarded as equal, especially in reference to the ongoing migration wave throughout Europe.

Worth mentioning is a study done by Robert Park and his former student Emory S. Bogardus at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which was performed due to a surge of non-Protestant, e.g. Asian, immigration to the United States. The scientist Bogardus established the so-called Social Distance Scale which made it possible to measure how distance is related to prejudices. Thus, they established degrees of intimacy and asked respondents to define how much intimacy/distance they would deem acceptable with regards to members of a certain group:

*"The Social Distance Scale usually consists of five to seven statements that express progressively more or less intimacy toward the group considered. Typical scale anchors are "would have to live outside of my country (7)" and "would marry (1)" (Cover 1995:403). In this case, a respondent who accepts item "seven" would be more prejudiced than a respondent who marks item "one" or any other item on the scale. The cumulative aspect also means that a respondent who expresses a given degree of intimacy will endorse items expressing less intimacy. A respondent willing to accept a member of a group in their neighborhood will also accept that same group in their country. Conversely, those who refuse to accept a group in their country will also refuse to accept them in their neighborhood." (Wark/Galliher 2007:386)*

This simple, unidimensional and cumulative scale makes it possible to measure the relations between specific social groups. It can also be transferred to other areas of social life, e.g. schools or hospitals in order to measure the dynamics between teachers and students or doctors and patients and was also used during the 1990s when the AIDS virus emerged in order to measure the hostility of people towards fellow infected citizens.

Initially, the AIDS virus was stigmatized as being transferred between gay men and not until much later was it acknowledged as a chronic disease:



*“Indeed, the disease was initially termed GRID, the gay-related immunodeficiency disease, and those stricken who denied homosexual contacts were often assumed to be lying.” (Fee/Krieger 1993: 1478)*

This led to *social distancing* which was caused by fear and stigmatization of infected individuals. Hence, this can be compared to stigmatization and fear of people with the plague or leprosy in the Middle Ages, but unlike then, only a distinct group of people were initially subjected to this type of behaviour.

In 1995 Leiker et al. used the Social Distance Scale in order to measure the behaviour towards people infected with AIDS, which was characterised by antipathy and homophobia:

*“First, we found that stigma increased as homophobia increased in all four PWA<sup>1</sup> conditions<sup>2</sup>. Second, stigma increased as AIDS knowledge decreased in the IV drug use and blood transfusion conditions. Third, women attached less stigma than men in all but the heterosexual condition. Fourth, in the blood transfusion condition, stigma decreased as religiosity increased.” (Leiker et al. 1995:333)*

People were so apprehensive of this disease that they did not want to find themselves anywhere near an individual with AIDS, even though the infection was transferred by way of bodily fluids such as blood or semen and not through airborne droplets.

When applying the Social Distancing Scale to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 it can be downscaled to the options: allowing a person into a radius of 2m with a mask or without one, as this virus, according to experts, is airborne and more infectious than other known SARS viruses.

Furthermore, *social distancing* was practised throughout history in many ways, as can be seen in this chapter, yet

*“most of the scholars who studied social distance in the twentieth century hoped to reduce it. [...] To participate in social distancing was to devalue a person; the study of social distance objectified these devaluations on a macro scale.” (Scherlis 2020:7)*

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *social distancing* has once again made its grand re-entrance and nowadays is not to be perceived as a devaluation of a person but rather as a kind of *superpower* used to save the world, albeit the social and historical implications point to anything but this.

### **Social distancing –from the psychological point of view**

One of the important, if not most important factors concerning *social distance* that we must consider is psychological. How do people respond to being socially or physically separated from other human beings?

It is well-known that humans are social beings and a basic need is for them to be in contact with others - to talk, hug, shake hands, kiss, etc. and it is precisely these basic needs that are banned during the Covid-19 pandemic. How does a grandmother feel if she is not allowed to hug or kiss her grandchild? How do work colleagues feel when they have to avoid any physical

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<sup>1</sup> PWA = Persons with AIDS

<sup>2</sup> According to the authors the four behaviors for developing AIDS are the following: homosexual sex, IV drug use, heterosexual sex, or a blood transfusion

contact? But most of all, how do children cope with not being allowed to play with their friends, to hug or touch another person?

Communication is also an important element of the human being, it not only being based on words, but also on facial expressions and gestures. How do people perceive suddenly being surrounded by faceless mask wearers? How can one communicate if one cannot observe facial expressions or understand words all too well due to the mouth being covered? Hearing impaired individuals are faced with a tremendous challenge because they largely depend on lip-reading in everyday life, as not everyone is able to communicate with them in sign language.

On the one hand, social contact is prevented and yet on the other hand, primary family contacts have been strengthened during the lockdown. The "locking up" of the family in an apartment or house made it impossible to separate or to be alone, which is also a basic human need. For a time, children did not go to school and parents did not go to work. They all needed to complete their assignments at home. They had to educate themselves, follow online lessons, participate in business meetings, all this while being surrounded by the entire family.

More affluent families have the advantage of living in a larger house, each child having their own room, computer, laptop, tablet, their own garden etc. But what about socially weaker families who may live in a two-room apartment with four children? Those of whom do not have a balcony, let alone a garden? How long can people bear this togetherness? What does it do to them? Certainly, peoples' nerves in this situation are often on edge.

*"This COVID-19 pandemic itself may lead to an increase in the number of cases of depressive disorders and anxiety disorders along with loneliness, social isolation, substance abuse, and a rise in domestic violence. They also warn that with the schools closed, there is a risk of a sharp rise in the number of cases of child abuse across the nations."* (<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200412/What-are-the-side-effects-of-social-and-physical-distancing>)

According to the newspapers, there has been an obvious rise in domestic violence and child abuse even though additional help phones and advice centres were set up. The true extent of this will most likely only become apparent after a considerable amount of time has passed. Considering that not everyone reports domestic violence or child abuse, the number of unreported cases is most certainly much higher. (cf. <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/mecklenburg-vorpommern/Offenbar-mehr-haeusliche-Gewalt-in-Corona-Krise,coronavirus2562.html>)

Regretfully, social distancing is being practiced in its most severe form during the Covid-19 pandemic, and includes but is not limited to:

*"Standing apart from others at a 5-foot or higher distance, especially in public areas and while waiting in lines*

*Limiting the number of people allowed into a location at a time*

*Limiting the number of people allowed to travel per vehicle*

*Introducing remote options for work and education*

*Imposing curfews*

*Closing establishments and locations that typically contain a relatively high number of people, such as eateries or swimming pools*

*Banning gatherings of a certain amount of people or higher*

*Stopping all services apart from essential services*

*Enforcing movement restriction orders*

*Enforcing full lockdowns that prevent individuals from leaving their homes"*

(<https://www.powerofpositivity.com/social-distancing-affects-mental-health>)

As a matter of fact, all personal freedoms which people took for granted have been limited or taken away from them. From one day to the next, people must stay at home, not allowed to do this, not allowed to do that. A feeling of being imprisoned has emerged. This is coupled with a fear for one's own life and for the lives of one's relatives, with whom one was not allowed to be close (socially/physically) just when that was what was needed the most. Apprehension coupled with the feeling of being trapped and not knowing how long this condition will last is most certainly not for individuals with weak nerves.

Suddenly people must change their habits, adjust to a completely new reality and wait to see what will happen. Certainly, there is nothing worse than sitting around, waiting and not being able to alter the situation or help oneself in any way:

*"Waiting is one of the most unpleasant experiences people regularly endure: waiting for an exam grade, a medical diagnosis, results from a job interview or audition. There are myriad words in the English language for unpleasant feelings associated with waiting: "fear," "anxiety," "dread," "trepidation." Remarkably and, tellingly, there aren't many words in the English language for a pleasurable state of waiting, though "anticipation" may fall into that category.*

(<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/people-find-waiting-incredibly-unpleasant-a-behavioral-economist-on-why-doing-nothing-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-is-so-hard-and-how-to-make-it-easier-2020-04-01>)

With regards to the lockdown, the concept of social distance can certainly be viewed in a more differentiated way. Following the lockdown, the focus is, to a greater extent, on physical distance, while during the lockdown it is possible to see social distance in its original form and definition mentioned in chapter 2. It can be said that physical distance is also guaranteed, but "only" outside of the immediate family or possibly roommates. In this context, the term can also be equated with social isolation, e.g. when it comes to single or elderly people who live in social isolation rather than physically distant isolation as would be the case in retirement or nursing homes. It is especially hard for elderly people as they already have fewer social contacts due to their age, are not employed, their children have families of their own and may not have enough time for them. Not only are they at an increased risk for more severe illness from the virus that this disease causes, due to being immunocompromised and often having underlying conditions, but also of social distancing and isolation:

*Almost 25% of all elderly individuals aged 65 and over experience some degree of social isolation, typically meaning that they already have few interactions with other individuals. Among this group, 40% of those aged 60 or older say that they feel lonely, too. This means that the elderly are already suffering ill-effects from social isolation, and social distancing can make it much worse." (*<https://www.powerofpositivity.com/social-distancing-affects-mental-health>*)*

Not only was the lockdown a challenge for elderly people but also, or maybe especially, for the young. In contrast to older individuals, the younger ones have active social contacts and interactions. They go to school, university, work, enjoy going out and meeting friends. Suddenly none of this was possible anymore. No work, school or university, no cafes, cinemas, shopping centres, no bars, clubs, fitness centres or sports clubs, no hairdressers, nail studios or massages, no swimming pools, amusement parks, concerts, no operas... Even food shopping and going out for a walk was questionable.

As consolation or countermeasure during the lockdown, people referred to social media again and again, because it was a medium by which to stay in touch intensively, to see each other, hear each other etc. Yet, can such virtual contact replace the usual social contact? The question certainly cannot be answered with a clear "yes". Over a certain, shorter period, it may well work, but in the long run it is quite unsatisfactory as people would be eager to see friends and family in person. It is only too human and natural to miss your loved ones and to long for them, to take them in your arms and to sit at a table with them, to see them live and in-person, touch them, smell them, sense them and entirely feel them.

Back to the elderly: how much do they know about technology in order to use social media to stay in touch with their family and friends? One thing is certain: it is without a doubt unhealthy for people to be alone or to be isolated:

*"Over long periods of time, social isolation can increase the risk of a variety of health problems, including heart disease, depression, dementia, and even death. A 2015 meta-analysis of the scientific literature by Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a research psychologist at Brigham Young University, and colleagues determined that chronic social isolation increases the risk of mortality by 29%."* (<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/03/we-are-social-species-how-will-social-distancing-affect-us>)

Social distancing as practiced during the COVID-19 pandemic assuredly can lead to stress and anxiety, depression, lack of motivation and productivity, anger, turning to vices, loss of cognitive strength and even trauma. It is very difficult to think positively and to stay mentally healthy in such a predicament, let alone the fact that social isolation increases the rate of mortality as well as the suicide rate. (cf. <https://www.powerofpositivity.com/social-distancing-affects-mental-health>)

## Discussion

Why of all things the term *social distancing* has become established in the media and globally accepted during the COVID-19 pandemic and an earlier pandemic, namely the swine flu (when it was used for the first time to refer to physical distance) could not be fully explained based on the available sources that were examined. As established throughout the research, the term *social distancing* might even work for the English-speaking countries, but *soziale Distanz* and *socijalna distanca* surely are not the proper terms in German and Croatian language.

In order to find a satisfactory answer to this question, it would be necessary perhaps to conduct additional research in the field of medical terminology and etymology and/or interview the people responsible for introducing the term during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to elicit from them their motivation for establishing this term in the broader public realm.

Another interesting research would surely be how this term works in other countries and languages, as (when you check on the internet) the term *social distancing* is used almost everywhere as mentioned at the beginning of the article.

## Conclusion

Now that the concept of *social distance* has been examined from various perspectives, we can ascertain that the term can certainly be viewed critically in its socio-historical context and that it has only emerged in a medical context during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This concept was used in other contexts in centuries prior, i.a. to refer to class and/or racial difference and did not have a positive connotation as described in chapter 3 of this article.

However, it does seem that over time various countries have reacted to the confusion surrounding the term *social distancing*, *soziale Distanz* or *socijalna distanca* and as a result there are a lot of articles on the internet explaining what is really implied by using the term(s) in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Not only is the term clarified, but clearer instructions and signs were implemented which make understanding of such easier. By now, a new term has been introduced, indicating exactly by way of visualisation what people should do: *keep their distance*, *Abstand halten*, *držite razmak*:



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

Yet, it is interesting to see, that in some countries the optimal suggested distance is 1.5m while in others it is 2, possibly due to differences in measuring within the same country. There seems to be no uniform guideline for people to follow. Another explanation can be found in the fact that the distance guideline initially started with 1m at the beginning of the pandemic, then was raised to 1.5m and finally to 2m. Nevertheless, it seems signs are not used or adjusted accordingly. These signs and the statement *keep your distance*, *Abstand halten* or *držite razmak* do not lead to confusions unlike the term *social distancing*.

Yet, if we pay attention to politicians and the media, they still refer to *social distancing*, *soziale Distanz* and *socijalna distanca*. Most likely they wish to demonstrate that they are familiar with this technical medical term and enjoy sounding like experts in the field or they just want to confuse people on purpose to stay in control of the situation.

In summation, the author would agree with George Loewenstein, Professor of Economics and Psychology in the Social and Decision Sciences Department at Carnegie Mellon University and director of the Center for Behavioral Decision Research that it would be necessary to replace the term *social distancing* with *physical distancing*, to be in compliance with the WHO, or as Loewenstein states:

*“A more superficially, but potentially surprisingly efficacious action would be to replace the term “social distancing” with “spatial distancing.” As we distance ourselves spatially, we have an even greater need for social contact, and for activities that bring ourselves together and give our lives meaning. Rather than waiting for the other shoe to drop, we need to gear up to support others.”*

(<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/people-find-waiting-incredibly-unpleasant-a-behavioral-economist-on-why-doing-nothing-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-is-so-hard-and-how-to-make-it-easier-2020-04-01>)

While writing this article an interesting phenomenon was witnessed in the media, especially on TV, concerning the mask wearing imperative which led to the assumption that the term *social distancing* was not chosen accidentally or without intention:

There seems to be a (social) distinction between who must wear a mask and who must not. When we look at TV shows, the people in front of the camera, the hosts and guests do not wear masks, even though the distance between them at times is not the prescribed 1.5 or 2m, yet all the cameramen, make-up artists, assistants, dancers etc. DO wear masks, even when they are in focus of the camera. With that being said, there definitely IS social distancing happening right now, isn't there?

This is precisely what also happens when politicians come together. Most of them don't wear masks when getting out of a car or entering a building (to be witnessed on TV every day), but the chauffeurs, doormen, cameramen, and journalists all must wear one. Who is being protected? Who is protecting whom? Does the obligation to wear a mask only apply to the lower strata of society, and do the one's better off escape this obligation? Is it not inconsiderable for *social distance* to be observed here in the historical sense? Isn't a clear distinction being made between the social classes as well? Or are our politicians allowed to play by their own rules regardless of what they require from their citizens? These questions may seem somewhat provocative, but the fact is that this can be seen in the media day in and day out. An average citizen may ask themselves where this all leads and whether the term *social distancing* is nevertheless connected to some of the linguistic, socio-historical, and psychological meanings mentioned in this article.

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# Discourse Analysis of Teacher and Students in Pre-Intermediate English Class

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## Abstract

This research will examine the classroom discourse and interactions between a teacher and students in an ESL class. It will analyze how discourse occurs and how it can facilitate language learning. The participants were adult university students or employees. Via live classroom observation and audio recording of classes, the data were collected. The findings suggest that the teacher controlled all students, and led all class activities and the teaching process. The teacher frequently used pronouns 'you', 'we', 'I' while teaching as well as words such as "perfect," "correct," and "very good" to motivate students in-class participation. Students mostly used the pronoun 'I' to answer the questions. Most of the questions were closed-ended, so students did not have a chance to elaborate or share their ideas. The discourse occurred in an "IRF" -- Initial, Response, and Follow up. Lack of coherence and cohesion were widely visible in classroom interaction and most of the sentences uttered were ungrammatical.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** coherence, cohesion, discourse, data, IRF

## 1. Introduction

Education is a very broad field, and discourse analysis is a method to analyze communication in the classroom or in written exchanges to understand the intended meaning and the outcomes. Thus, discourse analysis is a linguistic approach and has been applied widely in social sciences over the past few decades. Discourse analysis helps language teachers to provide variety and meaning to the lesson. It is beneficial for teachers to categorize their weaknesses and strengths, and ultimately, students benefit from a greater understanding of the lessons. It is also valuable for teachers to understand the classroom communication and discover whether the lesson has been implemented in the best possible way. According to Brown & Yule (1983), a different approach to the study of language itself is presented through discourse study. Discourse analyzes what language is used for, but it does not analyze language structures. Therefore, what the language is used for is the focus of discourse analysis, not the language structures.

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<sup>1</sup> Research Article

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Definition of Discourse Analysis

There are different definitions of discourse analysis, depending on the theoretical framework. The followings are some definitions:

Fairclough (1995, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) stated that discourse analysis is the analysis of different texts within the scope of sociocultural practice. It requires paying attention in all levels such as phonological, grammatical, lexical, or vocabulary; at a higher level, it requires consideration of exchange systems, structures of argumentations, and generic structures. Furthermore, concerning communication, Bavelas, Kenwood, & Philips (2002, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) refer to it as “the systematic study of naturally occurring communication in the broadest sense, at the level of meaning rather than as psychical acts or features” (p. 81).

Wennerstrom (2003, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) has defined discourse analysis as “the study of naturally occurring language in the context in which it is used” (p. 81). Contrary to this definition, Rymes (2008, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) has defined it as “the study of how language-in-use is affected by the context of its use” (p. 81). Moreover, Gee (2011, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) gives a similar definition and calls it “the study of language-in-use. To say in a better way, it is the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but to do things” (p. 81). Expanding further, Hai (2004, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) has defined discourse analysis as “the analysis of language beyond the sentence. This contrasts with types of analysis which are mainly concerned with grammar, word meanings, sounds, and rules for making meanings” (p. 81).

### 2.2. Significance of Discourse Analysis to Language Teaching

Language teaching aims to help language learners to communicate, regardless of their language level. The use of the target language gives learners real opportunities to experience and practice communication. Discourse analysis has emerged as an essential component in teaching language through the communicative approach (Olshtain & Celce-Murcia, 2001, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019). According to Berrocal *et al.*, (2016, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) to analyze the way foreign and native speakers use language within the social context, discourse analysis focuses on language forms and functions in social interactions to improve language acquisition. Moreover, it concentrates on details of speech to convey the social meaning used by the people using the components of language represented in morphology, syntax, phonetics, and phonology.

Most of the researchers believe that in language teaching and learning, discourse analysis and pragmatics are two essential parts. Discourse analysis deals with intended meaning and its relationships within the context, while pragmatics deals with the interpreted meaning from linguistic processing and social interaction. Furthermore, according to Hai (2004, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) how to interpret the relationship between the different units of the language in an attempt to reach a comprehensive framework of meaning is the concern of discourse analysts.

Discourse analysis has a significant role in language teaching and learning. Classroom discourse analysis enhances teachers' and students' meta-discursive reflection, and at the level of current globalized educational systems, it is considered critical in multilingual education. Classroom discourse analysis helps us to understand the complex relationship

between students' and teachers' interaction, and its effects on the learning process taken place in the classroom environment (Woodward-Kron & Remedios, 2010, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019). According to (Martinez, 2012; Qomi, 2019, & Rymes, 2008, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) classroom discourse analysis helps us understand to what extent teachers use the language in the classroom; it also provides us with valuable information about language analysis and its reflection on cultural awareness. Moreover, it enables both teachers and students to understand the different contexts and enable them to identify language corresponding functionality.

It should be acknowledged that discourse analysis is a powerful tool to create new forms of identities and strengthen students in a globalizing world. Discourse analysis is used by the teachers to develop social interactions in classroom environments. Tang (2008, as cited in Alsoraihi, 2019) stated that the study of discourse analysis and the employment of it in different contexts can result in:

- Language awareness enhancement
- Critical mindset
- Greater understanding of everyday contexts
- Better understanding of things taught about language in the classroom
- Developing the mechanism used in teaching English language
- Improvement of communication sensitivity (p. 84).
- Moreover, research conducted by Alzobidy & Khan (2019) revealed

The important factors to be considered are: comprehension and interpretation, individual variations that influence classroom discourse processing, for example, syntactic patterns, working memory, meaning, and interpretation of classroom discourse (p. 274).

In a study conducted by Luo (2013) the class assumed teacher-reading and student-repeating sessions, presenting a lack of opportunity in the classroom for the students to develop learner autonomy in English learning. Likewise, other classroom research showed limited opportunities for student-initiated participation in the classroom discourse or situations that require students' higher-order thinking cf. Jan & Hardman (2007, as cited in Luo, 2013). Most students did not have the opportunity to use the target language independently and only replied to the teacher in the chorus or repeated what the teacher uttered. That means almost all the classroom activities were teacher-fronted drills (Luo, 2013).

According to Widdowson (1979, as cited in Sinurat, n.d., & Mit'ib, 2010) "knowing a language does not mean understanding, speaking, reading and writing a sentence, it means knowing how sentences are used to communicate effectively" (p. 11). To do so it is necessary to increase the level of student participation in the classroom, to facilitate student-centered language teaching, and reduce the teacher's dominance in the classroom. Simultaneously, teachers should praise and encourage whenever students do positive work. Teachers and students influenced by language discourse research can avoid pragmatic difficulties in language teaching. Both form and function should be studied together, and avoid focusing too much on structuralism while not reducing the importance of functional studies (Sinurat, n.d.). Furthermore, the teachers should provide students with a suitable environment for interactions and real opportunities to exercise the language in a different situation to enhance the language acquisition and language development processes with a communicative perspective (Alsoraihi, 2019).

Foreign language learners learn and build their second language system naturally and unconsciously based on their first language because learners' first language competence is the tool they bring for understanding. Thus, second language competence develops on the common ground of the first language; the new rules assimilated in L2 build on existing L1 competence. Moreover, both first and second language systems do not form distinct language systems in the mind; they form connections in vocabulary, syntax, phonology, and pragmatics (Domalewska, 2015).

This study aims to analyze the discourse between teachers and students in a Pre-Intermediate English class. The research mostly focuses on whether the teacher discourse facilitates language learning or impedes it. Moreover, it also seeks to understand how the language teaching and learning process happens.

### **3. Methodology**

The researcher of this study observed and recorded a pre-intermediate English-as-a-second-language class to observe discourse in a real classroom setting. Before implementing this study, the researcher received permission from the teacher to observe and record the teaching process for forty-five minutes. The researcher took notes and transcribed the recorded audio onto a script to analyze the discourse.

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants of this study were male and female Turkish students at pre-intermediate English level. The participants were not school students, however; most were university students. Participants of this study had different purposes to learn English. Some of them study English to find a better job, others to facilitate other university subjects.

#### **3.2. Data collection**

The researcher selected the Pre-Intermediate English class to collect the research data because all the students were Turks, but the teacher was not. Therefore, English language interaction represented the type of class where the students and teacher come from different language backgrounds. To collect the data, the researcher observed the teaching process and took notes from students and teacher's interaction. In addition to that, the researcher recorded the language learning process and then transcribed it into the script.

#### **3.3. Data analysis**

The researcher implemented both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the collected data. After taking note of the observation process and transcribing the recorded interactions between teacher and students into the script, the researcher evaluated and analyzed the discourse. To analyze the discourse, the researcher did not use any specific software. The analysis involved reading the text carefully and highlighted the content and function words which were frequently exchanged between teacher and students during the language teaching process. Highlighted words were then listed on a separate sheet of paper to see how often these words were used by both teacher and students. Each set of words was written in a separate column and counted at the end. In addition, the script was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word to calculate the percentage of frequently used discourse words in the class. Consequently, the qualitative and quantitative analyzed data were combined and summarized together to come up with an appropriate conclusion.

### 3.4. Instrument

In this study, the instruments which were used to collect the necessary data concerning classroom discourse and interactions between teacher and students were tape recording and observation. The personal observations were necessary for the researcher to know how the teacher carries on the lesson and how the students react to the teacher's questions and comments. These observations were recorded in hand-written notes. In addition, the script from the audio recording was used for further analysis. Also, Microsoft Excel and Word were used as instruments to accurately analyze the collected data.

### 4. Results

This study focused on analyzing the teaching process and the interaction between teachers and students. The findings reveal that the teacher used 'lock-step' teaching, which means the teacher controlled all students, doing the same activity at the same rhythm and space while making presentations and checking exercise answers. Also, he followed the same coursebook/curriculum as the students, worked through the activities, and led all the classwork. He frequently questioned students about the topic and led them to answer. Most of the questions were closed-ended; although a small number were open-ended. In close-ended questions, students had no chance to express their ideas and opinions, so, the language learning process was impeded. On the other hand, open-ended questions let students share their ideas and experiences while answering the questions. This not only builds self-confidence for the students but also facilitates the language learning process.

Using discourse analysis, the interactions between teachers and students did not follow up with coherence and cohesion. Most of the students' answers had grammatical problems which caused a lack of cohesion and coherence. Two examples are '*seven-thirty o'clock*' and '*just to know.*' To overcome the problem, students talked in their mother tongue to help each other in responding to the questions. As Sopio (2018) has stated, "(E)ven though in most cases L1 was not encouraged to be used during the English lessons, students unconsciously or consciously still found ways of incorporating their mother language in the process of the L2 acquisition" (p. 178).

Through classroom observation and transcription analysis, it could be seen that the lesson was teacher-centered and conducted in lockstep. The figure below demonstrates the teacher talk, especially the usage of pronouns while teaching the lesson.

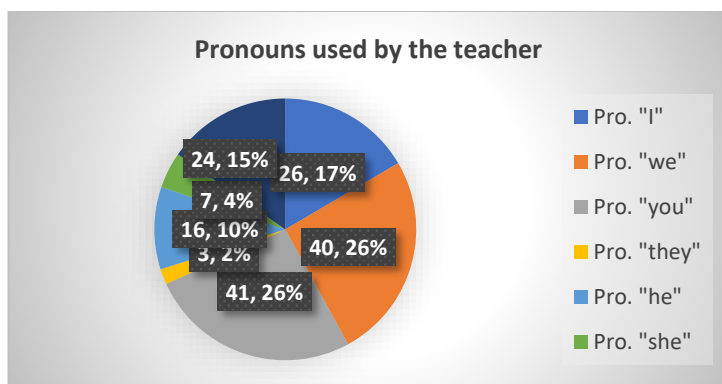


Figure 1. Pronouns used by the teacher.

During the lesson, the teacher used the pronoun 'you' 41 times and 'we' 40 times which covered 26% of the talk respectively. The pronoun 'you' asks direct questions or opinions of the students about the subject, whereas the pronoun 'we' shows shared responsibilities and the role of students in the classroom. Furthermore, the pronoun 'we' shows the shared responsibility of both teachers and students while learning a language. According to Karapetjana (2011, as cited in Hakansson 2012) usage of the pronoun 'we' can be divided into two categories, the inclusive 'we' used to refer to the speaker and the listener/viewer, and the inclusive 'we' that refers to both the speaker and the listener or listeners. Furthermore, the teacher used the pronoun 'I' 26 times while teaching the lesson, amounting to 17% of the talk. By using the pronoun 'I,' the teacher conveyed his opinions and made his speech more subjective as well as declaring his authority to the class. The remaining subjective pronouns were used during the interaction between teachers and students to determine student's participation in the class.

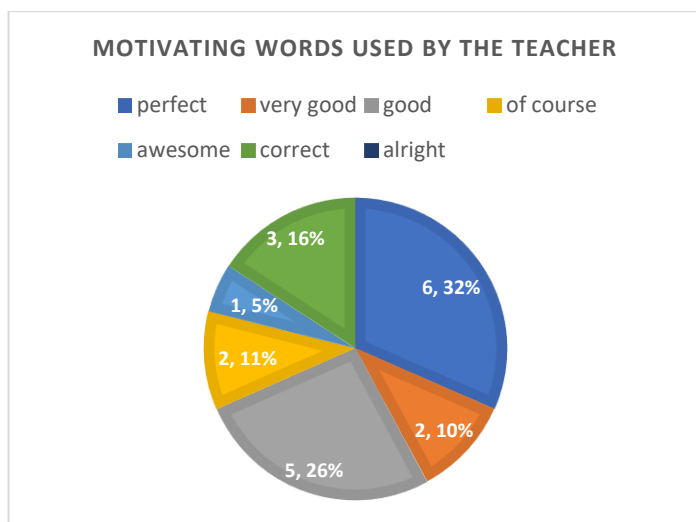


Figure 2. Motivating words used by the teacher.

In addition to the pronouns, the findings of this study revealed that the teacher praised, encouraged, and motivated students by using motivating words such as: 'perfect, very good, good, of course, awesome, correct, and alright'. Usage of such words not only motivates, builds self-confidence, and encourages students to participate in the lesson but also ease the learning process and strengthen the relationship between teacher and students, which is one the most influential aspects of learning. It is very important to make the classroom atmosphere relaxed and friendly. Ramage (1990, as cited in Zaman, 2015) stated that "teachers should try to make the learners engage in their learning that can influence learners' motivation to attain their desired goal" (p.9). All the researchers agreed that teachers are one of the important factors that can influence learners' motivation. Motivating words of the teachers create an enjoyable and friendly environment, build mutual respect, and encourage students to frankly share their ideas and experiences with the class. Teachers should relate lessons to the surrounding environment and real-life situation, so this is not possible unless they motivate students to feel free while interacting in the class.

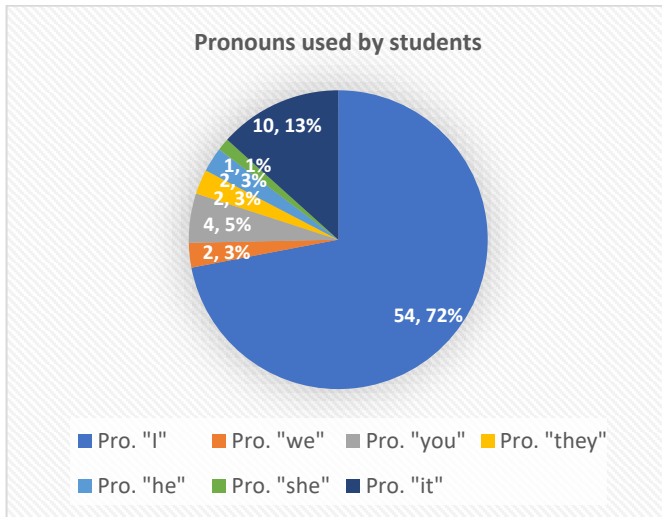


Figure 3. Pronouns used by students

Furthermore, the findings showed the frequent use of pronouns 'I' and 'it' by the students during teacher and students' interactions. The pronoun 'I' shows that the speaker expresses his/her ideas or opinions about the topic or question. Also, the pronoun 'I' positively describes oneself and highlights his/her personal qualities. By using the pronoun 'I,' students wanted to convey or reflect their point of view and made the answer or speech more subjective rather than objective. This pronoun was used 54 times, which covered 72% of the interaction with the teacher. The pronoun 'it' was the second most frequently used pronoun, and referred to a place, thing, or non-human being. It was used 10 times, covering 13% of the talk. The other personal pronouns were rarely used during teacher-students' interaction in the class.

In short, the observation and audio recording showed that the class was teacher-centered and the teacher used the lockstep teaching method. The teacher presented all of the lessons and talked more than seventy percent of the time, the students only listened and answered the questions whenever they were asked.

## 5. Discussion

Classroom observations and audio recordings of the teaching process in a Pre-Intermediate English class enabled analysis of a teacher's discourse, which is a very important factor in language learning. Discourse theory suggests that a teacher should be more aware while interacting or presenting the lesson because the language, choice of words, tone of voice, even way of dressing, and social behavior have an influential impact on learning. This study highlighted some of the most important points.

The teacher mostly used the pronouns 'you', 'we' and 'I' as well as others while he was conducting language teaching. The usage of the pronoun 'you' indicates that the speaker refers to either a specific person in the class or generally to all students in the class. In some cases, the teacher needs to use the pronoun 'you' not only in praising students, but also highlighting shortages or problems that everyone should consider. The pronoun 'we' declares that both the teacher and students are part of the lesson and make them responsible for the learning

process. Also, it raises the importance of the students as a target source and, if there are no students, there is no class. Also, usage of the pronoun 'I' shows the speaker's ideas, opinions and makes everything more personal and subjective. However, sometimes teachers use themselves as an example to encourage or motivate students to take part in the class, which is a good strategy.

Furthermore, the teacher motivated the students whenever they answered the question even if their response was not appropriate. The teacher should praise students and encourage them to participate in the class. On one hand, this action reduces their anxiety, fear of being criticized; on the other hand, it builds self-esteem and gives importance to them as a part of the language learning process. In this way, the teacher created a friendly, less fearful, and less tense classroom for the students, and that is one of the most important factors for language learning.

The interaction between teacher and students often had the students using the pronoun 'I' in their responses. It means that most of the questions completely referred to their personal views or ideas about the specific topic or ideas. There were fewer open-ended questions compared to close-ended questions. Close-ended questions do not help the students' learning process and hold them to a specific point even when they cheat from others. By contrast, open-ended questions help them express their ideas and accelerate the learning process and create a fruitful classroom atmosphere.

The other very visible point in the class was a lack of coherence and cohesion while teachers and students were interacting. Most of the students' sentences were ungrammatical and structurally direct translations of Turkish into English. Sometimes, students talked in their native language to help each other in responding to the questions. Sopio (2018) stated that "despite the fact that in most cases first language was not encouraged to be used during the English lessons, students unconsciously or consciously still found ways of incorporating their mother language in the process of the second language acquisition" (p.178).

## Conclusion

In short, the discourse analysis in Pre-Intermediate English language class revealed that the teacher mostly used 'you', 'we', and 'I' pronouns in language teaching to either explain the lesson or question students. Moreover, to praise and encourage students to participate in classroom discussions, teachers motivate them by using words like 'perfect,' 'very good,' 'correct,' and so on. This creates a friendly environment for the students and facilitates the learning process. However, he used the lockstep teaching method and tried to control and direct all the classroom discourse and activities. The teacher initiated the questions, students answered, and then the teacher followed up. Since students' sentences were ungrammatical and sometimes helped each other in their mother tongue, their discourse lacked coherence and cohesion. On the other hand, the teacher tried to create a friendly and enjoyable classroom environment by praising students.

Furthermore, the students frequently used the pronoun 'I' to answer the teacher's questions. Usage of the pronoun 'I' demonstrated that students were expressing their personal views, ideas, and thought in their answers. Students did not share their knowledge or elaborate in answers because the questions were close-ended. Such kinds of questions limit students' choices, impede their creativity, and most importantly encourage them to copy answers.



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# Internationalization at Home and the Development of the Linguistic Skills of Written Expression and Reading Comprehension in Foreign Language Teaching

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## Abstract

The emergence of COVID19 on the world scene has become a major challenge for the entire society and, in this particular case for the methods used in teaching and learning foreign languages in Higher Education Institutions. Not only teachers but also students have had to suddenly face the need to achieve their linguistic and intercultural academic goals in a totally new environment, characterized by the massive presence of digital and online teaching tools and by a very big lack of motivation in both teachers and students. In this study, we will analyze the relevance of virtual exchange and collaborative learning with foreign students who remain in their home universities and their contribution to improve the skills included in the CEFR. Starting with a case study of foreign language tuition in German and based on qualitative data, we will show the usefulness of internationalization at home as an effective tool for the development not only of linguistic skills, such as the written expression and reading comprehension, but also of the necessary intercultural competence. Furthermore, we will also examine how internationalization at home can be an equally useful tool or teaching practice to foster motivation in foreign language learning and teaching. We will highlight the relevance of teaching practices and resources at a time when teachers and students have had to get used to new teaching practices overnight. Based on the provided data, and due to its pedagogical relevance, we will be ready to conclude that internationalization at home is a practice that has offered an answer to a problem arising after the imposition of the lockdown and consequently should continue to be used at HEIs in the future.

**Keywords:** applied linguistics, online teaching and learning, internationalization at home, foreign languages, writing skill

## Introduction

### Literature Review

The sudden and unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first months of 2020 confronted the whole society with a unique challenge. Thus, all the different lifestyles reflected in the various professional, social and family scenarios, were affected by the spread

of the virus and its consequences overnight, and the educational environment was not an exception. The teaching activity in practically all educational centers and at all levels of education changed from its traditional face-to-face methodology to an entirely distance or online system, for which neither the teachers nor the students had previously been prepared. That new scenario therefore required urgent and necessary implementation of new measures and regulations, especially because we – teachers – continued striving to achieve the same learning objectives that had been initially set at the beginning of the course. None of us wanted to lose a whole academic year.

In that new scenario, which mainly involved adapting to a distance teaching/learning system, many teachers chose methodologies, such as streaming lessons, explaining content to their students by showing them slides to their students through different virtual teaching platforms like Microsoft Teams, teaching a reduced version of the syllabus or simply tutoring and accompanying students' autonomous learning. The teachers' lack of knowledge about the proper use of digital tools, their insecurity when making use of them and the uncertainty associated with the first months of the global health crisis often led to a growing lack of motivation among their students and, in many cases, also among teachers themselves: they became gradually discouraged, demotivated and disinterested with respect to their teaching/learning practices. In this regard, numerous studies on the impact of the confinement linked to COVID-19 on the educational environment (Acosta Jiménez, A. J. (2020), Hartshorn, K. James, McMurry, Benjamin L. (2020) and others) have been carried out in recent months. Most of them have highlighted a growing dropout rate by students, along with an important – and in many cases involuntary or unconscious - lack of involvement and commitment of both groups regarding their tasks, obligations and responsibilities within the university environment.

It is at this point that we must make it clear that, when we talk about the rapid transition to virtual teaching, we are referring neither to the digital transformation of teaching through a deep reflection on the part of the teaching staff nor to a greater technological endowment planned by Higher Education authorities or policies. The sudden outbreak of the pandemic did not give teachers the opportunity to prepare themselves or to activate some teacher training. It forced and urged many teachers to provide an imminent response to all those sudden changes and to try to continue with their teaching activities and practices in a safe manner as quickly as possible. We therefore agree with Hodges et al. (2020) when they affirm that the methodological change derived from the emergence of COVID-19 is not exactly an organic digital transformation of teaching and learning, but rather the implementation of an emergency remote teaching methodology that has attempted to make our lives easier in the historical situation in which we all have been – or are still - immersed. García-Peñalvo and Corell (2020) also state that this urgent and fully unexpected situation has revealed many of the main methodological and competency deficiencies in education, and it has also highlighted the profound current difficulties that we teachers have to face when it comes to the necessary digital transformation of Higher Education institutions.

As regards to teaching and learning foreign languages at the university level, we cannot forget about the eminently practical and communicative character of language learning skills. In this sense, the changes and adjustments required for our teaching activity cannot and should not be exactly the same as those that were being applied in many other disciplines at universities. The active participation of students in their own learning process was considered essential and it was therefore urgent to (re)think new and attractive teaching methodologies

capable of fostering their motivation and involvement in tuition. Thus, neither teachers nor students should conceive technologies as insurmountable barriers or obstacles to learning and to acquiring or developing the different key competencies. The massive incorporation of digital tools in language teaching and learning should rather be understood as an opportunity to break more than ever with the physical barriers of the classroom and to be able to enter new intercultural and multilingual spaces. That adapted teaching reality based on technology offered teachers a new scenario from which we could all benefit. During the COVID-pandemic, the implementation of digital resources and platforms gave us all the opportunity to finally break away from other more traditional teaching methods, to present alternative models of foreign language teaching/learning, and to approach other foreign cultures and get to know them better.

When we talk about (re)thinking foreign language teaching, we teachers must also reflect on how we can maintain the quality levels which were initially set as well as on how we can offer equal opportunities to our students so that they may access those new teaching practices and methodologies and all the various and different materials around it. It is true that nowadays we often take for granted the almost universal access of younger students to technologies and we tend to believe that they all have an adequate mastery of them. Many studies go so far as to speak of “digital natives” when referring to young people and teenagers. However, if we take a closer look at the reality experienced over the last few months and the period of confinement, we can conclude that this is not entirely true. For instance, several studies have shown that not all students have their own electronic devices and they cannot always access synchronous virtual classes; others do not live in houses fitted with internet access or with an adequate signal strength as to be able to follow quality teaching. In other scenarios where the online teaching practices often coexist with the telework of many of the students' relatives, we can see how the personal computer available at home needs to be shared in the family and, consequently, it is not freely available and cannot be used by the student at any time. In the study by Acosta Jiménez (2020), it was observed that 7% of Bachelor students studying degrees related to foreign languages at the Universidad Autónoma Madrid did not have the required devices to follow classes properly. This lack of accessibility to electronic resources by a significant number of students is very worrying indeed, and it may lead to the creation of gaps and

inequalities in the teaching and learning practices and in the adequate and required acquisition of competencies when learning a foreign language.

When we look at the literature published in relation to teaching in Higher Education in times of the COVID-pandemic, we tend to find a clear emphasis on the response that each institution implemented during the period of confinement; even after the lockdown was over, we appreciate that many institutions implemented a model of blended learning. Most of these studies focus on the typology of the technologies that were used in that online teaching model or on how many facilities were modified during the period of confinement. However, we hardly find any significant analysis of the perception that both teachers and students had of the teaching/learning process itself. As discussed above, Canaza-Choque (2020) states that this transformation of traditional teaching methodologies into others more based on digitalization contains other important and significantly positive aspects. For instance, they have forced us as teachers to use new methods in university teaching as opposed to other more traditional methods and to replace - at least partially - models which have become obsolete. We also agree with him in the conviction that this pandemic and its implications

in the transformation of teaching and learning can generate a deep demotivation and inequality of opportunities among students, and this is of course an essential aspect that must be addressed by the various academic and political authorities in all countries.

In this context, and being still immersed in a post-pandemic era, it becomes necessary to carry out an analysis of the so-called internationalization at home as a useful tool for the development of key competences in foreign language students, since this internationalization may offer them real learning contexts where they can use the foreign language that they are learning. It will also help us teachers to maintain the quality standards of our teaching practices and may ensure that students achieve all those key competences set by the CEFR. The review and (re)design of our teaching activity should also consider equal opportunities among students and should try to avoid the segregation or creation of disadvantageous spaces for students. Thus, we believe that the novel use of semi-directed language exchanges in an internationalized environment at home and outside the classroom has meant for many teachers and students the creation of a new learning context that plays an undoubtedly important role in the development of key language skills such as written expression, reading comprehension and intercultural competence.

### **Objectives**

The main objective of this article is to analyse and evaluate the methodological relevance of a semi-directed language exchange used in a language teaching context between native speakers of Spanish and native speakers of German. All students had to practice the different communicative skills in the foreign language while they were immersed in a home-based internationalization environment. Such a practice primarily aimed at improving the linguistic and intercultural competences of learners while they are living with all the constraints and restrictions derived from the COVID-19 crisis and were immersed in blended learning environments.

By semi-directed language exchange, we mean the creation of several tandem conversation groups in which students of different nationalities are integrated together and in which the mother tongue of some students was the target language of others, and vice versa. On this occasion, and due to the mobility restrictions derived from the confinement, we teachers considered appropriate to create an atmosphere of internationalization at home for our students and to join our Spanish students learning German as a foreign language with German students learning Spanish as a foreign language at the UAM and with other German students attending lessons at different German universities. We were therefore able to promote a direct contact and linguistic exchange between native speakers of both languages without making them leave their home university.

With the implementation of the tandem methodology within our teaching practices we aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

To know how internationalization at home may have an impact or an influence on the achievement of the different linguistic objectives set in each of the language courses taught at university and by the CEFR.

To find out the relevance of the tandem methodology for the acquisition and development of the linguistic skills such as the written expression and the reading comprehension in foreign languages.

To find out whether the tandem methodology used in an internationalization environment at home may be useful and lead to develop and encourage the intercultural competence of learners of German as a second foreign language.

To facilitate the students' self-regulated participation in the exchange forums concerning different topics, and to enhance and promote the use of their own technological resources, in order to ensure their real possibilities of access to the network without having to incur in inequalities or undesirable technological gaps.

### **Methodology and research questions**

With the aim of verifying the relevance and all the achievements reached through this tandem methodology, we designed a qualitative research based on the methodology of a case study from which we were able to obtain relevant qualitative information from the different questionnaires that were carried out by the informants, who were the same foreign language students that have been mentioned above.

The key questions that guided our research were always closely related to the different general and specific objectives that have been described above. That is:

Is internationalization at home beneficial for the development of the different key language skills and for the development of the intercultural competence of language students?

To what extent do native Spanish speakers and native German speakers value the tandem methodology and the regular exchange of written messages positively?

Can the relationship between students from different backgrounds in the same learning forum be useful to all of them? May it help them - in a collaborative way - to progress in their proficiency in the written expression and/or in the reading comprehension? Can we observe that both groups of students, Spanish and German, make progress in terms of language proficiency?

May the tandem methodology help the students to get to know better the foreign culture(s) of their tandem partners? Will they be able to become more interculturally competent?

### **Method - Instrument and context**

The method used for data collection in the research based on the case study method described above was the questionnaire. This instrument was made up of a total of 31 questions that explored aspects such as the demographic characteristics of the informants, their assessment and opinion about the tandem project in general and about the work they did in each of the topics addressed in particular, their motivation to learn and some other aspects linked to acquisition/development of each linguistic competence and of the intercultural competence.

The specific context to which we are referring in this article is linked to our teaching activity as teachers of as a second or third foreign language at a Spanish university. Within that context we managed to implement the tandem methodology between Spanish students of German as a foreign language and German-speaking learners of Spanish as a foreign language. The whole tandem project took place during the period of blended learning triggered by the COVID-19 crisis, that is between March and May 2020.

The project was shown and explained in detail to our students during the first session of tuition in the Spring semester. At that time, a long and interesting discussion was held

between students and teachers. We all tried to select the different topics that the students were going to work on in the tandem project and the various language exchanges to be established with their classmates and tandem partners. According to their language level and their personal likes and preferences, most students agreed that the most important and motivating topics for them were those related to hobbies and leisure, music and series, the experience of studying abroad, the use and development of language in the Internet age and, finally, all the information about festivals and popular traditions in the foreign culture. All the different groups of students had the opportunity to address and work on each of these topics in the forums and to create a whole and relevant chain of linguistic exchanges. The regular and collaborative work of Spanish and German-speaking students with an equal or very similar level of linguistic competence in the foreign language did not only allow the students to get

to know each other and to develop their language skills, but it also led to an interesting and deep analysis and self-awareness of their own and other people's culture and language.

### **Participants**

We must consider two main groups of participants and informants within the tandem project that we present in this article.

On the one hand, we have the group of students who had Spanish as their mothertongue. These were students from different bachelor degrees at the Universidad Autónoma Madrid (Bachelor Degrees such as Translation and Interpreting, English Studies, Modern Languages, Culture and Communication, and Hispanic Studies). All these students were studying German as a second – or even as a third -foreign language. The participants - mostly aged between 19 and 22 - had a foreign language proficiency level of around A2/B1 in the CEFR, and all of them were studying in Madrid on a blended learning basis.

On the other hand, we have the group of students who had German as their mother tongue. Most of these students were in Madrid as incoming students within the Erasmus+ international mobility program, but some of them remained in their home cities in Germany and were only planning to come over to Madrid in a near future. These students were studying different bachelor degrees, such as Law, Psychology or Modern Languages. All of them had in their curriculum the study of Spanish as a foreign language and showed a proficiency level of Spanish of at least B1 in the CEFR.

Finally, and although they were not the object of this study, all the teaching staff from the German department of the Faculty in Madrid participated actively in this project too. They were very active in the supervision of the different exchange forums and they also carried out the preparation on each of the topics on which the tandem project was based on.

### **Data Collection Tool**

The teachers involved in the project worked on a questionnaire elaborated as a data collection tool, and once it was ready, it was made available to all the participants in the project in the last weeks of regular tuition at university. Then, each informant was required to complete all the questions in the data collection tool anonymously and they were given as much time as they needed to do so.

In addition, and since the questionnaire was conducted through the Google Forms application, all the answers collected were also automatically sent to the teachers' register, which was helpful and saved a lot of time.

### **Data Analysis - Qualitative data**

Considering the answers given by the students in the questionnaire, we can observe that about 60% of the informants say that they really liked and enjoyed their active participation in the tandem language exchange project as a tool linked to an internationalization framework at home (5 points out of 5). 31% of the students rated it 4 out of 5. In other words, the vast majority of the group (91%) was very happy or happy with the project and with the positive effect it had had on their language learning process. With this satisfaction, they do not only refer to the cognitive aspect, but they also explicitly refer to other aspects, such as the affective and the motivational factors.

Regarding the different topics that were addressed by the students during their participation in the tandem project, most students stated that those topics had been useful, in order to be able to work collaboratively with foreign students whom they had never met before. These topics also helped them to increase their knowledge of the target learning culture and to develop their linguistic skills. 70% of the informants rated them as very adequate, whereas 25% of them rated the topics as adequate. Only 5% considered that the selected topics had had neither a positive nor a negative influence on their linguistic or intercultural development during their participation in the tandem project.

When assessing the different topics addressed by the students in their language exchanges, we could also find different degrees of interest in each of them:

Music and culture: 81%.

Getting to know each other: 58%

Festivals and popular traditions: 55%.

Studying abroad: 50%

Learning languages in the Internet age: 39%.

Students' motivation or lack of motivation was also a particularly important issue for us teachers, since most of the students said in the aforementioned questionnaire that they had often felt somehow unprepared and unmotivated when they had to face a new and totally unexpected reality which was affecting their families, social life and academic situation because of the COVID-pandemic.



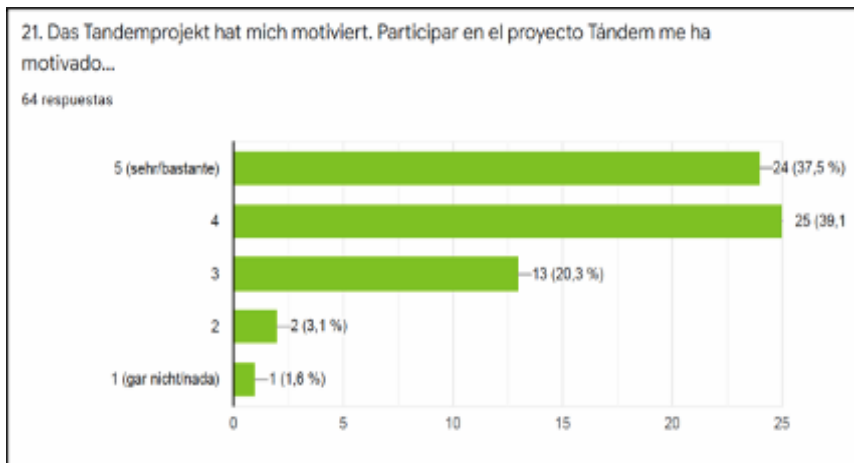


Figure 1

In Figure 1 we see that 77% of the informants felt very encouraged or encouraged to continue with their German courses after their participation in the tandem project. They considered that it had promoted the real communication in the foreign language and that the contact with native speakers through digital tools had helped them to improve their language and cultural skills.

Many of the questions in the questionnaire used for collecting data also revealed a clear trend towards the positive development of language skills. It is true that some skills were not worked on, such as the oral expression and/or the oral comprehension in the foreign language. We failed to assess the development and evolution of the students in those skills. However, in the questions referring to the development of the reading comprehension skills, 64% of the informants stated that their active participation in the tandem project had been helpful or very helpful, as shown in Figure 2.

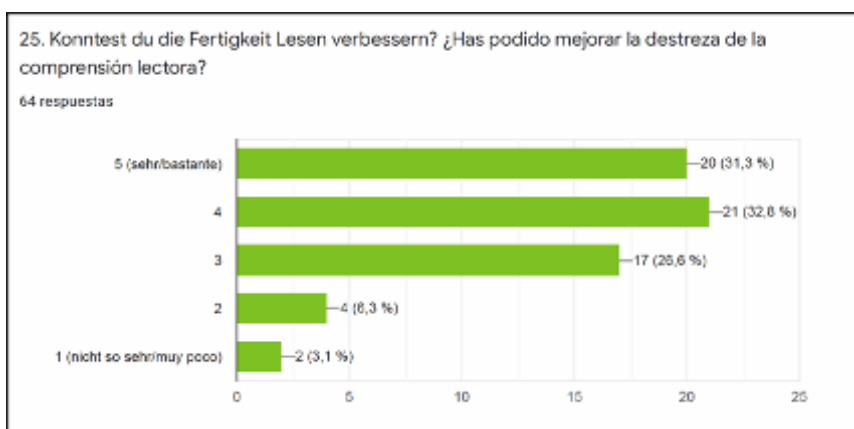


Figure 2

Whereas communication between the native Spanish and German-speaking students was based almost exclusively on the production and comprehension of written texts, these

competencies are also very much reinforced in the informants' evaluation (see Figure 3). Thus, 25% of the informants rated their progress in this skill as very positive, and 45% also answered that the tandem experience had helped them a lot. We can therefore observe that 70% of the participants had a positive or a very positive assessment of the tandem as a useful method to improve their language proficiency in the foreign language.

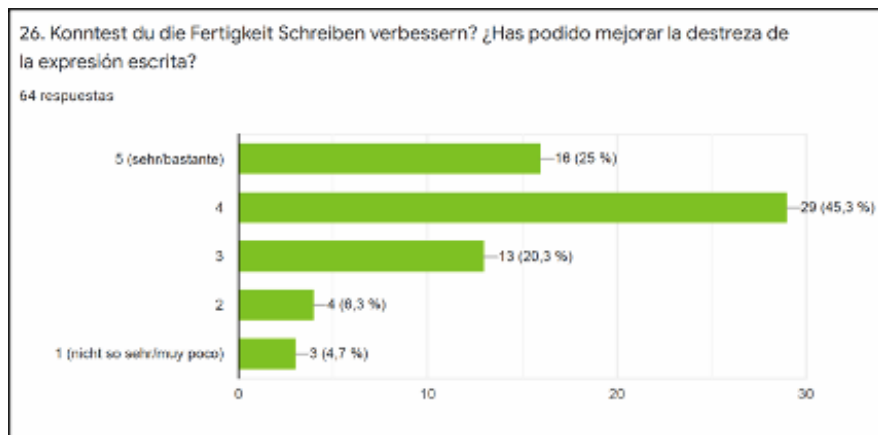


Figure 3

Finally, we would also like to briefly comment the data that refer to the subjective awareness of the participants in the project in relation to their progress in the so-called intercultural competence. 33% of the informants stated that this experience based on the internationalization at home had been totally adequate to deepen their intercultural competence, not only from a cognitive level, but also from an affective and attitudinal perspective. Likewise, 45% of the informants gave 4 points out of 5 to the adequacy of this project in terms of having been able to achieve that objective. The data collected in Figure 4 show that 78% of the students had found the project very useful and convenient to develop their intercultural competence and get to know the foreign culture better.

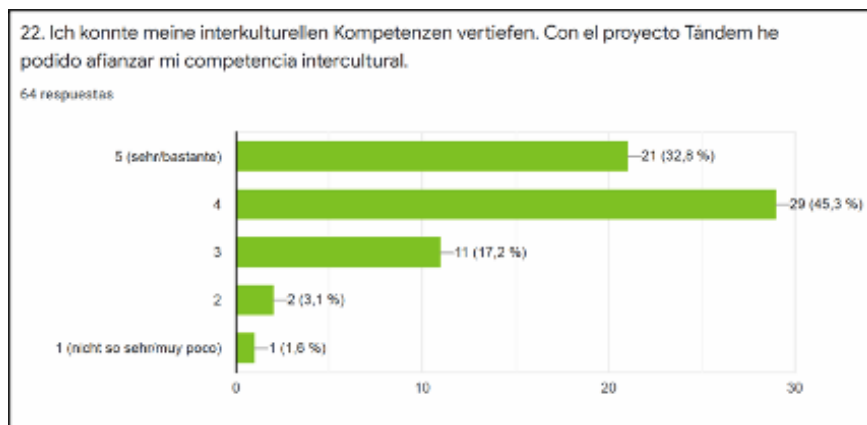


Figure 4

## **Evaluation and results**

Having analyzed the qualitative data discussed above and referring back to the proposed objectives at the beginning of this article, we can conclude that the project based on the semi-directed language exchange in a home-based internationalization environment has more than fulfilled all the goals that we had originally expected to achieve in this study.

With regard to the first objective, that is the evaluation of internationalization at home as a support for the development of key competencies, we must affirm that the data collected through this study support a very close relationship between the development of linguistic skills and the language and

cultural exchanges between Spanish native speakers learning German and German students learning Spanish, even though some of the latter students remained in their corresponding home universities. There is no doubt that the exchange in an environment involving a total linguistic immersion will always be extremely beneficial. However, in the pandemic scenario in which we are now living, the tandem methodology is proposed as a useful resource of great value for all foreign language learners.

Regarding the development of written comprehension, which was our second specific objective, it has become clear that there is also a close relationship between the use of forums and platforms for real language exchanges and for the development of students' comprehension skills. Their motivation when learning a foreign language significantly grows when they have to deal with authentic texts dealing with topics of interest and when they have to work collaboratively with other students and that is how this key competence may also be reinforced.

The tandem methodology has also been endorsed as a context of exchange in which it is possible to develop the multicultural competence, as we proposed in the third specific objective. It is important to assume here that it is not only a matter of an exchange of knowledge related to the target culture. It is also about developing other competencies that allow for an effective intercultural communication, based on attitudes and on other solid affective factors that allow the existence of a natural, adequate, real and fluent communication in the foreign language.

Finally, and as we mentioned in the fourth specific objective, active and collaborative digital methodologies have been often implemented in the last few months, since they do not require synchronous meetings in the networks, and that makes it possible for each student to interact in the forums when they have the real possibility to do so. Thus, all students have had the same requirements without experiencing disadvantages or limitations for not having the necessary technological resources. These teaching practices have therefore provided the students with an adequate learning autonomy and equal opportunities.

## **Discussion and limitations of future research**

Leaving aside the necessary mobility restrictions set by the scientific and political authorities in times of COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the new teaching models and practices referred to in this article clearly shows that collaborative learning through digital tools among students of different nationalities has a very positive impact on their motivation. It allows them to make a more effective and real use of all the linguistic and intercultural skills that they have acquired and to put their language training into practice in a regular and very

active way in real multilingual communicative environments. Thanks to these teaching practices in which they can reinforce, consolidate and apply the grammatical structures and vocabulary that they have acquired not only in the language classroom but also in the web and in the tandem practice with foreign students, language learners appear to feel much more attracted to other languages and cultures and that increases and encourages their desire to participate in internationalization experiences both inside and outside their own country.

Nowadays, when international mobility - so necessary for language learners as a complement to their academic training - seems unthinkable or at least it remains subject to very strict limitations, the implementation of teaching methodologies such as tandem experiences allow for an adequate development not only of the key linguistic competencies such as written expression and reading comprehension, oral expression and comprehension, but also of the essential intercultural competence (Bennet, 1986; Deardorff, 2006). In this sense, the limited physical mobility of students in times of the COVID-29 crisis is thus complemented by innovative teaching practices that favor internationalization at home (Beelen and Jones, 2015; Brandenburg, 2014; Fritz, W. and Möllenberg, A., 2002; Robson S., 2017). Moreover, for many students, for whom participation in a physical mobility program to other countries is limited by different factors such as economic, family, personal, work-related factors, etc., immersion in their foreign language classes in certain intercultural and multilingual spaces and their active participation in collaborative learning activities with students from other cultures, offers them a kind of *alternative* mobility, that is, as a kind of virtual mobility and a certain internationalization within their corresponding home universities.

In summary, the exceptional scenario brought about by the irruption of COVID-19 to the educational environment has highlighted the need to (re)think and implement alternative teaching methodologies in the classroom to the traditional face-to-face teaching. The enormous challenge that

teachers and students have had to face by suddenly having to adapt most of their teaching/learning activities to an online format should therefore be understood not as a handicap, but rather as the opposite; that is, as an opportunity to foster the true internationalization of teaching practices - physical or virtual - favoring the development of all the linguistic and intercultural skills reflected in the CEFR.

The challenge of creating collaborative learning spaces and networks at the various HEIs is now more relevant than ever, and it requires the collaboration of all teachers in the design of new teaching practices, resources and learning and assessment tools, as well as the necessary training of teachers and students in the handling of new technologies.

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# **Development of Grammatical Knowledge for Communication Activities for Foreign Language Acquisition in Online Classroom for Preparatory Year of Romanian Language at the University of Pitești**

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## **Abstract**

The paper focuses on developing grammatical knowledge for communication activities, through interactive sample activities in the online classroom, in the process of Romanian language acquisition as a foreign language of study for young adults, between 18 – 21 years of age, who apply for the Preparatory year of Romanian language at the University of Pitești, Romania. Teaching grammar has always been a challenge in every teaching-learning process of a foreign language. Grammar grounded knowledge is the key for communication in terms of accuracy and fluency, because it is important for learners to have a set of rules and constructions to make use of, in order to develop interactive and communicative abilities. Each set of activities focusing on accuracy or on fluency used to create correct examples of language use, requires adaptation to the communicative needs, depending on the level of the learners and their needs. Recent national and international events make it clear that there is an imperative need to adjust the entire process of delivering communicative grammatical content in order to make grammar become functional at the level of online communication the learners have to achieve. The goal during online classes is to use targeted communicative practice activities and performative tasks that best facilitate communicative grammar comprehension and learning, in order to help young adult learners gain confidence to start speaking and communicate online.

**Keywords:** grammatical knowledge, communication activities, preparatory year, Romanian language, online classroom

## **1. Introduction**

We are facing the birth of a new society defined by different patterns of communication, a different perception of space and time, where everyone can access and use the online environment, regardless of age, gender, social class and geographical context. The

continuously – growing need for acquiring communication skills in a foreign language is fully justified, since it opens new doors in terms of employment, and it also allows you the opportunity to know new cultures, people and places. This ongoing technological progress and changes in the knowledge-based society is challenging the educators and trainers to rethink what they teach, to whom, how and when. The world has gradually changed so surprisingly over the last 10 years, that we, as teachers, have to ask ourselves if our traditional way of organizing education really meets the needs of today's learners. In order to prepare ourselves to teach a changing audience – the digital generation - we had to use pedagogical strategies that strengthen the quality of the learning process. We managed to attract our learners by doing a systematic rethinking of the teaching methods, by redefining the learning concepts, by introducing new innovative elements besides the students' textbooks, by reshaping learning approaches.

The main aim of this article is to investigate how the Romanian grammar teaching and learning is carried out in the process of Romanian language acquisition as a foreign language of study for the Preparatory year of Romanian language academic courses at the University of Pitesti, Romania; to focus on grammar content from the students' textbook, and to present a sample of interactive targeted communicative activities as well as some performative tasks meant to engage students in spontaneous communication. To fulfil our aim, we have the following main research objectives, which we will explore in the present article, by applying questionnaire and by taking interviews: for the first part of our analysis we will discuss about the grammar content in the students' textbook, language teachers' attitude on grammar instruction process for communicative purposes; the last part of the analysis will present the effects of the methods and activities used to improve students' communicative performance.

## **2. Brief Outline of the Methods and Approaches for Language Learning and Teaching**

### *2.1 The Grammar Translation Method*

The Grammar Translation Method is the classical method, considered simple and effective (Stern, 1996), whose main objectives are the study of grammar, vocabulary and literature. The approach is a deductive one, with the emphasis on conscious learning. The ability to receive the written message and the ability to express oneself in written are the most practiced skills. The native language of the students is extensively used, the techniques used being translations, reading texts, grammar exercises and vocabulary. The roles of the teacher are as follows: manager, coordinator and evaluator of the students, the interaction in the classroom taking place especially between the teacher and the students (frontal approach). Correcting students is very important because the emphasis is on accuracy.

### *2.2 The Direct Method*

The inventor of the method is C. Berlitz. The main objective is to teach students to communicate in a foreign language. Translation is not allowed, the teacher using the real world, images, pantomime to suggest meaning. The mother tongue is not used at all. Grammar is taught inductively. Students practice vocabulary in context. The techniques used are: conversation, reading aloud, exercises, compositions, repetitions. The teacher's role is to be a partner of the student. The interaction takes place between the teacher and the students, but also between the students and the students.

### *2.3 Presentation, Practice, Production ( PPP)*

This is the British version of the audio-lingual method, notes Jeremy Harmer (2004, p. 80). It consists of three stages. In the first stage the teacher introduces the elements of language to be assimilated. Students practice using reproductive and rehearsal techniques. The third stage concerns the use of language presented and assimilated in an original and authentic way by the students. As with the audio-lingual method, vocabulary and grammar are taught inductively. Communication takes precedence, since the mother tongue is not used. The model is the teacher, who is the one who coordinates the activity. Because it is a method based on communication and evaluation is done all this way.

### *2.4 The Communicative Approach*

The Communicative Approach or Communicative Language Teaching ( CLT) has as main objective is students' fluency. Emphasis is placed on "real" communication (Harmer, 2004, p. 85). All four dimensions of language teaching are developed: the ability to express oral expression, the ability to receive the oral message, the ability to receive the written message and the ability to express oneself in writing. The learners' communicative skills are developed by linking grammatical development to the ability to communicate. Grammar is taught in relation to a communicative task, thus creating a need for specific items of grammar . The students' mother tongue is not used. The techniques used are: discussions, debates, role-playing, written communicative activities, drama, etc. The roles of the teacher are those of facilitator and manager of the students' activity, but also of their partner, the interaction taking place especially between students. Authentic and interesting materials are used in order for the students to make connections with their own language and culture. Errors are tolerated especially during communication activities, when the emphasis is on fluency. Students are evaluated both orally and in writing.

## **3. Research Design and Procedures**

For the first analysis part we have discussed the role of grammar teaching, with reference to the communicative activities in a second language acquisition process, then we made an analysis of grammar and grammar exercises in the students' textbook for Romanian language which we use at the academic preparatory year of Romanian language in our university. In order to find out the teachers of languages' opinion about grammar teaching for communicative activities as well as about the teaching aids and educational materials used during online classes to make the methods and approaches for teaching a foreign language more interesting, we applied some questionnaires and interviewed them. For the last part, during online classes , we gave the students a task to complete : exercises with interactive targeted communicative activities, and we compared the answers given by the students when they were interviewed about how they understood better the concept and the use of grammar rules, with their academic results of the respective practice communicative activities.

### *3.1 The Role of Grammar Teaching for Communicative Activities*

Grammar is at the heart of spoken and written communication and allows us to be clearly understood by others. Teaching grammar is fundamental in the process of acquiring a foreign language. Without grammar we can hardly speak, and if we do, it will not be very correct and concrete. Grammar has long been a subject of study and although the methods of studying grammar have changed dramatically lately, the reasons for studying grammar have remained



essentially the same. Grammar allows people to communicate what they want to express in a way that can be understood clearly. Explicit knowledge of grammar is very important, as it gives us a more conscious control and choice over the language. By fostering explicit knowledge of grammar, performative tasks will hopefully become implicit over time. Poor use of grammar can lead to blurring of messages, which affects our ability to communicate and can hinder the strengthening of relationships – an important skill for the development of young people. The correct use of grammar, on the other hand, makes listening and reading easier, making communication more enjoyable and impact more positively on relationships. Grammatical competence is defined in the CEF as follows: "... knowledge of, and ability to use, the grammatical resources of a language[...]. Grammatical competence is the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognizing well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with these principles (as opposed to memorizing and reproducing them as fixed formulae)." (Council of Europe, 2001, pp112-113). By teaching grammar, young people become even better prepared for the world of work. Discussion on how to teach grammar effectively and how to provide effective grammar practice for students has always been a major concern for both language teachers and learners. In order to make a grammar instruction meaningful, there are some reasons to take into consideration: students need to think critically when given grammar concepts and rules; they have a better understanding of grammar if the grammar instruction is sequenced; students need regular practice of what they are being taught; students need to acquire grammatical skills that will allow them to be able to transfer their comprehension of grammar knowledge to reading, writing, and real life. Brown (2001) mentioned that grammar should be taught in accurate communicative contexts, thus encouraging fluency and accuracy. He also offered a set of guidelines for teaching grammar for effective communication: simple explanations, clear examples, relevant visual teaching aid; grammar should be presented in an interesting, motivating way for the students, taking into account learners' cognitive style, as well.

### *3.2 An Analysis of Grammar Structure in the Students' Textbook*

We will examine the techniques used for grammar teaching and learning in classrooms, also grammar content in students' textbooks. Șerban V. and Ardelean L. (1980), argue that the structure of teaching and learning a grammatical phenomenon should comprise five stages:

1. Preparatory dialogue with complete semantics of forms.
2. Presentation of forms in context (structuring phase).
3. Structural assignment exercises (exercise / practice phase).
4. Functional exercises (generalization phase).
5. Integrating the phenomenon into micro-conversation (skills training).

Our students' textbook for Romanian language as a foreign language, called "Limba română – Manual pentru studenții străini din anul pregătitor", whose authors we are, generally follow this line; language structures are taught in close connection with vocabulary and grammar elements, and are exemplified on texts. The introductory part is dedicated to phonetics, with oral teaching, in order to clarify the issues related to the target language sounds; teaching is sequenced then into reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary, and, eventually, fluent speech. As structure, it comprises complete units, the grammatical category being associated with the appropriate theme, and the act of speech, being related to the thematic area; the lexical and grammatical components is presented and explained and then integrated into communication structures; a theme such as "In the city" can be used for teaching the forms of the adjective,

and the description of means of transportation in the teaching of the demonstrative pronoun and adjective. The clearly formulated objectives of the unit are presented at the beginning of each lesson. Romanian grammar is presented in a clear manner, with very short and comprehensive structures, with rules displayed in a simple manner; the morphology, syntax is structured according to the level of speech, progressively, so that the learners may acquire a proper vocabulary, which, together with a set of grammar rules, will allow them to become engaged in further communicative activities. The exercises are very simply presented, especially at the beginning, by setting a demonstrative model as example. Grammar exercises are generally based on the model: first is shown an item with a given answer as example, and then a number of eight to twelve similar items are given to be solved. In addition, dictation and grammatical compositions are used.

### *3.3 A View of Teachers' Attitude Towards Teaching Grammar for Communicative Purposes*

In the process of second language teaching, teachers are supposed to use participative techniques and apply suitable strategies so that their students can produce the spoken language in an acceptable way, as well as to contribute to the increase of the activeness, creativeness and productiveness of learning among students. At the same time, we refer to the students who should have a good level of oral fluency, after having been introduced to the most appropriate techniques for developing the oral fluency, along with grammatical accuracy, thus being able to determinate the achievement in their communication activities, whether effective or not. We applied a questionnaire and we also interviewed the 12 teachers, aged between 45 to 65 years of age, 85 % out of whom are female teachers, that deliver courses of Romanian language as a foreign language, to find out what is the way grammar should be taught in the classroom, and to present several situations that describe how teachers of languages make use of several methods, techniques and approaches, and what is the type of targeted oriented practice activities, performative tasks they use, in order to prove the efficacy of grammar instruction as a necessary step towards meaningful communication. The questions that teachers were required to answer in the questionnaire referred to the language used in grammar teaching, to what are the methods and techniques used for teaching Romanian as a foreign language, as well as of teaching grammar, and also to specify the tools and resources (teaching aids and educational materials) they used for online practice of communication activities in the online classes. For the interview part we enquired, teachers discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the methods and approaches they used for teaching grammar for communicative purposes, and also about the benefits and barriers of the tools and resources they used in online classroom.

The question that referred to the language used in grammar teaching: "Do you think Romanian grammar should be taught in Romanian, in the link language, or in both?" revealed the following answers: when enquired if grammar should be taught in Romanian or with the help of the link language ( English or French) or both, 65% of teachers agreed to use them both. 10 % of the teachers answered that grammar should be taught only in Romanian, so that teachers have the chance to listen to the target language, while 25 % thought that grammar should be taught only with the help of the link language, because it is easier for the students to understand the rules.

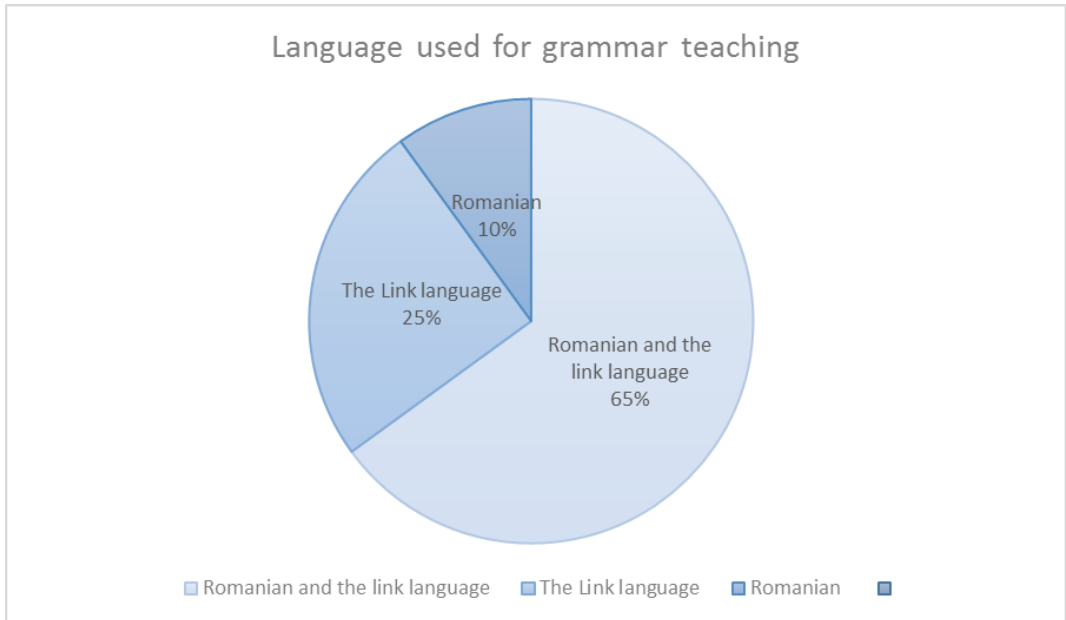


Figure 1 – Language used for grammar teaching

For the question, about what are the methods and techniques used for teaching Romanian as a foreign language, we asked the question: “Which approach do you use to present grammar content?”, and we also made interviews about teaching methods and approaches for teaching grammar. The investigation focused on two topics: the methods of grammar teaching, the relationships between correct grammar and communicative competence. We know there are two main approaches of teaching grammar. The deductive approach, more teacher – centred, when the teacher gives the rule, and language is produced based on the rule, and the inductive approach, more student – centred, when the teacher gives the students a means to discover the rule by themselves. As it is also written in the questionnaire, we asked teachers which approach do they use when teaching grammar, the deductive one, which includes PPP, Grammar Translation Method, the inductive one, which includes The Direct Method, The Communicative Method, or a mix of these types of approaches. We can see that when the teachers taught new grammar content in the classroom, 25% of teachers used only inductive approaches, because it consolidates students’ oral as well as written abilities. 70% of the teachers used both inductive and deductive approaches in their classrooms: they used inductive approaches when a new grammar topic was first introduced and followed up with deductive approaches when the topic was reviewed. Only 5% of teachers used the deductive approach. Figure 2, down below, shows a graphical representation of the answers of the language teachers, regarding the teaching approach for grammar content.

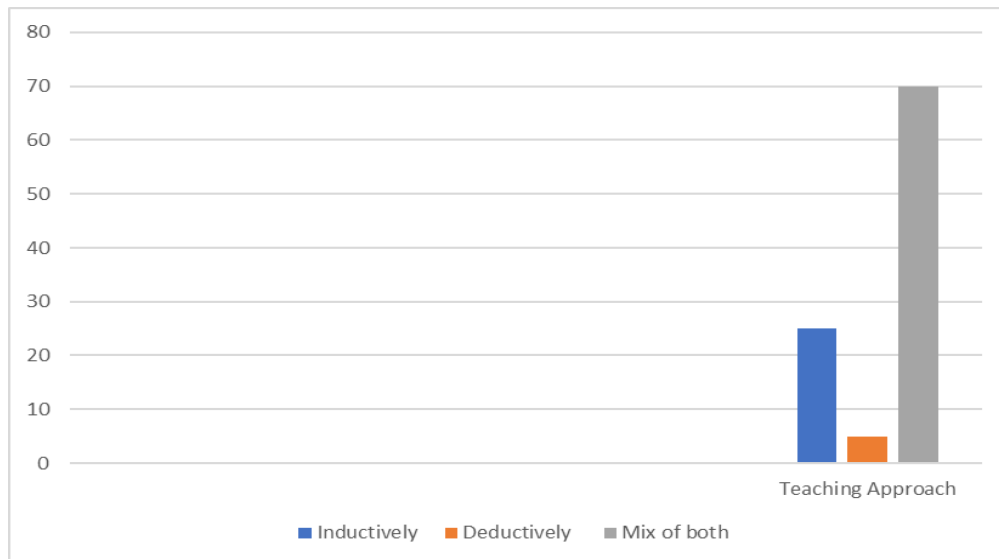


Figure 3 – Teaching approach for grammar content

We shall further discuss three different situations of teaching that we were presented during the interviews, and then we shall explain the advantages and disadvantages of using these methods and approaches for communicative purposes during classes of Romanian language as a foreign language. This is in addition to the questionnaires, but the findings are coincident. Situation 1: the teacher explains to the students what will be expected during the task and post task review section. The teacher introduces, or reviews, as is the case, the main vocabulary and grammatical items the students will need to accomplish the assigned task. This is Presentation, Practice, Performance (PPP), a deductive approach whose main advantage is that it is easy to implement, because production comes only after presentation and practice, it allows the possibility to prime language for later use. One of the main disadvantages is that it deprives students of learning opportunities, because they may become unsure on how to use target language in different contexts.

Situation 2: the teacher uses pictures and images to teach new words, speaks only in Romanian ( the target language), reads a passage in the text, then he asks the students questions related to that passage, and ends the lesson in an attractive way for the students, by telling a poem. The Direct Method, here presented, is a method which has very great impact in language teaching, hence the oral and natural techniques used have as main aim acquisition of the language by associating the word with the action, without involving mother tongue. This method ignores written work and reading activities. There is not sufficient attention paid to reading and writing skills.

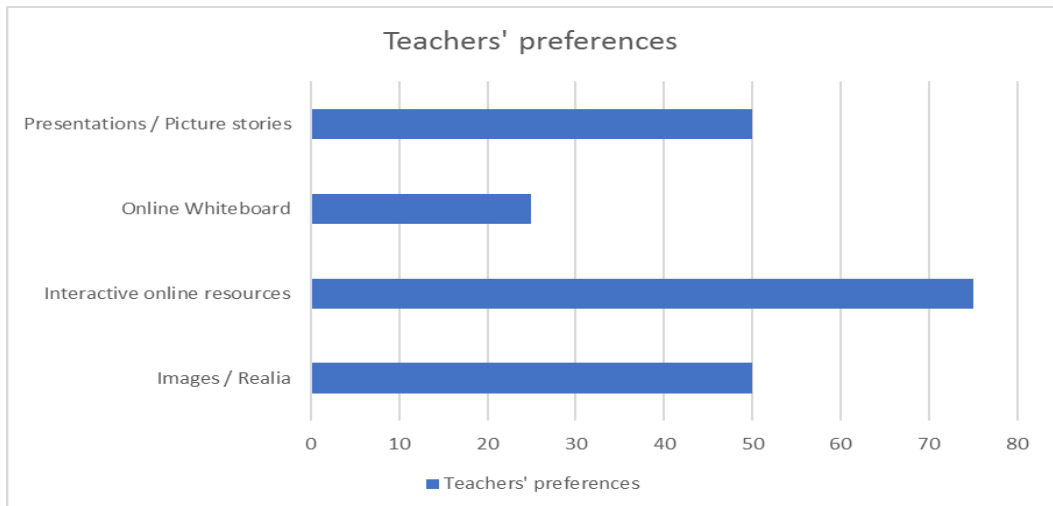
Situation 3: the teacher asks students to repeat the sentences he uttered; the expressions are learnt by using the dialogue based on imaginary situations; after the sentences are repeated and memorised, students work in pairs, then they are introduced the model exercise, they copy the exercise. This is mix of the deductive and inductive approaches, in the desire to cover reading, listening, writing and oral performance.

The research findings indicate that teachers' perceptions about grammar and grammar teaching is that students should be able to express their own ideas in real situations in a language that is as correct, meaningful and appropriate as possible, their task being to facilitate this grammatical skill with maximum efficiency. Teachers' role is to guide students on how to make use of the patterns of grammatical form in contexts of communicative activities. Learners, in their turn, should learn grammar implicitly through target language use and explicitly through the discovery of grammatical rules through use in meaningful examples.

For the question "what are the teaching aids and educational materials you used for the targeted communicative activities during online classes?" we inquired about the tools and resources, , they were required to choose from a variety of items and solutions available for online language teaching. Traditionally, language teachers use textbooks as an essential tool for teaching and learning that supplement teacher instruction. Foreign language learners use the textbook as a qualitative source of learning with language other than input given by the teacher. Given the present situation, the attention shifted to a more adequate way of delivering courses, introducing new, interactive teaching tools and educational resources and using proper methods and approaches to help the students be ready for the instruction that will allow them to communicate.

It resulted that teachers are more interested in the digital content, especially the one that is interactive for several reasons: it is more attractive to the student, it contains built-in audio and video, the student feels more involved in the learning process, it also offers the opportunity for the completed exercises to be corrected automatically, as well as the information necessary to accomplish the targeted practice activities, such as a glossary or grammar reference, it engages students into a friendly learning environment, so as to gain confidence and start speaking.

Figure 3 shows the teachers' preference for several types of digital content:



Besides the preferences resulted from the questions of the questionnaire, we asked the teachers to motivate their choice. The interactive online tools and resources are preferred in 75% cases in online teaching. They said they represent an extraordinary solution: the video

clips on different virtual platforms can be viewed by students, for communicative purposes, and later on they can complete worksheets, created mainly by the teachers; or, some interactive live worksheets, created entirely by the teacher, quiz, which offer a useful feedback, not only to the students, but also to the teachers, who can have an easier and clearer record of the students' personal progress. With an equal percent of 50 %, teachers make use of picture stories and presentation; in the same way, they use Realia or images when they introduce new vocabulary or grammar, or as a starting point for communication activities; these kind of activities make students feel motivated and become actively involved in the online class. Power Point Presentations, as well as Picture stories represent a support for the student – teacher interaction. Picture stories are usually a starting point for a narrative speaking or a writing activity, but they can also be of utmost importance in the communicative and interactive classroom. The Power Point Presentations can be very dynamic, attractive and interesting, especially if the teacher succeeds in combining successfully the text, the images, the audio, the video to present new material to the students. Another advantage is the fact that, once it is distributed, it can be accessed by the students any time, at will. There was only 25 % preference for the online whiteboard. The use of such a software brings a lot of benefits, by creating an attractive environment for real collaboration during online classes, by allowing possibility for all participants to write and draw at the same time and also to see in real time the changes made, by offering easy access to other online applications or digital content. The lack of choice for this e-tool is due to the fact that during face – to – face classes, the classical whiteboard was the main tool used for collaborative activities, while at the online classes, both teachers and students have much more opportunities and choices among all the other interactive resources and digital tools.

#### *3.4 Grammar Teaching in Practice in Online Classroom*

In terms of grammar teaching practice for communicative purposes, we propose a set of targeted interactive-learning activities for young adults between 18 – 21 years of age, during online classes at the Preparatory year of Romanian language, with the purpose of developing communication abilities, increasing learning efficiency and building positive interpersonal relationships. We shall present a sample – activity of this type we applied to all the groups of students. It is an activity in which the learner is pushed to speak on a topic using, at the same time, grammar rules.

Figure 4 presents a sample of a targeted communicative activity, an interactive worksheet, presented during online classes, which is the starting point for engaging students into spontaneous authentic communication.

1. Completează , în exemplele următoare, cu prepozițiile din chenarul de mai jos corespunzătoare, pentru a forma propoziții corecte.

în, la, din, de la, pe, spre

2. Citește fiecare propoziție și bifează dacă este adevărat sau fals în cazul tău, notând A sau F în coloana marcată „ TU”.

PROPOZIȚIE	ADEVARAT sau FALS			
	TU			
1. În general, eu merg .... munte de două ori pe an.				
2. Când intru .... magazin, cumpăr și articole aflate la promoție, chiar dacă nu am nevoie de ele				
3. După ce ies ..... un film, de obicei, rețin câteva fraze interesante.				
4. Dacă simt nevoia să fac mișcare în aer liber, merg să alerg .... stadion.				
5. Când am cursuri, plec ...facultate cu o jumătate de oră mai devreme.				
6. Atunci când merg într-o clădire înaltă, îmi place să urc.... ultimul etaj să admir priveliștea				
7. Când vin ... facultate, acasă, după cursuri, de obicei, revizuiesc materia predată de către profesor				
8. Prietenii mei sosesc ... vizită la mine acasă, de obicei fără să anunțe înainte.				

3. Acum, lucrați în grupuri, scrieți numele membrilor grupului în celelalte coloane și discutați fiecare propoziție în detaliu. Completați cu răspunsurile colegilor.

Figure 4 A sample of interactive targeted communicative activity

In this verbs of movement with obligatory preposition activity, students learn 8 verbs of movement with obligatory preposition and use them in a virtual group discussion. We put the interactive worksheet on the classroom platform. Students begin by completing verbs of movement with obligatory preposition task in 8 statements, with the prepositions shown on the interactive worksheet. When the students have finished, they are automatically given the answers; then, we review each verb verbs of movement with obligatory preposition and the meaning of each statement. Next, students read each statement and indicate whether it is true for them or not by writing 'A' for true or 'F' for false in the column marked "TU". After that, we divide the students into groups of four. One student from each group is designated to write the names of their group members in the other columns of the chart. The students then discuss each statement in detail and the designated student from each group completes the chart with their classmates' true or false answers. Afterwards, we have a class feedback session to find out which statements were true for most of the students and which were false. Any interesting findings can then be discussed in more detail.

This type of activities are more practical and conversation-focused. Their aim is to stimulate the use of grammar and vocabulary the students have learnt. These activities should enhance different skills altogether: team working, communication in a foreign language, public skills, problem-solving, creative thinking etc. Through targeted communicative activities, interaction and group work are encouraged, increasing the learner's self-esteem and ability to organize and learn autonomously. These activities help learners use the language in various areas, focusing more on communication. Furthermore, the choice of the topic is crucial, and also a certain relaxation, on the teacher's part, with regard to testing.

The results returned from these type of activities, together with the answers given by the fifteen interviewed students showed that grammar understanding was inversely proportional to grammatical errors made in exercises. The greater the level of understanding the students had, the more correct answers they tended to give. Moreover, the competency level in listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammatical understanding are different primarily because of the different teaching approaches used.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

This article evaluated several teaching approaches, to determine which method is the most appropriate for the purposes of teaching and learning Romanian grammar for the Preparatory year of Romanian language academic courses at the University of Pitești for the courses delivered during online classes. Furthermore, in order to understand how grammar is presented in the students' textbook, we studied the grammar section of the students' textbooks, and we examined the ways of grammar teaching and learning in the classroom, and how the exercises are displayed in textbooks. After that, to learn more about the teachers' view towards teaching grammar for Romanian as a foreign language, we presented some situations in which the teachers demonstrated how they used the teaching methods and grammar instruction in the classroom, making observations for the methods chosen. To determine if a specific teaching method and grammar instruction technique can enhance oral performance, we examined the effectiveness of the targeted interactive practice activities and performance tasks via interviews with the students and by comparing their answers with their academic results obtained in the online classes. The analysis of the teaching methods, the grammar and grammar exercises from the students' book, the teachers' preference for some digital tools and online resources for their online class, together with the level of oral performance of the learners of Romanian as a foreign language, has yielded several results. Practice showed that students were exposed to the both learning approaches, inductive and deductive, in order to develop their listening, reading, writing, speaking abilities as well as to gain grammatical knowledge. At the same time, the new virtual environment created a new context where they were more willing to interact and communicate, especially if the teacher adapted the methods and approaches to the online classes. So, no matter how relevant the students' book are, the teacher's methods and approaches have the greatest impact on students' learning, on their engagement in discussions, on their level of grammar accuracy and oral fluency for any performative tasks or targeted communicative activities.

The conclusion that emerges after conducting the analysis through both questionnaires and interviews is that in general, the teachers possess positive attitudes towards grammar teaching. They believe grammar is useful and important for understanding the structure of the Romanian language and for communicative purposes.



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## Appendix

### *Questionnaire for the Teachers*

1. Do you think Romanian grammar should be taught in Romanian, in the link language, or in both?

*Romanian*

*Link language*

*Both*

2. Which approach do you use to present grammar content?

*Inductive approach*

*Deductive approach*

*A mix of approaches*

4. What are the teaching aids and educational materials you used for the targeted communicative activities during online classes?

*Realia / Images*

*Power Point Presentation / Picture stories*

*Online Whiteboard*

*Interactive online resources (interactive worksheets, video clips, quiz)*

# Reconstruction of Cliché Image of Oriental Woman in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to hold a mirror to the existential struggle of an immigrant Muslim woman who is trying to survive on her journey to the west. Mohsin Hamid presents Nadia as one of the main characters in his 2017 novel *Exit West*. The paradox concerning Nadia is that while her preference for wearing a long black robe confirms the western misconstrued image of Muslim women, her actions, her view of the world, of life and of herself definitely refute the ingrained eastern notion of the suppressed, submissive, silenced Muslim woman. According to the dominant western view, oriental women are still under the strict control of the mechanisms of patriarchy. Among the control mechanisms of patriarchal order are traditions, norms, values and religion. However, Nadia does not fall into this western miscategorization of Muslim woman with her strong, rebellious character, and with her freethinking and insight. Indeed, it is Nadia, who safeguards, directs and in a sense, matures Saeed's-the other main character-rather timid and naïve personality. What is unexpected in the journey of these two characters is that the one who is need of identity reconstruction is not the female but the male character, for Nadia does already have a firmly constructed identity and she has no intention to transform either her outfit or her world view for the sake of integrating herself into the western culture. In brief, through the character of Nadia, Mohsin Hamid reconstructs the cliché image of oriental woman. In *Exit West*, Hamid reverses stereotyped gender roles by attributing his female character all the dominant personality traits attached to the male sex.

**Keywords:** Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West*, oriental woman cliché, reversed gender roles

## Introduction

"There is no possible fight for someone deprived of an identity, no internal motivation for fighting, since although I can fight only with others, first I fight for myself"

Monique Wittig (1997, p. 269)

## 1. In an Unnamed Eastern City

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid presents Nadia and Saeed as his main characters who are trying to survive in a chaotic world where human existence seems to be merely coincidental. The beginning of the novel is set, in the unnamed city of an eastern country where political unrest is caused partly by the refugee flows from another unnamed neighbouring country and partly by the dissension between the government forces and the militants. To Michael Perfect (2019), “the names of the protagonists’ city and their country are left blank, [...] to encourage readers to insert those of their own” (p. 190). Yet, to Shazia Sadaf (2020), the unnamed country is “quite identifiable as Pakistan, and the unspecified militants as the Taliban” (p. 639). At the onset, the author introduces the fragile atmosphere of the city and the encounter of his two protagonists as follows:

In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom. [...] His name was Saeed and her name was Nadia and he had a beard, not a full beard, [...], and she was always clad from the tips of her toes to the bottom of her jugular notch in a black robe. Back then people continued to enjoy the luxury of wearing more or less what they wanted to wear, clothing and hair wise, within certain bounds of course, and so these choices meant something. (Hamid, 2017, p. 1)

Nadia and Saeed meet in an evening class and a sudden intimacy grows between the two while the split between the militants and the present government deepens. Saeed is the only child of his parents and he still enjoys living with them. His father is a university professor and his mother is a retired schoolteacher. Ironically, Saeed and his well-read, liberal and moderate parents appear to be more conservative compared to Nadia who wears a black robe, giving the impression that she is a pious practising Muslim woman. Yet, she is riding a motorcycle and inside her black robe, she is wearing jeans and T-shirts. To Saeed’s surprise, as she mounts her motorcycle, she puts on her head a helmet instead of a black cloth. Indeed, Nadia might be deemed a disbeliever for the black robe functions as a shield protecting her against possible sexual assaults as well as the various sanctions of religious patriarchy. She uses her religious attire as a mirror whereby, just like Perseus holding his shield against the deadly gaze of Medusa, she reflects upon eastern and western viewers their respective prejudices: while eastern viewers see a “properly” Muslim woman who is bound by tradition, western viewers perceive a woman oppressed by religious patriarchy; in truth, fitting neither of these two stereotypes, Nadia manages to navigate in life as a pragmatic survivor. When Saeed asks the frequency of her prayers, Nadia frankly and, even harshly, says that she does not pray at all. Since Saeed could not match Nadia’s conservative appearance, her black robe, with her ideas about praying, he dares to ask a few days later: “‘If you don’t pray,’ he said, lowering his voice, ‘why do you wear it?’ [...] She smiled. [...] ‘So men don’t fuck with me’ she said” (Hamid, 2017, p. 16).

After finishing university, Nadia cuts off all her ties with the strictly religious members of her family when she announces that she will live on her own. To the tradition bound members of her family, the idea of a young single woman living alone without a male protector (a father or a husband) is definitely unacceptable. Indeed, since childhood, Nadia’s curious character, her disrespectful demeanour and continual questioning of “unquestionable” religious issues have been not only infuriating but intimidating her father. So as to lead the life of a true free spirit, Nadia discards her father, mother and sister without hesitation, and thereafter, neither her family members nor she herself attempt to repair the broken ties between them, despite the

feeling of regret that would follow all the four throughout their lives. Obviously, such a rebellious figure like Nadia, a young woman who refuses to conform to the coercive paradigms of patriarchy, would take the risk of forsaking her family. Nadia's family appears to be the smallest unit of a patriarchal society that is run by a patriarchal state. According to Kate Millett (2000), the family, society and the state are interrelated institutions and had there been a lack of cooperation between them, a collapse in all the three would have been inevitable (p. 33). In such patriarchal societies, the father is given the role of the head of the family; all family members should obey his absolute authority; that authority is also empowered by religious discourse so as to leave no room to any split in the family. In the case of *Exit West*, Nadia causes the break in the patriarchal family structure by renting a room to live as an independent woman; indeed, in order to rent the flat, Nadia lies that she herself is a widow just like the landlady. Consequently, Nadia puts a number of strategies into practice to tackle possible troubles threatening a single woman who relies on her instincts to survive in a chaotic city. Being a passionate follower of individual freedom, Nadia hides not just her body but also her free spirit under the black robe as she sets out on her long journey toward physical and mental liberation. Nadia's survival tactics at the beginning of her solitary life surrounded by an oppressive male dominated society read as follows:

Nadia's experiences during her first months as a single woman living on her own did, in some moments, equal or even surpass the loathsomeness and dangerousness that her family warned her about. But she had a job at an insurance company, and she was determined to survive, and so she did. She secured a room of her own [...] and [...] a circle of acquaintances among the city's free spirits, and a connection to a discreet and nonjudgmental gynaecologist. She learned how to dress for self-protection, how best to deal with aggressive men and with the [aggressive] police [...] and always to trust her instincts about situations to avoid or to exit immediately. (Hamid, 2017, pp. 18-19)

The quotation suggests that determination or having a daring personality and economic independence would not suffice to survive in such a misogynistic society. One instance displaying men's ferocious prejudiced attitude towards women in the city occurs when Nadia does not respond to the greeting of a man while the two stop at the red-light of an intersection. Nadia is on her motorcycle and the "burly man" is on his "tired-looking scooter" (Hamid, 2017, p. 39). In fact, the man's furious roar echoes centuries-long ingrained animosity reminding woman of her inferior status in the eastern social strata:

[He] began to swear at her, saying only a whore would drive a motorcycle, didn't she know it was obscene for a woman to straddle a bike in that way, had she ever seen anyone else doing it, who did she think she was, and swearing with such ferocity that she thought he might attack her, as she stood her ground, looking at him, visor down, heart pounding, but with her grip firm on clutch and throttle, her hands ready to speed her away, faster than he could follow [...]. (Hamid, 2017, p. 39)

Prior to her exit to the west, Nadia transgresses almost all the man-made prohibitive borders that are drawn to keep women under the strict control of the religious patriarchal society. Having secured a job at the insurance company and thus economic independence, Nadia starts enjoying her newly gained freedom; she has a brief affair with an underground musician who helps her to get rid of, what Nadia calls, "the weight of her virginity" (Hamid, 2017, p.31). In Nadia's eyes, this relationship appears to be physical, even experimental, rather than emotional. In a sense, she is exploring the nature of her sexuality albeit secretly. Another

instance of border violation is that Nadia is the one who orders psychedelic mushrooms through social media to enliven her first intimate moments with Saeed. It is through their phones and social media accounts that Nadia and Saeed come into contact with the happenings in the outside world that are otherwise invisible to them. In other words, the fibre optic cables of the internet broaden the couple's horizons and open up to them "an invisible world, as if by magic, a world that was all around them, and also nowhere, transporting to the places distant and near, and to places that had never been and would never be" (Hamid, 2017, p. 35). Obviously, the digital technology of the twenty-first century challenges all sorts of geographical and physical boundaries and allows trespassers to access-either in the virtual or in the corporeal form-any piece of land they would like to set foot on.

As two sensitive young people, Nadia and Saeed start to feel much more insecure and restless due to the ongoing violence in the streets of the unnamed city. Especially, after Saeed's mother's tragic death on account of a stray bullet, Nadia moves to Saeed's apartment. Saeed and Nadia do their best to console Saeed's grieving father. On realising that what awaits them in the city is nothing but a dystopic future and ultimately death, Nadia and Saeed decide to leave their country together with Saeed's old father. Nevertheless, Saeed's father refuses to go with them for he knows he could not leave his past behind and make a new beginning elsewhere in the globe. The night before the couple's departure, Saeed's father talks to Nadia and entrusts her Saeed's life. The father wants Nadia to promise him that she must stand by Saeed's side through to safety, and that she should never leave him alone until the danger is over. The irony here is that in such a matter of life and death, the father entrusts Nadia with his only son's life; however, in a patriarchal society, the reverse is expected to happen for woman is regarded as weak, incapable and passive. Yet, as the epigraph taken from Wittig suggests, Nadia is a born fighter, and as a wise reader of human nature, Saeed's father sees her potential, her strong identity and that she will fight not just for herself but also for Saeed. In her article Sadaf (2020) explains the meanings of the names Nadia and Saeed: "The name Nadia means 'hope' and a 'caller.' Saeed means 'fortunate' and 'lucky'" (p. 644). As is understood, Saeed is lucky to be safeguarded by Nadia-hope- in his tough journey to the west.

In *Sexual Politics*, Millett (2000) asserts that the socialization of male and female sexes in patriarchal polities is designed "with regard to temperament, role and status" (p. 26). According to Millett (2000), human temperament is based on stereotyped sex categorization ("masculine" and "feminine"), and the defining traits of male personality are aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy; female is associated with passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue and ineffectuality. The second factor is sex role that "assigns domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest, and ambition to the male" (p. 26). As to status, the majority confirms to assign superior status to the male and an inferior one to the female. Millett (2000) states that temperament is psychological; role is social and status is political; "[Y]et their interdependence is unquestionable and they form a chain. Those awarded higher status tend to adopt roles of mastery, largely because they are first encouraged to develop temperaments of dominance" (p. 26). In the case of *Exit West*, however, it is observed that Nadia belies all the prejudiced, stereotyped, patriarchal view of woman with her mindset, personality traits and behaviours. It is Nadia, not Saeed, who possesses all the traits that her particular eastern society assigns to men, and Saeed's father is the only person to recognise her exclusive nonconformist character.

## 2. On the Threshold of West: The Greek Island of Mykonos

Nadia and Saeed flee the country, pass through a number of magical doors, and arrive at their first destination, the Greek island of Mykonos. During their mysterious journey, Nadia is the one to take the initiative; she “cradles” and calms down the worried, sorrowful, weak Saeed as they find themselves in a public bathroom on Mykonos. The first refugee camp the couple see on this European land is a medley of races, cultures, languages and beliefs from all over the world. Nadia and Saeed feel as if a lessened version of a greater globalised world is extending in front of their eyes:

[T]hey saw [...] a refugee camp, with hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colors and hues but mostly falling within a band of brown that ranged from dark chocolate to milky tea-and these people were [...] speaking in a cacophony that was the languages of the world, what one might hear if one were a communications satellite, .... (Hamid, 2017, p. 100)

Mykonos is the place where Nadia detects a change in Saeed’s temperament for the first time. She sees bitterness on his face when she tries to kiss him. She thinks, “a bitter Saeed would not be Saeed at all” (Hamid, 2017, pp. 102-103).

The couple is swindled by a fellow countryman, one of Saeed’s acquaintances, who promises the two that he will provide them a safe passage to Sweden. In fact, the man is a human trafficker, and after getting his charge, he disappears never to be seen again. Although both Nadia and Saeed are aware of the abundant number of frauds swindling immigrants on the route to the west, Saeed prefers to believe that something wrong might have happened to the trafficker; and for a while, he even prays for his safe return. This act of swindling is another incidence displaying the sharp contrast between the two protagonists’ personalities in that while the pragmatic, reasonable Nadia accepts it as an ordinary and predictable act of human opportunism, the naïve, emotional Saeed could not stand the idea of being swindled by a fellow countryman. Nadia meets a young volunteer girl who is working at a clinic. The bond established between the girl and Nadia opens up a new magical door that ends the couple’s Mykonos adventure and allows them to experience a new one in London.

## 3. London: The Couple’s Second Destination

During their London experience, the couple gradually move apart because both start to act according to their individual will which leads them to make their own independent choices. The London house where Nadia and Saeed take shelter is populated by a group of diverse nationals. To Eva Rusk Knudsen and Ulla Rahbek (2021), “[w]hile Saeed feels anxious and easily intimidated in the company of unfamiliar people, Nadia is unafraid and worldly” (p. 5). It is noteworthy that the more Nadia moves towards west the more she feels secure and liberated; her optimistic extrovert nature enables her to contact with new people easily. For instance, her acceptance by the Nigerian community living in Palace Gardens Terrace satisfies Nadia profoundly because that particular group provides her, as Amanda Lagji (2019) suggests, a heterogeneous space, which is devoid of restrictive nationalistic concerns (p. 227), a liberating space where she can gain new perspectives, new ways of seeing things, which she considers an achievement. However, being harassed by the most aggressive members of the Nigerians, the terrified Saeed “huddle[s] in a corner” of his room just like a little child waiting to be saved by a motherly figure. Due to being exposed to such hostile attitudes, Saeed does not cherish any desire to know a new culture or new people like Nadia; thus, instead of trying to adapt himself to the circumstances of British culture, Saeed is drawn to his fellow country

folk, a group of Muslim immigrants who are leading a commune life in a nearby housing complex. That house becomes the only place where Saeed feels both physically and spiritually united. Being unable to fill in the void within him, Saeed tries to persuade Nadia to move to the house where his folks reside. The conversations Saeed holds with the leader of this group help him escape his nostalgic and melancholic mood to a certain extent. Saeed believes he could at least develop a sense of belonging if only he could become a part of his native community. However, the Muslim group's rule dictating couples to sleep separately in different rooms irritates Nadia and she rejects Saeed's offer of moving to that dwelling instantly. The reason why Nadia rejects Saeed's offer is that she neither longs for nor feels connected to her people as she thinks "[t]hey are not like [her]" [Hamid, 2017, p.149].

Nadia and Saeed see a fox wandering in the garden of the London house at two successive nights. It is clear that Hamid's placement of a fox that is observing its alien surrounding discreetly is not coincidental. The author's intention might be drawing parallels between the craftiness of the little fox with that of Nadia, for the fox craftily trespasses the borders of its natural environment, gets access to the unnatural urban space and survives unharmed without being caught. Just like the fox, Nadia migrates from her native city, trespasses a number of geographical borders and craftily survives the prejudices, suspicions and hostilities she encounters in all the foreign localities. And while doing all of these, she is actively protecting Saeed against possible threats awaiting them outside in this new environment. In fact, Nadia's instinct to protect Saeed against internal and external threats is another proof of reversed gender roles in that the couple's native patriarchal society posits the male "as the essential [the One] as opposed to [the female] the other, the inessential, the object" (Beauvoir, 2010, p. 26). Though Saeed never assumes the role of "the One," "the essential" neither in his native society nor in the west, he is appalled when he falls into the category of "the Other" in a foreign context. To Beauvoir (2010), the native travelling abroad "is shocked to realize that in neighbouring countries locals view him as a foreigner; ..." (p. 27). Likewise, Saeed is otherised by both Nigerians and British nativists due to his alien status in London. Therefore, when the nativist backlash against immigrants exacerbates, Nadia and Saeed move to a labour camp outside London.

During their sojourn in the camp, Nadia and Saeed begin to move away from each other not physically but emotionally. Nadia is no longer attracted to Saeed and she even starts to see him like the brother she never had. To Sadaf (2020), the characters' identities undergo a radical change each time they pass through a magical door. Sadaf likens this transformation to a rebirth, and that is likely to be the reason of the change in the nature of their relationship:

Nadia and Saeed's metaphoric twin birth through the door changes their identity and, as a result, their relationship. Having drawn comfort from each other's closeness in the past and finding solace in their similarity based on the geography of their initial nascence, they slowly drift apart in time, and form their own new lives, as their love changes to something like a fondness between siblings. (p. 642)

Furthermore, another significant reason behind this emotional change is Nadia's awareness of her sexual identity. Having dreamt of the girl in Mykonos, Nadia discovers that her body is fraught with some new erotic impulses. In addition, Hamid's apt insertion of three-page long vignettes after each chapter, except for the final chapter, draws attention to the change in Nadia's sexual preference. The vignettes to which Claire Chambers (2019) refers as "cut-piece scenes," (p. 237) present a number of similar migration stories simultaneously occurring

throughout the globe. These vignettes may be considered indicators of future happenings in *Exit West*. For instance, chapter nine features two old men, one being Dutch and the other a Brazilian; while the two men are kissing each other on a balcony in Amsterdam, a war photographer takes a photograph of them. Yet, she deletes this photograph later for she realises that this is an inconsiderate, disrespectful behaviour, an invasion of the two men's privacy (Hamid, 2017, p. 175). In fact, this vignette foreshadows Nadia's future lesbian identity, which may be regarded as a reaction against patriarchy's imposition of heterosexuality on both sexes. In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" Judith Butler (1997) claims "compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic" (p. 306) because in society only the norms of heterosexuality define the roles of man and woman. It is commonly believed that heterosexuality is natural or normal and homosexuality is a kind of "miming" the norm. For the sake of legitimizing its status as the original and normal, heterosexuality labels homosexuality abnormal and "miming." Thus, the war photographer deletes the kissing scene considering that her particular society could marginalise or "otherize" the two men on account of her photograph. Indeed, Butler (1997) asserts that it is heterosexuality that is not original: "The reality of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations" (p. 307). Hamid creates Nadia as a free spirit, a person who never mimics but is followed. By preferring a lesbian identity, Nadia rejects the ideological, economic and political power of man as Wittig (1997) claims:

The refusal to become heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or a woman, consciously or not. For a lesbian this goes further than the refusal of the role "woman." It is the refusal of the economic, ideological, and political power of man. (p. 267)

Saeed's attitude towards Nadia also changes, especially after hearing the news of his father's death. He devotes his labour camp days to hardworking and praying as the emotional gap between the couple widens.

#### **4. The Final Destination: Marin, San Francisco**

It is observed that Nadia is the one to decide where and when to go since the beginning of their journey, and her last decision is going to Marin, San Francisco, hoping "to be able to rekindle their relationship, to reconnect with their relationship" (Hamid, 2017, p. 193); however, it gets worse. Saeed becomes "more melancholic than he [has] been before, understandably, and also more quiet and devout" (Hamid, 2017, p. 193) because the further west he goes, the farther he is moving away from his native country, and entering a culture he could not adopt makes him a quiet and passive introvert. In fact, turning into passive victims is an expected characteristic of men who are in the asylum seeking process. As Deirdre Conlon (2011) suggests male figures in refugee position display some of the character traits attributed to women: "[A]sylum seekers' encounters with waiting belie the masculinist hue with which they are cast en route to the global North as they are re-inscribed with feminized codings of stasis and passivity" (p. 357). Likewise, Saeed falls into a state of numbness until he meets the preacher's daughter. In a sense, Saeed's relationship with the preacher's daughter relieves Nadia; she believes that her mission as Saeed's protector is accomplished. Thus, both sides agree on parting with complacency in this "new city," Marin. In Perfect's (2019) words: "Having begun in an old city that was being destroyed, their relationship ends in a new city that is being built. In a sense, Nadia and Saeed migrate away from each other" (p. 192). Hamid's last destination, Marin, adds an optimistic tone to the migration story. Obviously, the author's choice of Marin is not



coincidental in that Marin provides migrants from all around the world with a heterogeneous space where diverse histories, cultures, races, languages and beliefs live and express themselves freely.

It is noteworthy that Nadia stubbornly keeps wearing her black robe throughout her journey. Nadia's insistence on wearing the black robe annoys Saeed for he thinks, she is no longer in her native country, and she does not even pray. In Saeed's eyes, Nadia's long black robe gives the misleading impression that she is a properly practising pious Muslim woman, and since he knows that it is not so, he finds her attire meaningless and hypocritical. He thinks that Nadia is betraying her indigenous culture in every way:

But it was inexplicable that she continued to wear her black robe, and grated on [Saeed] a bit, for she did not pray, and she avoided speaking, and she avoided their people, and sometimes he wanted to shout, well take it off then... . (Hamid, 2017, p. 187)

Saeed fails to understand the actual reason behind Nadia's insistence on the black robe. She wears it not to display her commitment to a particular religion or a culture but to protect her integrity, her freedom in both hemispheres of the globe. Yet, both westerners and easterners misjudge her attire. The author's continual emphasis on the black robe draws attention to the contradiction between the identities of the two protagonists. As Knudsen and Rahbek (2021) note,

Nadia is a self-determining woman curious about life and always welcoming newness. Her densely signified black robe is re-signified as a means of safeguarding her personal space. [...] [I]t is a self-customized emblem of her personality, one which also grants her operational integrity in public contexts. (pp. 5-6)

In Marin, Nadia's black robe is seen as a religious symbol and even sometimes associated with terrorism. Her attire stimulates western Islamophobia. Thus, the majority of people with whom Nadia contacts in Marin regard her as a potential threat. For instance, to Nadia's female co-workers in the food cooperative, "her black robe was thought by many to be off-putting, or self-segregating, or in any case vaguely menacing, and so few of her colleagues had really reached out to her..." (Hamid, 2017, pp. 213-14). However, after witnessing Nadia's "mettle in the face of [real] danger" (Hamid, 2017, p. 214), or Nadia's silent resistance against the "pale-skinned tattooed man" (Hamid, 2017, p. 214), with a pistol, the workers realise who the real threat is and "who is threatened" (Hamid, 2017, p. 214). Thus, it is understood that the black robe does not function as an identity marker but as a protective shield tightly held by Nadia against socially constructed western and eastern clichés concerning woman. As Sadaf (2020) argues,

Having it on and keeping it on [...] as a sign of her agency, Nadia finds a new confidence in her identity and refuses to be labelled immutably by her choice of clothing. In other words, she keeps her robe on but liberates her identity to new experiences. (p. 643)

## Conclusion

Half a century later when Nadia meets Saeed in the city of their birth, she has the same attire on and she is described as an "old woman in her black robe" (Hamid, 2017, p. 228). Throughout her life, Nadia's black robe caused her many troubles; sometimes she is regarded as a terrorist threat; sometimes as an oppressed, silenced Muslim woman; and sometimes she is criticised by her fellow country people for being alienated from her specific religious belief and the

conventions of her indigenous culture. Nevertheless, Nadia keeps her black robe on so as to proceed freely on her self-drawn path. Here, one cannot help recalling Rumi's comment on human nature. Rumi establishes a parallel between books and human beings and says that in order to understand the true character of a person one should focus not on the cover but on the content of the book because a gilded cover might be misleading. In the case of *Exit West*, Nadia's black robe is her cover; and one should definitely concentrate on her mindscape in order to see and understand the free spirit lying under the black fabric.

Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* recounts an immigrant couple's journey to the west. As the couple move toward west, Saeed turns out to be a passive, silent, isolated figure, while Nadia becomes more active and liberated. To Liliana Naydan (2019), "while Nadia feels a sense of liberation in leaving the gender-based oppression that defines her experiences in the predominantly Muslim unnamed city, [...] Saeed tends to long for the sort of cultural and religious community he had prior to migration" (p. 439). In *Exit West*, Hamid reverses, and thus, reconstructs stereotypical gender roles that are defined by the norms of patriarchy. Hamid's female protagonist deconstructs the cliché image of the Muslim woman with her courage, her sexual identity and her liberating views of herself and of the world on the move.

A deeper understanding of this stereotypical representation of the female Muslim immigrant may be achieved—in a series of comparative analyses—by, on the one hand, tracing the historical evolution of the stereotype in the works of authors from different decades, and on the other, by juxtaposing variations in the representation of the said figure in the works of contemporary authors.

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# Defining the Scope of Alexandre Dumas's *La Drame De La France*: Problems, Considerations, and Debates

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## Abstract

Alexandre Dumas's interment in the Panthéon in 2002 prompted a steady reevaluation of his literary reputation, resulting in his increased prominence among his nineteenth-century peers. Several studies have resurrected Dumas's 1857 argument that his works comprise a vast series entitled *La Drame de la France*. This argument has become so ubiquitous that it has become an uncontested fact. However, there are certain challenges in studying Dumas's *La Drame de la France*. Dumas did not repeatedly make this assertion, which was announced toward the latter portion of his life, and whether it was something that consciously and continuously drove his plans when developing future ideas and concepts for his historical fiction novels is debatable. Therefore, while not disputing the existence of *La Drame de la France*, its nature (and the nature of its creation) nevertheless makes it so that which novels specifically comprise it has never been definitively established. Coming to some degree of consensus on this point is needed as a first step to advance studies of Dumas in this area. This article seeks to initiate this literary discussion by presenting Dumas's 36 major historical fiction novels set in France, briefly examining the problems, considerations, and debates that exist in whether each could be accepted as part of the series.

**Keywords:** Alexandre Dumas, *La Drame de la France*, Musketeers, Monte Cristo, *feuilleton*

## Introduction

Alexandre Dumas's interment in the Panthéon in 2002 prompted a steady reevaluation of his literary reputation, resulting in his increased prominence among his nineteenth-century peers.<sup>1</sup> Such high reevaluations, spurred by changing conceptions of French identity and

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<sup>1</sup> Since that time, several collections of Dumas scholarship have appeared. Examples: Michel Arrous, ed., *Dumas, une lecture de l'histoire* (Paris: Maisonneuve and Larose, 2003); Angels Santa and Francisco Lafarga, eds., *Alexandre Dumas y Victor Hugo: Viaje de los textos y textos de viaje* (Lleida: Pagès Editors, 2006); Chantal Massol, ed., *Stendhal, Balzac, Dumas: Un récit romantique?* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2006); Charles Grivel, ed., *Les Vies parallèles d'Alexandre Dumas* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion/Revue des Sciences humaines, 2008); Pascal Durand and Sarah Mombert, eds., *Entre presse et littérature: Le Mousquetaire, journal de M. Alexandre Dumas* (Liège: Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, Diffusion Droz, 2009); Eric Martone, ed., *The Black Musketeer: Reevaluating Alexandre Dumas within the Francophone World* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011); Julie Anselmini, ed., *Dumas Critique* (Limoges: Presses

culture, would have surprised critics just half a century earlier.<sup>1</sup> As Dumas's biographer A. Craig Bell noted in 1950, "Dumas is a river which academicians, critics and literary snobs have been fouling for half a century" (ix). However, such a view was not new. As early as 1848, literary critics in Dumas's lifetime, like Charles Robin, declared that Dumas "a été, a lui seul, l'objet de plus d'interprétations de toute nature et de discussions littéraire que tous les écrivains du XIXe siècle" (137).<sup>2</sup> The situation had not changed much by 1885, when Henri Blaze de Bury confessed, "Dumas est *populaire*, il n'est pas *connu*. Son genre de vie, ici et là quelques méchants volumes qu'il eût mieux fait de ne pas écrire, ont beaucoup nui à sa considération littéraire. On le prend généralement pour un simple amuseur, et cependant, toute comme un autre et plus qu'un autre, il a ses heures d'élévation et de philosophie" (47; original emphasis).<sup>3</sup>

During his lifetime, Dumas faced opposition from certain intellectuals because of his interest in pursuing commercial literary ambitions, accusations of establishing a "writing factory" in which he placed his name on works composed by others, and his status as an individual of mixed racial descent.<sup>4</sup> Following Dumas's death in 1870, literary scholars have put forward several reasons to account for the lack of studies of Dumas, despite his popularity. In the 1990s, for example, Dorothy Trench-Bonett described several common reasons to account for this during the twentieth century. She placed particular emphasis on Dumas's voluminous literary output, which makes him difficult to study.<sup>5</sup> Nineteenth-century critic Joseph Marie Quérard was overly critical of Dumas, particularly in his five-volume *Les Supercheries littéraires dévoilées*, largely for this reason. As journalist Philibert Audebrand wrote satirically in 1888, Dumas had written so much that "quand le vieux Quérard, ce bénédictin de notre âge, essayant de dresser l'inventaire des richesses bibliographiques du pays," reached Dumas's name, "il ne put se défendre d'un léger frisson d'effroi. La seule nomenclature des œuvres de ce géant faisant vaciller ses regards. Comment un tel homme avait-il pu venir à bout d'une telle tâche? A la vérité, il expliquait que quatre-vingt-douze collaborateurs avaient coopéré à l'éclosion de tant de choses" (3-4).<sup>6</sup>

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universitaires de Limoges, 2013); Eric Martone, ed., *Alexandre Dumas as a French Symbol since 1870: All for One and One for All in a Global France* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2020).

<sup>1</sup> For Dumas's shifting status as a symbol of contemporary France, see: Roxane Petit-Rasselle, "From the Literary Myth to the Lieu de Mémoire—Alexandre Dumas and French National Identity(ies)," in *Alexandre Dumas as a French Symbol since 1870: All for One and One for All in a Global France*, 89-117; Eric Martone, *Finding Monte Cristo: Alexandre Dumas and the French Atlantic World* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2018), 111-149.

<sup>2</sup> English translation: Dumas "has been the subject of more interpretations, true and false, and of more literary battles than any other writer of the nineteenth century."

<sup>3</sup> English translation: "Dumas is popular, but he is not recognized. His method of life and his occasional worthless books greatly damaged his literary position. He is usually looked upon simply as an 'amuser,' and yet... more than many others, he had his moments of lofty thought and philosophy."

<sup>4</sup> See: Martone, *Finding Monte Cristo*, 13-49.

<sup>5</sup> Other reasons include Dumas's popularity, which has been held against him as a serious writer; Dumas's colorful life, which often sidetracks those attempting to study him; and Dumas's status as a writer for young people, which had led critics to underestimate the complexity of his works. See: Dorothy Trench-Bonett, "Alexandre Dumas: Black French Writer," in *Alexandre Dumas, Charles VII at the Home of His Vassals*, trans. Dorothy Trench-Bonett (New York: Noble Press, 1991), 26-27.

<sup>6</sup> English translation: "when old Quérard, that benedictine of our age, tried to take an inventory of the rich bibliography of the country, when he arrived at... [Dumas's] name, he could barely refrain from a

To help make Dumas's work more manageable for study, and in particular his historical fiction novels, many recent literary scholars have resurrected Dumas's argument that his works comprise a vast series entitled *La Drame de la France*. Dumas made this claim in 1857 in chapter XLIV in his historical novel, *Les Compagnons de Jéhu*:

Peut-être ceux qui lisent chacun de nos livres isolément s'étonnent-ils que nous appuyions parfois sur certains détails qui semblent un peu étendus pour le livre même dans lequel ils se trouvent. C'est que nous ne faisons pas un livre isolé; mais... nous remplissons ou nous essayons de remplir un cadre immense. Pour nous, la présence de nos personnages n'est point limitée à l'apparition qu'ils font dans un livre : celui que vous voyez aide de camp dans cet ouvrage, vous le retrouverez roi dans un second, proscrit et fusillé dans un troisième. Balzac a fait une grande et belle œuvre à cent faces, intitulée *La Comédie humaine*. Notre œuvre à nous, commencée en même temps que la sienne, mais que nous ne qualifions pas, bien entendu, peut s'intituler *La Drame de la France* (III, 83-84).<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in the decades after Dumas's death in 1870, many French intellectuals commented on how Dumas's novels taught generations of Frenchmen the history of the nation.<sup>2</sup> In *La Comédie littéraire* (1895), for example, Adolphe Brisson devoted a chapter to Dumas and history, presenting the writer as a great chronicler of the dramatic story of "France" (213-226). In 1902, the critic Georges Pellissier declared there was an entire classroom contained within Dumas's works (232). Consequently, as French intellectual André Maurois declared in the 1950s, "it should be added that the world at large—and France in particular—has learned French history in the pages of Dumas" (183).

However, there are certain obstacles in studying Dumas's *La Drame de la France*, the most significant of which is its ill-defined scope, sequence, and unifying themes. Claude Schopp, possibly the most influential contemporary French scholar on Dumas, has been one of the chief advocates that Dumas's novels comprise such a series, which has been positioned as serving as a prequel series to that of Honoré de Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, set during the Restoration (1815-1830) and July Monarchy (1830-1848) and Émile Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart*, set during the final days of the Second Republic (1848-1852) and the span of the Second French Empire (1852-1870).<sup>3</sup> Such an association in itself elevates Dumas's literary

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slight shudder of fear. The very name on the works of this giant weakened his resolve. How could one man undertake such a task? In truth, he explained that 92 collaborators had cooperated to the realization of so many works."

<sup>1</sup> English translation: "Perhaps those who read our books singly are surprised that we sometimes dwell on certain details which seem somewhat long drawn for the book in which they appear. The fact is, we are not writing isolated books, but, as we have already said, we are filling, or trying to fill, an immense frame. To us, the presence of our characters is not limited to their appearance in one book. The man you meet in one book may be a king in a second volume, and exiled or shot in a third. Balzac did a great and noble work with a hundred aspects, and he called it the *Comédie Humaine*. Our work, begun at the same time as his...may fitly be called *The Drama of France*. See: Alexandre Dumas, "Chapter XLIV: Change of Residence," *The Companions of Jehu*, trans. (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, n.d.), 482.

<sup>2</sup> For overview, see: Eric Martone, "All for One and One for All: Recasting Alexandre Dumas as a Popular Educator in France during the New Imperialism," *Global Education Review* 6, 4 (2019): 50-79.

<sup>3</sup> See: Claude Schopp, "Le fil de l'Histoire," *Le Figaro* (hors-série): Alexandre Dumas, *Au galop des mousquetaires* (2002), 66; Claude Schopp, "Le Testament perdu," in Alexandre Dumas, *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine* (Paris: Phébus, 2005), 47-49; Claude Schopp, *Dictionnaire Dumas* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2010), 266-270. See also: Youjun Peng, *La nation chez Alexandre Dumas* (Paris: L'Harmattan,

status, as both Balzac and Zola remain among the most studied and highly-regarded figures in nineteenth-century French literature.<sup>1</sup> Dumas's reevaluation, and Schopp's influence in particular, has made this argument so ubiquitous that it has become an uncontested fact.

Yet Dumas did not repeatedly make this assertion, announced toward the latter portion of his life, and whether it was something that consciously and continuously drove his plans when developing future ideas and concepts for his historical fiction novels is debatable. Dumas did not always flesh out beforehand the events within his individual novels, never mind a whole "series" composed over decades. He is infamous for changing character's names or details mid-tory, as he generally published his novels initially in serial form, often composing several novels at once.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the critic Ferdinand Brunetière wrote that Dumas's dramatic works "ne sont pas littéraires. Ils n'ont pas de style, et la forme y reste indéfinie, imprécise, banale. La psychologie y est sans profondeur. Ils sont mal composés. La vie de l'homme explique ce caractère de son œuvre" (IV, 247). Dumas's novels, he argued, possess "certaines qualités littéraires," but they are "romans industriels" hastily composed (IV, 261).<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Dumas's conception of his historical fiction novels forming a composite and collective series was at best a loose, retrospective reflection on his body of work. Therefore, while I do not wish to dispute the existence of *La Drame de la France*, its nature (and nature of its creation) makes it so that the novels that specifically comprise it has never been definitively established. Coming to some degree of consensus on this point is needed as a first step to advance studies of Dumas in this area, as well as make comparative studies between Dumas and other writers and series. This article seeks to initiate this literary discussion by presenting Dumas's 36 major historical fiction novels set in France, briefly examining the problems, considerations, and debates that exist in whether each should be accepted as part of the series (in comparison, *La Comédie humaine* consists of 91 finished works and *Les Rougon-Macquart* consists of 20 novels).<sup>4</sup> Guiding this discussion are four criteria: Dumas's conception of French

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2003); Jean Tulard, *Alexandre Dumas, 1802-1870* (Paris: Figures et plumes, 2008), 74-76; Anne-Marie Callet-Bianco, "Un projet romantique: la quête de la totalité chez Balzac et Dumas" in *Stendhal, Balzac, Dumas: un récit romantique*, eds. Lise Dumasy, Chantal Massol, and Marie-Rose Corredor (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 2006), 53-67.

<sup>1</sup> For example, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* published barely a dozen articles on Dumas from 1972 to 2010. In comparison, during the same period, Zola was the subject about 80 articles; Balzac was the subject of nearly 90 articles.

<sup>2</sup> For example, in *Le Château d'Eppstein* (1843), the character Maximilian states that his wife's name was Thecla in the beginning of the novel, but later states her name was Bertha. Another example occurs in *Le Volontaire de '92* (1862) when the main protagonist, René, references an event toward the end of the novel in which he helped Sophie and the Viscount de Malmy escape that was never described previously.

<sup>3</sup> English translation: Brunetière wrote that Dumas's dramatic works "are not literature. They have no style and the form remains indecisive, imprecise, and banal. The psychology found in his work is without depth. They are poorly composed. The life of the man explains the character of his work." Dumas's novels, he argued, possess "literary qualities," but they are "industrial novels" hastily composed.

<sup>4</sup> Major novels set during Dumas's present-day France (predominantly during the July Monarchy) lacking a strong historical focus—and thus omitted from consideration—include: *Amaury* (1843), set 1838-1839; *Catherine Blum* (1854), set during 1829-1830; *Le Chasseur de sauvagine* (1859), set during 1818-1841; *Fernande* (1844), set in 1835; *Le Fils du forçat* (1860), set during 1831-1845; *Les Drames galants*; *La marquise d'Escoman* (1860), set during 1831-1840; *Madame de Chamblay* (1859), set in 1836-1856; *Parisiens et provinciaux* (1868), set in 1846; *Le Père la Ruine* (1860), set during

history, the significance of specific historical figures within the novel's plots, shared characters among multiple novels, and the significance the novel has traditionally held within studies on Dumas's work.

### Dumas's Conception of French History

For a sequence books to comprise a series, there must be some common characteristics or unifying threads that can formally unite them. In nineteenth-century France, the rise of the extended serial novel, published in cliffhanger installments in newspapers, encouraged the practice of a novel sequence. A novel sequence is a specific type of series in which the novels it includes may contain some common elements (such as themes, setting, or characters), but each individual novel can stand of its own (i.e., it has its own title, unique plot, etc.). As such, each novel can be read in, or out, of the sequence. Consequently, a novel sequence may encompass multiple story arcs or themes that span several books instead of including one or more common characters. The novel sequence had been popularized earlier in the century through the works of such writers as Fenimore Cooper in the 1820s. In French literature, the previously mentioned series by Balzac (*La Comédie humaine*) and Zola (*Les Rougon-Macquart*) are also nineteenth-century novel sequences, although there are many others. Dumas's work and conception of a series of historical novels was also likely influenced by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). Scott's major series (The Waverley Novels), as in the case of Dumas, include subseries (Tales of my Landlord, Tales of the Crusaders, Chronicles of the Canongate) that span broad historical epochs and are largely independent of each other, and thus only loosely connected.<sup>1</sup>

Around 1822, when Dumas was only about 20 years old, he demonstrated his fascination with the British writer's work by drafting a three-act dramatization of Scott's *Ivanhoe* as one of his earliest literary efforts. Balzac's pragmatic series, which was also conceived after the publication of several of its novels, is more open and extendable than Zola's predetermined series, organized around an extended family group. Dumas's conception of a series is thus theoretically closer to Balzac's than Zola's. However, both Balzac's and Zola's series focused on shorter historical periods and are joined through the reappearance of several fictional characters. Scott's novels, on the other hand, span an extended chronological spectrum and are largely independent of each other, and therefore not associated with each other in any strict sense.

Dumas's conception of history is largely the unifying, overarching theme of *La Drame de la France*, which, as a novel sequence, covers an extended chronological spectrum. Dumas's view of history is revealed in his *Gaul et France* (1833), which regarded the spreading of democracy as synonymous with progress. Among the first of Dumas's many historical works, the original edition included an epilogue, omitted from later printings, in which Dumas foretold the re-establishment of the Republic. However, a prologue from his novel *The Comtesse de Salisbury* (1839), which chronicles part of the Hundred Years' War, was later added. An anonymous

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1794-1834; and Gabriel Lambert (1844), set in 1831-1842. Dumas's historical fiction novellas/short stories set in France are also omitted. These works include: *Blanche de Beaulieu, ou la vendéenne* (1826), set in 1793-1794; *Cécile* (1844), set in 1792-1805; *Les Frères corses* (1844), set in 1841; and *Monseigneur Gaston Phoebus* (1839), set in 1385-1391.

<sup>1</sup> See: J.H. Alexander, *Walter Scott's Books: Reading the Waverley Novels* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Aude Déruelle, "Dumas et Balzac," in L'Herne: Dumas, eds. Sylvain Ledda and Claude Schopp (Paris: L'Herne, 2020), pp. 117-118.



English translation appeared in 1841 under the title of *The Progress of Democracy; illustrated in the History of Gaul and France*, including all elements of the work.

Following a brief introduction, *Gaule et France* is divided into three parts tracing French history from ancient time to 1328 (the Franco-Roman monarchy, covering events up to Pepin the Short; the Frank monarchy, covering events from Pepin the Short to Hugh Capet; and the French monarchy, covering events from Hugh Capet to Philippe de Valois) and a conclusion. The conclusion not only summarizes the first three parts, but also serves as an epilogue following French history from the medieval period to Dumas's present. Based on the different kinds of territorial properties that existed through centuries (like feudalism, *seigneurie*, aristocracy, and private property), Dumas separates history into four periods and perceives events as part of a divinely guided mission toward a republic, which was viewed as France's destiny.

Some have argued that such a theme unites Dumas's historical fiction, which sought to map this progress to his nineteenth-century present. Regardless of whether Dumas intentionally sought to establish a sweeping *La Drame de la France* from the beginning of his literary efforts, the conceptions of history he articulated before and near the beginning of his efforts writing historical fiction novels inevitably created a loose, overarching framework for how he viewed the past and how the past culminated in his present; such conceptions thus form the unifying theme of Dumas's larger novel sequence. Further, the concept of creating *La Drame de la France* likely did influence the works he wrote from 1857 until his death in 1870. Dumas did compose various smaller cycles of novels, or subseries, covering more compact sequences of historical events. As a result, these well-known cycles have been incorporated into *La Drame de la France*. These cycles can be more tightly united through the reappearance of fictional characters (as the case in his Musketeers cycle and Saint-Hermine cycle), by the reappearance of historical figures (such as in his Valois cycle and Regency cycle), or both.

The *Mémoires d'un médecin* pentalogy is united uniquely by reappearing fictional and historical characters in the first four novels, whereas the fifth novel in the series—*Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*—is connected only through the reappearance of historical characters. Further, all novels in a cycle are typically united by the historical period in which events occur (such as sixteenth-century France). However, within the broader novel sequence of *La Drame de la France*, as Schopp has argued, Dumas's Valois cycle (*La Reine Margot*, *La Dame de Monsoreau*, *Les Quarante-cinq*) relates the *seigneurie's* decadence, and his Musketeers cycle corresponds with the *seigneurie's* demise and the aristocracy's ascent. The end of the aristocracy is related in the *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle (*Mémoires d'un médecin: Joseph Balsamo*, *Le Collier de la Reine*, *Ange Pitou*, *La Comtesse de Charny*, and *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*). The passage to the future republic begins in his Saint-Hermine cycle (*Les Blancs et les Bleus*, *Les Compagnons de Jésus*, and *Hector de Saint-Hermine*). *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* marks the culmination of Dumas's series of novels.<sup>1</sup> However, while the inclusion of such novels is not disputed, there are various other historical fiction novels that merit consideration, as they relate to and enhance both this sweeping understanding of French history and *La Drame de la France*.

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<sup>1</sup> He makes such arguments in: Schopp, *Dictionnaire Dumas*, 268; Schopp, "Le Testament perdu," 47-49.

## Dumas's Works of Historical Fiction Covering French History

**Table 1: Dumas's *La Drame de la France*** (In the chart below, the novels in white boxes represent those in which wide agreement exists to place them as part of Dumas's extended series. Those in light gray boxes represent novels with strong arguments for inclusion, while those in dark gray boxes represent novels with weaker arguments for inclusion.)

Title of Work	Publication Date	Period of French History Covered
<i>Ascanio</i>	1843	Artist Benvenuto Cellini's tenure at the French court of François I (circa 1539 to 1545)
<i>Les Deux Diane</i>	1846-1847	The taking of Calais, the battle of Saint-Quentin, Henri II's death, and the Wars of Religion (circa 1521-1574)
<i>Le Page du duc de Savoie</i>	1855	Account of Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, who defeats Henri II in warfare, and then makes accord with him. Covers the end of Henri II's reign, including the battle of Saint-Quentin, the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, and king's death from a jousting accident (circa 1528-1580)
<i>L'Horoscope</i>	1858	François II's reign, circa 1559
<i>La Reine Margot</i> (Valois Cycle)	1845	Marguerite de Valois and Henri of Navarre's marriage, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and Charles IX's reign (circa 1572-1574)
<i>La Dame de Monsoreau</i> (Valois Cycle)	1845	Henri III's reign, circa 1578-1579
<i>Les Quarante-Cinq</i> (Valois Cycle)	1847	Henri III's reign, circa 1584-1585
<i>Les Trois Mousquetaires</i> (Musketeers Cycle)	1844	The solidification of the Bourbon dynasty through Louis XIII's reign, circa 1625-1628
<i>Le Comte de Moret; Le Sphinx Rouge</i>	1865-1866	The last years of Cardinal Richelieu's control over France (circa 1628-1630). Features Antoine de Bourbon, Come de Moret, the illegitimate son of Henri IV as a main protagonist.
<i>La Colombe</i>	1851	The Comte de Moret's mysterious disappearance after the battle of Castelnaudary (circa 1637-1638)
<i>Vingt Ans après</i> (Musketeers Cycle)	1845	Set after Louis XIII's death when Anne of Austria, assisted by Cardinal Mazarin, governed France on behalf of young Louis XIV (circa 1648-1649)
<i>La Guerre des femmes</i>	1844-1846	The Fronde, during Louis XIV's reign (circa 1650)
<i>Le Vicomte de Bragelonne, ou Dix ans plus tard</i> (Musketeers Cycle)	1848-1850	Louis XIV's reign, circa 1660-1673
<i>Sylvandire</i>	1843	End of Louis XIV's reign and death, circa 1708-1716

<i>Le Chevalier d'Harmental</i> (Regency Cycle)	1842	Cellamare Conspiracy against Philippe d'Orléans, regent for the young Louis XV (circa 1718)
<i>Une Fille du Régent</i> (Regency Cycle)	1844	The Cellamare Conspiracy's aftermath (circa 1719)
<i>Olympe de Clèves</i>	1852	Louis XV's reign, circa 1727-1729
<i>Mémoires d'un médecin: Joseph Balsamo</i> (Mémoires d'un médecin Cycle)	1846-1848	The end of Louis XV's reign, Count Cagliostro, and the marriage of Marie Antoinette and future Louis XVI (circa 1770-1774)
<i>Le Meneur de loups</i>	1857	The French countryside, circa 1780
<i>Le Collier de la Reine</i> (Mémoires d'un médecin Cycle)	1849-1850	The Affair of the Diamond Necklace and the ensuing backlash against Queen Marie Antoinette and the French monarchy (circa 1784-1785)
<i>Création et Rédemption</i>	1872	Adventures of a doctor and young girl during the onset of the French Revolution (circa 1785-1794)
<i>Ingénue</i>	1854	Onset of the French Revolution, circa 1788-1793
<i>Ange Pitou</i> (Mémoires d'un médecin Cycle)	1853	Onset of the French Revolution, circa 1789
<i>Le Volontaire de '92; René d'Argonne, René Besson: un témoin de la Révolution</i>	1862	Onset of the French Revolution, circa 1788-1793
<i>La Comtesse de Charny</i> (Mémoires d'un médecin Cycle)	1853-1855	The French Revolution and Louis XVI's execution (circa 1789-1793)
<i>Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge</i> (Mémoires d'un médecin Cycle)	1845	The French Revolution, particularly the rescue of Marie Antoinette from the Temple (circa 1793)
<i>Les Blancs et les Bleus</i> (Sainte-Hermine Cycle)	1867-1868	The final years of the French Revolution—including the Reign of Terror, the Convention, and the Directory—and the rise of Napoléon (circa 1793-1799)
<i>Les Compagnons de Jéhu</i> (Sainte-Hermine Cycle)	1857	Napoléon as First Consul, Royalist resistance to Napoléon, and Napoléon's triumph (circa 1799-1800)
<i>Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine</i> (Sainte-Hermine Cycle)	2005	The rise of the First French Empire under Napoléon (circa 1800-1809)

<i>Le Salut de l'Empire</i> (Sainte-Hermine Cycle)	2008	The closing years of the First French Empire, including Napoléon's retreat from Moscow and the Battle of Leipzig, Napoléon's exile to Elba, the Restoration, and Napoléon's 100 Days and the battle of Waterloo (circa 1808-1815)
<i>Le Capitaine Richard</i>	1858	The closing years of the First French Empire, especially Napoléon's retreat from Moscow (circa 1809-1815)
<i>Conscience l'innocent</i>	1853	An adventure set in the later years of Napoléon's reign and Waterloo (circa 1810-1815)
<i>Georges</i>	1843	French colonies (circa 1810-1824)
<i>Les Mohicans de Paris</i>	1854-1859	Restoration Era from 1820-1830
<i>Les Louves de Machecoul</i>	1859	The Restoration Era, July Revolution, and 1832 royalist uprising in the Vendée (circa 1793-1843)
<i>Le Comte de Monte Cristo</i>	1845-1846	Restoration Era, Napoléon's exile on Elba and his 100 Days, Return of the Bourbon monarchy, and July Monarchy (circa 1815-1838)

### **French Renaissance (circa 1521-1580)**

The earliest setting for Dumas's major French historical fiction novels is during the reign of François I and the birth of the French Renaissance. The first of these novels, *Ascanio* (1843), depicts artist Benvenuto Cellini's residence at the court of François I during the years 1539 to 1545. Ultimately, the novel provides a reflection on the relationship between the aristocracy of talent and that of birth, which helps set up Dumas's conceptions of French history and its destiny to become a republic that serve to unify *La Drame de la France*. Several minor characters who appear in *Ascanio* (1843) have cameos in two subsequent works: *Les Deux Diane* (1846-1847) and *Le Page du duc de Savoie* (1855). Due to their reappearance, these novels are often viewed as forming a loose trilogy. *Les Deux Diane* (1846-1847), covering events from 1521 to 1574, focuses primarily on the events of the reign of François I's son, Henri II (such as the taking of Calais, the battle of Saint-Quentin, Henri II's death, and the Wars of Religion). A third novel, *Le Page du duc de Savoie* (1855), provides an account of Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, who defeats Henri II in warfare, and then makes peace with him. Not strictly a sequel, as its events run parallel with those in *Les Deux Diane*, it covers the end of Henri II's reign, such as the battle of Saint-Quentin, the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis, and the king's death following a jousting accident with Gabriel Montgomery. However, many historical characters commonly appear.

Therefore, ostensibly, these novels form the first cycle, or subseries, within Dumas's larger *La Drame de la France*. Yet, the issue is more complex. While Dumas likely wrote *Ascanio* in collaboration with Paul Meurice, the latter is generally recognized as the sole author of *Les Deux Diane*, even though it is often included in Dumas's complete works and one of the better-known novels published under his name. Meurice, in need of quick revenue to appear a suitable match for his intended bride's family, allegedly persuaded Dumas to sign *Les Deux Diane* and publish it for him, since a work by Dumas was more lucrative than one by Meurice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The literary Goncourt brothers claimed that Dumas read the novel first to determine its suitability to be published under his name. Yet, Paul Foucher, another contemporary, related that when Meurice

If *Les Deux Diane* is dismissed from Dumas's *Drame de la France* on the grounds that he likely did not write it, then *Le Page du duc de Savoie*, dealing primarily with the period 1555 to 1559, covers much of the same historical and thematic terrain. However, *Le Page du duc de Savoie* also relates to two later-written novels set in Savoy—*La Dame de Volupté* (1863) and *Les Deux Reines* (1864)—and could thus be viewed as part of a different cycle of novels outside *La Drame de la France*.

*L'Horoscope* (1858), which recounts the rein of Henri II's son, François II in 1559, essentially picks up where most of the action in *Le Page du duc de Savoie* ends. As a result, it could be regarded as complementing Dumas's *Ascanio*, *Les Deux Diane*, and *Le Page du duc de Savoie*, if *Les Deux Diane* is not excluded, and forming a subseries of four novels because of their common historical setting and characters. However, some recent French literary editions have united Dumas's *Ascanio*, *Les Deux Diane*, and *L'Horoscope* in a single volume as a loose Renaissance trilogy, thereby excluding *Le Page du duc de Savoie*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Late Valois Dynasty (circa 1572-1585)**

Dumas's Valois cycle, comprised of *La Reine Margot* (1845), *La Dame de Monsoreau* (1845), and *Les Quarante-Cinq* (1847), has long been viewed as among the "grands romans d'Alexandre Dumas." Dumas wrote these three novels with his best-known literary partner, historian Auguste Maquet, with whom he collaborated during the height of his literary fame as a novelist in the 1840s.<sup>2</sup> *La Reine Margot* (1845), which covers French history from 1572 to 1574, details the marriage of Charles IX's sister, Marguerite de Valois, to Henri of Navarre, as well as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. *La Dame de Monsoreau* and *Les Quarante-Cinq* relate subsequent events from Henri III's reign over 1578 to 1585 (Natta, 40-60). Due to the prominence these novels hold within Dumas's oeuvre, the lack of other novels covering this period, and the fact that they relate to Dumas's conception of historical progress, these three novels are unchallenged inclusions in *La Drame de la France*.

### **Reigns of Louis XIII and XIV (circa 1625-1715)**

Just as Dumas's coverage of French history during the late Valois dynasty is covered in a noted series of novels, so too is his coverage of the reign of Louis XIII and the early reign of his son, Louis XIV. Largely skimming over the rise of the Bourbon dynasty in the personage of Henri IV (who was featured as king of Navarre in *La Reine Margot*), Dumas jumps to the reign of his son, Louis XIII, during the 1620s in *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844), arguably his most celebrated novel. With Maquet, with whom he had collaborated for *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, Dumas wrote two well-known sequels, both set during the reign of Louis XIV: *Vingt Ans après* (1845) and *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* (1848-1850).<sup>3</sup>

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later claimed authorship, Dumas openly supported him, stating that he had not even read it. See: Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt: mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. Jean-Louis Cabanès, 2 vols. (Paris: H. Champion, 2005-2008), I: 69; Paul Foucher, *Les Couloirs du passé* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1873), 442.

<sup>1</sup> See: Alexandre Dumas, *Les Romans de la Renaissance: Ascanio, Les Deux Diane, and L'Horoscope*, ed. Claude Schopp (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of their collaboration, see: Gustave Simon, *Histoire d'une collaboration: Alexandre Dumas et Auguste Maquet* (Paris: Éditions Georges Crès, 1919).

<sup>3</sup> For overview of the duo's composition of the Musketeers cycle, see: Simone Bertière, *Dumas et les Mousquetaires: Histoire d'un chef-d'œuvre* (Paris: Fallois, 2009).

However, there are three other novels covering historical events that take place between the events of the novels in the Musketeers cycle and feature many of the same historical characters and a similar setting. Including these novels in Dumas's *Drame de la France* is problematic because they seemingly break up the cycle of Musketeers novels as traditionally conceived. Toward the end of his career, Dumas began writing *Le Comte de Moret*, or *Le Sphinx Rouge* (1865-1866), about the last years of Cardinal Richelieu's control over France. Antoine de Bourbon, Comte de Moret (the illegitimate son of Henri IV) is among the novel's primary protagonists. The second novel, *La Colombe* (1851), represents Dumas's only attempt to write a story solely in the form of imaginary letters. It relates the mysterious disappearance of the Comte de Moret after the battle of Castelnaudary. Despite the difference in style, since *La Colombe* picks up events almost exactly where they ended in *Le Sphinx Rouge*, it is often regarded as its an unofficial "conclusion." As a result, French and English editions typically publish both novels together as a unified entity.<sup>1</sup> To overcome the challenge of the two often being perceived as outside the Musketeers cycle, some publishers have attempted to bill it as a "sequel" to *Les Trois Mousquetaires* since the former picks up chronologically where the latter ends and features many of the same historical characters, even though the famous musketeer protagonists themselves do not. Its events also occur well before those of *Vingt Ans après*.<sup>2</sup>

The third novel, *La Guerre des femmes* (1844-1846), is focused on the Fronde during Louis XIV's early reign. *Vingt Ans après* is also set during the interim between Louis XIII's death and Louis XIV's ascension in which Anne of Austria, aided by Cardinal Mazarin, ruled as regent. Consequently, it also features the Fronde. Dumas and Maquet wrote both novels at roughly the same time and the two complement each other in terms of their coverage of historical events. As a result, *La Guerre des femmes* relates events between *Vingt Ans après* and *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*. Including this novel in Dumas's *Drame de la France* thus breaks up the traditional Musketeers cycle. Unlike *Le Comte de Moret* (*Le Sphinx Rouge*)/*La Colombe*, it has never been presented as part of this cycle. In terms of historical coverage, the Fronde is also featured in *Vingt Ans après*. However, *La Guerre des femmes* is among Dumas and Maquet's stronger efforts and theoretically could be connected through its common historical setting and historical characters.

Finally, Dumas's *Sylvandire* (1843), his earliest major historical novel depicting the reign of Louis XIV, is focused on the final years of the monarch's long reign. Also written in collaboration with Maquet, this novel helps connect the historical events and themes covered in the Musketeers cycle to his Regency cycle and helps flesh out Dumas's portrait of Louis XIV and his era.

### ***Early Reign of Louis XV (circa 1718-1729)***

Picking up with events shortly after those related in *Sylvandire*, although written about a year earlier, *Le Chevalier d'Harmental* (1842) relates the Cellamare Conspiracy against Philippe d'Orléans, who served as regent for the young Louis XV. The novel marked the first

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<sup>1</sup> See: Alexandre Dumas, *Le Sphinx Rouge* (Paris: Cherche Midi, 2018); Alexandre Dumas, *The Red Sphinx, or The Comte de Moret: A Sequel to The Three Musketeers*, trans. Lawrence Ellsworth (New York: Pegasus, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For example, at least one publisher made this claim in the subtitle to a recent English translation of the novel. See: Alexandre Dumas, *The Red Sphinx, or The Comte de Moret: A Sequel to The Three Musketeers*, trans. Lawrence Ellsworth (New York: Pegasus, 2017).

collaboration between Dumas and Maquet, and the duo followed with a direct sequel, *Une Fille du Régent* (1844), shortly afterward. The two novels are often known as the Regency cycle. Meanwhile, *Olympe de Clèves* (1852) picks up with Louis XV's reign almost a decade later during the 1727 to 1729 era. This historical novel, although not customarily part of a series with the previous two, nevertheless helps bridge the long gap in coverage of French history between 1719 and 1770, fleshes out Dumas's portrait of Louis XV and his reign, and since it features a common historical setting and characters, could be regarded as loosely connected to an expanded Regency cycle (as could *Sylvandire* as well).

### **French Revolutionary Era (circa 1770-1793)**

Dumas's longest series of novels—known as the *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle—focuses on the events leading up to the French Revolution and those of the Revolution itself up to 1793. Along with the Valois cycle and Musketeers cycle, it is arguably among Dumas's most famous group of historical fiction novels. Like these two cycles, Maquet was Dumas's main collaborator (as he was involved with four of the five novels in the *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle). Consequently, there is not much debate among Dumas scholars as to whether they should be included in *La Drame de la France*.

The first novel, *Mémoires d'un médecin: Joseph Balsamo* (1846-1848), relates the end of Louis XV's reign and the marriage of Marie Antoinette and the future Louis XVI (c. 1770-1774). It is followed by *Le Collier de la Reine* (1849-1850), focusing on the diamond necklace affair involving Marie Antoinette. *Ange Pitou* (1853) relates the start of the French Revolution in 1789, while *La Comtesse de Charny* (1853-1855) covers the events of the French Revolution through Louis XV's execution in 1793. The final novel in the series, *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* (1845), although the first to be written, is set in 1793 and includes the attempted rescue of Marie Antoinette from the Temple (1793).

Dumas wrote several other tales, novels, pseudo-memoirs, and non-fiction books—such as *Louis XVI et la Révolution* (1850-1851), *Le Drame de quatre-vingt-treize* (1851-1852), and *La Route de Varennes* (1860)—which detail events leading up to and during the French Revolution. From this group emerge four major novels outside his *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle, none of which have strong cases for inclusion in Dumas's *La Drame de La France*. The first of them, *Le Meneur de loups* (1857), is a supernatural novel set in the 1780s in Dumas's hometown of Villers-Cotterêts. The historical material (setting and characters) is not a focus of this novel and including it in Dumas's *La Drame de la France* would also break up his *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle. Moreover, it does not advance the overarching theoretical framework uniting Dumas's novel sequence.

The next, *Création et Rédemption* (1872), is a posthumously published novel relating the adventures of a doctor and a young girl during the onset of the French Revolution (circa 1785-1794). It consists of two parts: "Le Docteur Mystérieux" and "La Fille du Marquis." Including it in Dumas's *La Drame de la France* would break up his *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle and does not necessary add anything new by way of coverage of historical events or further Dumas's views on French history that unite his novel sequence.

The remaining two novels can perhaps be seen as falling more in line with Dumas's works in which he collaborated with others (or was credited with collaborating with others) on real or

quasi-fictional memoirs rather than his works of historical fiction.<sup>1</sup> The first, *Ingénue* (1854), focuses on the events leading to the French Revolution (circa 1788-1793). It is allegedly a retelling of an autobiographical novel by eighteenth-century writer Nicolas-Edme Restif. The second, *Le Volontaire de '92* (1862), again focuses on events leading up to the French Revolution (circa 1788-1793). In 1856, Dumas met a veteran of Napoléon's army, who allegedly gave him a memoir detailing his experiences in the French Revolution. The book purports to be this memoir.

*Le Capitaine Paul* (1838) is not considered in these discussions, as it features American Revolutionary War hero John Paul Jones as its protagonist and does not readily relate to his overarching views on French history. However, Dumas gives Jones a French origin and most of the novel is set in France during Louis XVI's reign.

### ***Rise of Napoléon and the First French Empire (circa 1793-1815)***

Dumas's primary historical fiction novels set during the rise of Napoléon and the First French Empire are those comprising his Sainte-Hermine cycle, which were generally written toward the end of his life and career. While the novels in his earlier series were generally written during the 1840s and 1850s, Dumas did not start his Sainte-Hermine cycle until the late 1850s. As a result, this is the one cycle in which Dumas in all probability did intend at the time of its composition for it to comprise part of his larger *La Drame de la France*. The cycle begins chronologically with *Les Blancs et les Bleus* (1867-1868), which continues with the historical events that unfolded in his earlier *Mémoires d'un médecin* cycle. Consequently, it covers the latter portion of the French Revolution (circa 1793-1799), including the Reign of Terror, the Convention, the Directory, and, most significantly for the future of the series, the rise of Napoléon. The subsequent novel, *Les Compagnons de Jésus* (1857), focuses on such historical events in 1799 to 1800 as Napoléon's tenure as First Consul, royalist resistance to Napoléon, and ultimately his consolidation of power. The third novel in the cycle, *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine* (2005), is set during the rise of the Napoleonic Empire (1800-1809). It remained incomplete at the time of Dumas's death. However, during the early twenty-first century, Claude Schopp collected and completed it, thereby enabling it to be published in novel form.

Before the completion of *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine*, there remained a gap in terms of the coverage of the First French Empire, as the events of *Les Compagnons de Jésus* ended in 1800, before Napoléon became emperor, and the only other novel Dumas wrote relating to the Napoleonic era was *Le Capitaine Richard* (1858), which focuses on the end of the First French Empire during the years 1809 to 1815. *Le Capitaine Richard*, although not typically a part of the Sainte-Hermine cycle, provides a logical continuation of the historical events as they left off in *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine* and serves as a bridge to take Dumas's *La Drame de la France* to the Restoration era. It provides much attention to Napoléon's retreat from Moscow and largely skips over Napoléon's 100 Days and Waterloo, but Napoléon's subsequent exile to St. Helena is covered in a flash-forward.

However, although *Le Chevalier de Sainte-Hermine* ends the Sainte-Hermine cycle as started in Dumas's lifetime, Claude Schopp used material from Dumas as the basis for *Le Salut de l'Empire* (2008). Billed as a novel by Dumas and Schopp, it covers the end of the First French Empire

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<sup>1</sup> Other such books include *La Vendée et Madame* (1833), *Mémoires de J.-F. Talma* (1850), *Un Gil Blas en Californie* (1852), *Une Vie d'artiste: Aventures et tribulations d'un comédien* (1854), *Le Journal de Madame Giovanni* (1856), *Mémoires d'un policeman* (1859), *Mémoires de Garibaldi* (1860), and *Un Cadet de famille* (1860).



from 1808 to 1815, including Napoléon's retreat from Moscow, the Battle of Leipzig, Napoléon's exile to Elba, the Restoration, Napoléon's 100 Days, and Waterloo. This historical novel is intended as a more definitive conclusion to Dumas's *Sainte-Hermine* cycle. However, for Dumas purists, prior to the posthumous co-authored publication of *Le Salut de l'Empire* in the twenty-first century, *Le Capitaine Richard* was Dumas's only historical novel to cover the end of Napoléon and "conclude" the *Sainte-Hermine* cycle. The historical events in both novels run parallel to each other, suggesting only one is needed to conclude the cycle.

The only other major historical novel set during the era of Napoléon worth considering for inclusion in *La Drame de la France* is *Conscience l'innocent* (1853), which focuses on the exploits of a conscript in the years 1810 to 1815. The historical period is covered elsewhere, and historical figures, events, and themes play a lesser role in this novel than they do in others.

### **Restoration Era and July Monarchy**

As the back story in Dumas and Maquet's celebrated *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (1845-1846) covers Napoléon's exile on Elba, his brief return during the 100 Days, and the return of the Bourbon monarchy during the Restoration, and the main story takes place in the 1830s during the subsequent July Monarchy, many, like Schopp, have viewed *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* as bridging the events that unfolded in the *Sainte-Hermine* series with Dumas's present and thus serves as the finale to his *Drame de la France*. Moreover, the Count of Monte Cristo emerges as the hero of Dumas's conception of modern society.<sup>1</sup>

As Dumas's *La Drame de la France* has been viewed by some literary critics as a precursor to Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, which is set during the Restoration (1815-1830) and July Monarchy (1830-1848), his historical novels set during this era have been largely overlooked. However, there are three novels Dumas wrote set in the Restoration era and July Monarchy that relate events occurring primarily between the backstory and main story contained within the *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* that merit consideration for inclusion in *La Drame de la France*. The first of these is *Georges* (1843), written with Félicien Mallefille. A short backstory connects the novel to the Napoleonic era (circa 1810), while the novel's main story unfolds in 1824. As this novel is set in the French colonies, it is not usually perceived as part of Dumas's *La Drame de la France*. However, if one expands the concept of "France" to extend beyond the metropole, it becomes a possibility. Moreover, since it concerns the issues of race and slavery, it has become one of Dumas's most studied and significant novels.<sup>2</sup> However, it also includes his

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<sup>1</sup> On this point, see: Anne-Marie Callet-Bianco, "De Monte-Cristo aux Mohicans: l'affirmation du sentiment républicain," In Dumas, une lecture de l'Histoire, 189-208; David F. Bell, "Velocities: Precision, Overload (Dumas)," in *Real Time: Accelerating Narrative from Balzac to Zola* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 103-130.

<sup>2</sup> Examples include: Molly Krueger Enz, "The Mulatto as Island and the Island as Mulatto in Alexandre Dumas's *Georges*," *The French Review* 80, 2 (December 2006): 383-394; Amédée Nagapen, *Esclavage et marronnage dans le roman Georges d'Alexandre Dumas l'apport des chroniques de J.G. Milbert* (Mauritius: University of Mauritius, 2005); Molly Krueger Enz, "'White Negroes, Nothing More': The Ambiguous Role of the 'Mulatto' in Alexandre Dumas's *Georges*," in *The Black Musketeer*, 91-106; Claudie Bernard, "Georges, or the 'Mixed-Blood' Settles Scores," in *The Black Musketeer*, 127-159; Hilary A. Heffley, "Conquering Nature: Elements of Early Nineteenth-Century Ethnology in Alexandre Dumas's *Georges*," in *Alexandre Dumas as a French Symbol since 1870*, 119-139; Virginia Payne Dow, "Alexandre Dumas: Hidden in His Doppelgänger Paradigm," in *Alexandre Dumas as a French Symbol since 1870*, 141-174.

novel sequence's larger themes relating to merit based on ability rather than birth and republican sentiments.

The next novel to be considered is *Les Mohicans de Paris* (1854-1859), set between 1820 to 1830 during the Restoration. The novel, not typically regarded as one of Dumas's historical romances, has become widely praised as a pioneer of the detective novel.<sup>1</sup> However, it also deals with all classes and characters of Paris at the time, thereby providing an illuminating study of the Restoration arguably on par with those in the novels in Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, and allows Dumas to reflect on the developing epoch of private property that he sees as developing in the post-French Revolutionary era. Further, without a novel such as *Les Mohicans de Paris* to bridge events between the end of Napoléon and the demise of the July Monarchy, it is more difficult to include in *La Drame de la France* the final novel to be considered, *Les Louves de Machecoul* (1859).

Although *Les Louves de Machecoul* relates episodes from 1793 to 1843, its focus is on the July Revolution of 1830 and especially the subsequent royalist uprising in the Vendée led by the Duchesse de Berry in 1832 to place her son on the throne. In terms of coverage of historical events, it addresses and fleshes out the transition from the Restoration to the July Monarchy. Moreover, this historical novel emphasizes many of the overarching themes within Dumas's conception of history and his *Drame de la France*. Dumas constructs his tale based on the Duchesse's failed uprising to represent allegorically a broader struggle between Counter-revolutionary and Revolutionary France that came to a head in the post-revolutionary era. In Dumas's view, the fate of the uprising determined the fate of the nation. Thus, to Dumas, the 1832 defeat of the Duchesse and her Legitimist supporters marked a decisive turning point on France's road to realizing its republican destiny as outlined during the French Revolution. The narrative thus presents a strong republican polemic to argue unmistakably that France is destined to be a republic and is conceptually one of Dumas's most significant historical novels.<sup>2</sup>

## Conclusion

Dumas's historical romances may or may not have been written intentionally from the beginning as forming a larger collective known as *La Drame de la France*, first declared by the writer in the 1850s. Although the scope of Dumas's *La Drame de la France* is undefined, French literary scholars have generally agreed on the inclusion of his smaller cycles of historical romances as being crucial components of it. Moreover, Dumas's early work, *Gaule et France*, has been cited as the theoretical foundation for much of the thematic threads regarding progress and historical change in these novels. However, the vastness of Dumas's body of work leads to the possibility of various other inclusions to *La Drame de La France*. Agreeing on a full scope of novels for this collective series is necessary to advance studies of Dumas in this area. By briefly examining these other possibilities, there are 31 novels that have a strong case for inclusion in *La Drame de la France*, which can be seen in broader nineteenth-century French literature as complementing Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* and Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart*. Such defined series have been subject to many studies, but without the establishment of which books comprise Dumas's *La Drame de la France*, to study Dumas's work in a similar fashion,

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<sup>1</sup> See: Nicolas Gauthier, *Lire la ville, dire le crime: mise en scène de la criminalité dans les mystères urbains de 1840 à 1860* (Limoges: Presses universitaires de Limoges, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> For an elaboration on this point, see: Eric Martone, "The Last Vendée: The Duchesse de Berry, Legitimist Propaganda, and Alexandre Dumas," in *Royalists, Radicals, and les Misérables: France in 1832*, ed. Eric Martone (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 13-73.

or compare it to other nineteenth-century literacy series, is not possible.<sup>1</sup> As a result, there have been no comparable monographs to date published on Dumas's *La Drame de la France*.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of such studies for *La Comédie humaine* include: Arthur Canfield, *The Reappearing Characters in Balzac's Comédie Humaine* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1977); James Mileham, *The Conspiracy Novel: Structure and Metaphor in Balzac's Comédie Humaine* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1982); Melissa Marcus, *The Representation of Mesmerism in Honoré de Balzac's La Comédie humaine* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Linzy Erika Dickinson, *Theatre In Balzac's La Comédie Humaine* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2000); Diana Knight, *Balzac and the Model of Painting: Artist Stories in La Comédie Humaine* (New York: Routledge, 2007). Examples of such studies for *Les Rougon-Macquart* include: J.G. Patterson, *A Zola Dictionary: The Characters of the Rougon-Macquart Novels of Émile Zola* (New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1912); Lewis Kamm, *The Object in Zola's Rougon-Macquart* (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1978); Brian Nelson, *Zola and the Bourgeoisie: A Study of Themes and Techniques in Les Rougon-Macquart* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983); Philippe Hamon, *Le Personnel du roman: Le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Émile Zola* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1998); Julie Pihard, *Émile Zola et le roman expérimental: Les Rougon-Macquart ou la parfaite illustration du naturalisme* (Brussels: 50Minutes, 2015).

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# A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Gender Role Expectations in George Gissing's *the Odd Women*

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## Abstract

George Gissing's *The Odd Women* is an engrossing study of gender role expectations in the Victorian society on the cusp of the twentieth century. It is an examination of Nineteenth century discourses on Victorian gender ideology. The novel charts and explores the life trajectories of the female protagonists within the novel. This research paper has attempted to explicate the dynamics of gender role expectations through the application of a modern theoretical framework of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to assess how the discourses of the period inform Gissing's narrative. The research findings suggest that the perceptions of gender in a period are directly proportionate to the norms championed through the dominant discourses. The discourses are intricately woven within the episteme of the period under analysis and a conscious review of the constitutive elements of these discursive practices reveals possibilities of change for the future through arming research investigators with insights that account for gender construction in a given period.

**Keywords:** Gissing; Foucault; discourse; ideology; Victorian novel; 19<sup>th</sup> Century; discursive practice

## Introduction

George Gissing (1857-1903) triumphs over his literary peers of nineteenth century through his unswerving stark realism employed in his novels. His themes largely dwell on the poor conditions of the public in the lower stratum of social hierarchy of 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Gissing wrote extensively and, in a large career that straddled two decades, He was able to write twenty full length novels as well as innumerable other works of fiction and nonfiction. His noteworthy works include *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), *The Nether World* (1889), *New Grub Street* (1893) and the novel on which this paper is based, *The Odd Women* (1893).

Given that the research paper at hand attempts to explore the gender dynamics of the period through novel, a Foucauldian examination of discourse constructions on gender roles equips us with the means of understanding how the Victorian ideology

on gender functioned and how it sought validation. Foucault's method on discourse explication, as examined in greater detail in the theoretical framework, identifies discourse as a set of elements within a wider power hierarchy that gets to decide truths and enforces them through its regulatory authority (Bernauer, 2005). For him, discourses operate in their historical epitomes and reviewing them in the specificity of the epistemic occurrence aids in exposing structures of power.

Gissing's *The Odd Women* adumbrates gender roles at the turn of the century. Moreover, the women had only one role as per Victorian gender ideology i.e., to be married off to eligible partners. Now, Foucauldian discourse of the period posits why that line of thinking held sway. This, in turn, can aid us in challenging any discourse that makes a particular stance by exploring its constitutive elements and exploring how discourses around gender role have been constructed through employing Michel Foucault's method of discourse analysis. Being a monumental text that engages the fin de siècle discourses on gender roles, Gissing's *The Odd Women* can provide us a critical portrait of discourse practices on gender within the episteme of late nineteenth century.

This study utilizes Michel Foucault's conception of discourse to evaluate how the discursive practices on gender affect gender identity, shape character subjectivity and influence dominant discourses within a historical period. This equips us with the means to evaluate discourses and the dynamics of their operations. Gissing arrests readers' attention by a bold psychological exploration gender tensions in how they have consequences for formation of a feminine subjectivity or constructions of a female subjectivity through its illuminating juxtaposition of deeply entrenched patriarchal values vis-e-vis a feminist movement championed by the New Women movement. The themes of the novel expose the building blocks of Victorian gender ideology. Gissing presents an extensive treatise that effectively overturn established ways of looking at gender dynamics of the period. The coterie of female characters in *The Odd Women* used by Gissing aid in driving home the elements that sustained gender discourses in the period. Thus, the novel proves inevitable in the scrutiny of gender dynamics of the period which can educate the masses how discourses operate and how to build stronger defenses against them. By considering the issues faced by single women and what it meant for their subjectivity, Gissing's work explores gender roles and invites enquiries as to how can gender be liberated from a value laden system that disproportionately favors one over the other. Hence, the study has significance for the future researchers on how canonical texts engage discourses with real world ramifications and how those discourses are constructed.

Wendy Lesser (1984) opines that the novel "is one of the best portrayals of the women's movement, old or new" by mounting a challenge to the operating mechanics of discourses within their episteme (p. 211). It is widely interpreted as one of the pioneering texts that describes a changing arena for gender issues.

## Gissing's *the Odd Women* and Gender: A Historical Context

Gissing's novel *The Odd Women* explores gender dynamics through a perceptive study of the underlying psychological study of gendered discourses. It is made abundantly clear from its evocative title i.e., *the odd women* which refers to an 1860's survey that revealed that England had half a million women of marriageable age who could not pair equally with men and thus stood in surplus making them *the odd ones* in the mix. This lay bare the Victorian ideology on gender roles that it only saw them a opposite men to be meet their logical conclusion with marriage and if that was not on the offer, they did not matter at all and had to be, as one critic had suggested, sent off to the colonies under English to balance out the field for men.

*The Odd Women* stands out for its challenging of gender norms within the Victorian period. It seeks and kindles a debate on what it means to be a woman and how the nature of women is constituted as the latter was often mounted as a defense for the unfair treatment of women in the society and the roles they were supposed to play. These skewed dynamics of gender relations was searing factor for the dichotomy evident gender relations. Author Patricia Ingham (2000) notes in the preface of *The Odd Women* that George Gissing challenges readers to review received notions on gender role expectations ignites debates on the inherent ability and nature of women (XIII).

It is therefore pertinent to examine the novel in its historical context as to how the reigning fin de siècle discourses in the Victorian period contributed towards cementing of patriarchal values and gender norms within that period. It is tellingly no coincidence that the patriarch of the Madden family, Dr Madden invokes the idea that it is unnatural for women to earn money and all financial matters must be left to domain as it it's their sole domain to earn while women took care of the households. Dr Madden's gender ideology stems from the discourses on gender in the period. It is at par with the Ruskinian ideal of what it mean to be a 'good' woman. Ironically, Mr. Madden dies and leaves her daughter penniless in grinding poverty as someone unable to 'shepherd' his 'fold' (Gissing, p. 6)

John Ruskin had in 1864 spearheaded gender discourses in Victorian era with his essay '*On Queens' Gardens*' that drew a sharp distinction between the so called 'natural' spheres of women and men whereby men faced and struggled with the harsh realities of the outside world and women were to be custodians of the domestic sphere and supervised domesticities of the daily life. As per Ruskinian ideal, men were to be 'active, progressive' and defensive and women were the to be the provide them with the comfort of a peaceful household as they returned from their outside chores. Women to him were better off for 'sweet ordering, arrangement' of domestic spheres (Ruskin, 1904, p. 44).

It is this idea stemming from Ruskin's essay that is fiercely attacked by Mary Barfoot in Gissing's *The Odd Women* challenging those gender roles expected of women. She



advises the women in her professional academy if they want to break free from such narrow classifications in life, they must learn to be 'militant and defiant' and push their 'claims to the extremity (Gissing, p. 153). In this manner, Gissing uses Mary's character stir a debate on the role and gender expectations in the society. Sloan regards Gissing's female characters in the novel bring into focus an 'interplay of social forces and individual psychology' (Gissing, p. 119). Furthermore, Pierre Coustillas (2002) argues that Gissing was able to incorporate 'genuine realism' in the novel without pandering to mundane didacticism and thus succeeds in engaging the discourses of the period (p. 336).

In a similar vein, Diedre David (1984) maintains that Monica's abysmal marriage to Mr. Widdowson underscores how the discursive practices of the period left no recourse to women than to suppress their individual wishes to a system that terrorizes and forces them into submission through marriage, which in turn plays an enabling agent of the patriarchal system (p. 127). Once caught within the shackles of marriage, there is hardly a way out for a married woman other than submitting to the enforced norms of the society she lives in. Alam and Ramli (2020) are of the view that Gissing has adroitly tackled the dominant gender ideology by evocating alternatives to the conventional roles expected of them. The novel draws attention to the discourse dynamics that make women a willing victim to an oppressive system by inviting focus towards the influences of dominant gender discourses (Alam & Ramli, 2020).

Gissing successfully initiates a debate on gender roles and how discourses shape environments for strands of gender discourses to flourish. Monica's marriage to the patriarchal tyrant Edmund Widdowson serves as a launching pad for his mission. Mr. Widdowson is a typical Victorian conception of man and his thoroughly enshrined in the Ruskinian doctrine<sup>1</sup> which maintains 'an educated woman had better become a domestic servant than try to imitate the life of a man' (Ruskin, 1904, p. 171). Widdowson's misgivings towards the 'new women' underscore general apathy of Victorian England towards any attempt to refine gender boundaries as sanctioned by patriarchal agenda.

According to Elaine Showalter (2007), Gissing reignited debate on gender roles through his engagement of socio-economic issues in *The Odd Women* and this challenged gender norms of the period. She argued that Gissing's work contains powerful signs of a world where men are mired in despair and uncertainty in face of changing dynamics of gender where powerful women are ready to take charge. Showalter declares in the preface to the novel that:

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to John Ruskin's idea of women from his 1865 essay 'Of Queens' Gardens', bringing forth the conventional view of women as obedient housewives with 'queenly power' and modesty of nature.

... femininity is a construct; growing up female means learning to play a role. Women can make other women “unwomanly”; men can force womanliness upon them, by controlling their mobility, education, and economic dependency (p. 16).

Historically, woman in Victorian England had had to battle innumerable challenges to carve out liberties for their gender in a patriarchal world. Sharon Marcus (2007) notes that before the Divorce Act of 1857, the doctrine of coverture was in place that dictated that a married woman had to forego all essence to man and in the face of law, the couple was considered entwined as one and wife had to legal right over her property or body. This situation gave the husband full control over the wife until 1891 Victorians regarded family ‘peaceful refuge’ (p. 206). The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 gave reprieve to woman by sanctioning that marriage was a voidable contract that could be annulled under certain conditions. This was met with zealous opposition where critics deemed the law as an attack against the ‘greatest, oldest, and most universal of all social institutions, (Marcus, 2007, p. 213). Philosopher John Stuart Mill (2009) championed the cause of liberty for women and noted in his *The Subjection of Women* that ‘if ever any system of privilege and enforced subjection had its yoke tightly rivetted on the necks of those who are kept down by it, this has.’ (pp. 21-22). To Mill (1909), as he notes in his *On Liberty* the cause for debate in gender norms had to be routinely discussed and debated which will guarantee in the longer run that the subjection and oppression of women would cease to hold sway and will soon be held as a dead dogma, not a living truth’ (p. 40).

Similarly, a leading feminist of the period Mona Caird argued in her *The Morality of Marriage* (1987) that if women were able to ‘secure a liberty as great as that of men’ gender ideology would be greatly affected in favour women (p. 167). Furthermore, she had argued that change in gender was inevitable, and the inherent liberty of women cannot be held back much longer by the ‘moldering branch of patriarchal tree’ (p. 54). Correspondingly, Francis power Cobbe’s (1822–1904), article *Wife Torture in England* (1878) was pivotal in facilitating passing of laws in favour of women whereby oppressed and cornered wives could seek annulment of their relationships in the court of law (Marcus, 2007).

However, there were other in the spectrum of the gender debates in Victorian England who sought to justify the oppressed lot of women and some i.e., Margaret Oliphant (1856) maintained that the institution of marriage was irrevocable, and it was like death that is complete without revisions that goes unchanged for eternities. Similarly, another critic standing against New Women was Eliza Lynn Lynton who argued in her *Girl of the Period* that women must be free from any traces of personal ambition and should only exude domestic modesty by remaining quiet in her conduct and demeanor (340). More strikingly, it was the essay of W.R. Greg *Why Are Women Redundant* that influenced Gissing in the choice of his title for the novel. Greg (1864) had argued that since women of marriageable age in Victorian England outnumbered men by half of million, they must be transported to the colonies as they were the odd

ones and had no role here in England. The idea of a single unmarried women was abhorrible to Greg as he maintained a single life meant a lack of 'natural duties' for women made their lives painful and artificial without purpose (p. 282).

Thus, the epistemic landscape of the gender discourse was undergoing a transition and this change was captured in the fin de siècle literature. Gissing's *The Odd Women* seizes on the spirit of the age and argues for greater gender liberties through its engagement of divisive gender ideology of Victorian England and laying bare its faulty constitutive elements based on patriarchal quest for power.

### Foucauldian Discourse Analysis as the Methodological Framework

Michel Foucault's conception of discourse is particularly amenable towards explicating mechanics of gender as, according to Nicola Gavey (1989), it is considered a construct in the wider web of power relations. It therefore occupies an important place in feminist research. Furthermore, Aram Vesser contends that given the lack of specificity in the operations of gender and they influenced by dominant discourses in a certain epistemic environment, underscores the fluid nature of the ideological basis of normative power and if understood and classified can aid in rerouting discourses (1989). This indeterminate nature of gender and its ideological basis stems from its being amorphous discursive practices that sustains itself within broader systems of thought. As far as Gissing's *The Odd Women* is concerned, Dorothy Zaborzsky (1985) views it as a thorough and a 'fair treatment' of prevailing discourses on feminist movement in the Victorian England (p. 492).

Michel Foucault's conception of discourse is crucial to this study given his work puts its primary emphasis on the interplay of power and ingrained discourses of a period affect individual conception of external reality, and by extension how they interact with socioeconomic phenomenon epistemic environments. Foucault's take on power relations attempts to understand the constitutive elements of discursive practices in terms of their effects on social relations (Weeks, 1982). If Gender roles are envisaged consequent upon dominant discourses, it is important that we consider how those discourses garner their valiance at a given period. Since Gissing's *The Odd Women* explores gender roles in the Victorian Society at the turn of century, Foucauldian discourse analysis provides the investigative tools to parse the building blocks of those discursive practices that orient worldviews of the authors and by extension those of the characters in our novel under analysis.

What makes Foucauldian discourse analysis especially pertinent to this study is its viewing of discourse as a dynamic in inveterate flux whereby notions of power and identity emanating from it invariably change in accordance with how the discourse is structured. Thus, according to Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, discourse assumes pivotal importance in forming individual subjectivity and how they come to regard as 'natural' domain for gender roles in terms of their inherent ideology that feeds them (1977, pp. 26-27). As with discourse, Foucauldian notion of power differs from

received idea of it as being a fixed entity that seeks to dominate or oppress. It conceives power as fluid and constantly shifting reflective of epistemes. In noting how gender dynamics operate in *The Odd Women*, it is vital how power relations change and in turn affect the course of discourses. For Foucault, beginning in the twentieth century, there was a slow but subtle dynamic in relations of power that ensured subjects self-regulated themselves without apparent outside influence and became cognizant how they conducted themselves in the face of discursive practices. It all happened at a subconscious level without conscious individual attempt. They seek to adjust in term of social regimes. This ensures there are no visible punitive forces that enforce authority (Dean, 1999). All institutions, overtime use implicit power to ensure compliance without in-your-face tools of enforcement. Patriarchal derive their potency from the Foucauldian notion that discourses of oppression are subtle and rooted in the subconsciousness of subjects. Foucault borrowed Jeremy Bentham's analogy of Panopticon in how power structures ensure compliance without tangible display or use of force as was employed in the former times. Bentham's idea of Panopticon is based on the idea of three-pronged Panopticon used in prisons that forces inmates into believing that they are being always observed. Thus, they are kept in subordination without any physical application of force. Similarly, Foucauldian discourse sustains itself through its passive operations of age old. Value systems that ensure compliance in individuals forcing them to a set of gender ideation that obfuscates means to independent thinking.

Michel Foucault notes in his *Discipline and Punish* that domain of knowledge are invariably determined by the duality of power/knowledge relations and ensuing discourses and perceptions of social realities are dependent on the operations their subtle mechanics (1977, p. 26) For him, power manifests itself through its operations and not by means of its possessions. A detailed examinations of the day-to-day discourse practices release how the epistemologies of power operate. Foucault (1980) maintains in *Power/Knowledge* that discursive relations form subjectivity by adhering to their own 'regimes of truth' (p. 132). For him all-encompassing narratives cannot be trusted. In the novel, Gissing's protagonists Monica, Rhoda and Barfoot as subscribing to an ideology of gender that operates on a spectrum of total docility in the case of Monica, a median in Mary Barfoot to total aversion to patriarchy by Rhoda Nunn. This is corroborated by Foucault's argument *Discipline and Punish* that discursive relations form subjectivity by adhering to their own 'regimes of truth' (p. 132). For him all-encompassing narratives cannot be trusted.

His idea of 'hermeneutics of the self' as laid down in his 1993 *About the beginning of the hermeneutics of self* (p. 198) is crucial as it informs the analysis on how power relations assert themselves through their normalizing agents or discourse practices

The theoretical framework immersed in Foucauldian philosophy of discourse aids in identifying discourse practices as they emerge in *The Odd Women* and affect how gender ideology is formed. Foucault's categorization of gender as outlined in his *The*

*History of Sexuality* (1979) is postmodernist in character. He views it as a socio-economic, cultural and historical construct which is subject to change akin to discourses, fluid (p. 147). This conception breaks parts with the dominant view of gender as a fixed dichotomous binary carved in stone. Judith Butler also agrees with Foucault that it is, in fact, an ideology that has constructed gender as a binary and it is not a scientific fact impervious to change (2009). This belief system is sustained by patriarchal institutions through discourses that cater to their interests.

The differing ideological lanes occupied by Monica, Rhoda and Mary; the thesis of the novel squarely aligns with Judith Butler's argument that gender is not a fixed reality of nature but a mix bag of incessant instance of performing of gender through cultural feedback dependent upon dominant discourses of power dynamics operating in each society (2009). Besides Foucault and Butler, Norman Fairclough (2007) views gender an essential category of discourse. To him, discourses are not innocuous means of perceiving social relations but play a crucial role in how gender is constructed in the society. Therefore, our sense of reality and the range of subjective action are also determined by discursive practices. Analogously, Foucault maintain in *The History of Sexuality* that regulatory power acts upon a subject by subjugating him through acts of power and for him there is no preconceived or preexisting gender and calls sex a 'fictitious unity' (1979, pp. 81-82).

As discourses affect the sense perceptions of the subject in terms of their engagement with external reality, therefore Foucault notes in *The Archeology of Knowledge* that individuals' scope of action and thought processes are circumscribes by the discussive environment they are a part of. The discourse influence and regulate conduct and determine parameters of social ideals to be upheld (1972). When asked how discourses continue to sustain themselves with unabated legitimizing force, Foucault's idea of 'games of truth' needs to be taken into consideration. That connotes that all systems of values in conjunction with their disciplining institutions enforce their power by giving the impression of being on the side of truth, of classifying taboos and norms and all this is accepted or held true is negotiated through a space of indirect domination.

Gissing's protagonist Monica's world view, in terms of her initial submission to authority in *The Odd Women* aligns with what Foucault calls docile character who gives in to the regulatory power of gender discourses by not only external effect of subjectivity but also self-regulate themselves through their unconscious internalizing of the disciplinary institutions. It is an effect of Foucauldian biopower. Monica conforms to the idea of docility as the forces of regulatory power exercise their control on her subconscious and affect her subjective volition. It is as if, as Foucault (1977) regards it in his *Discipline and Punish*, 'power relations' exercise their hold by forcing the subject to 'to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs' (p. 25). They operate as formative agent in ensuring a conduct that conforms to a set criterion decided by the disciplinary body. They operate as conduits for the power structures

in the society, giving them legitimacy. Thus identity, although amorphous in infancy, is largely subject to the social cues long set by disciplining institutions and affect how individual consciousness is molded as be preconceived criteria.

### **Analysis and Discussions**

Until the onset of late nineteenth century, there were hardly any means available for women to materialize a meaningful change in how the epistemic gender dynamics operated. The only logical course for women was to settle down and get married. Opportunity for women was limited. Employment was scarce and options were soon exhausted beyond being governesses, companions to rich lady, or rendering services in schools as teachers. However, change albeit subtle, was beginning to manifest itself. The period from 1890 to 1910 in English history has been called the age that gave rise to female clerks that integrated woman into the domains of male workforce and their numbers saw dramatic growth (Chase, 1984). Remington typewriter had made its appearance and the feminist Rhoda Nunn makes use of it in her keeping of book and commercial correspondence (Gissing, p. 27). Furthermore, in the novel, Rhoda's use of typewriter serves a symbolical liberation from the bifurcation of gender roles and uses it to herald her personal freedom despite the fact the scorn from Everard Barfoot who looks down upon her work as mere 'copying with a typewriter and teaching others to do the same' (Gissing, p. 205). Rhoda mounts a rebellion to the patriarchal norms for dabbling in outré adventures despite the scorn of male to open the way for women's socio-economic liberation (Chase, 1984).

The nineteenth century was largely a period of transition the New Women movement had triggered much interest in the debate of educating women to expand their employability and the range in the job market. Activists had burst forth on the scene was zealous calls for a change in the current situation. There was a complete break with ways of thinking in women who thought their primary duty was the service to men and called for education reform that took into consideration the gender dynamics with a focus on the greater happiness of women through an empowerment of their sex (Helsing, 1869). Again, in his *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault argues that the building blocks of the episteme are the discourse mechanisms that set outlines for act (1974). The self-defeating ways of thinking by women against their own interests explains the lasting influence of those epistemes. It thus, demonstrates that the regimes of truth and knowledge do not have an unadulterated essence but are structured by relations of power.

Gissing's work is a masterful distillation of gender role expectation in force in the late Victorian period. The exchanges on gender dynamics taking place among Rhoda Nunn, Mary Barfoot and Everard Barfoot stand out for their perceptive encapsulation of how discourses were engulfing the Victorian psyche. Monica Madden's unfortunate marriage with Edmund Widdowson allows Gissing to peer into the patriarchal notions on the so-called 'proper' conduct for women. This line of thinking orients Monica's husband to regards her friends Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot as utterly

'unwomanly' by maintaining that both are on the way towards making women 'unwomanly' and their influence could 'corrupt' women into failing their domestic duties and serving their husbands (Gissing, p. 183). Again, Rhoda Nunn cannot bring herself to accept hordes of women who are no more than sheep in a directionless herd where they are operating as 'feeble, purposeless, hopeless woman living only to deteriorate' (Gissing, p. 322). Ms. Nunn is convinced there must be a way out from this purposeless life. She declares:

... I look upon them as a great reserve. When one woman vanishes in matrimony, the reserve offers a substitute for the world's work. True, they are not all trained yet--far from it. I want to help in that--to train the reserve' (p. 44).

Critic Lise Sanders (206) argues that Monica when caught in a relationship she abhors strives to break free the shackles of a system beyond her immediate control by cutting ties with the 'monotonous conditions of bourgeois domesticity' rearing wild fantasies for 'transgressive sexual desires' (p. 194). Her ceaseless anxieties of married life with man who denies her the right of personal freedom makes Mr. Widdowson 'anxious, suspicious, irritable' (Gissing, p. 172). On the other hand, Monica when confronted with the hopeless prospects of domestic slavery under the garb of social propriety engenders in her even greater desire to reject the status quo by indulging in 'comparison with women's labor outside the home' (Sanders 208). Monica's resistance is an instance of challenging the norms outside of her subjectivity. Foucault notes in *The History of Sexuality* (1879) that discourse as an entity that besides operating as an effect of power also contains points of resistance given their fluid dynamics of constructions, and Monica's challenge to the draconian mindset of her husband is instance of exploring the points of resistance to seek her own independence. Therefore, resistance is possible where subject can 'do their genders' in defiance of dominant structures of power regulatory power as in Foucauldian philosophy as outline in his *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1974) there is always a possibility of resistance to be able to 'think otherwise' (p. 16).

It is striking how the force of established discourses within the Victorian epistemic space have infiltrated those apparently on the fighting side of women's movement. This is succinctly underscored in *The Odd Women* when Mary Barfoot laments to her friend Rhoda Nunn that men regard women as they often do because woman has been 'a clog upon a man's ambition' (Gissing, p. 97). *The Odd Women* delves deep into the discursive practices around gender values cherished by Victorian by putting in front the woman's quest for seeking out a person space for themselves in a class ridden society where intellectual debate was often stymied by gendered values sustained by the invisible forces of patriarchy held in force by its institutions. Monica's decision to marry the ill-suited Mr. Widdowson is dictated by her personal quest to escape the awful fate suffered by her two elder sisters: of that of crushing poverty and socio-economic oppression in a system that afforded them no window to escape. Monica makes up her mind to marry in order stand out and get a leeway in the face of

entrenched discourses denying her any space to prosper. As scion of discursive period, Mr. Widdowson plays his role of Victorian husband oblivious of discourse mechanics that ensure that he remains an enabler in a cause governed by dominant discourse. He is genuinely at loss in the face of Monica's progressive views and Gissing notes that it was as if 'reason and tradition contended in him, to his ceaseless torment (Gissing, p. 220).

Given Michel Foucault's contention that discourses contain ammunition that can be used to break free from reigning ideological foothold of a period, similarly it is observed that Monica Madden grows to assert her individual self despite the obvious traces of a Foucauldian docile character through her immersion in the novels of the period. She experiences an emotional maturity, coupled with psychological growth in her engagement with the ideas in the texts she reads that give her talking points in her debates of her husband, Edmund Widdowson, who insists upon her being a traditional wife.

Widdowson incessantly relies upon all facets of discourses to gain an upper hand and attempts to sensitize Monica to the force of religion 'a precious and powerful instrument for directing the female conscience' (Gissing, p. 173). He invokes the Ruskinian ideals for what it means to be a wife and genuinely subtributes to the notion that a woman's 'sphere is the home, Monica' as he is convinced that Ruskin's 'every word.... about women is good and precious' (Gissing, p. 171). Monica puts up a fight and does not want herself to be a victim in the traditional Victorian value system that pushed women to the domination of men and denied her personal freedom to assert her independence. Victorian gender ideology is challenged in her debates with Mr. Widdowson.

Victorian gender roles are discussed in the very first chapter of the novel *The Fold and the Shephard*. The narrator tells us that Mrs. Madden had a certain 'role' to play as the mother six daughters and having 'fulfilled her function in this wonderful world' she had passed on (p. 5). This underscores what the family patriarch Mr. Madden expects from her daughters in the world and what their role is to give birth and die in domestic toils not worrying about money matter (pp. 5-6). It is as if all systems are values engulf epistemes as they operate as forces of oppression by defining limits to human values by appealing to a discursively mediated system of truth that does its bidding.

This is Gissing's way of directing the course of the novel on gender roles in a hopeless Victorian set up. Mr. Madden captures the essence of a patriarchal thinking on gender roles. Therefore, as Zaborszky (1985) contends, Mr. Madden is not too concerned with and rejects roles for women in getting an education or working outside the domestic fold (p. 492). For Mr. Madden 'the home must be guarded against sordid cares to the last possible moment ... women, old or young, should never have to think about money (Gissing, p. 6). Here he is, in effect, subscribing to a gender ideology that defined Victorian values on gender roles which was rooted in the belief that while



men braved the outside world, the women stayed at home under the guidance and protection of men. He pays dearly for his views and his patriarchal notions leave his daughters in utter poverty that sets them to a life of miserly pecuniary. Mr. Madden's death puts the daughters in financial misery that precipitates the early deaths of three of them while the remaining three are forced to live on the pittance left by their father. The youngest, Monica, hates her job at the draper's. She did not want to be chained to Rhoda Nunn whose place she considered oppressive and suffocating.

Monica's ill-conceived decision of marrying Widdowson proves to be a huge mistake. She made this choice out of fears to escape poverty. Her husband, Mr. Widdowson propagates the typical Victorian gender ideology and is convinced that 'an educated woman had better become a domestic servant than try to imitate the life of a man' (Gissing, p. 171). Mr. Widdowson fears that Monica's association with Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot will corrupt her thinking on domestic values. He declares the latter two to be utterly 'unwomanly' and fears they may work against his interests with Monica (171). He declares

... woman's sphere is the home, Monica. Unfortunately, girls are often obliged to go out and earn their living, but this is unnatural, a necessity which advanced civilization will altogether abolish (p. 171).

The role for her wife was designed and directed by Mr. Widdowson and him 'took for granted that it was his to direct, hers to be guided' (171). He goes to the extent that musing to himself if Monica tried to get away, he would be 'capable of killing her' (265).

According to Deirdre David (1984) Mr. Widdowson is 'chained to an ideology of female inferiority' and thus resorts to incessant moralizing in the hopes of 'reforming' his wife. (p. 124). Widdowson viewed women as 'born to perpetual pupilage', he was convinced women were beyond emotional maturity and remained 'imperfect beings' unable to shake off their delusions inculcated in their childhood (Gissing, p. 219). Now, if we try to trace the ideological underpinnings of discourses that guide Mr. Widdowson's worldviews and in turn his gender ideology. It bears a substantive tinge of Ruskinian orientation on the distinct spheres for men and woman.

Mr. Widdowson's treatment is centered around his gender mores rooted in Victorian discourses. Here the influence of Ruskinian Philosophy is at play in Widdowson's exchanges with his cornered wife. He informs Monica 'the natural law that points out a woman's place . . . commands her to follow her husband's guidance' (Gissing, 185). To him, he is ruling over Monica for 'own good' (p. 250). Monica however does put up a fight her inalienable rights as a human being stuck in a strained relationship and tell Mr. Widdowson how fallacious his views are gender roles are and she would want to experience the world on her own terms by going out and making friends declaring that 'life will be a burden to me before long, if I don't have more freedom.' (p. 183).

Gissing, through Widdowson, presents a window into the Victorian patriarchal gender ideology and the discourses invoked to sustain them. He is imbued with the reigning Victorian discourses on gender and his conduct is reflective of his ideology. Under Ruskin's influence. He is convinced that women's lives would be 'unnatural' if they propose breaking of the spheres of gender in vogue (p. 171).

On the hand, as a foil to traditional thinking, Rhoda emerges with her militant brand of feminism and urges Monica to overcome her domestic troubles and if she does then she will be able to 'prove by your life that we can be responsible human beings (p. 350). It is an echo of Francis Cobbe's *The Duties of Women* (1881) admonishing women to assert themselves to be 'responsible human beings' (p. 152). Gissing brings out the dominant Victorian gender ideology through the troubled marriage of Monica with Widdowson and treads through exchanges on gender between Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot. Rhoda is Gissing's archetypal militant feminist of The New Women movement. She has attained power through sheer persistence. Rhoda is averse to institutionalized marriage. Everard tries and test her views. Gissing uses Everard to demonstrate the ideology of Victorian men on the role of women and gender expections. Foucault reasons in *The History of Sexuality* that social norms affect individual conduct as its values are internalized through discourses (p. 152). Monica Madden, in her giving in to discourse on gender, comes off as a Foucauldian docile character and is of the view that difference between men and women derives from unfair treatment of the latter (Gissing, p. 183)

Through the works of feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft and others, the feminist agenda had already taken off by the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century. These writers wrote extensively to expose the oppressive aspects of patriarchy and how it had systematically used gender discourses to keep women at a socioeconomic disadvantage and in a position of inferiority to men. This mission had been kept alive by feminists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with greater rigor. Barbara Bodichon (1857) had called upon women to rise against oppression and fight for their rights. She declared:

... women may not take a man as a god; they must not hold their first duty to be towards any human being . . . we ardently desire that woman should not make love their profession.' (p. 9)

Bodichon's calls upon self-reliance are reiterated by Gissing's Mary Barfoot in the novel, which she declares in her *Women as Invader* speech. She preached in the favour total gender autonomy so that women could live their lives at part with the male counterparts without prejudice and opt for myriad choices available to them other than being pigeonholed to patriarchal adumbration of gender roles.

## Conclusion

In summation, Gissing's work is a powerful foregrounding of Victorian episteme on gender norms and gender role expectations stemming from deeply entrenched discourses that are in turn sustained by patriarchal values. It furthermore explicates the mechanics of operation of those discourses. It, therefore, stands to reason that George Gissing's *The Odd Women* is a quintessential feminist work that captures the heart of discourses on gender role in the Victorian England. It thoroughly succeeds in charting gender relations within the purview of the epistemic ideology held in place by patriarchal mission. It is a consummate portrait of period where the old arch is losing ground to the fin de siècle discursive forces. A Foucauldian perspective has been crucial at explicating the dynamics of discourse construction. It portrays how, in line with Foucault conception discourse construction, gender roles in Victorian England were deeply influenced by socio-cultural, religious norms and traditional morality upheld by the entrenched values of patriarchy. Gissing as a vocal mouthpiece of his era brings those discourse to bear their full potential which, in the final scheme of things, reveal that Victorian gender ideology was lopsided in its representation, submission and defining of sexual politics of the period. Varying aspects of the emerging discourses from all stakeholders in the spectrum get a substantive intellectual rundown. Gissing brings into focus all facets of the women's question by accommodating all feminist endeavors across the discursive spectrum. Rhoda is the extreme militant feminist; Mary is her softer counterpart and Everard serves a go-between in the charged debates. On the other hand, Edmund Barfoot stands for the typical patriarchal discourse while Monica Madden serves a Foucauldian docile character who succumbs to the patriarchal discourse and becomes its victim. The novel makes a case for greater gender liberation and an obfuscation of gender roles by doing with rigid old views. They wanted this to be reflected in the social policy. The moral injunctions of the period worked their influence on the subconscious of the characters and a constituent of discourses on gender blocked the independence of women. They always see themselves through narrowly carved out discourses that serve the patriarchal mission.

Therefore, *The Odd Women* as a blueprint of an epistemic ideology does not restrain itself in exposing the moral landscape and socio-economic milieu that play subtle parts in advancing tenets of that oppressive patriarchal ideology. It presents a depressing portrait of a family at the onset of the novel. A family patriarch who is opposed any time of female enterprise or their working outside, seeking jobs or being educated, dies suddenly leaving his six daughters penniless. The irony is difficult to escape in how the ideology is a failing vestige of foregone time. Three of the Madden daughters die deaths typical of the time period, one of consumption, another is driven to suicide unable to cope with her depressive lot and a third downs herself, Monica joins a draper in Weston and then moves to firm in London and she detested the idea of serving behind a shop counter. It makes perfect sense to capture the essence of gender arguments laid down in Gissing's work through Mary Barfoot's evocative cry

for change. A dream of world where women are relegated to petty menial positions working subservient to men but a world where they are appreciated for their 'intelligence, of honest effort, of moral strength', it is only then a space can be created where women can say goodbye to vestigial patriarchal moral code injunctions that chains them to a perpetual state of socio-economic dependence and inferiority.

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