

ENGLISH LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY CURRICULA AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA: THE CASE OF CORPUS LINGUISTICS

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Abstract: The literature on curricula comparison and analysis is poor in relation to literature on issues such as teaching methods, materials and student and teacher competences. The study of English language and literature is a relatively popular study at public universities across Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. The last decades have degenerated many new aspects and theories to language teaching but unfortunately traditional English teaching seems to be the main method used. Teacher education should change and shift more towards incorporating corpus linguistics into the teaching process. Corpus linguistics as a study is not recognized in the language research community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and incorporating this particular study into university curricula may inspire future teachers and researchers to endeavour in corpus based research. By being familiar with the research and tools of corpus linguistics, future teachers may use them to critically examine their teaching process and look for answers in corpus data evidence. The aim of this review study is to compare and contrast university curricula of studies of English language and literature with special interest in corpus linguistics courses. The focus is on eight public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We wish to find out if corpus linguistics is thought as an independent course at the university studies of the English language at public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and compare findings with those from public universities in the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia. We visited the official sites of eight public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Republic of Srpska, and reviewed their curricula of English language and literature studies, both single and double major programmes of undergraduate and graduate studies, for corpus linguistics courses. We used curriculum mapping as the research method for creating and using the curriculum map, it is a visualisation of relationships within and between a curriculum or curricula. This study seeks to answer the following questions: Is corpus linguistics thought as a separate course at English language and literature studies at public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Do universities in the region teach corpus linguistics as a separate course in the education of future English language teachers? The study wishes to emphasize the importance of incorporating corpus linguistics into English language teacher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and also highlight the importance of corpus linguistics and as science and promote it among researchers, teachers and students in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, university curricula, public universities, curricula comparison

1. INTRODUCTION

The last decades have degenerated many new aspects and theories to language teaching but unfortunately traditional English teaching seems to be the main method used. The literature on curricula comparison and analysis is poor in relation to literature on issues such as teaching methods, materials and student and teacher competences.

There are numerous definitions of the curriculum, the simplest one would be to follow its Latin meaning of course or track. A popular definition is one by Tanner & Tanner (1980), they define a curriculum as “the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school, for the learners’ continuous and wilful growth in personal social competence” (p. 13). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) encourages students to be active learners in the classroom and apply their critical thinking to the study of vocabulary which is also one of the objectives of corpus linguistics.

Corpus linguistics is the study of language based on examples of ‘real life’ language use. According to Biber and associates (1998) we should be thankful to this particular branch of linguistics since now it is available to identify the meanings of words by studying their occurrences in natural contexts, rather than relying on our own instincts about how a word is used. Corpus linguistic is the modern face of empirical linguistics. Language teacher educators have a fundamental responsibility to educate teachers in a way that empowers them to work in the modern world (O’Keeffe & Farr, 2003: 389). But unfortunately the face of corpus linguistics is vaguely visible in university curriculum design today (Barlow, 2002; Krieger, 2003).

The conclusion is that if teachers are not familiar with the availability of useful resources and use corpora or corpus software themselves (Callies, 2019) they will not be able to transfer the knowledge and skills to their students. According to McCarthy (2008) and his experience, teachers have heard about corpora but are not quite sure what

they are (p. 563). Teacher education should change and shift more towards incorporating corpus linguistics into the teaching process. According to Rescki (2006), one area that is under-explored is the relevance of corpus linguistics to teacher education (p. 306). If corpus applications and corpus findings are to reach the right audience (i.e. language learners), they must be integrated at the very core of teacher education courses (O’Keeffe & Farr, 2003: 391). Corpus linguistics represents cutting-edge change in terms of scientific techniques and methods, and probably foreshadows even more profound technological shifts that will “impinge upon our long-held notions of education, roles of teachers, the cultural context of the delivery of educational services and the mediation of theory and technique” (McCarthy, 2001: 125). Barlow (2002) sees three ways of incorporating corpus linguistics into the teaching process, syllabi design, material development and classroom activities. By being familiar with the research and tools of corpus linguistics, future teachers may use them to critically examine their teaching process and look for answers in corpus data evidence.

Preservice teachers or future English language teachers need exposure to the study of corpus linguistics and corpus data since this type of data has been proven to be “the real language data” (Bernardini, 2004: 15). Using the latest corpus data in educating future English teachers should encourage them to do the same in their future profession. The use of language corpora and computer analysis tools for language education facilitates the use of authentic language, makes students more active and independent analysers of language, and provides empirical evidence about language use (Conrad, 1999: 2). Curricula of English language and literate studies, especially those that focus on education on future English teachers, should focus on incorporating knowledge, tools and methodologies of corpus research into the teaching process. Corpora use also empowers non-native teachers because it helps them to be independent. Vida (2017) claims that pre-service teachers or students of graduate university studies are in a distinctive position of still being students while progressing to becoming teachers, so including corpus linguistics in their studies at this stage would be most beneficial for them as well as for their future teaching career.

Corpora studies and their findings can help future and young teachers at the beginning of their careers to plan materials and content for their lessons and explore the target language using corpora tools. A good example would be a wide selection computer software available for identifying concordances.

The study of English language and literature is a relatively popular study at public universities across Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. Universities offer single or double major university study courses for students who wish to study the English language. The aim of this review study is to compare and contrast university curricula of studies of English language and literature with special interest in corpus linguistics courses. We wish to find out if corpus linguistics is thought as an independent course at the university studies of the English language at public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and compare findings to those from public universities in the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Qualitative comparative analysis is a methodology used in this small scale review study, and we used the method of curriculum mapping to gain and compare the available data for the study. A curriculum map is a visual representation of selected components and characteristics of a curriculum so that the constituent parts are visible, thus allowing for easier review and potential comparison (Angelos & Guy, 2011; Elliott, 2014; Harden, 2001; Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2004). A curriculum map is a visualisation of the relationships within and between a curriculum or curricula. Curriculum mapping refers to the method for creating and using the curriculum map. Often, researchers in the field of curriculum studies conduct curriculum mapping specifically to compare two or more curricula using documentary evidence (Greatorex et. al., 2019). This type of analysis was used to analyse the obtained data of the studies’ curricula and its contents. The aim of this study is to examine university curricula and compare them, the focus is on eight public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We visited the official sites of eight public universities in Bosnia and Hercegovina, both in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Republic of Srpska, and reviewed their curricula of English language and literature studies, both single and double major programmes of undergraduate and graduate studies, for corpus linguistics courses. The eight universities mentioned in this article are all public universities in the country. All eight universities have web sites and English language study curricula are available online. We surveyed the following universities/faculties that offer undergraduate and graduate studies of English language and literature: University of Banja Luka/Faculty of Philology; University of Tuzla/Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; University of Sarajevo/Faculty of Philosophy; Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar/Faculty of Humanities; University of Mostar/Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; University of Zenica/Faculty of Philosophy; University of Bihac/Faculty of Pedagogy, and University of East Sarajevo/Faculty of Philosophy. After collection of data, we compared the B&H university curricula to those of public university curricula in Croatia and Serbia. The data was collected in the same

manner by visiting the websites and all information on curricula of the selected studies was available via the webpage of the university or specific faculty offering the course.

This study seeks to answer the following questions: Is corpus linguistics thought as a separate course at English language and literature studies at public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Do universities in the region teach corpus linguistics as a separate course in the education of future English language teachers?

3. RESULTS

As already mentioned, we searched the internet and surveyed university websites for undergraduate and graduate curricula of studies of English language and literature at public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia. After detailed data analysis we found that only two of the eight universities/faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina teach corpus linguistics either as a mandatory or elective course. The University of Zenica/Faculty of Philosophy teaches corpus linguistics as an elective course at the graduate study of the English language. The syllabus of the course is also available online. The full name of the course is “Corpus Linguistics”, it is a short course in the first semester of the graduate study of English language and literature with the workload of 3 ECTS credits. The objective of the course is to introduce students to the concept of corpus linguistics and for them to acquire the basics of this scientific study. The second university that teaches corpus linguistics is the University of East Sarajevo/Faculty of Philosophy. The course is also taught in the first semester of the graduate study of English language and literature and the syllabus is available online. The full name of the course is also “Corpus Linguistics” and students receive 7 ECTS upon completion of the course.

After detailed analysis of the universities’ English language curricula we can conclude that corpus linguistics is not taught as a separate course at the vast majority of public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Table 1 shows the list of public universes in B&H and whether corpus linguistics is though as a separate course (+) or not (-). Table 1 shows a lack of corpus linguistics courses in university education of future English language and literature teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From Table 1, we can also see that only two of the public universities teach corpus linguistics as a separate course at graduate studies.

Table 1 – Public universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the corpus linguistics course

	<i>Undergraduate study of English language and literature</i>	<i>Graduate study of English language and literature</i>
<i>University of Banja Luka/Faculty of Philology</i>	-	-
<i>University of Tuzla/Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	-	-
<i>University of Sarajevo/Faculty of Philosophy</i>	-	-
<i>University of Dzemal Bijedic/Faculty of Humanities</i>	-	-
<i>University of Mostar/Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	-	-
<i>University of Zenica/Faculty of Philosophy</i>	-	+
<i>University of Bihac/Faculty of Pedagogy</i>	-	-
<i>University of East Sarajevo/Faculty of Philosophy</i>	-	+

Table 2 – Public universities in the Republic of Croatia and the corpus linguistics course

	<i>Undergraduate study of English language and literature</i>	<i>Graduate study of English language and literature</i>
<i>University of Dubrovnik</i>	-	-
<i>Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek</i>	-	-
<i>Juraj Dobrila University of Pula</i>	-	-
<i>University of Rijeka</i>	-	-
<i>University North</i>	-	-
<i>University of Split</i>	-	-
<i>University of Zadar</i>	-	-
<i>University of Slavonski Brod</i>	-	-
<i>University of Zagreb</i>	-	-

Table 2 shows the list of public universities in the Republic of Croatia and whether corpus linguistics is thought as a separate course (+) or not (-). Corpus linguistics is not thought as an independent course at public universities in the Republic of Croatia.

Table 3 – Public universities in the Republic of Serbia and the corpus linguistics course

	<i>Undergraduate study of English language and literature</i>	<i>Graduate study of English language and literature</i>
<i>University of Belgrade</i>	-	-
<i>University of Arts in Belgrade</i>	-	-
<i>University of Defence</i>	-	-
<i>University of Pristina Kosovska Mitrovica</i>	-	-
<i>University of Kragujevac</i>	-	-
<i>University of Novi Pazar</i>	-	-
<i>University of Novi Sad</i>	-	-
<i>University of Niš</i>	-	-

Table 3 shows the list of public universities in the Republic of Serbia and whether corpus linguistics is thought as a separate course (+) or not (-). Corpus linguistics is not thought as an independent course at public universities in the Republic of Croatia. The difference between Croatian and Serbian universities is that for Croatian ones all information on study programmes and courses is available online, while Serbian universities do not offer this option, only a list of study programmes is available in case of Serbian universities. An interesting finding of this study is that corpus linguistics is not thought as a separate course in both Croatia and Serbia, this is a very surprising fact since both countries are larger and more developed than B&H, and also the fact that the Republic of Croatia is in the European Union.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The current study is small but of great importance for raising awareness of university teachers and curricula designers to incorporate more of not only corpus linguistics courses but corpus linguistics topics into their teaching. Corpus linguistics as a study is not recognized in the language research community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and incorporating this particular study into university curricula may inspire future teachers and researchers to endeavour in corpus based research. One aspect that could be beneficial for future research is to include an expert judge or judges to look at the collected data, these judges need to be experts in the research field as well.

One of the benefits of incorporating corpus linguistics into the university study of English language and literature is that students can later benefit on different courses they take. The study of corpus linguistics has several pedagogical purposes, for both teachers and students. According to Gilquin and Granger (2010: 359), one of its most important features is the element of discovery which makes learning more motivating, students become more involved, active, and ultimately, more autonomous in the learning process.

The results of this review study have implication for any type of English teacher education, from university degrees to career training and lifelong learning that aim to have corpus linguistics as a part of their curriculum. This is supported by previous studies on corpus based teaching and learning in EFL and ESL, that claim how teachers who are able to make better decisions in their teaching as a result of their ability to manipulate corpora skilfully and

provide more appropriate answers to their students based on authentic language data (Vida, 2017). An interesting study by Latif and Muhammad (2021) on two classes of student teachers shows results in favour of incorporating corpus literacy in education of future teachers. After teaching a corpus literacy component to two classes of student teachers in a graduate computer-assisted language learning course and two years later, a group of these student teachers responded to a follow-up questionnaire exploring their beliefs about corpus literacy integration and their multiple uses of corpora. The student teachers reported very positive immediate and long-term perceptions of corpus literacy instruction. Mukherjee's findings from 2004 point that while university students of modern languages are increasingly familiarized with the research-based use of corpora in linguistic content classes, this research perspective is not sufficiently translated into a teaching perspective for corpora to be considered a useful addition to the toolbox of language teachers.

One way to achieve this is to train and educate future English language teachers about corpora and corpus based research. We believe that university teachers do mention corpus linguistics in their academic teachings but according to the results we can say with certainty that corpora literature and research has not been introduced to Bosnia and Herzegovina's university education. The study wishes to emphasize the importance of incorporating corpus linguistics into English language teacher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and also highlight the importance of corpus linguistics and as science and promote it among researchers, teachers and students in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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